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FUTURE

DYNAMICS in

ASIA

FULL PAPERS BOOK

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CONTENTS

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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL REFORM ON POLITICAL REFORM IN SAUDI ARABIA

Mehdi Mokhberi[*]

Abstract

Speed of social reforms in Saudi Arabia since 2015 has been such that could the way for a series of political changes and reforms in the structure of the Saudi Monarchy. Reforms that are particularly focused on women and youth and have paved the way for social freedoms. This study seeks to answer the question that, given the traditional structure of society and government in Saudi Arabia can these social reforms be translated into political reforms at the level of the political system and government structure of the country or not? In this regard, the main hypothesis of the research is that due to the increasing acceleration whit social pressure and demand in this regard and the transformational personality Mohammad Ibn Salman. The process of social reforms in the society of Muhammad Ibn Salman continues to demand political reform in the society and leads to changes in the government structure of Saudi Arabia so that in the future we can see a kind of led from above. This article uses a descriptive-analytical method to advance itself and by examining the type of relationship between society and government. In Saudi Arabia in the new century AD and before the beginning of social reforms and further mapping the real atmosphere of SAUDI society during the social reform period, the impact of this demonstrates reforms on political change in this country.

Keywords: reform, Saudi Arabia, political, social, Mohammad Bin Salman

INTRODUCTION

The social, industrial, economic and political conditions of countries are such that the solution of problems and bottlenecks requires new and different patterns and solutions. The problems of current organizations of countries due to social changes and increasing complexity and intense competition, can not be solved with past measures and strategies, but to ensure their survival and survival need to find new solutions and methods that innovate, innovate , The creation of new products or services, processes and methods depends. Current organizations need to be flexible enough to respond to all possible situations (Ahmadpour 2011, p.140).

Saudi Arabia has always tried to become the leading power in the region by creating more maps, but due to the lack of all the parameters of a regional power during the last 30 years, it has not achieved its goals; but the country's leaders are trying to achieve this by using the following factors:

- Increase crude oil production to 10 million barrels per day based on Western menus to control prices and energy markets

- Wahhabism spread throughout the Islamic world with the aim of increasing its influence and reducing the influence of regional rivals

- Cultural, political, social use of Hajj

The best situation for Saudi Arabia was the Iran-Iraq war. Simultaneous imposed war weakened the warring parties; On the one hand, it weakened the Islamic Republic of Iran, the ideological enemy of the West and its Western allies in West Asia, and on the other hand, it weakened Saddam, who claimed to be the leader of the Arab world and the region (Azari 2008,p.78).

After the "Arab Spring" in the Arab world, Saudi Arabia faced a new situation that necessitated a kind of change in the social and cultural atmosphere of this country, and the presence of Muhammad

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bin Salman as the crown prince as a revolutionary young man, the beginning of this There were rapid cultural and social developments to achieve two basic goals of Saudi Arabia:

- Presenting a new and modern image of Saudi Arabia

- Increasing the legitimacy of the government at home with the aim of consolidating the power of the royal family and weakening pro-democracy tendencies and movements.

1. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Political reform provides the basis for the institutionalization of political organizations and participation, and the result is an increase in the ability of individuals, parties and groups to participate legally in the political space of society. Huntington equates political development with modernization and believes that industrialization, social mobility, political participation, and economic growth are indicators of political development. He believes that as new demand emerges in the process of modernization and political reform in the form of partnerships and newer roles; Therefore, the political system must have the necessary capacity and capabilities to change the situation. Otherwise, the system will face instability, chaos, authoritarianism and political decline, and society's response to these disorders may manifest itself in the form of revolution. According to him, the more a political system tends from simplicity to complexity, from dependence on independence, from inflexibility to flexibility, and from dispersion to unity, the more its political development will increase (Huntington ,1968).

2. THE CONTEXT FOR THE FORMATION OF SAUDI ARABIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Geopolitical position: Saudi Arabia has a special place in popular geopolitical theories. Saudi Arabia's privileged position and access to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf have given it a unique geostrategic and geoeconomic position. In addition, Saudi Arabia, with its world oil reserves and oil production capacity of up to 12 million barrels per day, has allowed the country to play a special role in pricing its production, distribution and consumption, and to spend part of its revenues on purchases Military weapons. The location of the Kaaba as the Qibla of the Muslims of the world and its cultural and material benefits put Saudi Arabia in a position different from other countries in the Persian Gulf. Such benefits have allowed Saudi Arabia to expand its political influence in the Gulf and other Islamic countries.

2.1. Political structure and decision-making

The political system of Saudi Arabia is based on the monarchy in the form of a tribe and based on the principles of Wahhabism, in which the king himself has the loyalty of various tribes and the chiefs of the tribes always obey his orders. The position and role of the king is the main and most determining center of power and the effective element of the structure of political power of the country. After the king is the family of sheikhs, with whose help the Al-Saud dynasty determines the outlines of the government's domestic and foreign policy (Zakerian 2006,p.87).

2.2. Economic factor

The economic structure of Saudi Arabia is completely dependent on huge oil revenues and is very fragile, because all economic activities, including industrial, service and commercial, are overshadowed by the oil situation. The Saudis have always used this tactic in their decision-making as one of the most effective levers of pressure. Since 1973, Saudi Arabia has sought to achieve three major goals by using oil capital: First, diversify the economy by reducing its heavy dependence on oil exports. Second, maintaining the stability and security of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; third, increasing international influence and prestige.

2.3. Ideology

Religious institutions based on the official principles of Wahhabism now provide the necessary legitimacy for the Al-Saud government, often endorsing official decisions and issuing religious rulings to validate the regime's political positions. Thus, the influence of Wahhabism goes far beyond the official role of a religious institution in Saudi Arabia. Since the establishment of the (Saudi) government, Wahhabism has shaped its culture, education, and judiciary, and has influenced all Islamist tendencies and aspects inside and outside the country. Is. In the foreign arena, among the Islamic countries, the Saudis have always tried to lead the Islamic world through Wahhabi beliefs.

Security factor: Because Saudi Arabia has an absolute monarchy, it, by nature, like any other monarchy, suppresses and disintegrates any opposition to the regime. This kind of behavior has so far guaranteed the stability of the Saudi ruling class. The government apparatus has such a way of behaving that it quickly suppresses any opposition. To show any protest, the government has banned the formation of any kind of party or union in this country and the movement called elections has no meaning. (Vafadar 2003, p.46)

3. RESEARCH METHODS

In this research, a library method has been used to collect research data and theoretical foundations have been used, and a questionnaire and a field method have been used to analyze the research questions. This questionnaire has been designed based on the Likert scale.

One of the most common scales for measuring attitude is the Likert scale. This scale is made up of a regular set of items (phrases) that are formulated in a specific order. These items present specific states of the phenomenon being measured as items that have equal distances in terms of measured value. In order to formulate the items, favorable and unfavorable expressions about the measured phenomenon are usually used in equal numbers. The respondent agrees with each statement on a graded scale, usually one to five or seven degrees. The subject's response to each item is then evaluated numerically (rank). The sum of these numerical values gives the subject a score on this scale (Farhangi and Safarzadeh 2006, p.224). To quantify all the quality criteria, these criteria are converted into their quantitative equivalents according to the table below.

Table 1- Coding Questionnaire Question Options

Qualitative criteria	I quite agree	Agree	No idea	I disagree	I completely disagree
Numerical average	5	4	3	2	1

Table 2 - Operational coding of questionnaire questions

Related questions	Indicator
1-5	Investigating the Impact of Individual Characteristics on Social Reform in Saudi Arabia
6-11	Investigating the Impact of Political Infrastructure on Development and Political Reform in Saudi Arabia
12-19	Investigating the Impact of Government Support and Programs on Social Reform
20-24	Investigating the relationship between social reform and political reform in Saudi Arabia

3.1. Method of measuring the validity and reliability of data collection tools

Validity

Content validity: Checks the representativeness of the measuring instrument. In this validity, the appropriate determination and drawing of the dimensions of the model metrics are examined. The completeness of the metrics (to measure the structure in question) is another factor in the validity of the content. Knowing that rational validity is essentially a matter of judgment, after examining this validity, the opinions of experts will determine the desired reforms. If there is a consensus on a particular

amendment, that amendment can be made. Otherwise, efforts should be made to reach this consensus by negotiating and transferring the reasons.

Questionnaire reliability:

The validity or reliability of the measuring instrument also means that if the measurement is repeated under similar conditions, to what extent are the results similar and reliable? (Hafeznia 1998, p.136) In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. To calculate Cronbach's alpha, one must first calculate the variance of the scores of each subset of the questionnaire questions and the total variance. Then the alpha coefficient can be calculated using the following formula and SPSS software: Calculations for each set of questions should be based on questions and assumptions.

$$\alpha = (\frac{j}{j-1})(1 - \frac{\sum S_i^2}{S^2})$$

In the above formula, α is the validity estimate, j is the number of questions, S2j is the variance of j subset and S2 is the total variance of the test (Sarmad et al. 1997, p.81).

The result of Cronbach's alpha test for the questionnaire indicates the high reliability of the questionnaire.

Scale: ALL VARIABLES
Case Processing Summary

		N	%
	Valid	250	100
Cases	Excludeda*	0	0
	Total	250	100

*. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.906	20

4. INFORMATION ANALYSIS METHOD

In order to make an appropriate decision or conclusion, the collected information must be analyzed. Analysis as a process of scientific method is one of the basic foundations in research method. In the present study, the obtained data were analyzed using SPSS software.

Analyzing the data obtained from a research study is one of the most important parts that the reason for the success or failure of a research work depends on it. In this research, descriptive and inferential statistics will be used to analyze the collected data.

-Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for demographic data and other descriptive data in the form of tables, central indicators, graphs and percentages of SPSS software will be used.

- Inferential statistics

Inferential statistics will be used with the help of SPSS software to analyze the data collected from the statistical sample of questions; To determine the normality of the data collected from the questionnaires, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test will be used and to test the research hypotheses, one-way analysis of variance and Pearson correlation coefficient and Friedman rank test have been used.

- Descriptive data analysis

Descriptive data analysis is the first and most important step in data analysis. This analysis can be very useful in determining the type of data distribution, data concentration (mean, median and mode) and dispersion (variance and data amplitude). In fact, to determine the appropriate statistical method, it is necessary to have descriptive information about the data, which is presented in Table (1) of the statistical index and demographic information of the research as follows.

Table 1- Descriptive analysis of data
Statistical data

	Gender	Marital status	Age	Degree of education	Work Experience
Number	250	250	250	250	250
Mean	1.28	1.304	2.252	2.648	3.488
Median	1.0000	1.0000	2.0000	3.0000	4.0000
Standard deviation	0.4499	0.46091	0.79941	0.91622	1.21976
Variance	0.202	0.212	0.639	0.839	1.488
Min	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Max	2.00	2.00	4.00	4.00	5.00

- Frequency distribution of information extracted from the questionnaire

In order to get acquainted with the demographic characteristics of the statistical units of the research, in the research questionnaire, items such as gender, degree, work experience that were used in descriptive analysis of the data using the distribution of frequencies and percentages were examined. These features can be used in the analysis of research results and sample people in different groups.

As can be seen in the table below, the sample in terms of gender is divided into two groups of women and men, with the male group having a higher percentage in the observed sexual composition.

Table 2

	Frequency	%	Fci
Man	180	72	72
Woman	72	28	100
Total	250	100	

According to the frequency table of married subjects, it is observed that 174 of the subjects were married and 76 were single.

Table 3

	Frequency	%	Fci
Married	174	69.6	69.6
Single	76	30.4	100
Total	250	100	

According to the table of the frequency of educated subjects, it can be seen that 32 people have diplomas, 60 people have bachelor's degrees, 118 people have master's degrees and 39 people have doctoral degrees.

Table 4

	Frequency	%	Fci
Diploma	32	12.8	12.8
Bachelor's degree	60	24	36.8
Master's degree	118	47.2	52.8
Phd	39	15.6	100
Total	250	100	

The table below presents the work experience of the subjects, which indicates the experience of the subjects, because according to the cumulative frequency column, it can be concluded that about 40% of people have more than 11 years of work experience.

Table 5

	Frequency	%	Fci
Less than 5 years	68	27.2	27.2
6-10	48	19.2	46.4
11-20	68	27.2	73.6
20 years and up	66	26.4	100
Total	250	100	

The table below presents the age status of the subjects. It is observed that people between 20 and 30 years have the highest frequency in the statistical population.

Table 6

	Frequency	%	Fci
Less than 20 years	36	14.4	14.4
20-30	135	54	68.4
30-40	59	23.6	92
40-50	20	8	100
Total	250	100	

- Inferential analysis

In this section, based on the data obtained from the research survey stage and the answers obtained from the research questions, an appropriate statistical analysis is performed to find reliable answers to the research questions.

- Test the normality of the data

In this study, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to check the normality of the data. Due to the high level of test statistics and low level of significance of the test, the assumption of normal data has been confirmed. Based on the values presented (Table 7), since the values of the significance level, the research variables are less than 5%.(P- value or Sig< 0/05)

Table 7. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

N		250
Normal Parameters	**Mean**	1.608
Std. Deviation		0.42231
Absolute		0.165
Most Extreme Difference	**Positive**	0.165
Negative		-1.06
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		2.609
Asymp. Sig		0.000

5. TESTING RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

5.1. The first hypothesis: Investigating the Impact of Social Reform on Political Reform in Saudi Arabia

Hypothesis H0: There is no significant relationship between social reform and political reform in Saudi Arabia.

Hypothesis H1: There is a significant relationship between social reform and political reform in Saudi Arabia.

To evaluate this hypothesis, regression test was used. The test results according to the relevant test statistics and the level of significance of the test, which is presented in the table below, indicate that the null hypothesis is rejected, ie the hypothesis is approved and between social and corrections. There is a significant political connection in Saudi Arabia.

Table 8. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	26.790	2	13.395	53.391	0.000
Residual	61.968	247	0.251		
Total	88.758	249			

Table 9. Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std.Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.319	0.128		2.482	0.014
Social reform	0.674	0.07	0.515	9.58	0.000
Political reform	0.104	0.043	0.129	2.39	0.018

According to f-statistic (Table 8) which is 53.391 and significance level (sig) which is less than 5.%, the main hypothesis of the research is confirmed. According to the Beta coefficient presented in Table 9, which shows a coefficient of 0.515 for social reform and a coefficient of 129 for political reform, it can be seen that there is a significant relationship between personal characteristics and social reform in Saudi Arabia.

5.2. The second hypothesis: Investigating the Impact of Political Infrastructure on Political Reform in Saudi Arabia.

Hypothesis H0: There is no significant link between political infrastructure and political reform in Saudi Arabia.

Hypothesis H1: There is a significant link between political infrastructure and political reform in Saudi Arabia.

To evaluate this hypothesis, regression test was used. The test results according to the relevant test statistics and the significance level of the test, which is presented in the table below, indicate that the null hypothesis is rejected, ie the hypothesis is approved and between infrastructures. There is a significant relationship between politics and political reform in Saudi Arabia.

Table 10. ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	16.85	2	10.255	43.233	0.000
Residual	11.763	147	0.222		
Total	18.745	149			

Table 11. Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std.Error	Beta		
Constant	0.429	0.101		3.482	0.000
Social reform	0.576	0.066	0.623	5.87	0.000
Political reform	0.154	0.033	0.121	2.28	0.018

According to f-statistic which is 43.233 and significance level (sig) which is less than 0.5%, the main hypothesis of the research is confirmed. According to the Beta coefficient presented in Table 11, which shows a coefficient of 0.623 for social reforms and a coefficient of 0.121 for political reforms, it can be seen that there is a significant relationship between political infrastructure and political reforms in Saudi Arabia.

CONCLUSION

In the general structure and macro level of Saudi society, especially the values related to the political system, the dominant values have been mainly attributive and the acquired values, which reinforce social indicators as a value in themselves, have no place or have a limited place. The importance of the relationship between occupation and resource allocation, the principle of family inheritance of positions and use of scarce resources, the dominance of the value of dependence and personal loyalty over merit and professionalism, which is the essence of the inherited political system in Saudi Arabia, are factors at the macro level. And culture is in conflict with work and production as a value in itself, it has weakened political relations, while social values that seek political upbringing should classify people because of their achievements, not because of their status and class social.

Also, the existence of values such as aristocracy, luxury, welfare and consumerism in the culture related to the inherited political system has led to the death of creativity and the spread of consumption, the main cause of this problem should be sought in the existence of wealth and natural resources such as oil. Of course, measures such as attention to petrochemicals and tourism are signs of changes that will lead society to a new culture of work and production.

Therefore, with all the political and social weaknesses that exist in the culture of work and production in Saudi Arabia, this problem can be solved, and it seems that the solution is the government's actions in reducing dependence on oil and paving the way for the prosperity of non-oil production.

According to the results of the study, which indicate the relationship between social reform and political reform in Saudi Arabia, it seems that Saudi Arabia is rapidly moving towards social reform, especially in the field of social freedoms for women and youth, and this can be in the future. Lead to the transfer of demands from the social sphere to the political sphere It is necessary to provide socio-political infrastructure to manage these demands in this country so that the process of development and political reform moves in a gradual, peaceful and non-violent process. Otherwise, the hasty move towards social reform without providing the necessary socio-political infrastructure will maximize the political demands of the society and intensify the desire to change the power structure among the people, and the Saudi rule from forming a kind of democracy. It is restricted and directed to maintain the legitimacy of the monarchy and to provide a level of political participation for the people.

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FROM HEGEMONY TO HEDGING: FUTURE OF THE ASIA PACIFIC IN POST-POST-COLD WAR ERA

Amin Noorafkan∗ and Mandana Tishehyar∗∗

Abstract

Starting roughly in 2021, we have witnessed a tectonic shift in the configuration of power. The new world order is not fully established yet; nonetheless, it has replaced the post-cold war order in at least three of the most strategically significant regions in the World, namely the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and the Asia Pacific. The post-cold war international order was characterized by a unipolar distribution of power and American domination over most—if not all—regional systems. This precise distribution of authoritative power and far-reaching hegemony indeed does not describe the international state of affairs anymore. Events in the Middle East and Eastern Europe have attracted lots of attention from scholars calling for the arrival of new world order. However, there seems to be a gap in describing and understanding the recent trends of competition in the Asia Pacific and its connection to the construction of a different configuration of power. The authors argue that the growing competition in the Asia Pacific region has created a geostrategic hotspot that will be of greater significance in determining the internal dynamics of the Post-Post-Cold War order than any other region. This transformation brings at least three conceivable outcomes. Firstly, the geographical proximity will be of more significance and bring the security perceptions and economic interests of neighboring countries closer together. Secondly, successful regional arrangements can provide bargaining leverage against other regions. Furthermore, finally, the costs of engaging in non-agreed modes of conflict will increase.

Keywords: Asia Pacific, China, India, United States, International order

INTRODUCTION

Calling for the arrival of a 'new world order' is not news. Nonetheless, most of the research has used the term loosely and interpreted every change in international affairs as a systematic transformation of power distribution and global arrangements. As a result, there is an understandable academic distrust in the usage of the new 'international or world order', which must be addressed in this discussion. Contextualizing the argument from a historical perspective can help illuminate its evolution.

The concept of world order came into the center of hot political debates during the second world war and was substantiated mainly in the United Nations and Bretton Woods system. From the beginning, this order was characterized by power politics, global policing, economic leveraging, and the American interpretation of liberalism. Nonetheless, it did not remain undisputed. The Soviet Union, for more than four decades, remained a recalcitrant element within the system. Many countries (such as Russia after the collapse of the USSR or China) and organizations such as the Non-Aligned Movement also did not completely buy into the system.

Evidence shows that geographical proximity was a decisive factor in determining compliance. So countries farther away from the western core were more reluctant to completely align with the US-centered order and more interested in multilateral cooperation. Most Asia Pacific countries, for example, partook in the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War and maintained good relations with great powers across and beyond their region afterward.

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1. ASIA PACIFIC; FROM GEOGRAPHY TO GEOPOLITICS

For decades, the vast swathes of territory stretching from Australia to India were referred to as "Asia-Pacific". The 'Asia Pacific' relates to that part of Asia that lies in the Pacific Ocean. The region includes three significant constituents: North-east Asia, southeast Asia, and Oceania (South Western Pacific). There is surprisingly fierce debates about the inclusion of the Indian Ocean. However, most debates are relatively new and political in nature. In fact, the exclusion of the Indian Ocean was one of the primary reasons that the term India-pacific could rapidly replace its predecessor in Washington and Delhi's diplomatic jargon.

Politically-driven redefinitions of the Asia Pacific are not limited to recent years. The geopolitical significance that this region holds was never under question. Even before prominent geopolitical theorist like Mahan and Mackinder started to study the region, the British colonial campaign was carefully aimed at taking control of –at least the most strategic parts- of the region. Mahan later claimed that "Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. This ocean is the key to the seven seas in the twenty-first century, the destiny of the world will be decided in these waters" (Ghosh, 2004:1).

During the first and second world wars, the region gained more importance. It was essential to ensure transit corridors, trade shipments, and energy security. The Asia Pacific was again a strategic region throughout the cold war. China and India had started to reassert themselves in world politics. By the end of the Cold War, East Asian countries entered the picture, and their rapid economic growth proved to be a significant incentive for the super/great powers across and beyond the region to start new arrangements (Schellhorn, 1992). These arrangements, however, often did not remain limited to economics. Space and maritime security, defense cooperation, and foreign investment were now part of the new regional/intra-regional arrangements.

Starting from 2017, "Indo-Pacific" gradually became the new normal in U.S. political debates and Delhi's new regional vision. Before that, however, this term was also known to East Asian political elites, for example, in Australia, Japan, Singapore, etc. (Wirth & Jenne, 2022). Since then, both terms have been used interchangeably, partly because neither defines its precise geographical frontiers. That being said, Asia-Pacific & Indo-Pacific can be distinguished from others in several aspects. Above all, the distinction between these terms is more of a strategic representation of interests and alliances and not a geographical difference.

It goes without saying that any geographical region located in a competitive and resource-rich environment is closely tied to strategic concepts. The critical point here is that interested parties in a region may not always be regional. When a region is strategically defined as a part of some 'outside' power's interests, the regional level of analysis cannot sufficiently depict the rival dynamics attempting to gain a special *Droit de regard* for themselves. These regions, historically without any exception, have played central roles in defining and characterizing the World.

The Asia Pacific, as discussed above, has been showcasing major rivalries among great powers. The hotspots where great powers invest their attention and resources to compete and counterweight each other could provide a precise picture of the general international power distribution. Simply put, by studying the power politics in such strategic regions, we can identify the international order. Nonetheless, we need precise concepts to better depict the political scenery.

2. HEDGING

The realist perspective dominating international relations during the Cold War was fairly limited in the number of concepts that could define foreign policy directions. Balancing and bandwagoning were primary foreign policy strategies (Foot, 2006), offering resistance or accommodation toward a

great or superpower. The dichotomy made some sense because of the bipolarity that characterized the world order at the time. Moreover, the simplicity of these views made them attractive, the attempt (or at least the illusion of attempting) to capture the World in one single concept.

Nonetheless, neither were accurate descriptions of the world order complexity as such. There are numerous examples, even at the height of bipolarity, suggesting many countries didn't exclusively subscribe to one strategy or the other. Less so, capturing the complexity of mounting competition in the Asia Pacific region and its twisted way of contributing to the world order. In short, both concepts offered by prominent realist scholars, although insightful at the time, did not enjoy the theoretical and practical cogency.

Practical implications of balancing and bandwagoning were, in some ways, predefined the general behavior of a state or a group of states in certain conditions. The patterns of amity and enmity were already established, and responding to any given situation was primarily determined in accordance with the categorization of the countries involved as friends or enemies. Balancing and bandwagoning, therefore, hardly allowed analysts and decision-makers to introduce strategic calculations into their decision-making and analytical process.

With more and more complications in international relations, 'Hedging' proved to be a practical and theoretical alternative –or at least addition- to relatively simple concepts. The most significant theoretical shift was integrating an interpretive approach into hedging. According to this approach, policy choices are made based on various strategic factors in play. Therefore foreign policy directions are not simply a matter of siding with one or another superpower.

Hedging points to the significance of perception and recognition in power politics. This is especially the case in the Asia Pacific, where any superpowers acknowledged neither the Chinese role of leadership nor even India's great power status. "Chinese recognize that their country is far behind the United States across all dimensions of power. They also see their own country on the rise- and, unlike the former Soviet Union, being steadily integrated into the world economy and able to benefit from economic globalization" (Foot, 2006:83)

Thirdly and more importantly, hedging paves the way to introduce 'strategic interests' to the discussion. Strategic interests are closely tied to the perception of a country's elites from the external entities. Therefore, they are never objectively observable and only result from a unique way of political reasoning. Neither balancing nor bandwagoning could methodically integrate subjective strategic interests into the foreign policy decision-making process.

With no place for strategic interests, balancing and bandwagoning not only pre-made decisions but also turned states' foreign policies into self-fulfilling prophecies. Theoretically, states had to behave in a certain way to preserve their interests. That behavior usually provoked the reactions appropriate to that behavior. In reality, however, there is no fixed causal relation in social interactions. With no exception, states have a variety of paths to take when making a foreign policy decision.

On the contrary, hedging rests on some form of ex-ante uncertainty, requiring states to choose resisting or accommodating, only when they face an imminent threat. Thus, even though one state may turn into a threat later on, the controlled levels of cooperation can continue, and in fact might reduce the potential risks due to resulted codependency. Therefore, following hedging strategy, states can conceivably exploit the gap between 'potential risks' and 'actual threats' through partial cooperation, and not fall under a general unified set of behaviors.

3. THE ASIA PACIFIC ORDER IN POST-POST-COLD WAR ERA

In the post-Cold War era, balancing and bandwagoning were still relevant in American foreign policy as the primary actor that steered international order. U.S. primary approach toward rising powers was to contain through a series of balancing policies. NATO's eastward expansion, US-led colored revolutions in Eurasia, military engagement in the Middle East, and numerous bilateral and multilateral pacts, alliances, and treaties with Asia Pacific countries all bear the footprint of the superpower's attempt to maintain the status quo.

Meanwhile, Washington encouraged and spurred other states to follow its lead and recognize it as an order-building power. This order was, to some extent, defined in power distribution but, more importantly, included a "set of rules, institutions, and shared values which foster a stable and predictable pattern of relations among members of an international system" (Bisley, 2019: 363). Stability and predictability of patterns of behaviour are essential to this conceptualization. When these two elements are no longer present in the international system, we will experience a transitional phase, entering into a new international order.

The international order remains stable and predictable as long as balancing strategies are successful. However, the recent trends point to the failure of U.S. efforts in three of the most strategically significant regions in the World, namely the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and the Asia Pacific. U.S. withdrawal from the Middle East and the following political crises in Iraq & Afghanistan owed much to a strategic overstretch, which no longer was affordable. The Russian invasion of Ukraine was the latest and most visible example of this failure. Regardless of the dynamics leading to the war and the final result, it is safe to say that containing Russia failed terribly.

The Asia Pacific meta-region is a more subtle example. Studying the history of formation and transformation of alliances in this region is extremely essential to the dynamism of the new order. As of 2011, the U.S. was already signalling a radical shift manifested in the "pivot to Asia" policy (Clinton, 2011). It was radical in terms of curtailing U.S. presence in the Middle East and other regions, and yet a conservative move to stop changing the world order. Since then, foreign policy and security policy elites in Australia, Japan, and the United States have purported to static conceptions of a singular liberal international system by introducing concepts such as the Indo-Pacific region or 'rules-based order'. This order is often conflated with U.S.-cantered trans-Pacific bilateral alliance relationships, also known as the hub-and-spoke or San Francisco system, established in the 1950s (Wirth & Jenne, 2022:214).

Therefore Indo-pacific, in the manner used by Conservative East Asian Elites and the U.S., is a concept that fails to capture the dynamism and fluctuation of the Asia Pacific order (Khurana, 2017). Despite all the efforts, changing realities have effectively outgrown the previous order. The "pivot to Asia" emphasized the strengthening of existing alliances, the diversification of partners, and greater involvement in regional multilateral institutions, but a genuinely multilateral security order remained "undesirable" (Park, 2011). U.S. policymakers remained reluctant to see multilateral institutions as anything but supplementary components in a "bilateralism plus" system. (Gannon, 2018: 33).

The Asia-Pacific initiative aimed to rebuild the international order of the Asia-Pacific region. In practice, Obama attempted to engage China and simultaneously prepared to counter or hedge against its rise. The net effect was to heighten anxieties on all sides. As Donald K. Emmerson, Director of the Southeast Asia Program at Stanford University, puts it, instead of offering the region "a comprehensive pattern of mutually beneficial cooperation for the future," Washington practiced a "shortsighted, zigzag, tit-for-tat diplomacy in the service of special interests" (Emmerson, 1995).

Foreign policy advisors in Indonesia and Malaysia interpreted this strategic rivalry as "a classic illustration of the security dilemma" (Kuik et al., 2012: 338). Even Singapore, the long-standing Western

ally, called for advancing regional cooperation to stabilize East Asia and discouraged China and U.S. from attempting to divide the region (Lee, 2019). In addition, France, Australia, and India, despite their divergent views on specific regional mechanisms and institutions, consider their Trilateral Dialogue more of a regional cooperation than a defensive measure against China (Grare, 2020: 156).

As far as preserving the Asia pacific and international order is concerned, the balancing and bandwagoning dichotomy leaves foreign policymakers in the U.S. and allied countries with only two choices. Nevertheless, the reality is rather different. Instead of forcing the Chinese government to cooperate or spar with Beijing over the precise location of a new containment line, the West has chosen a path that integrates elements from two contradictory approaches. As Acharya (2014) points out, this pattern of behaviour and the ensuing order will remain a mixture of conflict and cooperation, something that can only be described in an evolved conceptualization of hedging.

Undoubtedly the U.S. still holds a significant influence over the region through bilateral relations and regional arrangements such as Quad and AUKUS. Nonetheless, the post-Cold War era, which was characterized by a unipolar distribution of power and American domination over most—if not all—regional systems, has come to an end. Two primary components of the World order (namely, an agreement on the arrangements in the world and how they are meant to be changed; and secondly, the strategic balance of power among states) have proved unoperational and insufficient. Therefore, neither the existing regional arrangements nor concepts associated with them can capture the dynamism and fluctuation of the Post-Post-Cold War era or Asia Pacific order.

In the absence of a more precise descriptive and prescriptive concept for the multi-dimensional state of affairs in international relations, 'Hedging' can help fill this analytic gap to some extent. Hedging offers an interpretive approach in which nothing is pre-ordained, and not everything is determined by the systemic structure. Another element added to the discussion is 'strategic interests,' closely tied to the inter-subjective perception of a country's elites from the external entities.

Therefore, it seems that hedging can partially solve the problem of integrating seemingly contradictory approaches. States can simultaneously engage in cooperative and non-cooperative (including defensive) measures. However, to avoid an international disorder, we have to purport to regional multilateralism as a means of order-building. Regional multilateralism is often not in the interest of outside powers since it binds together neighbouring countries and decreases the chances of exploiting the rifts between them and imposing different bilateral trade agreements. However, long-term institutionalization of regional multilateralism helps all states grow closer bonds through multi-level co-dependency.

That being said, the new international order has to address some other newly emerged phenomena that are not necessarily geopolitical. The way hedging accounts for this order cannot provide a sufficient theoretical foundation to prescribe a national/global approach. Although the geopolitical aspect of the world order is still relevant, contemporary global issues require new concepts and approaches. Climate change, cyberspace, and Non-proliferation are a few notable examples. These issues not only threaten the stability of the international order, but also are shared among almost all states as threats to national security. To restore some shared sense of legitimacy to establish a new stable order, we need to take a bottom-up approach and launch initiatives and arrangements based on voluntary cooperation and subject-specific multilateralism.

Despite all the distrust and cynicism for such an idea to exist, the Conference of the Parties (COP) proved that it is not impossible. The voluntary process of goal setting, data collection, and assessment was a minimalist form of multilateralism with no enforcement mechanisms. The Conference of the Parties certainly was not an ideal arrangement but can be considered the first of many steps.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we should note that multilateralism is not order-building in and of itself. Therefore, the precise form of future order will depend on the relative distribution of power and agreed modes of cooperation and conflict management. Moreover, regional norms and institutions are more relevant in a decentralized world than ever.

There are at least three conceivable outcomes from this transformation. Firstly, the geographical proximity will be of more significance and bring the security perceptions and economic interests of neighbouring countries closer together. Secondly, successful regional arrangements can provide bargaining leverage against other regions. Finally, the costs of engaging in non-agreed modes of conflict will increase. While international organizations try to adapt, subject-specific international organizations and regional institutions can offer a temporal cooperative framework.

Last but not least, there is no doubt that transitional phases in order-building create a highly volatile international environment. The unpredictability caused by the instability raises the chances of non-agreed modes of conflict and unilateral decision-making. Old patterns of amity and enmity do not disappear instantly, but states might try to forge new patterns based on their perspective of the future order. Regional organizations must facilitate a peaceful transition and provide the institutional mechanisms to construct and enact new arrangements.

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RESONATING 'UKRAINE CRISIS IN SOUTH AND WEST ASIAN' MATRIX

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Abstract

This paper specifies "the theoretical and analytical framework" underpinning the problems and its ramifications of the "Resonating Ukraine crisis in South and West Asian matrix." Ongoing Russia-Ukraine crisis resonates far beyond a particular region. Besides, other countries of the world, many vulnerable ones are under fear psychosis as to how to handle the "geopolitical and other implications of the conflict" and adjust their policies correspondingly. These facts reflect far-reaching repercussions from the Ukraine border crisis, which inevitably affect the security situation in South Asia and contemplation of policy shifts of major West Asian countries. From security perspectives, South Asia are already in "policy camp dilemma," as to what actually ought to balance and counterbalance "resonating national interests" corresponding to the crisis.

In the fast "Block formation" of the globalised world geostrategic landscape in West Asia is undergoing "policy paradigm shifts" hypothesizing ideas with Beijing policy alignments. South Asian regimes including Kabul, Islamabad, New Delhi and Colombo's internal turmoil speak volumes about impending geopolitical changing matrix. Therefore, the objectives of the paper analyses the policy confusion regarding the responses from the South Asian states and the "speculative dilemma" of the major West Asian states and responses accordingly. The key findings underline what ought to be the best strategy to rationalize the "optimum national interests" rather than be the part of the ongoing turmoil. This research paper primarily employs quantitative content analysis as a method to address the research questions of security threat perceptions.

Keywords: South Asia, Security threat, Ukraine Conflict, Camp Politics

INTRODUCTION

History does not repeat itself; rather, it underlines, delineates and symmetries. When the Ukraine and Russian crisis began unfolding before the comity of nations, they divulged much beyond as to why the "invasion" takes place and colonial masters overthrow "the foreign regimes." Undoubtedly, in this connection, the resonating impact of the Ukrainian crisis (Danieri.P; 2019) my title of the research paper adequately shed light particularly in South Asia of one of the nuclear states rather than more on West Asian stint with the changing matrix (Yaffa.J; 2021). My research paper further underlines, as to how the "forced regime change" with the internal top traitors' collaboration happen to be only possible. Be they Ukrainian regime change earlier and now in South Asia – all had "institutional facilitators" and "collaborators with the conspirators" (Menon.R;2015). Nonetheless, they do leave a lesson for the future contemplations. Surely enough, Ukraine –Russian crisis does have a great resonance on the contemporary and future dynamics of Asia (Yaffa.J; 2021). To substantiate, there has a never-ending process of from the perspectives of Stephen Kinzer "Overthrow America's century of Regime change from Hawaii to Iraqi (Kinzer.S; 2006)."

Future dynamic is contingent upon the changing conditions of the prevailing situations right across the whole Asia (Wilson. A; 2009). The contemporary prevailing situation is "increasingly disturbing." The reflection is quite visible to the entire planet (Treisman.D; 2018). What is important is - the world is at cross road regarding the multiple issues of the global national interests (Anne.A; 2017). In this prevailing changing matrix of the regional and international dynamics, the "Asian discourse" is creeping over a vast tract of events leading to different orientations (Kinzer.S; 2006). What is imperative

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is now current dynamics of the future is in protruding on path full of "diplomatic turmoil" leading to the chaotic and anarchic situations in some countries (Lillis.J; 2018).

1. CRITICAL ISSUES

In the contemporary Asian dynamics, along with many opportunities, many challenges are creeping over the comity of nations of the post-Cold War stalemate (Sarotte.M.E; 2021). These factors will be detrimental in deciding whether they will be on the development trajectory or disastrous path. No doubt, in the given scenario, specially amidst pandemic situations, social unrest, political chaos, unemployment, forced migration, conflict, tensions, climate change, widespread corruption, socio-religious and ethnic conflict are the ones that are global commons (Anne.A; 2017). Besides, Asia is more vulnerable to gender differences, judicial corruptions, military and forced and political interventions from colonial masters, and a lot more compelling issues need immediate intervention from the comity of nations (Menon.R;2015).

The following can figure out as to the critical issues confronting Asia in the contemporary and the future dynamics.

1. Socio-cultural, ethnic and religious conflicts

2. Widening gender differences in the developing and the third world countries.

3. Unaccountable and corrupt governments

4. De-seating the elected regime by "own establishment" in collaboration with foreign masters

5. Massive abuse of human rights and justice denial to the mass

6. Rising exclusive growth

7. Water resource management, disaster management

8. Asia Pacific will remain a flash point for a longer period of time – is a perceived notion

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research paper are to highlight as to how in this ongoing Ukrainian and Russian conflict is resonating in South and West Asian changing matrix:

➢ Identifying and deciphering the tangible components of the veracity of the problems of the crisis.

➢ Trying to segregate the each "identified problems" of the conflict of both Ukraine and Russia

➢ Suggest the needed accountabilities of the world communities in addressing the identified problems

➢ Providing a broad picture as to how the world can be saved from the impending world disaster if the war continues unabated.

➢ Is "realist approach theory" applicable in today's contemporary world or "collective voices" can play in mitigating the Ukrainian crisis?

➢ To provide theoretical understanding regarding the conflict of Ukraine and Russia as an analysis that can turn out to be meaningful in configuration; the practical policy making related to just peace and development in the comity of nations in the "future dynamics of Asia."

3. RESEARCH METHODS

My research paper premises on the "analytical observation" that was undertaken by exercising

'comparative perspective methodologies and its impact. To understand the intent of the Ukrainian crisis, it is imperative to highlight the very essence of the crisis with the help of the quantitative and qualitative analysis per se. At the very outset, even the role of big regional players is very significant. In this contemporary multi polar world, and the camp divided world, the future dynamics is contingent upon multiple indicators for the peace, progress, development and a just society – all squarely lie on the shoulders of the major powers of the contemporary world.

4. SURVEY LITERATURES

There are a number of literature surveys that highlight as to how the Ukraine and Russian imbroglio has been unfolding over the decades. Related to this, the survey literatures for "Ukrainian crisis and Russian invasion" the author Christopher (Smith, 2022) portraits the crisis as Ukraine's 'Euro Maiden Revolution' which wrested power from pro-Moscow Ukrainian Victor Yanukovych and then Russian intervention follows. In another survey literature of the book titled "Lessons from the Edge" is a grim reminder of the devastation of a child of parents who survived Soviet and German holocaust, Yovanovitch carries a personal stake in the preservation of democracy around the world (Yovanovitch, 2022). In another literature survey, the book titled "Ukraine and Russia: From Civilized Divorce to Uncivil War" the author does survey literature and tries to investigates how in the post-independence of Ukraine from the Soviet Union has never been a cake walk. (Danieri, P; 2019). In yet another literature survey titled "Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine", the author gives insights as to why roughly four million Ukrainians were deliberately deprived of food, starving them to death between 1932-33. With Russia and Ukraine's crisis worsening, the book also underlines regarding the Peasant was shaped by the past (Applebaum,A; 2017).

5. REGIONAL RAMIFICATIONS

There is almost unanimous in the delineation of the "geopolitical fall out" that takes place in the post –regional ramifications. It has always happened. It was there in the aftermath of the Gulf War too. The repercussion was devastating, so have been the Afghan crisis and its escalating impacts on the regional geopolitics. In this sense, the ongoing "Ukrainian conflict" is no different. Since, my research paper delineates on both South Asian and the West Asian regions – nevertheless – my focus of analysis will be more on South Asia rather than West Asia. The Ukrainian – Russian crisis is resonating its impact on the West Asian countries (Anne.A; 2017).

5.1. West Asian Matrix

If we look at the West Asian dynamics -this is particularly visible in the area of gas and oil supplies, humanitarian aid and food security, military actions and the political negotiations. As of now, there has not been a paradigm shift in any realignment in the relationship between Riyadh, Moscow or Washington. Even though, many countries of this part of the world are trying to bet between Russia and the United States to optimize gains in specific areas of the national interests. Notwithstanding, continued sanctions on Russia can have a long-term impact on countries like UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and others.

These countries, particularly, the former stressed on the "diversifications of interests" related to the defense cooperation with Moscow (Anne.A; 2017). There appear some of the Gulf States for quite sometimes tending to forge issue-based relations outside the "traditional dependencies" on the colonial powers. Nonetheless, Kremlin does find a bigger place at least in contemplation for Saudi. With the forced changed regime and the collaboration of external conspirators along with elements in the top echelon of the powers for their personals gains as they have been part of conspiracies for decades and it's the same elements that never allow completing the tenure of the elected governments. It is the same elements that never allow the right person in the regime to head the nation. For decades, these elements kept people in dark. Still the same elements are misleading the people. Therefore, the great resonation

of Ukrainian crisis resonated in Islamabad far beyond Ukraine and Kremlin. Islamabad in the middle of the night, this unprecedented move sent a shock wave to many new thinkers to align to Kremlin as being guided by the compatible sovereign national interests. Without any shadow of doubt, Saudi Arabia desires to have sovereign relations on equal footing and for that matter; Riyadh should no longer be taken for granted in the fast-changing globalised world.

5.2. Impact of Ukrainian Crisis on South Asia

With every passing day, the Ukrainian crisis is getting complex (Sarotte.M.E; 2021). At the same time, impact is wide and diverse. The current crisis is also dividing the world into "the global camp politics. (Menon.R;2015)" Not surprisingly, this is happening at a time when the world is passing through one crisis after another. It appears as if the world is replaying the Cold War in different perspectives. Nonetheless, what is significant is –the impact of the crisis could be in any capacity and horizon yet one of the biggest debacles in the recent history has been Islamabad of Imran Khan regime. Since the forced de-seating of the elected government, there appears how "the establishment" per se was hands in glove with the foreign collaborators and conspirators – just for the sake of personal gains at the cost of the country as a whole (Yaffa.J; 2021). This all is happening due to the stand taken by the former regime for making the country independent from the clutches of the external stooges.

Therefore, unfolding Ukrainian crisis is escalating and impacting the South Asian region manifested in many respects. Nonetheless, in some cases, the impact will be so hard is beyond comprehension -specifically, South Asia. And that has exposed the "real intent" of the so-called establishment of Pakistan to the world. It has opened a billion-dollar question. "The forced regime change" in Islamabad is an eye opener for the world. This created a host of questions: Was the conspiracy hatched by only foreign masters? Another question happens – does "conspiracy theory" precedes first or external intervention happens first? If the current state of affairs continues unabated, the consequences can lead to Pakistan into complete oblivion. At political front, unlike the South Asian Pakistan debacle, nothing sort of this is visible in Gulf States. The impact understandably is not beyond control.

Asian events appear to be somewhat on the expected lines provided, critical issues facing are addressed. However, at present, the ongoing Ukrainian and Russian crisis is resonating far deeper than seemed to be. Already, the world witnessed the first victim of this crisis from South Asia became Islamabad. How the entire country has been put on auction by the foreign agents in the form of judiciary, army, the opposition, who are working for foreigner masters for their own self-interests rather than Pakistan given the mass movement that has engulfed the entire country in the post-calculated dethroning of the Imran regime by the establishment. In this entire conspiracy theory of forced regime change, the conspirator appears from the establishment per se. They are loyal to the foreign agents and not to their motherland. Nonetheless, they never forget talking endlessly of sacrifices for Pakistan, but the reality is the other way round. My research understanding underlines not only the Ukraine crisis a resonating factor in this part of the world rather; this is a grim reminder for other regimes of the world as well. These collaborators are the biggest spoiler of the democracy. In fact, they have been suffocating the just and reasonable voices of the general public for decades – and minting dollars for themselves for taking shelters in the foreign lands – these are all the general voices emanating from the rational voices from there. Second the biggest spoiler and the rotten and the foreign agent is the judiciary of Pakistan right from the Supreme Court to the bottom, unless they are thoroughly cleaned, forgets the realization of the dream of Pakistan as a state. They are the ones who have made Pakistan a failed state. It is better to be no state than to be a disabled, fragmented, crippled and run by imperial agents otherwise, if required there is a need of another national movement to make the country independent. What the people are calling "Haqiqi aazadi" or the real freedom.

6. KEY FINDINGS

➢ The key finding is the reflections of the general perceptions pervasive in the South Asian countries related to the impact of the Ukrainian crisis.

➢ Our insights in this paper are also perceived that the role of the "global camp politics" is very significant in sabotaging the global peace and tranquillity. nd quite obvious in the chaotic world, the concept of economic growth and development is nothing but farce to address the global justice. (Kim, 2016; Sharma, 2016).

➢ More so, the key findings in this research review spells out that how the corrupt establishment of a country is misleading the public for their own self-interest – without bothering of the consequences to the state.

➢ Another country of South Asia – Sri Lanka has plunged completely to an uncertain fate as a sovereign state.

➢ Forget about intangible factors like that of --- the economic conditions, the health and stability of the financial sector, financial literacy across the world will be quite rational in the domain of global justice in the ongoing Ukraine –Russian crisis.

➢ In addition to the above findings, it is also abundantly clear that a number of factors like that of level of, gender, household expenditure and level of awareness are contingent upon the stable political environment unlike the resonating impact of the Russian – Ukrainian imbroglios.

o Particularly, the greater part of the vulnerable sections of the society of South Asia is being affected of third world countries in particular.

o Further, my research findings highlight about the leverage of socio-economic causes that are likely to be eased out before the advent of the Ukrainian crisis. Otherwise, cheap oil and gas and wheat could have been justifiably useful for the country. (Chowdhury, 1994).

o Justifiably, the global justice underlines the core issue of an accountability that the rich and influential people owe towards the society.

o Finally, our research paper focuses on the greater role of the society to strategize and theorize the policies that can be an effective tool with the help of the government of the day by ensuring "national education" plays an effective role in bringing the parity in the society for the deprived a lot who are the victims of injustices occurred to them over a period of time. (Cabeza-Garcia et al, 2019).

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Military intervention in any "sovereign modern state and forced regime change" through conspiracy anywhere in the world should be thwarted at all costs.

2. The judiciary should be held accountable and prosecuted if its judgments are against the natural justice of the public at large.

3. This is the answer to those who talk about forced regime change is not a conspiracy rather a blatant external interference – thus no conspiracy theory. In criminal Law conspiracy precedes the external intervention in the internal state matters.

4. Resonating the Ukrainian and Russian crisis on South Asia – particularly Islamabad, the restoration of the previous regime the duly elected government by the public.

5. Alternatively, the immediate fresh general election is the need of the hour.

6. The traitors in the establishment need to be weeded out and shown the doors –regardless of

their ranks and positions.

7. An immediate lawful right should be given to the public to choose the government of their choices anywhere in the world.

8. State Institutions need to undergo urgent restructure reform else, need to be declared dysfunctional anywhere in the world.

9. Free and fair election as a democratic norm is the rightful solution.

10. The conspirators of from within from any quarters need to be prosecuted as per the law of the land if it has happened in any country.

8. KEY POINTS

1. Firstly, Afghan crisis and now a sustained conflict of the Ukraine predicament may have dreadful and drastic impact on South and West Asia.

2. Besides, security threat perceptions, and already "regime change conspiracy theory" in the wake of the aligning with a camp politics through dubious means is getting a heavy toll in South Asia due to "Super power hegemonic overtures" leading to the extraneously imposed chaos and anarchy in the country.

3. In addition to this, the three nuclear power states are at loggerheads in South Asia region is more devastating than the contemporary pandemic catastrophe.

CONCLUSION

Ukrainian crisis took a heavy toll in South Asia. How much still the impact lies the South Asian states proved any shadow of doubt. Sri Lanka is one of the glaring examples of the toll. And the biggest toll is of Pakistan. One of the nuclear states of South Asia and the only nuclear state of the Islamic world if can fall in the hands of crooks and the regime can be changed overnight with a great conspiracy directly being linked with the colonial master that an elected Prime Minister of a country – sent direct alarming bell right cross the comity of nations just not confined to a specific region alone. It is not that the conspirators were outsiders alone. Any intellectual can understand the role of the apex judiciary, the defender of the nation and the so-called establishment and of course the domestic conspirators of the country. The so-called the defender of the nation should understand a country is not finished only through the military intervention, that the defender stipulates that is capable enough to thwart the nefarious designs of the enemies, rather the biggest blow the it got against Islamabad is beyond anybody comprehension. The current dispensation which was imposed overnight in Islamabad will send the country in complete oblivion once for all. My research submission is astonished the Prime Minister of a country who was on the journey of taking country to a new high was forcefully dethroned – is complete failure to defend the country as a sovereign state. Forget if the defender talks about it are capable enough to defend the nation is actually already the case. My research observation underlines on the issue of the direct involvement of the establishment along with the conspirators. How, the answer is found in the statement if the defender says it is neutral. In the current contemporary global politics, if a nuclear state army cannot defend its own Prime Minister from conspiracies and regime change, which can trust it can save the country from foreign aggression in any respects. In the current state of affairs, the country is directly moving into oblivion unless resorted to the course correction --- truly, this is something, the Ukraine crisis has taken its own toll along with many others.

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MILITARY DIMENSION OF RUSSIAN FEDERATION-CHINA RELATIONS: IS MILITARY ALLIANCE POSSIBLE?

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The objective of this study is to analyses the possibility of a Russia-China military alliance. In the context of the Russia-Ukraine War, one of the most discussed issues in the international security is the possibility of Russia and China military alliance against the United States of America (USA). "Will China and RF, which are trying to create a multipolar world, turn to a military alliance against the USA" constitutes the research question of this study. The main claim of this study is that it is not possible for Russia-China relations to turn into a military alliance in the future. There are many reasons for this. First of all, Beijing is a military threat to Moscow in the medium and long term, although it is never mentioned in Russian national security and military doctrines. Second, it is not possible for the Moscow to create a buffer zone that Russia attaches great importance to on the borders between Russia and China. Thirdly, the economic and financial sanctions imposed by the West on the Russia in the Russia-Ukraine war have a deterrent feature for China. Fourth, the Russia-Ukraine war has not yet turned into a full-fledged war between Russia and NATO.

Keywords: Russia, China, Military alliance, USA, NATO.

INTRODUCTION

The Russian Federation (Russia) and China are two countries with a deep-rooted history and civilization in the world, which are now permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), with nuclear weapons and strong-armed forces. Russia and China are assertive great powers in the international system today. These two great powers are against the hegemony and unipolarity of the United States of America (USA) that emerged after the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in world politics. In this context, Russia and China want to create a multipolar world despite the USA. Both countries feel themselves under the threat of regional political-military developments in which the USA is the leading actor in the international system. There are many problems between Russia and the USA. NATO's enlargement, missile defense system, color revolutions are among the prominent ones. China sees the USA as the biggest obstacle within the scope of the "one China" policy it follows within the framework of its policy of unification with Taiwan. Although the USA continues to officially state that it continues to support the "one-China" policy, US President Joe Biden stated in May 2022 that USA will defend Taiwan militarily if it is attacked by China (Youngs, Baker, 2022). On the other hand, China's ignoring approaches to human rights and the alliances formed recently in Asia-Pacific under the leadership of Washington are other important problems between the USA and China.

While the USA sees China as a peer but long-term threat in its policies, doctrines and assessments (Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community, 2022), it sees Russia as a low-capacity but imminent threat except for its nuclear weapons. The Washington administration develops and implements strategies with national power elements, bilateral and regional cooperation mechanisms and alliances against these threats. The problematic relations of the USA with both Russia and China are bringing Moscow and Beijing closer to each other. Russia-China military relation has developed in parallel with the political and economic relations. The Western world, NATO and especially the USA, are trying to foresee the future of Russia-China relations, which they see as their rivals. At a time when

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the Russia-Ukraine war continues and the USA announced that it will intervene militarily in favor of Taiwan in a possible attack by China, the military dimension of the relations between China and Russia and whether it will turn into a military alliance in the future is one of the important dynamics that draw attention. Relations between the two countries are going through a great test with the Russia-Ukraine war. China's support has gained great importance for the Russia, whose economy was dragged into trouble with the economic and financial sanctions imposed by the West and could not military success in Ukraine at the pace it wanted. Other aspects that make these relations valuable are the West's desire to eliminate Beijing's support for Moscow, which is in a difficult situation, and the tendency to see and test the real level of the ever-developing Russian-Chinese relations in a crisis situation. In this context, this study will try to answer the question "Is it possible for Russia and China to form a military alliance against the USA in the future?" The basic assumption of the study is that it is not possible for Russia-China relations to turn into an official military alliance in the future. In the study, first of all, the history of Russia-China relations will be briefly examined. Subsequently, military cooperation between Russia and China will be discussed in various dimensions, and then whether a military alliance between Russia and China is possible will be focused. The study will be concluded with the evaluation.

1. A BRIEF HISTORY OF RUSSIA-CHINA RELATIONS

In the 20th century, Russia-China relations experienced a turbulent period. Even after the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the relations between the two communist countries did not become stable. As a result, in 1969, the USSR and Chinese armed forces briefly clashed over the Ussuri River, which marked the border between the Soviet Union's Siberia and China's northeastern province of Heilongjiang. The negative course of the USSR-China relations allowed the USA to establish cooperation with China in order to use it as a counterbalance to the USSR. After Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to China in May 1989 and China's suppression of pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square by military force in June 1989, the worsening of relations with the West restarted the rapprochement between the two countries. The normalization process that started between the USSR and China in 1989 led to a gradual increase in cooperation. After the collapse of the USSR, Russia and China have been in an effort to develop mutual relations as well as to strengthen their economic, political and military cooperation. In this period, due to the West's arms embargo on China, Russia became the main weapon importing country for Beijing. Russia, on the other hand, saw China as a good market for the defense industry to survive due to its bad economic situation. In the 1990s, Russia's relations with the USA followed a negative course due to NATO's enlargement policy (Jochheim, 2022). China-US relations, on the other hand, have become tense due to Taiwan, human rights and other problems. In this context, the existing problems of Russia and China with the USA revealed the rapprochement between Russia and China, which turned into a strategic partnership in 1996 (Carlson, 2022a).

Russia and China signed an agreement on confidence-building measures with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan in 1996 and an agreement on mutual troop reduction at the borders in 1997 (Aliyev, 2020). These agreements facilitated the emergence of the Shanghai Five mechanism, which was transformed into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001. On June 15, 2001, the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was announced with the participation of Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The Charter of the Organization was signed in June 2002 and entered into force on 19 September 2003. India and Pakistan were accepted as full members at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Heads of State Council meeting held on 8-9 June 2017. China and Russia signed the "Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation" in 2001, which forms the legal basis of their bilateral relations. In the process that continued until 2008, the long-standing border dispute between the two countries was gradually resolved (Carlson, 2022, p.16).

Since 2014, Russia and China have described their bilateral strategic relations as "the best point in history". Russia's large-scale military operation against Ukraine, which started on February 24, 2022, accelerated this trend (Jochheim, 2022). The summit that Putin held with Chinese President Xi Jinping in China, where Putin visited to attend the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics opening ceremony, was an important development. Before Russia's military action against Ukraine began, on February 4, 2021, Putin and Jinping issued a joint declaration. According to the joint declaration, Russia and China openly expressed their support for each other on all issues, including regional issues. Russia and China have criticized the trilateral security partnership between Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom (AUKUS) and the "formation of closed bloc structures and opposing camps in the Asia-Pacific region". Russia expressed its support for the "One China" principle, expressed that Taiwan is an integral part of China and is against Taiwan's independence. Likewise, the two countries expressed their opposition to NATO's enlargement. China has supported Russia's proposals to establish long-term and legally binding security guarantees in Europe (Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development). This is significant as it marks the first time since 1959 that China has taken a firm stand on an important European security issue in support of Russia (Jochheim, 2022).

After Russia's military operation against Ukraine, which started on February 24, 2022, the Russia-China relationship and the level this relationship can reach in the future have become an important part of the strategic equation of the war. In this context, China's response to the Russia-Ukraine war has been an issue that draws attention in the international security environment. The USA claimed that Russia sought help from China. Russia and China have denied this claim. The US administration has warned China that its military and economic support to Russia in the Russia-Ukraine war will face serious consequences (Pena, Sanger, 2022).

China tried to show a balanced approach towards the Russia-Ukraine war. China supports Moscow's argument that the West is provoking the crisis by ignoring Russia's "legitimate security concerns". China did not condemn Russia's military action against Ukraine. As part of the Russia-Ukraine war, China refrains from supplying weapons to Russia, helping Russia evade economic sanctions, or taking other actions that could expose China to sanctions by the USA and its allies. In addition, Beijing abstained from the votes held at the UNSC and the UN General Assembly to condemn Russia's actions against Ukraine. China does not want to pay a heavy price by supporting Russia in the Russia-Ukraine war. However, Beijing did not respond to USA calls to rein in Russia and force Moscow to end the war (Carlson, 2022a).

2. RUSSIAN-CHINESE MILITARY COOPERATION

Russian-Chinese military cooperation has three dimensions. These are military-political, military-practical and military-technical cooperation. Military-political cooperation is concerned with the overarching strategic and political goals of the two states and armies, such as the creation of a multipolar world. Military-practical cooperation consists of activities such as exercises, joint training and operations. Military-technical cooperation includes interstate arms sales and technology transfer from one state to another (Ryan, 2010, pp.181-182).

When military-political cooperation is examined, both countries benefit from cooperation in terms of military relations at the strategic level. The strategic-political military cooperation between Russia and China allows both countries to be sure of their common borders, not to perceive imminent threats from each other, and to direct their military power and deterrence only to the Western world led by the USA. Russia and China are trying to balance the threat posed by the USA in the anarchic international system (MacHaffie, 2011, p.40). Russia's strategic partnership with China allows Moscow not to perceive an imminent military threat from China towards its eastern regions, and Russia's engagement

with NATO and the USA in the west. Before starting its military operation against Ukraine, Russia deployed a large number of military units from the Eastern Military District to the Ukrainian border and Belarus. By making military-political cooperation with China at a strategic level, Putin is preventing a two-front war in Europe and Asia at the same time. On the other hand, Russia does not see China's rising power as an imminent threat to itself and perceives the US's orientation to the Asia-Pacific region as a development that provides an opportunity for Russia to maneuver in Europe. Similarly, China considers Russia's opposition against the European security architecture as a development that enables the USA to engage in Europe and provides freedom of action in the Asia-Pacific region. Russia's recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by fighting with Georgia in 2008, its annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the military operation launched against Ukraine on February 24, 2022 contradict the principle of territorial integrity of the states that China advocates for unification with Taiwan. In this context, Beijing, on the one hand, wants Russia to weaken and stall the US and the West militarily and politically, on the other hand, it avoids directly supporting Russia's military action against Ukraine. However, China continues to see Russia as a very important strategic partner. China defines the relation with Russia with the highest degree of cooperation "comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination". Because both countries are in agreement on issues such as creating a multipolar world, ending the unipolarity of the USA, and not interfering in each other's internal affairs. In addition, the two countries are developing their security and economy in cooperation in the field of energy and defence industry (Carlson, 2022).

In terms of military-practical cooperation, China participated in the Vostok exercise in eastern Russia for the first time in 2018. The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) participates in the annual strategic war games of the Russian army. The navies of the two countries conducted joint exercises in the Mediterranean Sea in 2015 and in the Baltic Sea in 2017 (Saradzhyan, 2020). In September 2016, the Russian and Chinese navies conducted an eight-day "island capture" exercise in the South China Sea, where Beijing has claims for the first time (Baijie, 2016). In July 2019, Russian and Chinese strategic bombers and early warning aircraft conducted the first joint air patrol in the Asia-Pacific. Japan and South Korea claimed that their airspace was violated during the air patrol. In fact, South Korea claimed that warplanes fired warning shots at Russia's A-50 early warning aircraft, which violated its airspace. Moscow and Beijing denied all the allegations (Osborn, Lee, 2019). In addition, military units belonging to the Russian and Chinese land, navy and air forces conduct joint training every year. Russia and China are planning to expand their bilateral training areas by exchanging military trainers in their military academies. In addition, the military-political leaders of the two countries regularly hold high-level consultations on common threats (Saradzhyan, 2020).

When military-technical cooperation is examined, China was a country that had privileged access to the advanced weapon systems of the USSR. China was the first country to buy the Soviet Su-27 fourth generation fighter aircraft (Aliyev, 2020). China is the second largest customer of the Russian defence industry after India. Russian arms exports to China peaked in 2005, but declined over the next few years. Russian concerns about the copying of Russian defence industry technology by China have been an important factor in this decline. China's production of the J-11B fighter jet, an unlicensed copy of the Russian Su-27 fighter aircraft, is an important example in this regard. China's demand for Russian weapons has also decreased as a result of developments in its own national defence industry (Carlson, 2022a).

Between 2016 and 2020, Russia was the main supplier to China, from which China carried out 77% of its arms imports. This rate also constituted 17% of Russia's total arms exports. Between 2016 and 2020, Russia's arms exports to China increased by 50% compared to the previous five-year period (Chart-1). This is a result of Russia's exposure to Western sanctions as a result of its annexation of Crimea, and the willingness of the Russian defence industry to cooperate with China. Western sanctions

against Russia after Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014, and subsequent support for the pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine, marked an important turning point in Russia's military-technical relations with China. Russia soon agreed to sell the advanced S-400 air defense systems, Su-35 fighter aircrafts, helicopters, submarines and aircraft engines to China (Jochheim, 2022, p.5). In 2019, Russia offered to assist China in establishing a missile early warning system (Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2021, p.94).
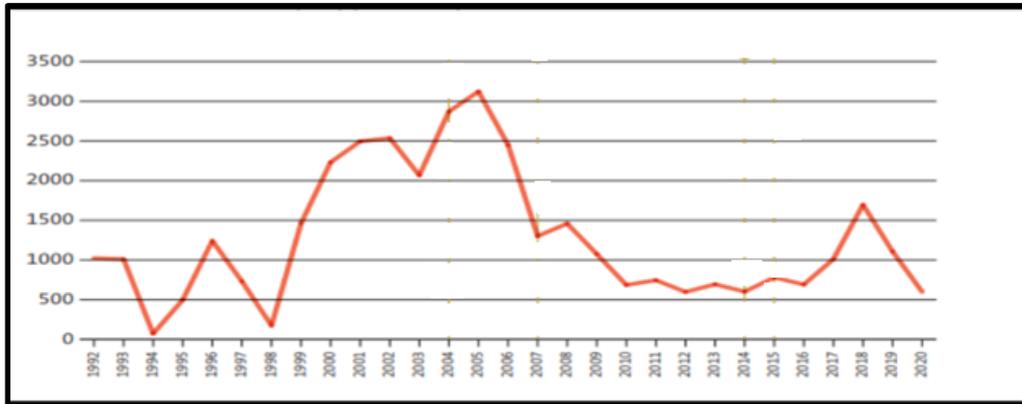
Source: Carlson, B.G. (2022a), China-Russia Relations and Asian Security. *Strategıc Trends 2022: Key Developments in Global Affairs*, Brian G. Carlson, Oliver Thränert (Ed.). Zurich, Center for Security Studies, p.17.
Chart-1: Russian Arm Sale to China (1992-2020 million US$)

3. POSSIBILITY OF A MILITARY ALLIANCE BETWEEN RUSSIA AND CHINA

Before considering the possibility of a military alliance between Russia and China in the future, it is useful to examine why the states are included in the alliance. First, states enter into alliances in order to eliminate imminent and serious dangers to them. An example of these imminent and serious dangers is protecting territorial integrity and preventing externally supported regime changes. States can enter into alliances to prevent threats that do not exist but have strong indications of their future emergence. Secondly, when a state enters an alliance, it should be sure that it will not be able to take measures against the threat/threats it encounters with its own capabilities and that the threat level will decrease by joining the alliance. Finally, states can enter into an alliance with either a third state or the state that poses the threat against them (Saradzhyan, 2020, pp.9-10).

When the possibility of a military alliance between Russia and China is examined within the scope of the above-mentioned issues, the first thing that comes to mind is the absence of an undeterable threat to both countries. Russia and China think that they can cope with the threats they face in the current situation. Both countries have significant nuclear deterrence (Table-1) and conventional capabilities (Saradzhyan, 2020).

Table-1: United States, Russia, and China Nuclear Forces (January 2022)

Country	Deployed warheads	Stored warheads	Total stockpile
United States	1.744	1.964	3.708
Russia	1.588	2.889	4.477
China	-	350	350

Source: Global nuclear arsenals are expected to grow as states continue to modernize–New SIPRI Yearbook out now, Retrieved 13.5.2022, from https://sipri.org/media/press-release/2022/global-nuclear-arsenals-are-expected-grow-states-continue-modernize-new-sipri-yearbook-out-now

The Russia-Ukraine war has not completely turned into a large-scale war for Russia. Currently, there is a proxy war in Ukraine between NATO and Russia. Moscow considers that it can continue the ongoing war in Ukraine within its own capabilities. Moscow and Beijing think that they have the

capacity to resist the color revolution attempts both in their countries and in their regions (Saradzhyan, 2020).

The second factor that will affect the formation of a possible military alliance between the two countries is that China's national power elements are increasing. This situation causes the current balance of power between Russia and China to change in favor of China. There is an imbalance in favor of China in terms of economy, geography and demography. According to the World Bank data for 2020, the population of China is 1.41 billion and Russia is 144.104 million (Data for Russian Federation, China). China has about 10 times more population than Russia. The fact that Russia, which has the world's largest country, and China, which has the world's largest population, are neighbors to each other, poses potential problems in terms of demographics and geography. Russia thinks that its large and low-density lands are under the long-term threat of high-populated China.

According to World Bank data for 2020, Russia has US$ 1.48 billion Gross Domestic Product (at constant prices), while China has US$ 14,722 billion GDP (current US$) (GDP (current US$ - China) (Chart-2). According to the data of 2020, Russia's export to China is US$ 49.3 billion, which is 14.9% of Russia's total exports of US$ 330 billion. China's exports to Russia amount to US$ 50.7 billion, which constitutes approximately 1.9% of China's total exports of US$ 2,65 trillion. Russia is China's 16th largest trading partner. US$ 23.8 billion of Russia's exports to China consists of crude petroleum (Observatory of Economic Complexity). The economic sanctions imposed on Moscow by the West increase Russia's need for China in the fields of energy and defense industry. In case of an official military alliance between China and Russia, Russia will be a junior partner. It is considered that this situation will not be accepted by Russia. Because this situation contradicts Russia's great power policy and multipolar world view.
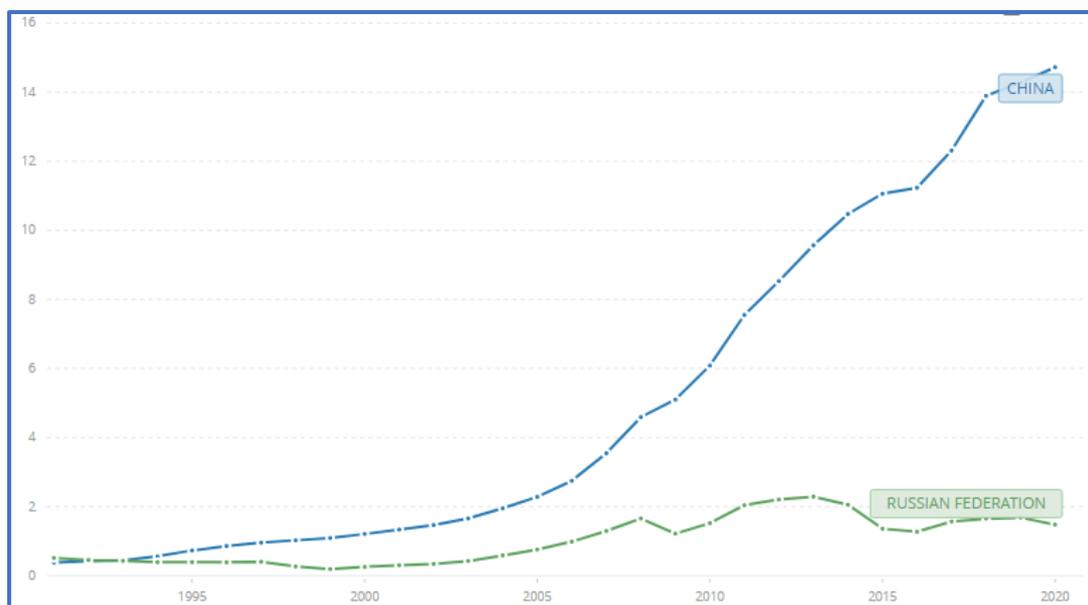
Source: GDP (current US$) - China, Russian Federation, The World Bank, Retrieved 10.5.2022, from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?contextual=default&end=2020&locations=CN-RU&start=1991
Chart-2: Comparision of Russia-China Gross Domestic Product Trends between 1991 and 2020 (Constant billion US$)

Chinese national power elements are growing rapidly and in this respect, it is a military power that causes concern all over the world. There is a 4,209.3 km non-buffer zone border between Russia and China. This causes China to meet the criteria of capacity, physical proximity and intent, which constitute the Russian threat assessment criteria. Although China does not currently intend to pose a

military threat to Russia, Russia does not attach much importance to intent in its threat assessment because the element of intention contains the potential to change in a very short time. Although China is not defined as a danger or threat to Russia's security in any of the Russian national security strategies and military doctrines, the Russian General Staff has to evaluate the worst-case scenarios that may arise with China and plan accordingly. It is very unlikely to think that China, whose rise in military power is carefully followed by the whole world, has not been scrutinized by Russia, which is very sensitive about its military security. High rank generals in the Russian Armed Forces gave clues about how Russia looks at China's developing military power. For example, in 2009, the Chief of the Russian General Staff, General Nikolai Makarov, identified NATO and China as the most dangerous of Russia's geopolitical rivals. Later on, Makarov revealed Russia's policy towards China as "We are conducting a very balanced, well-thought-out policy". Also in 2009, the Chief of Staff of the Russian Land Forces, Lieutenant General Sergei Skokov, said about China: "If we talk about the east, then it could be a multi-million-man army with a traditional approach to conducting combat operations: straightforward, with large concentrations of personnel and firepower along individual operational directions" (Saradzhyan, 2020, pp.14-15).

Another factor that prevents China from entering into a military alliance with Russia is the possibility of imposing to China the economic and financial sanctions imposed on Russia due to its military action against Ukraine. The country with the largest foreign exchange reserves in the world with US$ 3.25 trillion, most of its reserves are stored in Europe and the USA. The rise observed in China's national power elements is mainly due to its economy based on foreign trade. However, the Beijing administration considers that it is highly unlikely that economic and financial sanctions will be imposed to China as it is imposed to Russia. Because China, with its 10 times larger economy than Russia, is closely linked to world trade and has an irreplaceable position in the supply chain. In this context, possible economic and financial sanctions to be imposed to China will have serious consequences for the world economy as well as for China (Siqi, 2022).

CONCLUSION

It is not possible for Russia-China relations to turn into a military alliance in the future. There are many reasons for this. Beijing is a military threat to Moscow in the medium and long term, although it is never mentioned in Russia's national security and military doctrines. China is getting stronger day by day in terms of all national power elements and there is no buffer zone between Russia and China. Therefore, these factors contribute to Russia's perceived threat to China. The Russia-Ukraine war has not yet turned into a full-fledged war between Russia and NATO. China's expected military action against Taiwan has not yet taken place. Russia and China are currently able to deter the USA and NATO by their own capabilities. In addition, the economic and financial sanctions imposed by the West on Russia in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war have a deterrent feature for China.

A formal military alliance between Russia and China could hinder their freedom of action on developments contrary to their interests. And also it would increase the risk of one dragging the other into its own conflict. While it is unlikely that China and Russia will form a military alliance that requires formal security commitments, there is no doubt that they will increase close military cooperation. Today, the closeness between Russia and China primarily reflects the will of the two great powers not to harm each other and to feel safe and free against each other in the fight against the USA.

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THE LAW OF ARMED CONFLICTS IN AFGHANISTAN

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Abstract

Mankind has always been in a struggle with each other since their existence. This situation is also valid for states; these struggles sometimes reached a peaceful solution with the least damage and sometimes resulted in wars accompanied by heavy destruction and devastation. Various rules and practices have been tried to be developed since ancient times in order to minimize the damage experienced. With the help of technological developments, it has become inevitable to determine the limits of these struggles, which took place over the totalization and aggravation of the dimensions of destruction, and to put them on a legal basis. Within this scope, the Law of Armed Conflicts began to take shape by systematically developing the procedures and rules that international relations subjects must comply with. The discipline of Law of Armed Conflicts is basically built on the traditional and basic principles of jus ad bellum and jus in bello. Jus in bello determines the rules and boundaries that states must follow during conflicts between the parties; jus ad bellum indicates under what conditions a state can legitimately use military force. This study primarily addresses the law of armed conflicts, the concepts of self-defence and jus ad bellum (justified war). Finally, evaluations will be made on the violations experienced in terms of the law of armed conflicts under the titles of "Military Necessity", "Principle of Distinction", "Prevention of Unnecessary Pain and Suffering" and "Proportionality" of the Afghanistan War.

Keywords: Afghanistan, the Law of Armed Conflicts, Principle of Distinction, Military Necessity, Prevention of Unnecessary Pain and Suffering, Proportionality.

INTRODUCTION

War and conflict are the leading phenomena that deeply affect societies and states, but can be neither deterred, nor prohibited in the literal sense. Nowadays, conflicts, armed struggles and wars are taking place all around the world, and peace is needed, perhaps more than ever. Almost from the beginning of the human history to the present day, wars and the "struggles" for this purpose have been one of the cruel, deadly, but inevitable realities on Earth and contain substantial elements of political, economic, and military mobilization for states in particular. According to the Ancient Greek historian Thucydides, the author of the History of the Peloponnesian Wars, the cause of the war is the ambitions of power born of boundless greed and passion inherent in human nature, whereas Charles Darwin claims that it is possible to characterize war as the survival of the fittest. The Roman Commander Scipio's remark on the destruction of Carthage that "It is a spectacular sight, but I'm afraid and worried that someone will do the same to my city one day" is one of the most important anecdotes in history that demonstrates the brutality of war. In this war, which took place while there were no modern weapons in existence yet, scores of people lost their lives without distinction between civilian and military, and the city of Carthage simply disappeared (Güneysu, 2011: 119). The Roman commander, while celebrating his victory, also formed this sentence that would help demonstrate the damage caused by the war to the people and the environment when showing empathy towards his adversaries, which helps us understand the hazards of war clearly even today.

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When we contemplate the causes of wars fought by further simplifying and generalizing them; defending the existing state territory, expanding it by conquering new lands; possessing underground and surface resources; retaining glory; spreading racial, political or religious principles, as well as competing and exacting revenge are several prominent examples. Although the causes of wars are usually the same or similar to each other; the consequences of wars in the modern world are more destructive and lethal due to the fact that the methods used in the present day are far more advanced. In addition to this, the issue of compliance of wars with international law and the law of armed conflict has become sought after and consequential.

In this study, the concepts of the law of armed conflict, self-defense and just war, then the course of events leading to the intervention of the United States in Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks, and lastly the assessment of the War in Afghanistan with respect to the law of armed conflict will be examined.

1. THE LAW OF ARMED CONFLICT, SELF-DEFENSE AND JUST WAR

Not only the use of force in international or interstate relations was not prohibited until the signing of the United Nations (UN) Charter in 1945, but it was also considered a right that states resorted to in order to settle their disputes (Kolasi, 2017:3). The principles that enable states to employ the military use of force against other states being evidently regulated by international law has become inevitable after the consequences and devastation caused by the full-scale modern wars as well as the First and Second World War have reached a horrible point. The fact that the Second World War, one of the bloodiest wars in history, took place once again laid bare the pain, blood and brutality of the nature of war and led to the need for modern societies to take precautions against this plight. Although the UN, established after World War II to maintain world peace and facilitate interoperability on numerous international disputes, has prohibited the right to wage war along with certain exceptions, wars are still waged across the globe. Armed conflicts have been systematically and conceptually included in the scope of international law in conjunction with the first Geneva Convention of 1864 for the wounded in war and the medical assistance rendered to such persons. Although the Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Additional Protocols of 1977, which still remain in force today, are the international legal documents of significant importance and a milestone with regards to the law of armed conflict; the regulation of the principles of war aimed at preventing the unnecessary suffering of combatants and targeting civilians and fundamentally involved in the means and methods of warfare has begun with the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907.

The leading motive for attempting to introduce regulations for armed conflicts in the field of international law is that the international community, which cannot fully prohibit conflicts and wars, has tried to limit their negative effects, at the very least in all good faith, by establishing certain rules for armed conflicts and wars. That is to say, countries have conducted studies in the legal sense in particular, and *at least* in order to create a culture of war, they have tried to keep the damage inflicted by wars to a minimum, and eliminate or minimize the images of brutality and inhumanity that may occur as a consequence of wars. As a result of these studies, legal norms that we may refer to as "international law of armed conflicts" have begun to emerge. Nevertheless, despite several rules and regulations governing the rules of armed conflict, neither the outbreak of the First World War nor the Second World War could be prevented. For instance, the provision *".....the provisions contained in the regulations are only binding on the Contracting Powers, in case of war between two or more of them"* is present in the Article 2 of the Hague Convention of 1907. According to this provision, it was stated that the regulations could be applied if the belligerent parties agreed to these rules, which effectively caused the Hague Conventions to be stillborn, far from binding. On the other hand; the four Geneva Conventions relating to and including the principles for "*The Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed*

Forces in the Field; The Amelioration of the Condition of Wounded, Sick and Shipwrecked Members of Armed Forces at Sea; The Treatment of Prisoners of War, and The Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War" were signed in 1949. The significance of the law of armed conflict was reinforced and the value attributed to this branch of law in the international community increased with the adoption of the Additional Protocols in October 1977.

The common Article 3 of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 is an international customary rule and specifies the prohibited actions that are mandatory to comply with during armed conflicts. In summary of the article in question; the wounded and sick persons from those taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria; violence to life, and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; taking hostages; outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment; and the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court are prohibited. In other words; the common Article 3, which can be regarded as a distilled, miniature version of the Geneva Conventions, is accepted as an international customary rule; both international and non-international armed conflicts have maintained their prevalence and those taking no part in conflicts or not being in a condition to take part are treated humanely (Ertuğrul, 2017:158-175).

An attempt has been made to build the law of armed conflict on the two traditional and fundamental concepts, *jus in bello* and *jus ad bellum*. Jus in bello regulates the legal and moral rules that must be followed during the conflict, while jus ad bellum determines the use of military force, regardless of the circumstances, is legal or, in other words, legitimate (Güneysu, 2012:98). In other words, the law of armed conflict, which determines and regulates the actions deemed justifiable to wage war and those during the war, is a legal discipline comprised of the approach arguing there are and should be rules that serve the contemporary laws of nations, tackle wars at their point of origin in a peaceful manner, and adhered to by all parties in question in case of possible disputes among the aforementioned parties. This discipline serves modern life with its existence and aspires to prevent or mitigate the damage inflicted on the non-combatants caught between the belligerent parties to the most extent possible, arguing that the modern and humane identity life has attained since the 20th century should be protected in times of disorder, crisis or war as well. (Gasser, 2007: 20).

"The distinction of armed conflicts into "international" or "non-international" is of vital importance to set out the rules of the law of armed conflict to be applied during the war" (Ertuğrul, 2017:156). Compliance with these set-out rules ensures that the use of force remains on the grounds of legitimacy, whereas the violation of the rules in question detracts the relevant use of force from the legal basis. There are two conditions for the use of force to be legitimate on the basis of international law. The first is the condition known as self-defense, present in every national legal order in existence and authorizes the aggressed party to exercise the use of force against the aggressor. Not a punitive act, self-defense principally aims to repel the attack directed against the aggressed country within the framework of certain rules. The act of self-defense must cease immediately after having reached the aforementioned objective; otherwise, such a use of force will develop into an offensive. The second condition, also of an international nature, is that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), a principal organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security under the UN, established in 1945 and consisting of 193 member states as of today, has explicitly adopted a resolution on the use of force. In other words; the both conditions have been acknowledged as the cases of "self-defense" under Article 51, and the use of force under Article 24 pursuant to the Chapter VII on the basis of the UNSC

resolutions, as exceptions for the prohibition of the use of force regulated in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter.

The primary objective of the United Nations is to prevent threats to international peace and maintain security. In this context; Paragraph 3 of Article 2 of the UN Charter, which states *"All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.",* serves as a basis, and this is further reinforced by recognizing the provision in Paragraph 4 of the corresponding article, stating "*All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.*" Moreover, it is guaranteed in Paragraph 7 of the corresponding Article that the UN may not interfere in the internal affairs of states; however, the coercive measures to be adopted by the UNSC in accordance with Chapter VII titled "*Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression*" have been established as a single exception.

In accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, the UNSC is primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security, and retains the authority to determine whether the peace is threatened, the peace environment is deteriorating, or an act of aggression has occurred. The UNSC shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in consequence of the determinations to be made, to maintain or restore international peace and security. These decisions may, either involve the measures not involving the use of armed force as stated in Article 41 "*complete or partial interruption of economic relations and of rail, sea, air, postal, telegraphic, radio, and other means of communication, and the severance of diplomatic relations*", or military operations due to the provision *"...may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary..."* should the Security Council consider that measures provided for in Article 41 would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate. To put it differently; the principles of the use of military force by one state against another is determined by international law; and the full compliance with these principles in the use of military force implies that the act is legitimate, whereas the violation of said principles signifies the further violation of international law and the delegitimization of the use of force.

The United States (U.S.) has attempted to justify all the interventions in Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks on the basis of its right to self-defense under the law of armed conflict. In this context, a joint resolution entitled "Authorization for Use of Military Force" was passed by the US Congress; then   *-as desired by the United States-* the United Nations Security Council has adopted Resolutions 1386 and 1373 against the state of Afghanistan and the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization. While the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan commenced with the insertion of the paramilitary teams from CIA Special Activities Division/Special Operations Group into Afghanistan on September 26, 2001; the official date of the military operations was marked as October 7, 2001. Following the launch of the operations; the United States, in a letter submitted to the UNSC, stated the UN Charter was the legal basis for the military operations conducted in Afghanistan. In order to reinforce this notion, US National Security Adviser Sandy Berger affirmed it was appropriate under Article 51 of the UN Charter to try to find, disrupt and destroy military terrorist targets, for protecting the self-defense of the United States. Launching in an invasion in Afghanistan on account of harboring the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization, which does not fulfill the characteristics of a state, and its leader in response to the terrorist acts of the latter, is the leading topic of debates in this matter, even though the U.S. admits the aforementioned terrorist acts was not committed by the state of Afghanistan itself.

There are two international resolutions and a case required to be taken into account when assessing the course of the intervention. In the first resolution; the International Court of Justice ruled in the case of Nicaragua dated 1970 that the arms supply to the armed groups in a country could be

regarded as "use of force", and subsequently prohibited states from organizing, encouraging or inciting armed groups against other states. (Kaya, 2003:106). In the second resolution, the UNSC Resolution 1368; Paragraph 3 of the corresponding Resolution calls upon states for cooperation with the intention of finding the perpetrators who organized the September 11 terrorist attacks, and further underlines those aiding and abetting the perpetrators shall be held accountable. In addition to the aforementioned resolutions, the third case is that the state targeted by the terrorist attack and the state from which the perpetrators of the attack originate are obligated to cooperate, and the conditions are set for an intervention against the terrorists in the host country (Erkiner, 2020: 330). When the aforementioned case and the UNSC and the International Court of Justice Resolutions taken into account; it could be acknowledged that Afghanistan, the country aiding and abetting the perpetrator Al-Qaeda terrorist organization, was the subject of the act of self-defense for the reasons of both resorting to the use of force, and harboring and refusing to extradite Osama bin Laden and the members of the organization in Al-Qaeda camps.

According to Thomas Hobbes, man is by nature a destructive being who prefers competition over cooperation, arguing that "Out of Civil States, there is always War of every one against everyone." Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called War; and such a war, as is of every man, against every man." (Hobbes, 2007: 95). Carl von Clausewitz, on the other hand, defines war as the continuation of politics by other means (military) and the use of force intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will (Clausewitz, 1968: 101). Regardless of whichever definition used; in fact, one cannot distance itself from the nature of war and 'organized violence'. In this day and age, the main subjects of the anarchic international system and law, devoid of central authority, are states. In order to resolve interstate tensions and regulate international relations; the League of Nations and the United Nations were established after the First World War and the Second World War, respectively. Despite the fact that international organizations have been established and certain rules of international law have been set out; an attempt has been made to establish specific principles of war or the law of armed conflict after the failure to deter wars in the world.

The teaching of Christianity has evolved into the doctrine that requires to legitimize violence and has become politicized even though the term Just War was first used in the times of Ancient Rome. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, a follower of St. Augustine and the proponent of the notion "Whether it is always sinful to wage war?", there are three criteria for a war to be 'just'. The first is "*auctoritas principis*", meaning the war should be waged not on an individual basis, but under a sovereign authority. The second is "*causa justa*", meaning it is essential that the war is based on a just cause. And the third is "*intentio recta*", in other words, it is necessary to have a rightful intention, such as protecting/supporting the good and/or avoiding the evil. Thus, the aforementioned criteria laid out by Aquinas have become the three principles necessary for *jus ad bellum* (Kolasi, 2017: 17).

Currently, the Charter of the United Nations remains the principal legal source on the use of force by a state. Whereas the Charter in question intends to ameliorate or resolve international disputes or incidents by peaceful means in accordance with the principles of justice and international law, develop friendly relations between the countries and take the appropriate steps to strengthen world peace; the relevant articles of the Charter have defined the purposes and main principles of just war, which is the lawful state of war. Although just war means a war waged in self-defense against an aggressor state, it can also be considered just "if waged to right a great wrong or put an end to cruelty" in the modern sense (Leaning, 2002:353). Furthermore, the fundamental notion behind the idea of a just war is that wars are not as a negative concept in its entirety as often thought; on the contrary, they can lead to beneficial results, such as rooting out terrorism and drying up its resources. As pointed out in the expression *Utrum sint causæ naturales belli faciendi*, the state of nature does not justify the war itself; instead, there are

certain causes that justify the war. For instance; as the use of military force against terrorist organizations and the regimes aiding them is considered to further contribute to peace in the long term, the military interventions against such actors tend to be considered legitimate and justified.

When the terrorists in the territory of a host country launch a terrorist attack targeting another country from their point of origin, this is considered an international act of terrorism due to the fact that the act in question is committed against another country while originating from a host country (Erkiner,2020:294). In this context, the US intervention in Afghanistan has been perceived and acknowledged by the states and the international community as the right of self-defense of the United States. This attitude is reasonable since an act of terrorism has been committed on U.S. soil, thousands of innocent civilians have lost their lives, and a significant number of the top brass and militants of Al-Qaeda, the terrorist organization who committed this act, have been dwelling within the borders of Afghanistan. In fact; President Bush, in his speech to the Congress on September 20, 2001, demanded the Taliban that the Al-Qaeda leader to be extradited immediately to the United States and all terrorist camps in Afghanistan shut down; however, the course of events leading to the intervention accelerated after the responses from Afghanistan had been in an ambiguous manner resembling to the policy of appeasement.

2. THE COURSE OF EVENTS LEADING TO THE INTERVENTION IN AFGHANISTAN

The region known as Khorasan in the past and comprising Afghanistan today, encompasses the territories recognized as the line of communication of East Asia, West Asia, Central Asia and South Asia, situated in a geostrategic location due to neighboring Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in the north, China in the east, Pakistan in the south and Iran in the west. Afghanistan has been invaded by a number of states and has become a center of contention and conflict in the course of history due to its strategic location (Rahimi, 2018: 6). In Afghanistan, which gained its independence in 1919, civil strife among the communities of the North, identified as non-Pashtun, Afghan Arabs and the Taliban occurred from 1989 until 2001, when the Taliban regime fell. In addition, the invasion in 2001 is another reason why Afghanistan has thus far not been able to achieve stability.

On September 11, 2001, Al-Qaeda terrorists targeted the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the symbols of the U.S. and its power, with four commercial jets they had hijacked and utilized them as improvised missiles; these attacks resulted in the deaths of about 3,000 people; such acts paved the way for substantial change in the theoretical and practical realms of the contemporary international relations, and in short led to consequences affecting the world at large to a considerable extent. The 43th President of the U.S. George W. Bush, a fervent advocate of a dynamic foreign policy in direct proportion to the approach of "all countries and any other forms of entities thought to constitute a potential threat to the U.S. at any level must be countered with the 'preemptive strike' notion, and even their regimes and leaders must be removed from office", was sworn into office after the elections on October 7, 2000 and formed his Administration from the individuals known as Neo Conservatives. In the State of the Union address to the American citizens -*could be also meant to the whole world*-four days after the attacks, on September 15, 2001, President Bush stated that ...*We're at war. There has been an act of war declared upon America by terrorists, and we will respond accordingly. ...We will find those who did it; we will smoke them out of their holes; ...and we'll bring them to justice."*, declaring he would initiate a global struggle against terrorism. Shortly afterwards, President Bush announced on September 20, 2001, that sufficient evidence had been obtained as a result of their investigations and that the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization led by Osama bin Laden was the perpetrator of the attacks (Woodward, 2005:220). This statement, meeting the requirement criterion for the use of force in self-defense against international terrorism, could be interpreted within the context of the violation of the obligation to prevent terrorist acts by Afghanistan, the host country for the perpetrators of the terrorist acts in question(Erkiner,

2020:328). In addition to the fact that Afghanistan, as a failed state, was unable to fulfill its obligation to prevent acts of terrorism targeting another country from its native territory, the particular attitude of the Taliban regime refusing to extradite Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaeda, and to dismantle the terrorist organization caused the most harm to Afghanistan and its people, paving the way for the invasion that would last for two decades.

The UNSC adopted Resolutions 1368 on September 12 and 1373 on September 28 in response to the September 11 attacks. While it is emphasized in the aforementioned resolutions that terrorism poses a grave threat to international peace and security and the United States reserves its right to self-defense, no clear provision with regards to enabling the U.S. and its allies to resort to the use of military force in the fight against terrorism or the fact that the measures to be taken for self-defense by the aforementioned parties shall not involve the use of force is present in the said resolutions. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), referring to Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, underlined that the attack on the United States was an attack on all member states, and that the necessary conditions for assisting the United States were set. The U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives also adopted a motion entitled "Authorization for Use of Military Force" in order to enable President Bush to use military force at the national level on legitimate grounds. In addition, it is an intriguing point that neither the perpetrators of the attacks, nor the holder of the right to self-defense is clearly defined in the aforementioned resolutions. NATO and the European Union responded to President Bush's calls for the fight against international terrorism with the statements recognizing the terrorist attacks as an act of war, further endorsing this ambiguous attitude adopted by the UNSC (Başeren, 2001:70). On the other hand; the assessments made on this matter by other countries lacked "constructive criticism" due to the concern that such interpretations could be regarded as aiding and abetting, or at least indirectly assisting the international terrorists while not much time elapsed since the attacks, further contributing to the ambiguity of the boundaries of self-defense to be taken into account in the use of force against Afghanistan.

In Resolution 1368, the UNSC reiterated that it would continue to fight against any acts that would threaten international peace and undermine security caused by terrorism, referring to the founding purposes and principles of the UN. The UNSC also condemned the September 11 attacks; affirmed that the U.S. reserved its right to self-defense in compliance with the principles of the UN, called upon the states for cooperation with the purpose of bringing those who organized the terrorist attacks and aided and abetted the perpetrators to justice, and announced that it stands ready to fight against terrorism in any shape or form. However, the UNSC did not issue an authorization to enable the U.S. or NATO to use military force. The UNSC; in referring to the right of self-defense expressed in Resolution 1373 and Resolution 1368, stated that non-state actors, *such as Al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden*, could threaten peace not only at the national level, but also on an international scale. Such a standpoint indicates that the traditional security concept can be revised and more flexible adaptations to the law intended for the future cases can be implemented. While the relevant resolution points out that all necessary measures can be taken, no clear statements that states are authorized to use military force are present. However, the aggressed country (U.S.) resorts to self-defense due to the fact that the host country (Afghanistan) is both responsible and not responsible for the acts in question. The rationale for the aggressed country resorting to self-defense is that the former has been attacked; nevertheless, it is not the responsibility of the latter (Erkiner, 2020:312).

There are two essential UNSC Resolutions which ought not to be overlooked and to be contemplated as to why they were not addressed in the course of the intervention in Afghanistan. In Resolution 1267 in 1999 and Resolution 1333 in 2000, the UNSC condemned the Taliban for turning a blind eye to the use of the regions controlled by the regime for the housing, training and organization of the terrorists; deemed it unacceptable for the Taliban to allow Osama bin Laden to lead the terrorist organization. In fact, the UNSC determined that the Taliban regime in Afghanistan posed a threat to

international peace and security. However, despite the aforementioned resolutions, the UNSC barely announced that it stood ready to take all necessary measures only after the September 11 attacks, and neither referred to the preceding Resolutions, nor laid out the measures in question and how they would be implemented. In fact, it is also remarked that no clear legal basis for an armed conflict against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda militants in Afghanistan was present until the UNSC Resolution 1510 in 2003. In other words; there was neither an explicit provision, nor an authorization issued to the U.S. and its allies with respect to the use of military force against terrorism present in UNSC Resolution 1368 and 1373, and only the inherent right to self-defense of the U.S. was affirmed; whereas an authorization for military operations was issued with Resolution 1510. Taking into account that the relevant resolution on the authorization was ratified in 2003, about 2 years after the intervention in Afghanistan, it could also be interpreted that the military intervention went ahead of the law.

President Bush informed both the domestic and foreign public opinion about the main rationale for the military intervention in Afghanistan as an open-ended, ambiguous policy in the context of *the Global War on Terror*. The purpose of this policy has been defined as maintaining the peace by fighting terrorism and dictatorship, establishing close relations between the major powers, and promoting free and open societies throughout the world. It should be stressed that, however, the expression is rather problematic as the notion does not include the regulations designed to prevent possible human rights violations, the occupation and colonization of the national underground and surface resources belonging to the country in question. We could remark that President Bush, who preserved "the doctrine of intervention" developed since 1980 to the present and employed in the military campaigns against Panama, Kosovo and Iraq by the U.S. for its own benefits, sought to legitimize the possible preemptive operations to be launched by the U.S. in the future.

3. THE AFGHANISTAN WAR IN THE LAW OF ARMED CONFLICT

Whereas finding a definite starting point in the historical development of the law of armed conflict is an arduous task, it is of great value for the work of the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius on the atrocities committed by the belligerent parties against one another, On the Law of War and Peace: Three Books (*De Jure Belli Ac Pacis Libri Tres*) in 1625, to make reference to the obligation to comply with the laws of war. *The Lieber Code*, a guideline covering the rules of the law of land warfare, was prepared in 1863 by Francis Lieber. One of the most significant developments in this field was undoubtedly experienced with the Hague Conventions signed as a consequence of the conferences convened in 1899 and 1907. In the present day, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 come across as an international treaty regulating the responsibilities the belligerent parties are required to comply with and the rights enjoyed by the said parties in the broadest sense. The law of armed conflict, which designates the reasonable principles for entering into war and the actions in the course of war, and regulates said principles; has established certain rules, which serve the contemporary laws of nations, seek to resolve wars in a peaceful manner at their point of origin, and shall be complied with and applied in cases of armed conflicts resulting from possible disputes. Such principles are categorized for the purpose of conducting the war in a way that does not harm human dignity, as well as preventing the damage caused by the war and using force within the legal framework. Although the basic principles are not unquestionably finalized in a certain source, "The Principle of Military Necessity", "The Principle of Distinction", "The Prevention of Superfluous Injury and Unnecessary Suffering" and "The Principle of Proportionality" stand out and are recognized. While these principles signify the rules on which the war is based in the course of an armed conflict, they indicate the necessity to conduct war within certain laws and customs, in a way that does not harm human dignity and honor (Erendor, 2019: 1993).

The Principle of Military Necessity, included in the Saint Petersburg Declaration of 1868, is based on the approach "that the right of belligerents to adopt means of injuring the enemy is not unlimited;

and accordingly shall direct their operations only against military objectives" set out in both Article 22 of the Hague Conventions and Article 48 of the Additional Protocol 1, and also recognized as the Principle of Limitation. The principle denotes that either all procedures for peaceful settlement must end in failure, or all peaceful means must be exhausted before resorting to force. The main purpose of the principle is to prevent the destruction of the core values of humanity, mitigate the ill effects of war, and limit the aggressive and violent acts that will undermine the post-war peaceful settlement. The Principle of Military Necessity, established in order to neutralize the enemy with as few casualties as possible and not to cause injuries to civilians and damage civilian property not necessarily offering advantage to achieve military objectives, has been cited in a plethora of conventions, treaties and legal documents with regards to the laws of war since the second half of 19th century. Within the framework of this principle, it is of utmost importance not only to immediately neutralize the adversary, but also to observe what consequences the acts in the military operation will bring. The total prohibition of bombing a military target of strategic importance due to its close proximity to civilians is in violation of the principle of necessity on the grounds that, though not exactly possible, the total destruction of the target building with ordnance may paralyze life in the city or cause long-reaching harm to the city (Davulcu, 2020: 108). The civil war in Afghanistan, which lasted for years, the incessant destruction, and the flow of life lingering after the U.S. intervention are the most leading evidence that the principle of military necessity was neglected in the course of the war. On the other hand; mere days after the Al-Qaeda's attack on the U.S. on September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush stated "These carefully targeted actions are designed to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations, and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime", simply indicating that the military operations would be conducted in line with the principles of military necessity.

In the List case, the Nuremberg Tribunal defined the military necessity as "authorizing the use of force in any kind and magnitude to compel the adversary to surrender fully in the expense of the least amount of lives, time and money as possible", and considered opposite behaviors a violation of the principle in question (Güneysu, 2012: 100). It is indisputably acknowledged that the United States is in a far superior position of power to Afghanistan in financial and military respects. Despite this superior power, the path followed in the mode and strategies of defense is a form of violation employed to demonstrate the military superiority of the U.S. to the rest of the world rather than to neutralize its adversary. For instance; a suicide attack targeting a marketplace in Southern Afghanistan in June 2012 and an airstrike targeting a village in Logar constitute the violation of the principles of military necessity by virtue of directly targeting innocent civilians. 20 people were killed and 50 people were injured in the marketplace strike, and 15 people were killed in the village raid. On the other hand, the intended target or location was not fully disclosed, and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) only reported that the insurgents who opened fire on NATO soldiers in the area were killed after an air strike as well (NTV, 06.06.2012). In other words, the losses sustained and the intended military advantage should not be disproportionate. Whereas the aforementioned strike has possibly targeted the insurgents, such an attack is not of a kind to be interpreted as "an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated" in accordance with Article 51(5)(b) of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Directly targeting the marketplaces and villages, in which civilians frequent as part of their social life, is an act in full violation of the laws of war and humanity itself. For this reason, "the principle of proportionality" plays a leading role in situations where it is impossible to completely avoid civilian casualties.

The most basic purpose of the principle of proportionality in the law of armed conflict is to restrain and keep the act of war at a reasonable level, and signifies the preliminary calculation of the damage to civilian buildings and property, designation of legitimate military targets, and refrainment from the

tyrannical and disproportionate use of force in war. Were the principle of military necessity to be indisputably applicable in its entirety, any acts of shape or form would be permitted. However, a necessary act of self-defense must be applied proportionately in order to be regarded as lawful; no other means for preventing the attack than the use of military force must be available, and the military force employed must be proportionate to the unlawful attack and not cause excessive damage (Örnek; 2012:123). In accordance with the principle in question, efforts must be made to regulate the conduct of war in compliance with the laws of war and enforce that the other principles are not violated by warning the civil and military authorities before the launch of military operations (Davulcu, 2020: 99). A number of research conducted on the military interventions in Afghanistan, post-2001 in particular, both demonstrate that the U.S. has employed disproportionate force and prove that the war was waged by force. The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) report in May 2009 highlighted that three foreign soldiers were killed in the aftermath of the suicide bombings by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED), while 65 children, 21 women and 11 men, a total of 97 individuals, were killed after the air campaign launched in response to the suicide attacks; asserting that such an airstrike involved in a use of disproportionate force (BBC Turkish, 26.05.2009). Furthermore; the New York Times Newspaper, in the series of news published in December 2021 by leaking the classified documents of the U.S. Department of Defense (the Pentagon), uncovered that the numbers of the civilians killed in the airstrikes conducted by the U.S. in Afghanistan was much higher than the official figures, the death toll had been deliberately kept low and the U.S. officials had attempted to cover up the number of casualties (New York Times, 18.12.2021).

The principle of proportionality denotes that the degree of intensity of violence, the damage caused and the quantity of expenses caused by such damage must remain within a certain limit. Likewise, the principle of proportionality involves the total prohibition of targeting individuals who possess non-combatant status and the protection of such individuals from perils, in compliance with the principles of the Geneva Convention, which establishes high standards for the design and the employment of weapons, and the protection of civilians. In the Afghanistan War, the United States has employed "smart munitions" to avoid civilian deaths; however, the method in question has still not been able to prevent the destruction of civilian settlements and the loss of life of their residents in these strikes. However, a necessary act of self-defense must be applied proportionately in order to be regarded as lawful, and therefore the use of force employed in the territory of a country must only target the terrorists dwelling in the territory in question (Erkiner, 2020: 333). Whereas it was announced that the primary objective of the intervention in Afghanistan was the destruction of the terrorist camps and affiliated facilities, and the neutralization of the terrorists; the areas of dense population such as city centers were targeted resulting from intense airstrikes, the main infrastructures were too heavily damaged to be repaired in the short-term. This case indicates that the U.S. was regretfully neither able to keep civilians safe from the military operations that could potentially harm the civilians nor was in full compliance with the principle of proportionality. When taking such painful events into account; the acts in question are in violation of the provisions in Article 51(5) "An attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated"; Article 51(3) "Civilians shall enjoy the protection afforded by this Section, unless and for such time as they take a direct part in hostilities"; and Article 57 "...constant care shall be taken to spare the civilian population, civilians and civilian objects" of Additional Protocol I, in reference to the principle of proportionality, defined occasionally within the framework of the definition "excessive" in the Geneva Conventions.

The Prevention of Superfluous Injury and Unnecessary Suffering is the leading principle among the most violated principles in Afghanistan since the U.S. intervention in 2001. Although the employment of the means and methods of warfare, particularly relating to arms, ammunition and

materials, which may cause unnecessary suffering are prohibited; the information obtained from the public opinion concerning the war in the last two decades have confirmed the occurrence of such acts, demonstrating that the attacks harm the civilians in an inconceivable manner and adversely affect the social life in the communities. While certain classifications, definitions and legal regulations with respect to which weapons cause unnecessary suffering are present, several weapons leading to superfluous injury and unnecessary suffering are still being employed in armed conflicts. In this context, it is alleged that the U.S. has employed white phosphorus, cluster bombs and depleted uranium, which could be regarded as weapons to inflict superfluous injury and unnecessary suffering in the Afghanistan War.

Although it is stated that white phosphorus is employed to emit smoke in order to separate friendly forces from hostile forces in conflict zones, white phosphorus crosses the line of its innocent purpose due to the chemical substances it contains; and it thus bears the potential to be evaluated as a toxic chemical in reference to Article 2 of the Chemical Weapons Convention. In the statement he made on May 13, 2009, Nadir Nadir, Deputy Chairman of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, said that they had found traces of the use of white phosphorus, which shared the same effects as a napalm bomb, causing the human body to burn from the inside out by inhalation and die from pain, in the clashes in Farah province. While the U.S. did not issue a satisfactory statement on the matter, it immediately rejected the allegations and accused the Taliban of employing white phosphorus (Çelik, 2013: 134). Considering the limited resources of the Taliban in Afghanistan, this statement is far from satisfactory and convincing. The employment of white phosphorus, which could be regarded as an inhumane cause of death, was constantly brought up in the media between Afghanistan and the U.S. in 2009; however, no reliable information came to light on that particular matter.

Another type of bomb alleged to have been employed by the U.S. in Afghanistan is the cluster bomb. Comprised of a carrier container filled with a large number of bomblets and considered a crime by international law, this type of bomb poses a grave risk not only to the target itself, but also to the immediate vicinity of the target area due to the dispersion of the bomblets in the shape of small pellets. As well as causing dismemberment on civilians, cluster bomb could also induce adverse psychological effects on its victims. In accordance with Article 1 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, also known as the Oslo Convention and signed in 2008; this weapon, prohibited by the corresponding article and unethical to employ as it is deemed inhumane for military interventions, had been employed by the U.S. in the operations conducted against the caves and camps inhabited by Al-Qaeda militants in the intervention in Afghanistan before the date of ratification. Although prohibited by the U.S. in 2003, 1,228 cluster bombs had been employed in the airstrikes conducted in 2001-2002 (HRW Report, 2002:15). Another case in this context is the air campaigns where the U.S. Air Force B-52 bombers dropped 202 bombs comprised of cyclotol-type explosives and zirconium-laden warhead (BLU-97/B) on the designated targets in Afghanistan in 2001. This attack, which caused the inhumane scenes of death in defiance of international law, was also confirmed by the U.S. (Milliyet, 26.10.2001) Afterwards, the statements that the U.S. had defied the law of armed conflict and continued its attacks in the most inhumane way possible were issued to the world press, whereas several countries were swift to support the methods of the U.S. in the conduct of warfare. For instance, the then-British President Tony Blair stated that he approved the use of cluster bombs by the U.S. in Afghanistan and issued a statement that "They are weapons that are legal and necessary in certain specific circumstances." (Hürriyet, 08.11.2001).

Another weapon employed in the military intervention in Afghanistan is uranium, which has lost most of the isotopes of Uranium-235 in its structure, and known as depleted (diluted) uranium. This substance, used in the arms industry for the production of armor and piercing shells, was included among the substances prohibited for employment in warfare in the two reports prepared by the Sub-Commission

on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in 1996 and 1997. A 2003 study conducted by the experts of the Uranium Medical Research Center in Washington revealed that uranium was employed on civilians in Kabul, Tora Bora and Mazar-i-Sharif. According to the studies conducted, the proportion of uranium in the urine of an Afghan not contaminated with uranium was detected as 9.4 nanograms, whereas an average of 315 nanograms per liter of uranium was detected in the urine of the Afghans contaminated with uranium in combat, and even 2,031 nanograms of uranium was detected in the urine of another child (NTV, 23.05.2003). Featured in the show No Limits in March 2003 as a guest, Professor Doug Rokke, the former head of the Pentagon's Depleted Uranium Project, confirmed the aforementioned case, stating that depleted uranium caused acute respiratory illnesses and heavy metal poisoning by long-term inhalation. The U.S., on the other hand, has neither completely confirmed, nor denied that it uses this diluted uranium in the statements issued on this particular matter.

When taking all the aforementioned events into account; the employment of white phosphorus, cluster bombs and depleted uranium, all of which are considered to have caused superfluous injury and unnecessary suffering in the military operations conducted by the U.S. in the Afghanistan War, are in violation of the provisions of Article 35(1) "...the right of the Parties to the conflict to choose methods or means of warfare is not unlimited" and Article 35(2) "It is prohibited to employ weapons, projectiles and material and methods of warfare of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering" of Additional Protocol 1 to the Geneva Convention, The Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects of 1980 and The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction of 1993.

The Principle of Distinction is one of the leading principles that defines whom and what the belligerent parties may target, the necessity to distinguish civilian objects from military objects by the belligerent parties and protect innocent civilians from harm in times of war, as well as caring for and not harming the objects with respect to their lives. This principle, also included in several articles of the Lieber Code, the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols, aims to mitigate violence against civilian populations in the course of armed conflicts. The picture depicted over the past 20 years of the military intervention in Afghanistan teems with examples where the principle of distinction has been violated in the general sense, as in the other wars throughout the world. Disproportionate violence employed in the war, injuring and killing civilians in a painful way and the interventions that impede the flow of social life while putting the lives of civilians in a dire situation indicate that the principle in question has been violated numerous times. Although the provisions of Article 44 "...combatants are obliged to distinguish themselves from the civilian population..." and Article 52 "Attacks shall be limited strictly to military objectives" of Additional Protocol 1 are clear; from 8,000 to 18,000 civilians lost their lives only in the first three months-period of the intervention in Afghanistan according to the preliminary findings (Conetta, 2002: 20). In the statements issued by the United Nations, 1,659 civilians were reported to have lost their lives in Afghanistan even in the first six months of 2021, whereas 3,254 civilians were injured in the attacks, which were concentrated in residential areas in particular (DW, 26.07.2021). In its report published in 2008, Human Rights Watch informed that the Taliban militants took shelter in the villages to protect themselves from shelling and forced the civilians as "human shield", thus a number of civilians, mostly women and children, were killed in the strikes resulting from military deception (Cumhuriyet, 08.09.2008). The U.S. put forth two considerations in this regard. First; the responsibility for civilian casualties lay entirely with al-Qaeda and the Taliban due to the fact that both al-Qaeda and the Taliban had adopted the forceful employment of civilians as human shields a tactic in the war. Second; despite the fact that the US Armed Forces displayed utmost sensitivity to avoid civilian casualties, they became "paralyzed" due to such tactics of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, which

ultimately put the civilians in harm's way. Such an approach makes it more understandable what Edward Said remarked as "blaming the victim". On the other hand, it is not an easily-proven hypothesis that the militants deliberately targeted civilians, considering the U.S. military forces could cause civilian casualties (Çelik, 2013:100).

According to a study conducted by the British charity Save The Children concentrated on the years between 2005 and 2019 and announced in 2020, at least 26,000 children were killed in the Afghanistan War. In this war where five children on average have been killed each day; it is pointed out that violence is not at a humane level due to the conduct of hostilities without distinguishing young, child, old, woman or man from each other, that the war has harmed the children in the region in particular and disproportionate force has been employed. In addition; it can be claimed that civilians continue to lose their lives due to the unexploded ordnance left in the residential areas, and that such areas have thus become risky and are almost indistinguishable from battlefields (BBC, November 23, 2020).

When taking all the aforementioned events into account, it is acknowledged that the U.S. has conducted several indiscriminate attacks in Afghanistan, and such attacks are in violation of the basic rule in Article 48 "...shall at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives and accordingly shall direct their operations only against military objectives" and Article 51(4) of Additional Protocol 1, which bears the provisions that civilians must be clearly distinguished and protected.

The most prominent reason for armed conflicts to be considered a legal term and the establishment of a legal discipline in this sense is that any kinds of armed conflict will arise in the disputes between two states or more and the damage resulting from such conflicts will be much greater (Chalabizada, 2021: 134-136). Clausewitz, one of the most prominent theorists of war, stated "To introduce into the philosophy of War itself a principle of moderation would be an absurdity", signifying the authority and possibility of using perpetual violence in war. The mode of warfare employed in disputes that cannot be resolved by peaceful settlement means that the both sides display as much harsh and willing behavior as possible in order to pursue their interests, whereas it can also mean that such a posture can lay to waste everything along the way. Such a course of action causes unrestricted use of force, as well as neglecting all manners of humane aspects and causing violence to harm humanity. In this regard, it is rather difficult to speak literally of "humanity" and "living in humane conditions" in a place where there is war. This is why it is essential to attribute value to the law of armed conflict and its regulations.

The U.S. presence in Afghanistan, which began in 2001, ended in withdrawal in 2021 at the end of two decades. The Taliban signed an agreement involving the guarantees that Afghanistan would not be utilized for terrorist activities; and then besieged the capital Kabul shortly thereafter on August 15, 2021, taking over the administration by "peaceful" means. In the statement issued on August 30, 2021, Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, the Commander of the U.S. Central Command, announced that the process of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan had been fully completed. Although the Afghanistan War, the longest war in the history of the U.S., came to an end; the material and intangible losses of Afghanistan in the course of 20 years and earlier, including its own civil war from the 1978s to the 2000s, are rather sizable. Whereas the intangible losses refer to an environment where historical and cultural structures have vanished with the transformation of the country into a battlefield in particular, where the social life has become paralyzed; the number of women and children killed and wounded as the material losses uncovers the severity of the destruction caused by the war.

CONCLUSION

As the most complex view of conflicts of interest in the history of mankind, war is a phenomenon that has existed from the past to the present day and will endure so long as the humanity exists. The

means of warfare that states resort to in order to safeguard their own interests, resolve disputes with other countries and compensate their losses, is an armed activity. Conflicts of interests among nations have proved inadequate to prevent wars and conflicts both in the national and international level; and war has taken its place at the beginning of the most significant social events from the most primitive to the most modern societies throughout human history. When 22,000 Austrian and 17,000 French soldiers, who died in the Battle of Solferino in 1859 solely because they could not receive medical assistance, were the subject of a book entitled "A Memory of Solferino" by Swiss businessman and activist Jean Henry Dunant, the whole of Europe read about the transformation of war into brutality from a literary source and understood the necessity to establish laws on the principles of war. In the course beginning after the aforementioned work and leading to the foundation of the International Committee of the Red Cross; efforts were initiated to create a legal statute with respect to war and the culture of war throughout the world, as well as to ensure that innocent civilians, diverse cultural structures and the continuity of social life were not harmed, with an emphasis on the awareness in regards to war. The law of armed conflict has been established in the world where the rhetorics of globalization and international peace were accelerated in the Second World War and even continue to expand today, assuring the discourse that there can be the "customs" of war in international law in the simplest terms (Abbasbeyli, Ramazanov, 2016: 30). In other words, the steps taken on human rights with the transition to the modern understanding of society have concerned the law of war as well; particularly the Geneva Conventions, established as Europe-centric, have initially taken steps to prevent the harm to innocent people and the flow of social life in times of war.

The fact that the number of civilian deaths, as well as material losses in the Second World War was catastrophic has accelerated such steps; and the Geneva Conventions of 1949 were adopted through the efforts of the UN, established after the war, enabling the Law of Armed Conflict to take shape more systematically. Due to its cumbersome structure and the effects of the veto power in the UNSC, it is an arduous task to make effective, impartial and swift decisions. Today, wars are ongoing around the world, and they will continue to do so, as long as humanity endures. In addition to the aforementioned points; the fact that the U.S. bears the power to compel the UN, established after the Second World War for the purpose of creating a world with better living standards and impartiality, and the relevant organs to adopt resolutions for its own benefit and otherwise considers the UN as an obstacle, casts a shadow on the institution and the core values it upholds. In spite of the inability to prevent wars and the particular attitude of the U.S. of pursuing its own interests and exploiting the UN; the fact that the wars in recent memory have been in compliance with the law of armed conflict signifies the notion that it is in harmony with both the modern world and human dignity is widely acclaimed with each day passing by.

In fact, the matter of war has always led to a debate concerning the legitimacy of the use of force. The principles on the use of force have been established within the framework of international law, even though certain difficulties are occasionally encountered in practice. Whereas a number of individuals defend the expression of Cicero "*inter arma leges silent*", which means "in times of war, the law falls silent"; the efforts on the application of the law of armed conflict are put forth in the occurrence of an armed conflict. For this particular reason, the law of armed conflict is one of the most precarious issues at the international level, and principally aims to regulate armed conflicts as a part of international law.

It can be pointed out that such an act which constitutes a crime as the September 11 attacks, should be penalized at a minimum level or responded to through lawful military interventions. Judging from the notion that certain criteria must be met in order for the war to be considered just, it can also be stressed that the Afghanistan War conducted by the U.S. is a just war. Although it was at first considered that the war was justified due to the motivations which played a critical role in the emergence of the Afghanistan War, civilian casualties in the later stages of the war occasionally transformed this particular case from a lawful intervention into a catastrophic war. A war is an act that does/can not allow

distinction, or in which a limited distinction between civilians and combatants can be made; regrettably resulting in the deaths of a great number of people and the suffering of people in the conflict zones.

Not only the war, which had been ongoing for years and was announced to be "over" with the U.S. withdrawal in the past few months, inflicted material and intangible losses to the aggrieved country, but also resulted in the ethnic separation of the country and a chaotic atmosphere devoid of peace and tranquility following the acts of terrorism. Conflicts of interest still linger in Afghanistan, which is in possession of territories located in South and Central Asia; whereas both the civil war and foreign interventions in Afghanistan have defamed the region as a conflict zone. This particular war movie, watched by the rest of the world, puts the social life of the Afghan people in a dire situation and forcefully labels them as "refugees" in need of refuge in different countries.

There is an undeniable link between armed conflicts and displacement of people, due to the fact that one of the leading reasons for the internal and external displacement of people is armed conflicts; forcing the displaced people exposed to the plunder/raze of their villages, the employment of prohibited weapons, the inability to protect the civilian population against the dangers arising from military operations, the acts of hostage-taking, rape and terrorism, to migrate to the areas where they can provide water, food and shelter for themselves (Ertuğrul, 2017: 155-159). This situation has not changed in Afghanistan either; civilians have been forced to migrate from time to time in the course of the 20-year war. In this context; the Taliban looted a number of cities and historical sites in Afghanistan, and detonated such prominent structures as the statues of Bamiyan Buddha. This barbarism and tyrannical oppression of the Taliban is also identified with the anger felt towards the province and an attempt to destroy the history and culture. Furthermore; the fact that the local people, the most remarkable element of the culture, are also subjected to such attacks, forces them to migrate; with a number of families who have fled the conflicts in the provinces of Kabul. In fact, three out of every four people (76%) who participated in The Cost of War survey in 2009 stated that they had been forced to leave their homes at least once during the conflicts over the past three decades. This particular case alone is in violation of Additional Protocol 2. It is regulated in the provisions of Article 17 "The displacement of the civilian population shall not be ordered for reasons related to the conflict unless the security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand" and "Civilians shall not be compelled to leave their own territory for reasons connected with the conflict" of the corresponding Protocol.

Lastly, the fact that the U.S., the leading player in the course of globalization, has not been issued a clear authority by the UNSC to intervene in Afghanistan, as well as occasionally ignoring the relevant principles of the law of armed conflict, causes concern for the future in the matter of the equality, validity and "humanitarian" benefit of the law for all. After the 11 September attacks, the U.S. Administration neither exchanged views with such international powers of critical importance as Russia and China and such regional actors as Pakistan and India, as well as keeping the alternate options of peaceful nature other than military intervention in its agenda for a long period of time; nor seemed willing to push the Taliban government for the extradition of Osama bin Laden and the expulsion of Al-Qaeda from the territory of Afghanistan. It is evident that the terrorist attacks carried out on September 11, 2001 claimed the lives of innocent civilian people, were against the law and could not be justified for any reason. Nevertheless, the attacks in question were considered by the Bush Administration as a "Pearl Harbour" of some kind intended for the U.S., hundreds of billions of U.S. Dollars were spent in the intervention in Afghanistan on the basis of the right to self defense in reference to Article 24 and 51 of the UN Charter, and ultimately withdrew from Afghanistan in 2021, two decades later. All that remains is an Afghanistan and its people who have lost politically, economically and socially *in every aspect*. Time will tell how long this "peace" that has come to Afghanistan is going to last.

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EXTREMISM AND THE CHANGING UNDERSTANDING OF SECURITY IN THE AFGHANISTAN SECURITY REGION

Mirwais Balkhi[1]

Abstract

Following the US presence in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the collapse of two authoritarian regimes — the Taliban and Saddam Hussain — a new security dynamism has emerged through new war approaches by the Taliban, Former Ba'th members, ISIS, ISK, and many other non-state and state-sponsored actors in areas surrounding Afghanistan to fight the US/NATO occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq on one hand, and attempts to eliminate other regimes in South Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia. These extremist fighting tactics and approaches have changed the nature of security in the trans-regional geopolitics of the Afghanistan security region. As a result, new sets of conflicts have arisen. This new security dynamism cannot be examined without considering the variables that caused them, and the identification of their links to independently researched changes that are clearly identified. The new security dynamism can be described as the "total deconstruction" of the "old security" understandings and mechanisms. Factors, ends, means, and the environment of security have changed. Therefore, in the "new security", the pragmatic ideological factors aim at the disintegration of state apparatus through new technologies and virtual means, by violating traditional security legislation, and encompassing all aspects of the lives of human beings. This research attempts to study the new security dynamics from the new war's perspective in the Afghanistan security region which consists of the three surrounding security systems of South, Central, and West Asia.

Keywords: New Security, Traditional Security, Security Dynamism, Afghanistan Security region, the Taliban, ISK.

INTRODUCTION

The world did not immediately realize that the nature of security in the Afghanistan region shifted after the terrorist attacks that took place on September 11, 2001. In response to this, the invasions of Afghanistan led by the United States in that same year, and of Iraq in 2003, were conducted traditionally. However, changes in the concept and examples of security in Afghanistan had already taken place before this incident — during the thirty years of proxy war (1978–2001). Internal developments in Afghanistan, such as the overthrow of the communist regime and the rise of the Taliban in 1994, as well as the activities of various Islamic, takfiri, and jihadist Islamic ideological groups from around the world in and around Afghanistan, had changed the traditional framework of war and security. Although these developments took place in Afghanistan, they affected the entire region around it. This manifested itself in the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in the USA. Thousands of jihadists from various lands flocked to Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion. In fact, the essence of Islamic extremism was gathered from around the world in Afghanistan. These were people who had experienced conventional warfare in other parts of their countries. They knew that it was not possible to continue the war against the enemies (the West and its governments) in the traditional way. Hence, they came up with new concepts and new security mechanisms. The attack on the United States done in this unconventional manner actually took the conventional US security apparatus by surprise. The world was amazed too.

As Afghanistan became the battleground for the Eastern versus the Western ideologies during the Cold War, and again during the regional Cold War among the surrounding hegemonic powers, all the

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states — small and big — around Afghanistan became politically, economically, militarily, and culturally involved. The reciprocal interactions that followed of the regional states with Afghanistan gradually brought about great changes, both in Afghanistan and in these countries. A new form of war and unconventional security began in the Afghanistan region, especially along the Afghanistan axis, and had been going on for about two decades. It was a great change that the leaders and fighters of the extremists in Afghanistan realized, and stood up to this unusual and new war. Ahmad Shah Massoud, the famous commander of the war against international extremism and terrorism, warned the Western world in his speech in Paris (2001), that the war in Afghanistan had wider dimensions, and if the fight against it was not supported, it would spread to the West, especially to the United States. Massoud, who had experienced nearly 20 years of war and conflict with various forces entering Afghanistan from all over the world and creating a new nature of security, knew that traditional security mechanisms had lost their validity. Massoud had realized that NATO, the conventional security organization of the West and the United States, was not going to be able to secure its territory through conventional means.

However, Western nations, in particular those that are members of NATO, were unable to comprehend the ever-changing dynamics of war and security in the Afghanistan region because they failed to learn from the dangers that were posed to the organization and its individuals. As a result, they were taken aback by the waves of terrorist strikes they faced, and were astonished by them. New and unusual threats were emerging from in and around Afghanistan. Strict security models and traditional security concepts posed great threats, but few realized these dangers at that time. The object of the US invasion of Afghanistan was to eliminate terrorism, and the aim of the invasion of Iraq was to eliminate the potential nuclear threat by an anti-Western dictator, *without* being part of a new and unconventional war. These invasions took place in the form of a traditional war and the security of NATO. This led US/NATO military operations to overthrow the authoritarian and totalitarian regimes of the Taliban and Saddam Hussain, in Afghanistan and Iraq, respectively. However, the war never ended in either country, and security threats prevailed even after the US presence in both countries. Indeed, the insecurity that followed did not only confine itself to the aforementioned countries but also sprouted serious new security challenges to the entire Afghanistan region.

This essay seeks to highlight that the reason for the weakness and the failure of the US-led NATO mission in securing the Afghanistan region was due to their conventional view of war and security over the past twenty years even as, at the same time, the ideological opponents of the governments of the region and the rest of the world had been fighting their opponents for years with a completely *changed* and modern approach. What is important is that this phenomenon is still going on. The world is still paying less attention to the new war and new security scenario in the Afghanistan region. As long as this is the approach, complete security in the Afghanistan region will not return. At the end of the essay, efforts are also made to suggest ways out of the current situation so that governments in the region and the world can work closely together to end the threats.

It is important to highlight that this essay makes use of several novel phrases and ideas in the fields of political geography and security which the reader may not be familiar with, and which may lead to confusion. These include terms like "Afghanistan Security Region", "New Security", and "total destruction". As a result, this essay provides an explanation of these from the perspective of the author.

1. THE AFGHANISTAN SECURITY REGION

Since the first half of the 2000s, there have been suicide attacks, bombings, armed attacks, and the like as well as the arrest of terrorists by the police in different countries, such as Pakistan, India, Central Asia, Iran, Turkey, Iraq, and Azerbaijan. However, these were also the countries where terrorist attacks were being planned and plotted. While the number of attacks has not been the same in all these countries, what is common in all these terrorist attacks and plots is that their roots go back to extremist

jihadists in the areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The main reason for this is the close commonalities between the people of these countries. The Taliban — the result of the extremism of four decades of religious ideological warfare in Afghanistan and Pakistan — soon spread their skills and ideology to other parts of Afghanistan, no doubt inspired by many notorious terrorist organizations. Later, when the ISIS, a more sophisticated form of the Taliban, entered the battlefield under another name and brand, it spread from Iraq to Afghanistan; now it's Khorasan branch has become a major security threat to the region. This large-scale influence and impact among the various groups in and around Afghanistan show that there is a single area in terms of "security". This essay has termed it the "Afghanistan Security Region".

It is conceivable that readers may inquire as to the meaning of the phrase "Afghanistan Security Region." Since nobody has ever used this geopolitical phrase before, it needs further elaboration. The Greater Southwest Asia and Central Asia region has been renamed according to different perspectives. The nature and extent of each naming are based on purpose, and do not necessarily cover the whole area. There is different naming of the region from the point of view of politics, geopolitics, economics, geography, environment, and other perspectives. These names have different uses. Determining the economic boundaries of a region, for example, has an economic conception and application. Therefore, several economic indicators determine its nature. Thus, just as the political Middle East differs from the economic, cultural, and environmental Middle East, so does the vast Southwest Asia region differ in terms of the different perspectives used.

Since security studies has its indicators, this region also has its name, nature, and boundaries. A security look at this region, especially from the point of view of religious ideology that prevails over the civilization, history, and culture of its people, causes its borders to be determined by being based on the common aspects of civilization, history, and culture. Outside these borders, other countries and peoples may be affected, to some extent, by the insecurity stemming from the region's insecurity ideology; but this is low and exceptional, and often even accidental.

The security region of Afghanistan can be defined based on a civilizational, historical, and cultural view based on the interactions of nations around Afghanistan in South Asia, West Asia, and Central Asia, which share common links from the distant past to the present, and the result of these links is the definition of a commonality in mentality, behavior, and identity. The Afghanistan-centered region has expanded to three peripheral regions, but does not necessarily cover all of South Asia, West Asia, and Central Asia. Rather, the border of this region goes as far as wherever the civilization-cultural and historical commonalities with its core, "Afghanistan", are alive.

Thus, countries such as Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka in South Asia, Kazakhstan (partly Kyrgyzstan) in Central Asia, and Arab countries in the Persian Gulf (excluding Iraq) in West Asia do not fall within the "territory" of Afghanistan. These countries have very weak civilizational, historical, and cultural commonalities with Afghanistan. The religious readings, identity, and historical memory of these nations are very different from the region of Afghanistan. However, because the new security transformation in Afghanistan has taken place, the effects of this new dynamic of Afghanistan have also spread to other regions. Thus, this vast and pervasive region can now be referred to as the "Afghanistan Region". Therefore, to accurately define the region of Afghanistan, other countries or nations that are included are Pakistan, India, Iran, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. They have common civil, historical, and cultural ties with each other.

The reason for naming this region the "Afghanistan Security Region" is because of the Afghanistan-centric view of security. Countries and nations that have strong civilizational, historical, and cultural ties to and among themselves face the same actual and potential harm in the new security dynamic. Because Afghanistan is the center of the development of threat indicators, it has been seen

from this point of view. However, a country like Armenia in West Asia or Bangladesh in South Asia may not be deeply implicated in these links, in which case their vulnerability varies, and can be analyzed based on other indicators. Also, the dominant variable in an Afghanistan-centric region is the prevailing religious extremism and terrorism which, in terms of reciprocity, affects Afghanistan and the countries which are immediate neighbors, or has strong three-fold; civilization, culture and history links with Afghanistan.

2. "NEW SECURITY" AS "TOTAL DESTRUCTION"

Like all concepts and issues that have taken on a new shape as the world evolves, security as an important issue has also evolved and changed its nature (Jones, 2018). Today, the understanding of the concept of security, its indicators, security issues, and security mechanisms have all changed. This claim is especially true in the Afghanistan region as compared to other parts of the world. This is because, in this region, the concepts, models, approaches, and even the extensive security methods derived from the Copenhagen security school were effective until the end of the Cold War. However, after it ended, the changing nature of security, and past and outdated mechanisms, could not analyze the new situation well. This worsened the security situation in the region.

If someone were to ask what is the main difference between "traditional security" and "new security", the straightforward response can be summed up in a single phrase: "total destruction" The outcome of this is evident in the increased security measures. It is vital to present arguments and instances to know the meaning of the phrase "total destruction". This will allow for a better understanding and analysis of the situation. It simply means the "total helplessness" (Ataria, 2019) of the citizens. This circumstance, as described by the traditional explanation is, in reality, identical to the natural condition described by Hobbes, with one significant exception. In Hobbes's natural state, mankind constructs an absolute state to prevent anarchy and violence (Steinberger, 2008). This state was eventually constituted by law, and it centered on maintaining a power balance between society and the state. However, given the circumstances that now exist, human beings are moving away from reasonably republican governments towards absolute regimes. However, they continue to utilize old and pre-modern methods.

In the spirit of total destruction, anything and everything is fair game. When "suicide" is accepted as a valid method of resistance, and suicide bombers are supposed to be the 'missiles of the anti-regimes' leaders' (Williams, 2008), there can no longer be any cultural or legal barrier preventing them from being a risky and harmful option for people. In this sense, order, morality, custom, tradition, and the institutions that have existed in the past, are all broken. The goal of "total destruction" by any means is the driving force behind these destructive forces. Moreover, the ideology of "self-differentiation" is the most crucial and evident component of organizations that undermine human safety. Everyone looks to heavenly sources for guidance, and their goal is to wipe out the Kharijites[2] and the Takfiris[3]. This divisive and destructive approach towards politics has left a sour taste in the history of Islam since it has pitted all Muslims against one another in bloody conflicts that have resulted in no one being exonerated. Just 25 years after the death of the Prophet, even the most trusted of his associates were put to death.

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[2] The Kharijites were the first identifiable sect of Islam. Their identity emerged as followers of Muhammad attempted to determine the extent to which one could deviate from ideal norms of behavior and still be called Muslim. The extreme Kharijite position was that Muslims who commit grave sins effectively reject their religion, entering the ranks of apostates, and therefore deserve capital punishment (see: https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195390155/obo-9780195390155-0047.xml)

[3] Pronouncement that someone is an unbeliever (kafir) and no longer Muslim. Takfir is used in the modern era for sanctioning violence against leaders of Islamic states who are deemed insufficiently religious. It has become a central ideology of militant groups (see: http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e2319)

3. NEW SECURITY UNDERSTANDINGS IN THE AFGHANISTAN SECURITY REGION

The conflict in Afghanistan, which has been going on for the past half a century and has been used as a testing and breeding ground by a variety of groups, particularly Islamist extremists, has disrupted traditional security mechanisms, and created a new dynamic in the field of security, which makes Afghanistan and other countries in the region equally vulnerable to threats posed by common historical, cultural, and civilizational ties (these may go back and forth, or soon or late). The other parts of people's live in the Afghanistan area have been pushed to the background as a result of these three essential issues. The aspects of a civilization's history and culture as well as its influence on the physical and psychological dimensions of security, on the individual and collective levels, and in the social, economic, and political arenas, all have an impact.

The current security dynamics stem from the transformation of traditional security into a new security, as a result of which the traditional security indicators have changed. This section deals with the evolving nature of security indicators. The meaning and notion of security, security spoilers, security means, security objectives, and the security environment are all undergoing a metamorphosis. Poverty, illiteracy, pessimism, and the destruction of customary, human, and religious values in Afghanistan and its environs, particularly in the border areas between Afghanistan and Pakistan, have changed everything at the core of the Afghanistan region, and are also spreading to other parts of this region. In these areas, the destruction of customary, human, and religious values have been especially devastating. Trust between humans, between citizens and governments, and between governments and citizens — the most prevalent aspect of daily culture — has been destroyed. There is evidence to support this allegation in every state that is located in the area of Afghanistan. At all levels of society and government in India (Paul, 2008), Pakistan (Yosuf & Nauman, 2015), Central Asia (Collins, 2002), Iran (Danaee-Fard & Anvary-Rostamy, 2007), Turkey (Grönlund & Setälä, 2012), Azerbaijan (Pearce & Fesenmaier, 2015), and Afghanistan and Iraq, a form of pervasive pessimism is present.

3.1. New Security Concept: Safety Value

The evolution of conventional security into contemporary security is the root cause of the present security dynamics in the region. The ever-changing characteristics of security indicators are discussed in this section. The notion of safety in the region around Afghanistan is clouded and convoluted in people's minds. Everyone has a different conception of what constitutes security in terms of their own strategic goals. The absence of a unified viewpoint toward security is what has made things more difficult. On the other hand, more developed cultures outside of Afghanistan have arrived at a unified but subjective interpretation of what constitutes a security. In the areas around Afghanistan, authoritarian governments use the pretext of maintaining security to silence their political opponents. Because governments have eroded the security of the people, political opponents conduct political and occasionally violent combat against the government. The maintenance of their own ideological principles is what destructive forces think of when they think of security.

Security in the modern sense in the Afghanistan region means the protection of the ideological values, political beliefs, and identity of groups. Even the concept of national security at the state level has been reduced to the security of the beliefs and values of a ruling group. For instance, on the level of national security, any radical religious group, ethnic political organization, or identity group thinks that the threat to their faith or identity originates from the government. As a result, each believes that assaulting a group that they perceive to be posing danger to their ideals is necessary for their safety. At this level, there is a conflict that pits everyone against everyone else. At the national level, the ruling groups in the government consider national security to be the preservation of *their* values. To ensure that their values are preserved, the ruling groups in the government use all of the government

machinery against internal rival groups as well as rival governments in the region. Therefore, on this level as well, it is everyone against everyone. This battle is being fought against everyone on several fronts, including political, economic, cultural, and military.

Therefore, security refers to the maintenance of a whole community's intangible assets. In addition to this, there are no established indicators. At the level of the nation as a whole, there is no unanimity on security indicators among the various religious and ethnic groupings. Although it is a typical definition of security indicators, the problem has not been resolved at the national level with this approach. Because of this, ensuring safety in the Afghanistan region has emerged as a primary issue for parties, ethnicities, and organizations. For the time being, security is an issue *within* the government in the areas around Afghanistan; however, in the developed world, the issue is outside of the government.

3.2. New Security Spoilers: Takfiri Groups

There are elements of danger that are unique to each area which are not shared by any of the others. In the region around Afghanistan, the insecurity is composed of religious and ideological extremist organizations that are working towards the goal of destroying the foundations of the nation-state by relying on jihadists and other extreme readings of Islam. This region has an abundance of potentially dangerous resources (Lažetić, 2021). The discussion of the takfiri Islamic ideology is what determines the key variable in this region, and what separates the Afghanistan region from other regions in terms of the levels of security provided. This worldview, which may be found in both Islam and Hinduism[4], has a propensity to be both destructive and radical.

The civilization, history, and culture of the people who live in this region are the primary factors that contribute to the existence of security risks there. Afghanistan is located in this region. Insecure forces have emerged from all three conditions to challenge the status quo as a result of the collapse of civilization, historical dissatisfaction, and the practice of an authoritarian culture by rulers and governments. These factors have led to the rise of insecure forces. They have a destructive nature. But, the fact that these forces are not striving for a better position is, maybe, the most dangerous aspect of the situation. Instead, destructive forces are the natural product of degeneration, dissatisfaction, and dominance in their own environments (in ungoverned spaces). They are aimless (Orsaeva, 2019) unplanned and, in most cases, strategic tools (Zagaris & Bannister, 2020) in the hands of the big powers, or the hegemonic governments within the area of Afghanistan. Non-strategic forces — such as the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan; the Khorasan branch of ISIS in South Asia; ISIS in Iraq, Iran, and the areas surrounding it; and the Central Asian extremist organizations in Azerbaijan — do not have a single charter for themselves, individually or collectively. As a consequence of this, the interpretations from people belonging to these groups have been varied and, in most instances, conflicting.

With the fall of Kabul in August 2021, the Taliban leadership announced that they would not support the Pakistani Taliban in their war against the government, and would not provide them with a haven in Afghanistan (Esfandyar, 2021). But, Taliban fighters in the streets of Kabul announced, in front of reporters and YouTubers, that the group's next mission is to fight Pakistan and stand by their Pakistani Taliban brothers (meaning TTP) (Qari Kahlid, 2021). Terrorists opposed to the governments of China, India, Central Asia, and Iran live in support of sections of the Taliban, and no doubt refrain from working against tyrannical or non-Muslim rulers in their liberation missions (according to them). The situation in Iraq is still the same. The threat of extremism in Iraq exists next to it, and continues as a constant, and a constant threat. There are high potential threats in Central Asia and Azerbaijan also. There are

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[4] Some people and groups in Hinduism as the other dominant religion in the Afghanistan Security Region have also recently radicalized (see: Hasan, M., Isezaki, K., & Yasir, S. (Eds.). (2019). *Radicalization in South Asia: Context, Trajectories and Implications*. SAGE Publications India).

hundreds of Islamist fighters among the Taliban and ISIS who are seeking to overthrow the existing governments in their countries. At least 600 Azerbaijani fighters live among the ISIS and other terrorist organizations in Syria (Balkhi, 2018).

When one group assigns a certain interpretation to the concept of security, it follows that every religious, racial, and ethnic group, as well as a sect, is in fact a security threat. In the Afghanistan region, every facet of the working world must be viewed through the lens of security. While Pashtuns in Pakistan believe that the Islamabad government is influenced by anti-Pashtun and Punjabi values (Rizvi. 1991), Tajiks in Afghanistan see the Taliban as a threat to their religious and identity values. The Tajiks in Pakistan also believe that the Islamabad government is influenced by anti-Pashtun and Punjabi values. In India, the government is comprised of members of the Hindu right-wing who view members of minority groups as being a danger to Hindu principles (Anand, 2005). All religious and ethnic identity dissident organizations are viewed as a potential danger in Central Asian countries. Iran, Turkey, and Azerbaijan are all experiencing the same problem right now (Natali, 2005).

3.3. New Security Means: Positive Instruments

In the new security, which revolves around "total destruction", the use of all means of destruction is in the spotlight. Effective tools invented for human development and well-being are being used for destruction. Due to this, the public mentality about these devices, their buying and selling mechanisms, and finally their destructive use, become prevalent. For example, UAV cameras, a new human invention for advanced photography, were used by the Taliban and the ISIS in Afghanistan (Kamran, 2020) and Iraq (Warrick, 2017) for purposes of terrorism. They planted bombs on these cameras, and detonated them against the enemies — and even in mass gatherings — which resulted in dozens of deaths and injuries. Today, in Afghanistan and Iraq, and around these areas, the camera drone is not only a means of advanced photography but also a dangerous explosive device to kill innocent people. Therefore, buying and selling a drone, and using it in insecure areas creates panic and anxiety (Personal Interview, 2021).

These and other useful innovations have become potent weapons in the hands of insecure groups, and also a cause for the general populace to feel uneasy. Nearly every development and welfare facility in the Afghanistan region is regarded with varied views, and utilized in a variety of ways. For instance, vehicles pose a significant risk in the Afghanistan region at the moment. Explosives in cars, bombs in cars lead to more car bombings. Even though it is a typical form of terrorist attack in Afghanistan and Iraq, and where people experience a high degree of automobile panic, this tactic is still being utilized as a tool of terror in other countries in the Afghanistan region (Mazurik & et al., 2005). A sense of car-phobia has spread among the common people in the major cities of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq. Car bombs have also been used in Iran (*The Washington Post*, 2007), Turkey (*New York Times*, 2015), Uzbekistan (Polat & Butkevich, 1999). Again, the Internet is one of the most important tools used by extremist groups for various purposes, beginning with recruitment to setting up terrorist missions. The virtual world of human beings, in which the younger generation is more involved, is also being attacked by various extremist groups (Lewis, 2005).

3.4. New Security Ends: Aimlessness & Martyrdom

The current idea of security emphasizes achieving the security goal as the primary concern. At the end of the day, governments, groups, and organizations all have one particular security objective in mind. This is the case with all traditional security concepts and techniques. Even terrorist organizations have tried to further their agendas by stoking the opposition's fears, and stirring up the opposition's fright. However, with the introduction of contemporary security measures, those organizations have risen to prominence which, based on their religious and ideological convictions, see "martyrdom" and

"destruction" as the ultimate purpose of their existence; hence, these groups do not pursue any set goals. Since the Takfiri extremist groups do not have an unambiguous goal in the current situation, they are aimless and wandering currents, and are dissatisfied with the current situation. This disturbs and spoils security.

This also indicates that these groups' values are not going to be attainable any time soon and, as a result, their primary and immediate goals are going to be acts of violence and terror until they achieve their beliefs. The establishment of the Islamic Caliphate and the unity of the Ummah (after the cleansing of the hypocrites from within) are some examples of the goals that lead to the recruitment of terrorist groups. Other examples include the destruction of the "nation-state" system, the decline and destruction of the West, and the decline and destruction of the East.

3.5. New Security Environment: Both Mental & Physical

During the development of contemporary security, dangers to the security environment has been increasing. That is to say, they pose a threat to every facet of human life. The fear of losing one's future, one's possessions, and one's being in both their physical and mental dimensions, is experienced by every citizen in this region. Life promises are gone, and people have a strong sense of fear. The primary setting is one of uncertainty due to every person's present mental state (Putnam, 1980). The individual who is associated with the Afghanistan region does not recognize any source or reference as a trustworthy institution, which can be depended upon as a window of support for his psychological and mental security. Therefore, when the environment of ideas and minds becomes unstable, many other aspects of the exterior environment of human life become unstable as well.

The fact that both the traditional and legal security regulations of the past are routinely disregarded is one of the most detrimental aspects of the current state of security. People cannot discover a way to live that is relatively safe, or according to any custom. Until the recent past, religion served as the most significant safe environment for the thoughts and ideas of the people living in this region. Religion helped to soothe the human psyche and, as a result, resolved the majority of the most significant problems of the time. Liberal thinkers proceeded to calm their mental anguish by providing a transparent and open interpretation of religion which was derived from their Sufi and mystical notions of the subject. However, these ecosystems have been completely ruined.

4. THE CONSEQUENCES

The transformation of security to a new stage has caused adverse effects in the region of Afghanistan. To begin with, a total pessimism has affected all levels of life in the region; the relationships between people have deteriorated. The relationship between the people and state institutions have also weakened, and there are no cordial relationships even among the States in the Afghanistan region. People have less confidence in structures to protect them on an individual, national, and non-physical level. Indeed, people have less faith in structures in general. The police serve the rulers as the protectors of security, and the judiciary serves as the distinguisher between those who have been corrupted and those who have been politicized; yet neither of these institutions can be trusted as authorities. On the other hand, the people are seen with distrust by the government, which is founded by a person, or group of individuals. Indeed, the government often views corrupt individuals as a source of security. As a result, the trend of democracy and security in the area around Afghanistan is heading in the wrong direction.

Extremism is the other security issue prevalent at all levels in this region. It is a persistent threat, which is spreading, along with terrorism in the countries of the Afghanistan region. People, especially the younger generations, who are more in number in this part of the world than in other parts of the world, have been pushed into seeking refuge in ideological groupings as a result of the dissatisfaction

that they feel politically, economically, and culturally. Religion has come to serve as the foundation for the dominant worldviews in this part of the world. Young people are presently gravitating toward the religions of Islam and Hinduism. Because Medina illustrates an abstract ideal, and powers the growth of religious ideology as the final goal of their battle, Medina is called "the city that won."

Another issue is brain drain. It is true that brain drain is a common public issue in the developing world. However, outside the Afghanistan region, this escape is voluntary; those who have a sense of patriotism and mission continue to stay and work in their own country. But, in the Afghanistan region, this escape is forced, and will lead to destruction if left unchecked. This situation may not seem serious in some countries in the Afghanistan region. However, authoritarian governments are either suppressing or discolouring the brains left behind. As a result, there is a monotony that has slowed down the development process.

Thus, the deterioration of the people's relations with the government and vice versa, the attraction of young people to religious extremist groups in order to achieve the structures of a so-called utopia in their respective regions and, finally, the flight of extremist brains have caused the field to be emptied every day for militant forces for the purpose of providing so-called security in the country. And, the brain drain of those who cannot accept to stay and fight the threats have also transformed the region. The area can make progress by consolidating its structures and bolstering its institutions. However, the consequences of insecurity have resulted in the failure to institutionalize a secure life, or allow its people to thrive.

Conclusion

The nature of security has evolved as is clear in the new indicators in the Afghanistan region. However, individuals, countries, and organizations in the region, and beyond, still look at the region from a conventional security perspective. Each has sought to solve political, economic, social, and religious problems with a conventional security approach. Even the US war on terrorism was led with this view of Afghanistan and Iraq. The result of all US efforts has only been excess insecurity. Mechanisms from within and outside the region that are rooted in traditional security models and approaches are still being defined and proposed in the old way to eradicate terrorism in the region, and undermine the extremist narrative. The older models include the creation of a regional army, the development of economic cooperation between governments in the region, the use of deterrence, etc. — all of which have proven unsuccessful at various times.

Resolving insecurity in the Afghanistan region requires new fundamental dimensions. In the first dimension, it is necessary to seriously study the nature of modern security in the Afghanistan region, and *not* look at its problems with conventional security tools. In the next dimension, the management of security issues in this region requires the cooperation of all actors in this region; individual work will not give results.

The revival of tolerant and moderate Islamic narratives that have their roots in the distant past of this region, and are practiced in the community even in the current situation, is the way forward. Designed anew by governments, the collective implementation of such moderate narratives can bring a new world to the people. Otherwise, one-sided and individual policies resulting from pessimism between the government and the people, and between groups among themselves, will make the region worse. Mystical and Sufi Islam, which was developed in Greater Khorasan and Transoxiana over the centuries and successfully stood up to face extremism at different times, can become the most important collective approach to restoring human and national security in the greater Afghanistan region.

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INVESTIGATING THE ROLE AND INFLUENCE OF DIASPORAS IN THE COURSE OF POLITICAL INTERACTIONS OF COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD TODAY

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Abstract

The passage of different historical periods has shown that with the emergence of various problems for humanity such as regional and civil wars, poverty and economic instability, cultural, civilizational and ideological conflicts, epidemics etc.; they always choose immigration as a solution to their problem. By saying goodbye to their homeland and entering a non-native land, these immigrants, after a while, form a social host in the heart of society, which seeks to preserve and keep alive the customs, traditions, art and science of their homeland.These communities are known as distant or diaspora communities.In the last two centuries, and especially in the present, the role and influence of the diaspora in international societies and the international system is clearly visible.At present, the importance of the role of the diaspora as one of the transnational actors along with the role of governments in the international system and international relations has an influential and special place.Which can achieve results in different conditions by benefiting from different efficiency and potentials developed from its existential nature.And these results in international relations are manifested primarily in the first place with important political, economic, social, cultural effects on the homeland and the host country of the diaspora, and finally at the international or regional level.In this article with descriptive and analytical methods;In order to identify the various influential dimensions of the role of diasporas in relations between countries, in response to the question that"What effects do host and patriotic countries have on the mapping of diasporas?"We hypothesized that"it seems that diasporas can create a map given the hidden potential within them and the conditions and opportunities created by the host country and the homeland."Finally, they can have an impact on gaining multifaceted concessions in foreign policy and international relations. In this article, the authors examine the role and potentials of Asian diaspora communities and reflect their performance on intergovernmental relations, examining the question and proving this hypothesis.

Keywords:Diaspora, Homeland, HostCountry, TransnationalActors, International Relations, Asian Diaspora

INTRODUCTION

Before globalization, governments were unrivaled rulers of international relations and exercised any sovereignty over them.Even when governments decided to relinquish part of their sovereignty, and they exchanged it with others in international organizations, and international organizations sided with governments to ensure the sovereignty and sovereignty of powerful countries.The bipolar system and ideological confrontations caused governments to take a stand against any entry of new actors and to exercise extreme caution, but with the advent of post-globalization, transnational actors announced their presence to make an impact in the field of international relations, and also, among the transnational actors that have a significant impact on international policy and foreign decision-making of governments, can mention non-governmental organizations(NGOs), multinational corporations, religious groups, epistemological communities, religious and humanitarian organizational and transnational communities, terrorist groups, drug traffickers as well as diasporas.Among these, diasporas are our focus in this article.Diasporas, which are an important part of the transnational actors in today's

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international system, are establishing their own communities and forming their own communities around the world.These immigrants can become influential groups nationally and internationally.This migrant population migrates to the host country for reasons such as regional and civil wars, poverty and economic instability, cultural and civilizational and ideological conflicts, epidemics, etc., creating a community in a non-native land.In that conscience there is a desire to return to the motherland if conditions improve.Therefore, by living in the host community, this community strives to keep alive as well as modernize its territorial culture, customs and teachings, even if it is mixed with the culture of the host community.The concept of diaspora and the patterns of influence of these societies are among the topics that have received increasing attention from researchers, politicians and other international relations activists in the last two decades.In the words of one of the leading professors in the field, "all enemies, friends and even skeptics agree on the growing use of the diaspora and its critical necessity."In the last two centuries, and especially in the present, the role and influence of the diaspora in international societies and the international system is clearly visible.At present, the importance of the role of the Diaspora as one of the transnational actors along with the role of governments in the international system and international relations has an influential and special place.Which can achieve results in different conditions by benefiting from different efficiency and potentials developed from its existential nature.And these results are manifested in international relations and the international system, primarily with important political, economic, social, cultural, etc.effects on the homeland and the host country of the diaspora, and finally at the international or regional level.In this article, first we introduce and recognize the diaspora and then in other sections we examine the research hypothesis.According to the available research resources related to the diaspora, in the present article, due to the differences in the subject, focusing on the role of host and patriotic countries, on the process of diaspora activities, including what effects these countries have on the prosperity and non-prosperity of diaspora potentials have their own activities. We have researched at national and transnational levels, such as various areas of foreign policy and international relations, as well as economic, cultural, scientific and technological, which can somehow show the innovative aspect of the forthcoming article.In a study of the impact of Asian diaspora communities, we found their performance and ability in intergovernmental relations.

1. DIASPORA;THE NEED FOR COGNITION AS A NEW CONCEPT

The word diaspora is conceptually a contextual word that has evolved over time.Diaspora is a combination of the two words Dia meaning around and around and Spiro meaning diffusion and dispersal,which is interpreted in the literature of migration to communities far from home(Saeedi,1398:125).Until the middle of the twentieth century,the concept of diaspora had only one exclusive instance,and that was based on the story of the dispersal of the Jewish people after exile in 586BC,which was told in the form of numerous and sometimes contradictory stories.Although the diaspora was also used in this period in the Christian tradition to refer to the experience of the Armenians in Armenia,The only basis of this concept was the history of the Jewish people,which was also used for the displacement of ethnic groups such as Armenians and Greeks due to the common features with similar historical cases(Anand,2003:213).Some of these common features that made it possible for other peoples to apply the concept of diaspora were coercion as a key factor in the external migration of people with a clear identity from their homeland,displacement and exile,and the collective memory of the mainland.and Strive to return to the mainland and preserve the culture by taking care of the common borders and maintaining communication and unity(Brubaker,2005:3).In another definition,this concept"brings together societies that are neither a perfect nation,nor a particular race,nor a particular religion,nor merely a group of people who miss their homeland;"Nevertheless,they have attachments and capabilities that make them vulnerable to influence on nations,races,religions and countries"(Aikins and White,2011:10).Until recently,diasporas were thought to be fragmented and powerless ethnic communities,but the contemporary experience of several diaspora groups shows that diasporas are

important players in global interactions that can be used as part of transnational political processes.They also have the potential to influence the economy and wealth generation to a greater extent(Cheran,2003:7).On the other hand,the existing reality indicates that this important concept in contemporary social sciences and international relations is not well known in Persian-language sources and scientific circles.There is no doubt that the study of the role-playing and influence of non-governmental actors has always been a concern of research related to international relations and foreign policy.But the phenomenon of diaspora and its connections with other fields needs more and more precise clarifications because it is a new and developing field of study(Pirkkalainen and Abdile,2009:5).As a global issue,the diaspora is also an opportunity that has been the subject of much discussion and exchange at many international conferences,as well as being studied at various universities as a field or program of study;But the realization of the opportunities arising from the formation of the diaspora depends on national and international planning.And in this way,it will be able to accelerate the development and dynamism of the international economy and the process of globalization of the economy,peacebuilding and the transfer of cultures and the strengthening of relations between different nationalities and play a role in public diplomacy programs.

2. THE FUNCTIONS OF THE DIASPORA IN THE FIELD OF POLITICS

The purpose of diaspora policies is to influence both the policies of the homeland and the policies of the host or to influence political practices on behalf of the homeland and the resident diaspora community.Diaspora policy is a set of processes that influence the policies of the host political regime for the benefit of the diaspora homeland and also influence the politics of the diaspora mainland in a way that benefits the diaspora and its host country(Laguerre,2006:15-16).Diasporas can also use extra-institutional methods to influence,depending on the conditions of the host country and their capabilities(Gottschlich,2006:18).It can be noted that although the creation of a collective identity requires an exploration of national self-awareness,the preservation of collective values and identity requires the formation of organizations and institutions.In fact,institutions create and reflect a common sense of identity,and therefore,the formation of collective institutions and organizations is essential to maintain the collective identity of the group in the target community.Some diaspora communities put on the agenda a large-scale effort to increase political convergence based on a sense of national identity,and based on that,establish various institutions and associations focusing on the issues and concerns of the diaspora community and the mother country(NoorMohammadi,2015:67-66).It should also be noted that diaspora groups,which sometimes act as lobbies,can act as mediators between their host country and their homeland,as well as intermediaries between the diaspora community and the host country.What usually leads to these lobbies becoming more powerful is not the size of the diaspora community,but their financial resources and organization(Laguerre,2006:87-89).In the lobbying process,members of the diaspora make extensive use of professional lobbying groups,the Internet,and other means of communication to educate politicians and the general public and to influence the political discourse of the host country,trying to define its political agenda(Newland,2010:9).Members of a prosperous diaspora community can bring more financial resources;Thus,their access to the powerful parts of the host country becomes easier and the talent,acumen and sacrifice required for the development of the country are provided more(Patterson,2006:1892).The Diaspora can use its financial power like other interest groups,but in the same way,unlike the usual interest groups,it can use its diplomatic credentials like the interest groups in the country of residence.The diaspora also operates in constituencies distinct from other interest groups;Because they are not physically present in the homeland and historically have no direct electoral influence(they do not have a real vote).Due to the increasing financial and political power of the diaspora,governments have gradually established ministries and departments for diaspora affairs to use their capacities to promote the country.This trend later highlights the domestic politics of diaspora action.The Diaspora,while seeking to advance its own

interests,also plays an important role in the domestic political process(ShainandBarth,2003:461462).Overall,the diaspora is a stakeholder group involved in the domestic politics process.They also seek to advance their identity-oriented interests,both directly through lobbying and indirectly by providing information to institutional actors.In addition,the diaspora is very important for the homeland as a tool of influence against foreign governments,including the host country,due to its international position.Analysis of the relationship between the diaspora and the homeland reveals the potential effectiveness of diaspora action.

2.1. The role of Diaspora in international relations

Another important issue is what interests the diaspora pursues in the foreign policy of their homeland as groups that are practically abroad;There are four possibilities for these groups to exert influence in their homeland,These four motives are not separate and are often intertwined and their focus is both in the country and abroad.First,the diaspora considers the foreign policy of the homeland as influencing and influencing the interests of the whole kinship community inside and outside the country.These benefits take many forms:definition of identity,sense of solidarity,commemoration of events,or financial considerations.Regarding the first possibility(tendency to define the identity of people),Theoretical tendency is present with the approach of constructivists.Identity does not always determine interests.According to the constructivist approach,identity is sometimes self-interest.For some diaspora communities,the identity of individuals is not the starting point for influencing interests,actions,and policies;Identity is both the beginning and the end.Second,the diaspora can play a major role in the ways in which homeland foreign policy affects the future of the homeland.Certainly the interests of the motherland,its existence and its international alliances are the concerns of its government,and therefore the diaspora is responsive in this regard.However,the diaspora believes that decisive policies,on the one hand,provide security for the homeland and,on the other hand,endanger the security of the homeland.Third,the diaspora sees domestic foreign policy as affecting the interests of a particular group,which can be ontological or purely material.Ontological interests provide the possibility,security,and self-perception of the diaspora in the country of residence.In this context,the efforts of diaspora activists to change the politics of the homeland in order to adapt these policies to their own priorities.Regarding material benefits,the diaspora community claims to satisfy the interests of individuals.In such cases,the diaspora community adopts its foreign policy to the extent that it puts pressure on the motherland,not to interfere.The fourth and final point is that the diaspora considers domestic politics to affect the limited bureaucratic interests of their societies.Because diaspora communities are focused on home affairs,the policy of a country that underestimates the role of the diaspora as an asset to the motherland can threaten the very existence of diaspora communities(Shain and Barth,2003:455-456).

2.2. Investigating the importance of Asian diaspora diplomacy in the world today

Diaspora diplomacy seeks to activate the potential of these expatriate communities to become a force for the benefit of the homeland.One successful example of this diplomacy is the Zionist regime in Israel,which has strong ties to its diaspora around the world and often uses them to further its own interests."In fact,until recently,it had a ministry dedicated to diaspora affairs,which was closed in2013,and instead a section in the Prime Minister's Office became active under that title."This action has caused dissatisfaction among some of the Jewish diaspora."(Norouzi,2013:141-140).For example,in the last decade,the US Congress has witnessed the efforts of Indian lobbies as one of the most successful lobbying organizations in the United States.The role and importance of these lobbying organizations is such that some in the United States believe that the Indian lobby in the United States is the only lobby that can achieve the power of the Jewish lobby.These lobbying organizations are based on strong networks of public and legal corporations that are collectively supported by wealthy Indians.The first

and most active Indian lobbying group is the Indo-American Political Action Committee.The committee,which is somewhat similar to the EPC,has sought to influence US foreign policy on a large scale.The committee's efforts to gain the support of both parties are evidence that the organization is focused on its goals of influencing US policies in the national interest of India and the American Indians.This committee became the most prominent lobbying organization of Indian descent only 5years after its establishment.China is also an interesting example,with more than 40million expatriate Chinese making up the world's largest diaspora in more than 130countries.What is remarkable is the widespread participation of the Chinese in public diplomacy,as some call it on the verge of hyperactivity.China has used its diaspora in special matters;For example,large-scale protests by the Chinese diaspora against the boycott of the 2008Beijing Olympics and support for its holding,or another example of diaspora efforts and lobbying for Taiwan's peaceful accession to China(D'Hooghe,2007:26).

3. THE ROLE OF HOST COUNTRIES IN THE FORMATION AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE DIASPORA

It must be acknowledged that the policies of the host society play a very important role in identifying members of the diaspora.According to studies,social integration expands the scope of diaspora members and paves the way for active participation in the social and cultural life of the larger community,and naturally reduces the negative psychological feeling that results from a painful historical memory specific to diaspora communities;In this regard,it plays an important role in reducing the diaspora's desire to enter the group.Multicultural policies facilitate the social integration of the diaspora in the host society.In contrast,assimilationist policies are only acceptable if the participation of marginalized groups and the diaspora is integrated into a larger culture.This policy,referred to in the social science literature as the"new racism";Provides the grounds for the formation of closed societies within a larger society(Rasooli,2015:326).Also,diaspora communities at the international level affect the country of origin and destination in various ways,such as active and inactive,constructive and destructive,until the diaspora becomes active and operational until the migrants do not feel a collective identity(Saeedi,2019:140).In host societies where the freedom of action of associations is recognized,diaspora communities can easily communicate with their members and organize them in line with the common goals of the diaspora community through the publication of newspapers and magazines,the creation of television networks,and the holding of rallies.The fundamental nature of the host country's political system determines the diaspora's ability to exert influence.The same is true of diasporas that have erosive effects on national unity.At times,non-democratic regimes have sought to exploit the diaspora to further foreign policy interests.However,these are out of the scope of this article because the diaspora is not an independent actor.In addition,the country of residence will affect the diaspora's ability to exert indirect influence over the motherland.The way in which the government allows the diaspora to influence the diaspora's value as a foreign policy asset is patriotic.In a weak(permeable)government,the diaspora can influence the country's foreign policy towards the motherland.Therefore,the diaspora in this case is considered capital and it is given the power to influence the homeland.Here it is assumed that the foreign policy of the host country is important for the homeland.The same factor of weakness or permeability that matters to the host country,He enters the game in his homeland,though not necessarily in the same way.Weak here does not mean a government that is too democratic,moreover,it is a country that is poor in terms of ideological,material and institutional resources.In such countries,which are not necessarily democratic,governments need support to survive,and a strong diaspora supports them in exchange for something;Thus,weak countries,both democratic and non-democratic,seek diaspora influence(Dehghani Firoozabadi and Bahrami,2017:44).

4. INTERACTIONS AND POLITICAL ROLE OF THE DIASPORA BETWEEN THE HOST COUNTRY AND THE HOMELAND

In order for the diaspora to influence the foreign policy of the motherland,must have the necessary motivation,opportunity and tools;This means that in addition to having to"want"to have influence,It must also have the ability to apply it.This ability is related to the capacity of the members of the community to organize as an influential and powerful group(which depends in part on the nature of the system of the resident country).It also depends on the capacity of the domestic political system to accept diaspora influence;Therefore,the factors affecting the efficiency of diaspora infiltration are:The motivation of the diaspora,the socio-political nature of the country of residence,as well as the homeland and the strength of relations(balance of power)between the diaspora and the motherland of the governments of the home countries have different approaches to the diaspora(Shain and Barth,2003:464-465).In some cases,governments see their activities as interfering in the sovereignty of the country.In other cases,governments see them as playing an important role in the country's social,political,and economic development.Some governments also have a more complex relationship with the diaspora,welcoming their activities in some areas and preventing them in others(Brinkerhoff,2012:76-79).The extent of the diaspora's motivation for influencing the foreign policy of the homeland varies according to their position on the issue of identity.There are factors that reduce the potential motivation to influence the motherland.One of these factors is the issue of dual loyalty,the second factor is related to cultural issues and failure is the third factor in reducing motivation;However,it also leads to anger,fatigue,or humiliation.Finally,if interfering in the foreign policy of the homeland is to strengthen the identity from the diaspora point of view and also legal from the point of view of the homeland,then the diaspora is motivated to exert influence.Of course,these factors also depend on the nature of the host country and homeland.Another factor is dual loyalty.A homeland may consider the diaspora a legitimate part of the people,But do not accept diaspora interventions on sensitive issues,especially those related to growing conflicts.In short,if the homeland is weak and receptive,The diaspora's ability to influence the foreign policy of the motherland increases(Dehghani Firoozabadi and Bahrami,2017:45-43).

5. THE ROLE OF THE ASIAN DIASPORA IN DIFFERENT FIELDS OF THE WORLD

Considering the role of the host countries and the homeland on the activities of the diaspora communities to which it was referred,then according to this issue, the activities of the diaspora in(economic fields),(socio-cultural)and(exchange and transfer of knowledge and skills)and(The role of new media and technological equipment).

5.1. The role of the Asian diaspora in the world economy

As in the field of politics and security,the diaspora's influence in this area is diverse.From direct and indirect participation in the commodity and capital markets to active role-playing in the field of trade and marketing to labor management,and most of all in the field of monetary and financial transfers between the homeland and the host country.In the latter case, there are different types of financial transfers.These activities include"foreign direct investment,sending money to family and friends or Remittance",savings,business,investing in start-ups,buying property or humanitarian aid."(Ionescu,2006:44).Among these,foreign direct investment,remittances and trade are more important.Marketa Geislerova says"Through trade and investment,diasporas facilitate the exchange of resources,goods,services,knowledge,technology and capital between the homeland and the host country.In addition,foreign entrepreneurs are involved in the economic development of the country."(Geislerova, 2007:98).Existing standard patterns of global trade also state that flows associated with migration and international capital are the most fundamental features of the age of globalization(Federici and Giannetti:2010: 295).Diasporas involved in transnational businesses,by acting as intermediaries simultaneously in addition to earning profits for themselves,can be a good

channel for improving productivity and increasing profits by creating opportunities and helping efficient management in different countries.According to research,these emerging actors can act directly and as foreign investors or be actively involved in the process of attracting non-native investors in countries.China is a prime example of this and has been able to capture a large share of the global market.According to statistics,about 50to70percent of foreign direct investment in the country came from the Chinese diaspora(Bahmani and Asadi,2018:105-104).The efforts of diaspora groups are largely focused on the economic sphere.They typically work in host countries to advance and defend the economic interests of their homeland;But this process is not one-sided.Diaspora groups also contribute to the economic interests of the host country in their homeland.They try to act as credible intermediaries between the host country and the homeland and benefit all parties.Some diaspora groups also promote new political and social ideas(Sheffer,2003:173).Home-based diaspora investment may be vital for resource-poor developing countries,as weak institutions and political risks keep non-diaspora foreign investors away.In fact,the diaspora is more likely to invest in economies that are considered risky by others because they have information and relationships that other investors no longer have(Alizadeh,2020:168-167).In the last 45years,the number of people from all over the world living outside their home country has nearly tripled;That is,it has increased from 76million to 215million people.In2012,the global diaspora sent more than \$534million to friends and family in developing countries.According to World Bank estimates in2011,diasporas based in the United States sent about \$51.6billion in remittances;That is,they sent about 30percent of the US GDPto their friends and relatives in the homeland or in other countries.In conclusion,it can be said that the more the activities and economic effects of diasporas are focused on achieving sustainable development,the more desirable it is.China and India have all reached record highs for their diaspora economic contributions in recent decades.However,the participation of Chinese abroad in their homeland,which has been mostly in the form of investment,has made their role in sustainable development and increasing economic growth in this country greater.However,Indians have preferred to be active in this field by sending money to their relatives,and this has diminished their role in the field of sustainable development(Ionescu,2006:44).The economic activities of diasporas not only affect the mother country but also have the potential to influence the host country.The most important of these are helping to develop employment,scientific advancement and international marketing for the products of the host country.Referring to the success of the United States and Canada in attracting immigrants from developing and highly skilled countries,RobertE.LucasJr did not limit the benefits of these relocations to the host country.He believes that in the form of an efficient immigration regime,these people can benefit all parties;Among other things,to strengthen exports from their homeland to the host country.An example he cites to prove this claim is the increase in imports of goods from East Asian countries to Canada in the last decade of the20th century and the early years of the21st century.

5.2. The cultural and social role of the Asian diaspora in the world

In fact,the diaspora's actions and reactions to the host community are inherently culturally burdensome and can be influential depending on the space in which they take place.In the same way,their interaction with their homeland and their compatriots,whether they like it or not, transmits the culture of the host society in which the members of the diaspora live.This phenomenon,although difficult to measure and requires the use of methodical scientific research,is undeniable.Members of the diaspora are simultaneously engaged in cultural trade,both when engaging in political activities,when engaging in an economic activity,and when they are involved in the transfer of science and technology.In the most basic case,they bridge the gap between two cultures by transferring words,terms and goods,and in more serious forms,by participating in scientific discussions and cultural activities,they play a more effective role in cultural exchanges and connecting civilizations.Under the right conditions,this presence and exchange of experiences strengthens the atmosphere of tolerance and pluralism in societies,deepens

human understanding and creates a possibility for resolving misunderstandings between nations;But in unfavorable circumstances,this situation can become a threat to various parties;For example,the challenge of cultural values in the host society of extremist groups to attack immigrants and narrow the field by fomenting ideological differences.Conversely,under-immigrants may take advantage of common issues and experiences and form coalitions within the host community by standing with other minorities.Here,too,the role of governments should not be overlooked.They have the ability to take initiatives in the socio-cultural sphere and in cooperation and interaction with diasporas.This is often pursued as part of a comprehensive cultural-national strategy.According to the explanations given,the Asian diaspora is analyzed exactly according to this framework.

5.3. Transfer of knowledge and skills by the Asian diaspora in the world

The exchange of knowledge,skills and techniques between tribes has long been an important aspect of human history,which has generally been possible in the form of migration,albeit for a short time.The diaspora's role-playing in the transfer of skills and the facilitation of this movement between nations is another issue that has been relied on in existing works.Members of these far-flung sections of the population can be divided into three groups based on their skill level:high,medium,and low. Meanwhile,people who have a high level of skills appear more active in the process of transferring knowledge,technology and related photofunctions,and therefore have a special place and more impact than others.This impact is rooted in the fact that these individuals,in addition to technical expertise,generally have a good understanding of situation analysis and also benefit from effective networking capabilities.Perhaps this is why,as the diasporas have become so important in international politics and economics,the world has also witnessed the flow of science and technology through these societies and their members.As mentioned above,the Asian diaspora has a narrative in the same realm.And this is no exception.

5.4. Impacts of the role of new media and technological equipment in international societies by Diaspora

Victoria Bernel points to the interplay of diaspora,cyberspace,and illustration.He points to the use of cyberspace to theorize transnational ways and new media related to the rise of new forms of society,public spheres,and places of cultural production;He also mentions the Internet as an essential tool for national independence that is concerned with the identity,democracy,culture,and history of diaspora communities(Bernel,2006:161179).Thus,the main approach of the diaspora is to focus on collective identity(Baubock and Faist,2010:21).As mentioned earlier,one of the concerns of diasporas is to maintain contact with their homeland and their ancestors.Despite living in a foreign land,diasporas have always tried to maintain their connection with their homeland through ritual processes and the creation of cultural symbols and myths.The presence of strong opposites and affiliations is one of the salient features of diasporas.Now with the advent of communication and information technologies such as satelliteTV,the Internet;SatelliteTV,Internet;Diaspora communities have more opportunities to communicate.It is now clear that information and communication technologies are helping to preserve many diaspora communities(Budarick,2014:145).Given the potential of information and communication technologies,it can be said that global communication has changed the concepts of the diaspora and collective memory;Because closing the time and space distances has provided the possibility of continuous communication between people in the diaspora,and this has changed the feeling of being in exile and away from the ancestral land. More importantly,it has enabled diaspora communities to form media nation-states(Abdi,2020:159-158).As we said,the Asian diaspora is also measured in this way.

CONCLUSION

Considering the influential role of the Diaspora in the world today as an important transnational actor,as well as the fact that new structures in the new fields of communication and media require the special focus of different governments and political decision-makers;It is necessary to review this social element,the impact of which plays an undeniable role in the various political, economic,cultural and other spheres in the relations between the host country and the country,as well as in international relations;Ignoring this important issue causes the loss of positive situations affected by the role of these social groups and also brings negative confrontations for the stakeholders.As mentioned in the present study,we are aware of the growing impact of the Asian diaspora in the world,and we came to the conclusion that if possible,the role-playing and the circle of movement resulting from the host and patriotic countries of the diasporas can play a role in beneficial and harmful orientations for the parties,especially the homeland.Given this issue, the need to pay more attention to the Diaspora's relationship with the homeland becomes clear;Because immigration and residency in the host country is due to homeland problems for the diaspora.And the diaspora inevitably has a desire to rectify the problems of its homeland,and this sometimes becomes a factor in seeking opportunities for the benefit of the host country versus the homeland of the diaspora.In this study,we also came to the conclusion that the countries of the homeland should try to fill their conflicting spaces with their diasporas in different countries so that they can at least in critical political,economic,cultural and benefit from the pressure of these institutions with the host country of their diaspora.And more importantly,even when the level of political relations between countries is at a desirable and positive level,diaspora institutions can further elevate the various levels of bilateral relations,especially in the economic and cultural fields and scientific and technological exchanges.In addition,we conclude from this study that neglect of diaspora societies can lead these societies to the core of their intellectual conflict with the sovereignty of the homeland.But on the other hand,proper attention and communication with diasporas in recent decades has shown that classical conflicts have given way to new and valuable interactions and meet the short-term and long-term goals of patriotic countries and the aspirations of diaspora communities.And the result guarantees stability and progress with the Saudi path in the above-mentioned areas.Therefore,the present article is an attempt to show the importance of these influential societies,especially in today's world,for political decision-makers and to focus on the issue at hand.And during that, the important conclusion was reached that the policies of the host society,especially the developed western countries,due to the importance of this type of society,try to align their cultural,social and...tendencies with their communities.And this action over time,highlights the field of active and voluntary participation of the diaspora in the above-mentioned matters,and consequently the opposite of this action by governments against the diaspora,will lead to their isolation.And it clearly undermines the hidden potential of these communities,which can be practical and productive for the host country in various areas.And how the diaspora,in this dilemma of self-preservation,pursues other goals with confusion,which can have unpredictable and negative consequences for the host states.In this study,we also concluded that in today's world,due to the undeniable role of this social element far from home,the positions of many diaspora states that have traditionally had a heterogeneous and interventionist view of their diaspora,It is regulated in such a way that they have to pursue their policies towards absorption-oriented policies even in the face of fundamental conflicts between the parties(the diaspora and diaspora homeland government)Because competition in different fields between countries,not considering the position of these communities far from home,is considered as the loss of political,economic,cultural and.opportunities and the loss of soft power bases at social levels and sensitive and influential parts of the world.

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THE POTENTIALS OF A SHARED TASTE OF BEAUTY IN SHAPING A MORE CULTURALLY-UNIFIED ASIA IN THE GLOBAL MEDIA AGE

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Abstract

As Parag Khanna put it in his book "The Future is Asian" the Asian perspective is worth considering in the global media age, because it is a viewpoint that covers a geography that contains 4.5 billion people. Asia's view is about various issues such as economic growth, poverty eradication, trade integration, infrastructure investment, and youth. What makes Asia important and crucial is the geopolitical landscape of Asia which is multi-polar and multi-civilizational in a sense that unlike Europe as a single level of analysis is a multipolar system with no hegemon since the Mongols. This is where the assumption of the paper is set and then is followed by the research question: Does a shared taste of beauty like those in ancient artifacts among the Asians bear the chance to bring harmony between them and turn them to a cultural unit? It is hypothesized that the multi polarity characteristic of Asia brings with itself both challenges and opportunities and in order to turn the challenges such as fundamentalism into an opportunity there needs to be a shared taste that carries with itself a common legacy and identity free from religion and nationality, one that can also stand out and perform equally on the global stage next to the West in today's world that the virtual space is a key player and a shared setting. The theory applied in the paper is constructivism which is focused on the role of shared views and values in shaping a shared identity.

Keywords: a culturally unified Asia, a shared taste of beauty, ancient artifacts, the global media age

INTRODUCTION

By setting a context of today's world, Asia as a key player in different domains becomes a priority both at global and regional level. The world is experiencing a systemic shift due to economy that accelerated by the end of the Cold War in terms of a rapid growth of the GDP that is going beyond the Atlantic zone and is forming an alternative economic pole. In this regard Asia is the most dynamic global region that has been successful in reaching a geo economic convergence, meanwhile keeping the geopolitical rivalries suppressed. However, there are political hotspots in Asia which could be considered as frozen conflicts whether in the Middle East or in the South China Sea. (Khanna, 2022) Yet a broader picture of Asia can be easily put it in the framework of institutional liberalism where economic interdependence help the states overcome political and security concerns in a pragmatic way. Needless to say, that the connection among the Asian states is to be intensified by new institutions like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, or "The Belt and Road" initiative.

Contrary to the economic horizon which is experiencing more integrity in a regional sense, there lies a cultural jigsaw in Asia in terms of variety. Moreover, by moving towards a more virtual life as an outcome of the Coivd-19 pandemic cultural issues are as important as economic and security ones if not less. Asia lacks the homogeneous language or religion that were keys in intertwining the West culturally and turning it to an influential player at the global level. Unlike the West, Asia has witnessed clashes rooted in religion and ethnicity that are two of the main drivers of culture in this part of the world.

This is despite the fact that culture embraces many other areas such as social behavior, norms, knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities and habits of the people in each society. Given the way the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization defines the term culture, it

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covers a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society that embraces areas such as art, literature, lifestyles and ways of living together. To be more precise as Tylor put it, it has both an external and internal dimension. The internal could refer to the psychological items whereas the external one could include items like art. This is also close to the picture Malinowski has provided us with:" Culture is a well-organized unity divided into two fundamental aspects—a body of artifacts and a system of customs. (Kelly, 2022) Considering the meaning of culture and how it has been resonated in the artifacts the question of this paper is: Could a shared taste of beauty among the Asians that have left its trace on the artefacts, lead to a more culturally unified Asia?

And as for the answer to this question it is hypothesized that by looking back through history and studying the interactions and exchanges among different nations in belle époque of Asia, we reach a common ground in the way culture presents itself by assessing beauty and how this can build a unity that moves beyond the existing discrepancies that until now has laid the ground for insecurity and threat among the states. Therefore, the question of this paper focuses on the potentials of a shared taste of beauty and the role it can play in bringing unity among the nations in Asia in terms of culture. It is assumed that the way the nations in Asia depict beauty, mirrored in artefacts, could be a precursor of a shared culture that can provide a better standing for Asia on the global stage when unified. Considering the essence of the topic the methodology applied in this research is a qualitative one.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Constructivism became a prominent theory as an aftermath of Cold War when main theories of IR fell short of predicting and explaining the end of it. Constructivism is distinctive because of three elements:

Firstly, intersubjectively shared values, ideas and norms among the actors in international arena shape the global politics. Constructivists cast light on the intersubjective characteristic of knowledge and for that they focus on the social aspect of human life in which shared ideas like an ideational structure play a key role in forming behaviors. This is the point where this theory chooses a path different from that of the main streams of IR like Neoliberalism in which the structure is made of a material structure.

Secondly, the ideational structure by nature is constitutive and dynamic which provides actors with an opportunity to redefine their interests and identities through interactions. This is another significant difference between this theory and the rationalist ones like neorealism and neoliberalism that have certain and definite views when it comes to interests and identities.

Thirdly, the mutual relationship between the actors and the structures in which both actors (agents) and structures are reproduced. In other words, structures shape identities and interests of the actors and at the same time actors redefine and reshape the structures via their newly constituted interests and identities. So, this reciprocal interaction leads to an emancipation from the existing challenges. Moreover, constructivism highlights that reality has the potential to change upon different contexts of time and place. (Burchill S. et al. 2013)

Alexander Wendt the main theorist of constructivism argues that discursive social practices that reproduce and transform the views of "self" and "other" by each actor builds the cultural context, (Guzzini, S. Anna Leander, 2006, p. 29) an ontological view close to that of critical theorists acknowledging that their reflective stance has more to say about the intersubjective bases of international relations especially when it comes to the emergence of institutions. (Price R. Christian Reus-Smit, 1998) Three types of culture- Hobbesian, Lockean, Kantian- as Wendt put it lead to three types of norms followed by different degrees of internalization. In a Hobbesian system actors behave based on egoistic and materialistic way which led to anarchy. However, by taking a different route as time goes by there

exists the chance for The Hobbesian culture to move toward a Lockean or possibly a Kantian one. Therefore, Wendt believes that cultures are not reified and absolute givens but they are the products of historical social processes. The dominance of a self- help world of egoistic states in today's world has led to a series of interconnected incidents that embolden collective action, problems and historical mistrust. Living in a constructivist worldview gives us this chance to eradicate obstacles such as self-interest by engaging states into new practices. (Guzzini, 2006, p. 29)

Having Chosen constructivism as the framework of this research, a metatheoretical approach is applied to see the world and giving meaning to concrete surroundings including objects as the basis for ontology. (Onuf, 2002, cited in Moshirzadeh, 2015) Through ontology the constructivists define their epistemology which mean the way cognition is developed. They believe that there is a link between the reality and the value, unlike the positivists' viewpoint. (Moshirzadeh, 2005, p. 21) This is close to the viewpoint of Emmanuel Kant presuming that in judgments of beauty our understanding of the world is deployed, in other words our cognitive faculties are involved (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2019) Therefore what we see and how we assess things could be taken equally as norms, values and ideas that as constructivists put it may lead to a shared identity. A shared taste of beauty could be the beginning point for bringing unity and harmony just like the norms and values.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A SHARED TASTE OF BEAUTY DISPLAYED IN THE ARTIFACTS AND ITS ROLE IN BRINGING UNITY

Art is a domain that carries and conveys the taste of beauty, one that can make a difference. Art is not normative in a sense that shows people what to do but it connects people to their senses, body and mind which finally spurs thinking, engagement and even action. Art and culture together provide people with the needed space to share their experiences even when they are seeing the world radically different. It is a safe haven for expressing disagreements while they are accepted and embraced with more tolerance in various types of discussions: political, social and ecological. Art lets us move beyond an us-and-them mentality and helps us reach a broader idea of what constitutes *we*. (Eliasson, 2016)

Moreover, in today's semi- virtual living we are to witness the fusion of technology with the creative industries, such as media, fashion, music, entertainment, education, literature and art as a key player in the digital revolution. Therefore, it is assumed that there will be more capacity to bring change because of the interplay between technology and the creative arts, generating completely new forms of expression and media. (Issacson, 2014)

3. WHY ASIA MATTERS IN THE GLOBAL MEDIA AGE?

Firstly, from a geopolitical perspective, this is the first time in history that the western civilization is witnessing this type of geopolitical division, one that is out of its control like the Cold War era. While Europe is dispersing, Eurasia is getting more intertwined and interconnected. Yet this closeness does not mean that Eurasia is about to see unity which Europe reached during the Cold War and the post-Cold War era. Instead, due to the interactions between globalization, technology and geopolitics in which each of them becomes stronger the Eurasian region in turning into both a dynamic and meaningful being. Moreover, the Mediterranean will become more unified because of the huge number of refugees moving from North Africa and the Levant towards Europe. The term "Global Island" as it was put by the British Geologist Helford Mackinder would not be an immature one when the world sees a dramatic interaction across the Indian Ocean from Indochina to East Africa. Middle East in this regard carries lots of potentials as a transcontinental region. The waning West will play its part for an emerging global culture which spreads across continents following the disappearance of distance through technologies like roads, bridges, ports, vessels and fiber optic cables. However, this is only one side of the story and there exist other aspects such as religion and culture that are affected by globalization and that may

easily bear the fruits of fundamentalism as it happened in the case of the Islamic State through the internet and social media.

Secondly China's "Belt and Road Initiative" which signifies a new Silk Road just like the Medieval Silk Road is not a single trajectory but an extended trading network linking Europe with China both overland and across the Indian Ocean. Putting the focus on the characteristics of the Silk Road as it was during the Middle Ages such as its multicultural nature provides us with a perspective of what lies ahead in the future and as Robert D Kaplan puts it "a world more similar to one which the Venetian merchant Marco Polo explored in the late 13th century". Besides, the advance of technology builds momentum for a smaller, more permeable and complicated world with numerous, intractable and interconnected crises. (Kaplan, 2017, p 7-8)

In the global media age the Asian perspective is worth considering, because it is a viewpoint that covers a geography that contents 4.5 billion people. Asia's view is about economic growth, poverty eradication, trade integration, infrastructure investment, and becoming the factory floor of the world, leapfrogging in technologies, building up foreign exchange reserves, massive military modernization and youth – the majority of Asia's population is young and most of the young people in the world are Indian and Chinese millennials and generation Z in addition to those in South East Asia. They have grown up in a post-Cold War world prior to an era in which the West was dominant in setting the norms, rules with ideational leaders. Now Asians travel more, trade more with the rest of the world and there are more investment flows between Asia and outside Asia since the Cold War ended. It comes of no surprise to see the emergence of a new system, an Asian system. Until now the world has witnessed systems like a European system, NATO, a North American system but not an Asian one. Calling Asia a system does not carry with itself a sense of peaceful and trouble free connection but one with more tense and interdependent relationship while having the ability to manage itself without any reference to the rest of the world.

Besides what makes Asia important and crucial in other countries' calculations is the geopolitical landscape of Asia which is multi-polar and multi-civilizational in a sense that unlike Europe as a single level of analysis it is a multipolar system with no hegemon since the Mongols. (Khanna Parag, 2021) This multi polarity characteristic brings with itself both challenges and opportunities and in order to turn the challenges into opportunities there needs to be a shared symbol that carries with itself a common legacy and identity, one that can also stand out and perform equally on the global stage next to the West.

Richard Hass, in his recent book "The *World, A Brief History*" classifies the world into six regions: Europe, East Asia and the Pacific, South Asia, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Americas. He evaluates the regions upon the role they may play in this century. Among all the regions he sees East Asia and the pacific as the most populous region of the world which is likely to emerge as the main context for this century's history to shape with China, Japan, South Korea, and Indonesia as key players. As for South Asia he believes that its dominance by India will overshadow that of China's. However, this region is prone to the rivalry between India and Pakistan alongside the chaotic situation in Afghanistan. The other part which he believes its scenarios will affect the world profoundly in terms of issues like energy and terrorism is the Middle East. Overall, he assumes that the main difference that lingers between the regions will be religion, the changing demographics, and language. As for religion he points out about the Muslim population which will mainly be in the Middle East and also Indonesia, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. (Hass, 2020, p. 34-35)

Micheal O' Sullivan, in his book *"The Levelling: What's next after Globalization?"* argues that geopolitics, in the coming era will be dominated by three main players that are Chinacentric Asia, the Americas, and Europe. India (O' Sullivan, 2019,p.25). Undeniably Asia is and will be a region with a

huge scope of affairs, economic, cultural and political. However considering the variety of religions, languages, tribes and sects, it is difficult to see Asia as a sole actor at international level.

4. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO SHAPE A CULTURALLY UNIFEID ASIA AND COULD A SHARED TASTE OF BEAUTY PLAY A ROLE IN THIS REGARD?

Asia is a region in which the powers have been successful in promoting a geo-economic convergence through pragmatism. Though, there are frozen conflicts such as Palestine and South China Sea that need to be tamed and resolved since they carry the potential of explosion. (Khanna, 2022) It is worth noting that the reasons behind these frozen conflicts are mainly geopolitical and ideological out of which many parts of Asia have witnessed fundamentalism as a backlash, one that poses a threat to media in forms of disinformation, misinformation and even hate speech. For that there is a need to carve out a collective identity and bring nations from different religious and ethnic backgrounds together. This is exactly where art can set the scene for togetherness.

As for the relationship between a shared taste of beauty and culture the research history dates back significantly to the end of 19th century when E.B Tylor focused on studying the culture of primitive people. His book, Primitive People, shattered the common belief that one needs to have an education in order to have a culture. He came up with new definitions that culture is the actions one chooses to define his/her character. It is the way someone chooses to live. Culture not only defines the way someone lives but it also indicates the mental capacity with which they do their livings. Moreover, there are some tools by which humankind presents its viewpoint on life such as: tradition, language and other means of communication including music, sculpture, poetry, architecture and etc. Through the creation of artefacts an artist conveys the meanings and values that are in his mind in addition to those that reflect the civilization he comes from at that moment or even the legacy of an ancient civilization of his background.

Art fulfills two aspects of expression: decorative and didactic. In one sense it soothes the mind and soul by providing the audience with pleasure and in another, it serves to teach and inform the viewer on meanings, values and the desire to communicate. (The Relationship between Art and Culture, 2021)

CONCLUSION

Unlike Europe or the West as a broader context, Asia is a continent with so many different languages, religions and types of governing as key drivers to form and shape a shared culture or identity. In recent decades Asia has been home to critical issues with a wide scope of influence having originated in clashes between identities and cultures. It is presumed that many of these clashes came to the surface as a result of globalization and digital revolution leading to a backlash motivated by an anti-West rhetoric. In many countries in Asia de-westernization has become a focal point notably in the Muslim ones. For that it is so complicated to reach a collective identity and culture necessary to give weight to the East in the international setting. This is exactly where the need for a shared element is felt, something that can give momentum to fruitful interactions among the nations in Asia. Here comes a shared taste of beauty which is mirrored in arts. Art is an underpinning from which issues like fundamentalism and nationalism in a negative sense are rare to appear.

In this regard history shows us how different nations were influenced by each other in Asia. At the time of the Silk Road the presence of the Mongols in the 13th century CE in the Iranian plateau and Central Asian regions transformed the cultural traditions by adding new and original elements. It influenced a broad artistic field such as miniatures, painting and book illumination with the Mongol rulers making use of Chinese and Mongolian features adding new elements to the already existing models. In the 11th century CE also with the arrival of the Seljuks from the Central Asian steeps to the Iranian plateau and Mesopotamia figurative artistic traditions were introduced, bringing eastern

elements to the local arts. The traces of this influence is seen in the Persian heroic epic Shahnameh and later works of art even after the end of the Mongol ruling. The point is that the interplay between the elements of the Mongolian influence and the Persian miniatures left a considerable heritage along the Silk Road. (Cultural Selection: Mongolian Influence on Iranian Arts) The same happened in Anatolia when in the 13th century following the Mongolian presence in China a blending of Sino-Turkish-Mongolian arts took place, with the Mongols bringing Chinese influence to Anatolia with leaving their traces on Anatolian paintings in tiles. A telling example of the reflection of shared beliefs could be tracked in Seljuk dragon patterns that exist in Anatolian minor arts comprising far- Eastern beliefs, astral mythological beliefs and shaman traditions. (Cultural Selection: Chinese Influences in Anatolian Arts)

For Asia to have an equal standing in the global media age, taking the new generations and their new lifestyles into account which is more or less virtual, it is essential to reach a common ground to tackle common concerns particularly in those parts of Asia dealing with issues such as fundamentalism or nationalism in a negative sense, that may be exacerbated by the use of the virtual space in which military power or hard power as it is put by Joseph Nye is not able act and the only source of power is the soft one. Therefore a culturally unified Asia based on a shared taste of beauty could be a solution, bringing a balance of presence both at regional and global level.

The resurrection of this shared ancient taste that reflects a shared viewpoint on how one sees the world would entail benefits as such:

1. Shaping a culturally unified Asia and presenting Asia as a unit

2. Providing the Asians with an equal standing alongside the West in the global media age, leading to a balance of presence in the virtual space

3. Eradicating the assumptions like "cultural invasion" that until now has hindered constructive and productive bilateral relationships between the West and the East

4. Replacing "the othering" with a collective identity built on a shared viewpoint, decreasing the potentials of intra and interstate conflicts in Asia

5. Promoting synergy, dialogue, engagement as the bases for transcultural understanding

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CAPACITY ANALYSIS OF THE SOUTHEASTERN COAST OF IRAN IN THE NORTH-SOUTH CORRIDOR AND THE SILK ROAD REHABILITATION PROJECT

Fatemeh Alamolhoda⁎

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, countries' special attention has been paid to power builder geoeconomic factors such as corridor plans. Iran also, due to its special territorial and geopolitical characteristics, somehow is considered as a crossroads of this route. The seaports of the south-eastern coast of Iran, connecting to the Indian Ocean as communication and gateway nodes, can play an important role in the global trade flow which today has turned to maritime transport. It also has many playing cards in the game of powers in the geographical rang of the world, in the context of international North-South Transport corridor, the Silk Road Rehabilitation Project and the convergence of Eurasia. The North-South Corridor is calculated as a powerful multi-mode network (sea, rail and road) from the Indian Ocean to the Baltic and Scandinavian countries compared to traditional routes by up to 40% shorter in distance and time, and up to 30% cheaper in cost. Theoretically, this corridor could challenge the position of the Suez Canal on the continental level if it is successful. Various alliances, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, are considered as instruments of regional peace and security. Indeed, with the increase in the level of positive peace in the region and the common understanding of countries about security threats, the region will move out of the status of negative peace by changing the procedures of cooperation. According to theoretic approach of regional networks, each network has nodes, loops and central units which have minimums of links. Units such as Iran, which is located between a network of Persian Gulf clusters, West Asia, some northern areas in Central Asia and the Caucasus, enjoy more resources and security than other units. This study tries to prove that through considering the capacities of the south-eastern coasts why Iran compare to other alternative routes is the most cost-effective and safest route.

This article with descriptive analytical method from using library sources and variant maps determines the geographical facts and geopolitics potential of the southeast of Iran especially the Oman sea coasts and its effects on Iran Commonweal.

Keywords: Geopolitics, South-eastern coast of Iran, The Oman sea, Indian Ocean, North-South corridor, Belt and Road Initiative.

INTRODUCTION

Today, the issue of transportation is one of the important components of the national economy and due to its infrastructure, it has a great impact on the process of economic growth, national power and political behavior of the country. This section includes activities that are widely used in all fields of production, distribution and consumption of goods and services and plays an undeniable role in economic activities. Without the transportation network, subsidiary facilities and equipment and the desired fleet, it seems impossible to imagine the general growth and development of the country. Basically, with the growth and development of the world trade and economy at the present time and considering its rapid expansion, the role of transportation systems in optimizing costs, travel time, speed of movement, safety and level of services cannot be denied. Also, understanding the geographical and geopolitical situation of different regions of each country can have direct effects on the interests of that country (Arjroodi, 2005).

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The Islamic Republic of Iran is a bridge between Asia-Europe and North-South and can play a key role in the transportation of goods by ground (road and rail), air and marine transportations, due to its special geographical location. This privileged position of Iran in the region has doubled with the collapse of the former Soviet Union; So that suitable conditions have been provided for goods of transit and for regional market of goods and services to be more active. Considering the investments made and the facilities created in all areas of ground (road and rail), air and marine transportations, the countries of the region from the south of the Persian Gulf to Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Baltic states and from the east to the west of Asia can confidently choose Iran for transferring exported and imported goods **(**Babazadeh, 2009: 157-199).

Countries prepare their territory for the transit of goods through regional exchanges by creating desirable conditions. This will both lead to revenue for the country through which transport is done and increase its political and geopolitical position at the international level, as well as increase the dependence of the destination countries on the country through which transport is done. The benefits of transport are multifaceted. If a country has the environmental potential for transport and wants to use this potential to improve its position at the international level, it is necessary to prepare its legal, legitimate and political conditions in addition to the appropriate physical infrastructure (Abedini, 2021).

The problem of this research is that Iran will be a safer and more cost-effective route in the loop of new Silk Road and the North-South corridor, considering the situation of Chabahar port, which is located in the passage of two of the three important international corridors.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The dynamics of regional networks will have different effects and consequences through their function. In the meantime, individual nodes, clusters, and the entire network will influence the processes and outcomes of the benefits. Units located between network clusters (betweenness centrality) benefit from more resources. Iran, for example, can be thought of as one of the units located between the clusters of the Persian Gulf, West Asia, parts of the northern basins in Central Asia and the Caucasus all of which, of course, are considered a part of its network based on a network view of the regions. Well-connected units will receive more resources from network connections. In this way, grouping within the regional network can expand the power of resource utilization (Ghasemi, 2015: 153).

The theoretical basis of the present study is the discussion of convergence and network integration. In general, the formation of networks requires a minimum of convergence and interconnection between its loops. This convergence also requires the cooperation of network units and nodes with each other. In the field of international relations theories, there are three main theoretical trends which include power-based and geopolitical theories, economics-based theories and idea-based theories (Ghasemi, 2015: 161). By examining the situation of Iran and the special geopolitics it possesses in the transport crossroads, the importance and position of Iran can be evaluated and proved from the perspective of all three theoretical trends.

Convergence in international politics is a process in which political units voluntarily relinquish their full authority to achieve common goals and follow a supranational power which is the international institution or organization (Farajiraad, 2013: 84-116).

In fact, the main motivation of governments for such close cooperation is their access to benefits and opportunities that were impossible for them to achieve before entering the convergence process (Hafeznia, 2011). These types of convergences include the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) and its function.

Therefore, using the descriptive-analytical method and the library collection approach, we will discuss what is the position of Iran among the international corridors and what is the advantage of the eastern coast, specifically Chabahar port, over alternative routes?

2. FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

2.1. One Belt One Road

For the past two decades, despite the global economic downturn, Asia has been the center of global economic growth. It has become a global hub of production and trade, capital structure, and productivity, and has grown rapidly on the basis of interregional and international trade. Meanwhile, China and India have become two emerging world powers with rapid economic growth and large economic volumes. Although China, as the second largest economy in the world, has more power than India, India is also trying to be one of the most influential and important powers in Asia and even the world. Both countries pursue geostrategic and geopolitical goals in Eurasia with the priority of Asian politics. The growing need for energy resources, access to large consumer markets and the expansion of spheres of influence have led the two countries to adopt a geo-economics strategy to establish communication corridors to access the Eurasian continent. On the one hand, the countries of Central Asia, beyond the Caspian Sea, and Afghanistan, and on the other hand, the Persian Gulf region, South Asia and the Indian Ocean are the focus of both powers. The interference of geopolitical territories as well as China and India spheres of influence have caused the two countries to compete with each other for protection, pursuit and securance of national interests; In such a way that the two great Asian powers have almost conflicting interests with high regional and global aspirations (Veicy, 2021)

China has launched a Silk Road Rehabilitation Project called the "One Belt-One Road initiative", which has two ground and marine roads:

1. The Silk Road Economic Belt

2. The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

The Chinese government launched its 21st Century Maritime Silk Road initiative (MSRI) in October 2013. Chinese leaders have planned ambitious MSRI to build economic waterway connecting Beijing with economic centers around the world. Beijing insists that the project is economically motivated, but some observers believe that China is primarily pursuing its strategic goals. The Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean are currently playing an important role in world trade and will become even more important in the coming years. Most of these extensive Chinese constructions are active in the Indian and Pacific regions. Each of the world's 10 largest ports is located along the Pacific coast or in the Indian Ocean, and more than half of the world's maritime trade is shipped across the Indian Ocean alone.

The volume of oceanic commercial transportation has quadrupled since 1970, and about 9.84 billion tons of products are transported through this annually. Exports of Asian economies are expected to increase from %17 in 2010 to %28 in 2030, which is more in line with the region 's economic environment (Farajiraad, 2013: 84-116).

Globally, the maritime silk road is more important than the "economic belt" which comprises the continents. The "road" is designed to go from the Chinese coast to Europe via the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean in one direction and the other from the Chinese coast via the South China Sea to the South Pacific Ocean. In other words, the "Road" is a maritime network of ports and other coastal infrastructure from South and Southeast Asia to East Africa and the North Mediterranean Sea.

The 21st century maritime silk road has been designed for two roads: one from Chinese coasts to Europe via the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, and the other from Chinese coasts to the South Pacific Ocean via the South China Sea. According to a report of the National Committee for Development and Reform, the New Silk Road is based on the five principles of the UN Charter: mutual respect, lack of mutual commitment, lack of mutual interference, equality, mutual benefits, and peaceful coexistence. After China, the second most important area of the Maritime Silk Road is Southeast Asia. To bridge the communication gap, China's geostrategic goal is based on the Maritime Silk Road project, assurance China's control over the most important maritime trade routes and the import of raw materials (Abedini, 2021).

Map 1. One Belt One Road

The maritime silk road passes through Fuji Province, which is located along the Straits of Malacca and ends in Europe. While in most cases the primary destination of the Maritime Silk Road is through the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean countries of Europe, it should be noted that the Maritime Silk Road also connects to various East African countries such as Djibouti, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique and Tanzania. This route is intended as an economic tool to stimulate the growth and modernization of the ports and infrastructure of the participating countries. The initiative has no political or military goals, and the implementation of a peaceful program focusing on China's growing wealth has always been emphasized. This program is actually based on a win-win approach. The one belt-one road initiative has officially become one of China's national strategies.

Map 2. Iran's Vision

The importance of crossing Iran on the rail rout of China-Europe can be explored in the following cases from China's perspective:

- Improving the transportation network in eastern Xinjiang and its economic growth

- Access to Southern Europe and the Mediterranean

- Access to new countries along the way

- Access to the countries of the Persian Gulf

- Reduce dependence on specific countries of Kazakhstan and Russia (Sepahi, 2012).

2.2. North-South Transport Corridor

The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is a multifaceted corridor that connects the various transport regions of South Asia, West Asia, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Russia and Northern Europe. The North-South Transport Corridor is an intergovernmental agreement between Russia, India and Iran which was signed in September 2000 and entered into force two years later. In total, thirteen countries have ratified the agreement since it was signed.[12]
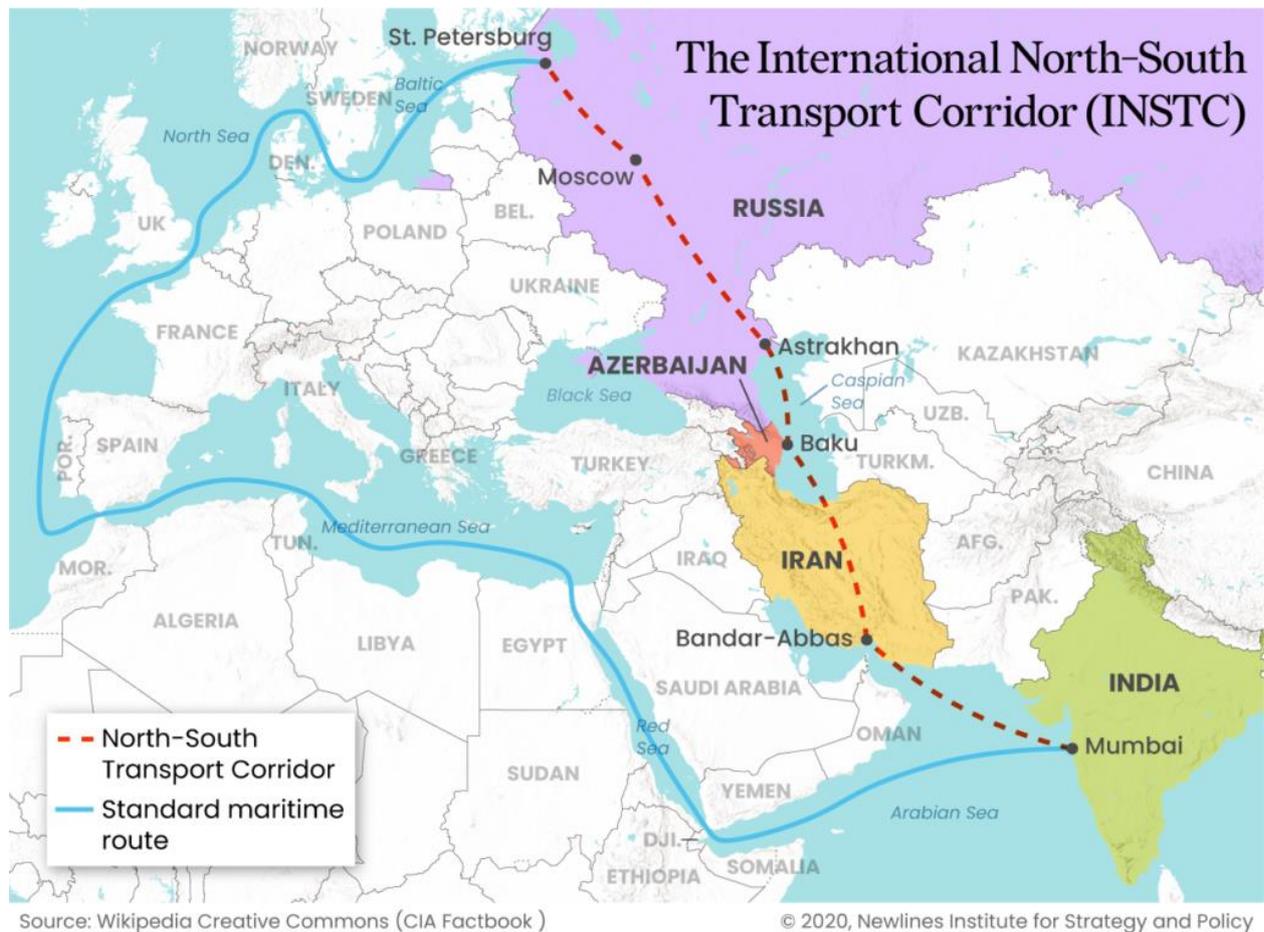
Map 3. International North-South Transportation Corridor

This route has a number of maritime and ground components that make it necessary to have side routes to facilitate the transport route. These triple paths are:

- The first one known as the western route is a traditional pathway and the countries located in this corridor have accepted it more. This route starts from the Indian port of Mumbai and reaches Bandar Abbas in the Strait of Hormuz, between the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf, and then continues along the ground and rail routes inside Iran and reaches the Astara passage, Iran. Then, a land route begins parallel to the Caspian Sea, which reaches Astrakhan, Russia, then to Moscow and northern Europe. Or it reaches the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Black Sea and subsequently Georgia through the Astara passage and continues to Western Europe.

- The second route starts from the port of Mumbai on the west coast of India and reaches the Bandar Abbas(port) of Iran in the Strait of Hormuz. From there, the ground route of the corridor including ground or rail routes inside Iran begins and reaches the port of Amirabad on the Caspian Sea coast. From here, the maritime route of this passage starts in the Caspian Sea and reaches Astrakhan, Russia, and from there to Moscow and Northern Europe.

- The third route is known as eastern route which starts from Mumbai and reaches Bandar Abbas. Then there is the ground route inside Iran, which reaches the port of Amirabad. It then crosses the eastern Caspian Sea and Turkmenistan and ends in Russia and then northern Europe.[13]

From one and, both International and Domestic North-South Corridor, the North-South international corridor including the connection of Northern Europe, Scandinavia and Russia through Iran with the countries of the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia, and on the other hand,

the north-south internal corridor in Iran which connects Sarakhs to Chabahar all indicate the great importance of eastern Iran in the current global geopolitical and geostrategic environment (Khalili, 2012: 8-124).

The advantages of the North-South corridor include the following:

- Reducing the distance and time of transporting goods from Europe to the Persian Gulf countries and South Asia

- Russia's strategic access to the open waters of the Indian Ocean

- Creating a proper context for more cooperation between the countries of the route

- Reducing the dependence of South Asian countries on transporting and trading through the Suez Canal (Naserian, 2009: 70-73).

It should be emphasized that being in the path of North-South Transport Corridors as a result of establishing transport connections between Russia, Eastern, Central and North Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus on the one hand and South Asia, Southeast, Far East, Oceania and the Persian Gulf countries on the other hand is considered a prominent advantage for Iran. Due to the short route in the north-south corridor and equipping infrastructures and providing extensive facilities in various sectors of transportation, the Iranian route has many attractions for the transit of goods. Shahid Rajaei, Amirabad and Anzali ports have a special place in the north-south transport corridor.

2.3. Ports

Ports, as communication and gateway hubs, in addition to playing a major role in the global trade cycle that is now moving towards maritime transport, also play a vital role in the game of powers at the geographical level of the world (Noorali, 2020). Thus, ports have geopolitical, geostrategic and geo-economics roles in the current transitional global order, and global powers have a special view of them in the arena of power competition in the 21st century.

The focus of the powers in the past was the vast maritime, ground and marginal areas from geopolitical thinkers' point of view and this led to the theories of maritime, ground(Heartland) and marginal (Rimland) powers. However, today, with the spread of geo-economic thinking, ports as the nodes of the geopolitical network and the heartlands of the coastal countries have gained special importance in the field of maritime trade (Noorali, 2020).

Ports in a special geographical position with a gateway function as world trade hotspots are of paramount importance in the foreign policy of countries around the world, especially the emerging powers dreaming of becoming a superpower in the 21st century. Therefore, from a professional point of view, the port can be considered a vital strategic bottleneck located in the lands connecting the sea and ground, which on the one hand saves the port country from moving towards entropy (damping) in the world system, and on the other hand, it is a geopolitical asset of the country on which neighboring landlocked countries have a geopolitical dependence (Noorali, 2020).

A big game has been formed in the new century with the focus on ports, and China, Russia, the United States, and India are leading players in the geopolitical competition in Central Asia region as the "geographical axis of history". These four powers compete in a region that is critical to the global balance of power. Hence, geopolitical analysts have called it the big new game (Noorali, 2020).

It is important to note that in contrast to classical geopolitics and the Cold War era, when military and weaponry competitions prevailed between geopolitical rivals and national budgets were spent on military and security affairs, in the new era a geo-economic perspective has led to the development of infrastructure of the countries involved in the competition. The region of Iranian plateau and South Asia,

which in the past was involved in the geopolitical rivalry between Russia and Britain known as "the big game", is now involved in the geo-economic rivalry between China and India, which can develop the infrastructure of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan; it specifically can make Baluchistan a bigger place (Veicy, 2021).

2.4. Chabahar Port:

Transfer of traffic load to Chabahar port

Bandar Abbas has an important strategic position in Iran because it has been located in the Strait of Hormuz. However, the heavy traffic of US commercial and military ships in this area can be problematic. In order to increase trade and further growth, the Iranian government intends to transfer its maritime traffic from Bandar Abbas to Chabahar port (Byrd, 2006).

Chabahar port, which experienced its first serious development in 1984,[22] has become a free commercial-industrial port since 1992. It also served as Iran's trading gateway during the imposed war.

Chabahar port is located on the main shipping lines to Africa, Asia and Europe due to its privileged position in the east of the Strait of Hormuz and the Sea of Oman, and is recognized as the shortest communication and transport route of Central Asian countries and Afghanistan to the markets of the Persian Gulf, East Africa and other parts of the world. The two ports of Gwadar in Pakistan and Chabahar in Iran, with their strategic and important positions, have the potential to become the gateway to the Central Asian Economic Lifeline.

Map 4. Southern Iran and Pakistan, Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea

The ports of Karachi and Bandar Abbas are considered to be rivals of these two ports which are always in danger due to the possible closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran, and the concentration of military forces in Karachi. In a fierce competition, China and India intend to seize the markets of Afghanistan, Central Asia and Russia and establish closer relations with these countries. Transportation through the port of Chabahar is the shortening of thousands of kilometers of trade routes. If the

infrastructure is created, the Chabahar port is prepared and provided with desirable conditions in this competition to take over the economic lifeline of Central Asia (Kiani Moghaddam, 2012: 16-18).

Chabahar is called the East transport axis in the east axis development plan. The corridor which starts at the Silk Gate in China and feeds the heart of the economy of the country, Canton province, joins Southeast Asia, then enters India, after passing through the region's most important cities, such as Calcutta, Nakpur, Jabpour, Hasirabad, Karachi and Ben Qasim reaches Chabahar. Chabahar port is the easiest and most strategic way to access open waters for the six landlocked countries of Central Asia. The region is connected from the north to Central Asia and Afghanistan, from the east to Pakistan and from the south to the Indian Ocean through the ground and air transportation networks. Direct access to open waters and being located outside the Persian Gulf, as well as the lack of vulnerability in times of crisis, and a special strategic position are other features of Chabahar (Abedini, 2021).

Chabahar port has the potential to serve as a bridge between ECO and ASEAN member countries and other countries in the world for the production, export, exchange and transit of goods. In addition, Chabahar can be the key to the development of the east of the country and with the implementation of the transport axis of the east of the country, the economic and commercial geography of these areas will change (Abedini, 2021).

2.5. Gwadar Port:

A good replacement for Karachi Port

Karachi Port is the largest commercial, military and fishing port in Pakistan, located at a strategic point. Proximity to India is one of the main problems of this port. Karachi Port was attacked by Indian military troops in 1970. Hence, the Pakistan government tried to reduce its dependence on this port by building the Qasim port. Currently, the best alternative for this port is a port far from India (Gwadar port) (www.atimes.com, 5/16/2022).

In addition to being far from India, the port of Gwadar has a convenient and important position, which is located in the north-south corridor, is similar to the port of "Chah Bahar", can be a line of communication between 20 countries and through the Red Sea, the key to enter East Africa (Kanwal, 2012). Despite the differences between Pakistan and India, Pakistan intends to establish relations with its northern countries and needs adequate infrastructure to establish such relations. Pakistan suffers from many problems in this area, including lack of transportation infrastructure, industrial and commercial capacity, as well as problems in its social structure (www.atimes.com, 5/16/2022).

China, as one of the world's economic hubs, is in close competition with India to gain access to the markets of Central Asia, Eastern Europe and Russia. China, which needs an eastern transit axis to import energy and export goods, has invested in the port of Gwadar (Kiani Moghaddam, 2012: 16-18).

This investment has two important benefits for China, not only providing commercial purposes but also providing an opportunity for China to monitor U.S. military sovereignty in this region (Kiani Moghaddam, 2012: 16-18). The port of Gwadar can be a launching pad for Pakistan to become a strong and prosperous country. Also, despite the pirates in the Malacca Strait and other sea lanes, the motivation of countries to use this transit axis will be increased but there are many problems in turning the Gwadar port into a transit gateway to the east axis, all of which relate to the internal affairs of Pakistan and southern Afghanistan (where the north-south corridor crosses the port of Gwadar to Central Asia and Eastern Europe). The main and most important problem for both China and Pakistan is the presence of Gwadar port in Baluchestan province of Pakistan. Due to ethnic and tribal conflicts and separatist beliefs, the people of this region believe that they will not gain anything from the development of Gwadar port. On the other hand, the existence of terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and the Taliban has

always been the scene of clashes between the people of this region and the central government. In addition to insecurity, the presence of narcotics and their transit from Afghanistan to Pakistan are other problems facing the Gwadar port and the government of Pakistan (Heidari, 2005: 95-103).

2.6. Suez Canal Challenge

Shankar Shinde, Vice President of the Federation of Indian Transport Associations, said at the North-South Corridor Conference in 2017: "The purpose of creating a corridor is to expand the volume of trade between countries and regions located in its various routes, by reducing trade costs and transportation time. Previous research on the routes within this corridor, as well as subsequent research, has shown that these routes reduce the cost of trade between countries on these roads by about 30 percent compared to traditional roads and transport time by about 40 percent compared to the Suez Canal" (Shinde, 2017).

The North-South corridor as a multimodal network of sea, rail and road with a length of 7200 km for freight from Bombay in India to Helsinki in Finland is up to %40 shorter in distance and time and up to %30 cheaper than traditional routes. In this way, India will be able to save up to 20 percent on shipping and container shipping costs to countries with which it has common interests in Central Asia (Veicy, 2021).

This transit network could allow countries along the route to use it as an alternative route to the Suez Canal. The corridor could theoretically reduce the current sea route via the Suez Canal from 16,000 km to 7,200 km and reduce travel time between South Asia and northern Europe from 60 days to 30 days. This will significantly reduce transportation costs on the continental level and, if successful, could challenge the status of the Suez Canal.[34]
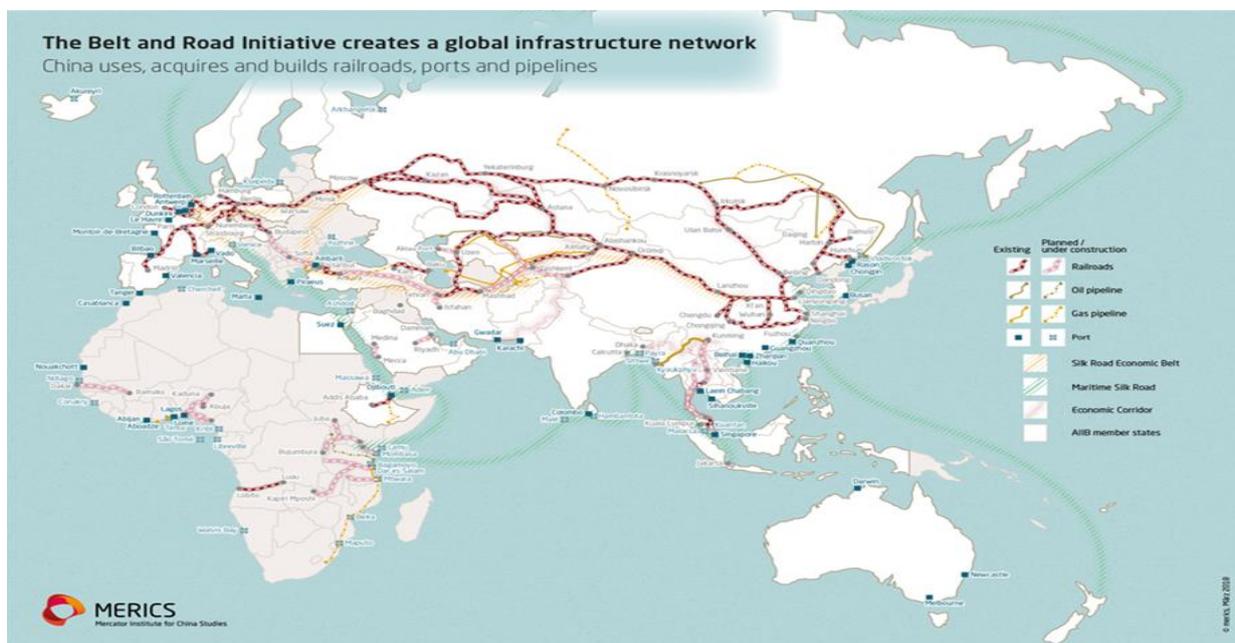
Map 5. South Asia – Northern Europe Transportation Lines

One of the important necessities in international trade is to ensure the transportation of goods in a safe, low-risk and high-speed environment. The closure of the Suez Canal, one of the most important waterways for trade in goods and energy in the world, could have an irreversible impact on the global economy. Because about 10 percent of international trade, including a significant portion of the world's oil needs, also passes through this sea route.

By changing its view of the geo-economic perspective in recent years, Iran has made to take steps to facilitate the transit route, some of which are:

- Concluding the North-South International Transport Corridor Agreement

- Establishment of multilateral corridors under the auspices of the Economic Cooperation Organization Eco-Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) Road Corridor and Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran (KTAI) Road Corridor

- Ashgabat quadripartite agreement concluded between Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Oman

- Membership in the Europe-Caucasus-Asia Corridor Agreement known as the TRACECA

- Concluding Chabahar Multilateral Transportation Agreement between Iran-India-Afghanistan

- Negotiations for concluding a multilateral international transport and transit agreement between Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Greece, Bulgaria with the aim of establishing a Persian Gulf / Black Sea corridor

- Concluding Iran-Turkey-Qatar Transport and Transit Cooperation Agreement

- Launching an online guide system and membership in the E-CMR convention

- Follow the steps of membership in the European transport agreements (ADR) and perishable foodstuffs transport (ATP) (Pabarja, 2019).

Of course, we must also pay attention to the weaknesses. Because problems such as the lack of a proper financial services system in accordance with international standards, lengthy customs processes, depletion of the rail transport fleet, and the multiplicity of beneficiary organizations and delays in resolving these problems increase the share of alternative routes in neighboring countries and make it more difficult to absorb transit demand in the future. Rival corridors for the north-south corridor passing through Iran include the Suez Sea Corridor and the overland route through the eastern countries of Iran (Sepahi, 2012).

It can be suggested that Iran needs to make major decisions regarding the re-creation of its historic role in the New Silk Road. Decisions that take place under diplomacy. Iran must clearly act to launch the Central Asia Corridor and the historic North Corridor. Iran's railways, like the Mashhad-Tabriz railway, are old and there are almost no high-speed trains.

The important thing is that Iran must become a rail-based country. Since in the past, there was more emphasis on airport construction and air transportation, today we see many unusable airports in Iran, which is not very advanced due to sanctions, navigation industry and aviation technology. Therefore, Iran should be made railway-oriented to be equipped with port infrastructure in order to prevent an exclusive view of the airport as an economic exchange terminal.[37]

In addition to the historic northern route, Iran should also launch the China-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran route, and more importantly, reduce the chances of opening corridors that are unprofitable. Iran must be able to become an attractive country on the new Silk Road in terms of tariffs and infrastructure. In fact, Iran's agreement with China will not be of strategic importance, unless Iran proves itself as the center of gravity and the center of the Silk Road, that is, to introduce itself as the center of this network. In this case, it will be possible to attract capital from countries such as China and Russia and even European countries for rail and port infrastructure.

This view, especially regarding maritime and port-based trade, can lead to the elimination of deprivation of rail routes, especially in the area of Chabahar port. In other words, just as the Chinese

designed the Silk Road to eliminate the deprivation of Xinjiang, Iran should use joining the Silk Road as a means of deprivation elimination. In addition to eliminating deprivation, this action will turn the instability of those areas into lasting and stable security.[38]

In a rational action, with practical strategy and diplomacy, all political and security ties between Iran and its neighbors can be combined with economic goals, and the existing capacities can be used to deepen regional and supra-regional relations.

CONCLUSION

Chahbahar port has a special geopolitical position. The reasons for this specialness are being located next to the water of international roads, the most important ocean port of Iran, suitable beaches for mooring ocean-going ships, being outside the Persian Gulf region and the Strait of Hormuz, access to land roads, which is the closest route to the countries of Central Asia and Eurasia. With proper planning, active diplomacy, and the coagulation of international agreements, the Silk Sea Road can be connected to the Silk Economic Belt by Chabahar, and on the other hand, it can be connected to the North-South International Corridor. This makes Chabahar a cost-effective option as a bridge between ECO member countries, ASEAN and other countries for the production, export, exchange and transit of goods. By adopting a geo-economic approach and trying to provide the necessary infrastructure as a unit that has an intermediate center between network clusters in the Persian Gulf, West Asia, some northern areas in Central Asia and the Caucasus, Iran can further stabilize Chabahar's privileged position.

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SECURITY COOPERATION BETWEEN CHINA AND BANGLADESH FROM A HOLISTIC VIEW OF NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract

The holistic view of national security is a crucial governance conception proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2014. This conception emphasizes the maintenance of traditional and non-traditional security assets of a state, and applies to security complex in Asian context. South Asia, strategically important in world politics, is fraught with uncertainties. While Bangladesh is of strategic significance to China, it has never escaped traditional and non-traditional security threats. This study seeks to explore the pattern and impacts of China-Bangladesh security cooperation, so as to provide a practical framework of fixing security complex in a regional context. Through a mixed-method approach, it reveals that, in response to traditional security challenges, China and Bangladesh have conducted frequent high-level exchanges and military cooperation. Moreover, financial and technical supports from China have effectively reduced the harm of non-traditional security problems in Bangladesh. But the analysis demonstrates that, security cooperation between the two countries has partially weakened India's influence in South Asia, adding uncertainties to the regional security complex. Thus, this bilateral cooperation needs more partners in the region to fix diverse challenges of security.

Keywords: holistic view of national security, security cooperation, China, Bangladesh, South Asia

INTRODUCTION

On April 15, 2014, at the first meeting of the Central National Security Committee, Chinese President Xi Jinping first proposed the concept of a holistic view of national security. On April 14, 2021, The Holistic National Security Research Centre of China was officially established. The holistic view of national security shapes China's national security architecture, which comprises 16 types of security. It is a concept of national security governance dedicated to coordinating and maintaining a state's external and internal security, traditional security and non-traditional security assets, so as to provide a sound development environment for a country.

As a major strategic component of the world, South Asia is regarded as one of the key regions affecting regional and global security, but it is also fraught with uncertainties. Two of South Asia's largest countries, India and Pakistan, have long disagreed on borders, with their particularly acute dispute in Kashmir. In recent years, terrorism, drug trafficking and human trafficking have become significant issues that pose a threat to the security of small South Asian countries and the region. In South Asia, governments' perception of insecurity has become the norm. Some scholars have pointed out that, the South Asian security system is in fact an insecure system (Cohen, 1975).

In these contexts, China's bilateral security disputes and cooperation with India and Pakistan have been well studied. For example, the Sino-Indian border dispute and the Tibet issue are regarded as sources of distrust between them (Anand, 2011). The longstanding friendly relationship between China and Pakistan has attracted the attention of academics as well, especially in the area of military cooperation (Boon & Ong, 2021). However, analysis of the security relationship between China and the rest of South Asia is still lacking. This lack not only ignores the self-interests and policy choices of small

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South Asian countries, but also ignores the potential multilateral effects of China's bilateral interactions with them, which dynamically affects the overall security situation in South Asia.

This paper focuses on the discussion of China's holistic security cooperation with Bangladesh when various security threats have become a growing global concern. Because of the existence of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor and its entry into the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh is of strategic significance to China. While Bangladesh has enjoyed an astonishing pace of development, its geography makes its security largely under threat from natural disasters. This not only entails considerations addressing of traditional security threats in Bangladesh, but also the non-traditional security problems. These factors not only affect the Bangladesh's strategic choices in security cooperation, but also involve the interests of other South Asian countries and third powers, which in turn affect different views on friendliness and interventionism between large and small countries. Since the holistic view of national security takes into account the complex security issues prevailing in the current world, it can serve as a comprehensive framework analyzing a country's security context. As early as 1992, Bangladeshi researchers have suggested a holistic approach to deal with security threats, but this theory has not yet reached maturity there (Iftekharuzzaman, 1992). Thus, this paper attempts to study the national security cooperation between China and Bangladesh from a holistic view.

1. EXISTING RESEARCH

Scholars have examined the background and approaches of bilateral interaction between China and Bangladesh, in which the security issues in Bangladesh and the historical development of China-Bangladesh relations are considered to be two main research fields.

First, security problems in Bangladesh are viewed as having a negative impact on its development. Shahriar (2021) research shows that there are a series of illegal cross-border problems at Bangladesh's vast territorial junction with India. This suggests that, while Bangladesh's border dispute with India has been partially resolved, its geographical feature being surrounded by India on three sides may require it to deal with sensitive issues of territorial and demographic management, which has caused further concerns about the future of Bangladesh's security. Discussions of other scholars reveal profound confusion. It is emphasized that not only border issues, but also the river and elevation characteristics of Bangladesh have increased the vulnerability of its security environment. According to a report released by the Bangladesh Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (2022), annual floods in Bangladesh generally affect 30% of Bangladeshis, and this figure reaches 70% in extreme cases. Faced with normalized natural disasters, Bangladesh has adopted a range of preventive and emergency measures. However, these measures are not able to mitigate harms caused by the disasters. Li (2018) believes that the lack of economic support and knowledge and technology make disaster prevention and mitigation in Bangladesh face major challenges. Even more disconcerting, as a Muslim-majority country, under certain conditions, Bangladeshi society may engender extreme religious terrorism. Arefin and Ritu (2021) argue that, the contestation of partisan power, political turmoil in neighboring countries, and youth's need for identity have contributed to extremism and terrorism at the micro and macro levels, leading to the fact that Bangladesh's governance of the country's security issues is becoming increasingly difficult. Barthwal-Datta (2022) concludes that, a series of complex security issues have challenged the governance capacity of the Bangladeshi government, leading to ineffective security governance and the intensification of social conflict.

Second, academia has conducted research on the history and development of Sino-Bangladesh bilateral relationships. By the turn of the century, since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Bangladesh, bilateral relations between China and Bangladesh have flourished. Sarker (2014) illustrates that, China and Bangladesh have established an all-weather friendship. In various fields of cooperation, the trade between China and Bangladesh is currently one of the main research focuses of

researchers. Luo and Yang (2016) demonstrate that, due to the huge difference in economic size between China and Bangladesh, the trade cooperation between the two countries is asymmetrical and unbalanced. Data provided by the China's National Bureau of Statistics (2022) supports this view. In 2020, Bangladesh had a trade deficit of $14.2 billion with China, doubled that of 2012. China-Bangladesh cooperation in the military and security fields is the other focus of scholars' research. Mannan (2019) points out that Bangladesh is highly dependent on China's arming equipment to develop its modern defense system. Sahuja (2009) states that, the military cooperation between China and Bangladesh makes India vigilant. However, research into how China can reach out to counter other security threats in Bangladesh is limited. According to Shamsuzzoha (2020), evidence of China-Bangladesh cooperation in non-traditional security areas is reflected in human, food, economic and cultural security. In addition, Tan (2021) used quantitative analysis methods to highlight the difficulties of counter-terrorism cooperation in the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Corridor from a regional perspective. Although there was actually nobody make specific suggestions to improve the security environment in Bangladesh, the existence of its security issues has increased the pressure on the Bangladeshi government to take actions, and the effectiveness of existing measures has called into question the tradition of Sino-Bangladeshi cooperation. For the Bangladeshi government, this situation is a major challenge and an opportunity to enhance its governance capacity. If the two nations can jointly develop tools to address the security threats of Bangladesh in a more targeted way, it would not only help China and Bangladesh build a more promising development partnership, but it would also be an exemplary model for promoting security and stability in South Asia.

In general, these studies provide opportunities to identify some key elements of China-Bangladesh cooperation, in particular with regard to their economic and commercial relations, and military cooperation. Although few have noticed, these issues have changed the paradigm of global cooperation, from the international specializations to strategic cooperation between nations. Considering this major change, there is a gap in knowledge that should be filled through further research. Within the current studies, scholars have not successfully incorporated the primary security threats facing Bangladesh into the framework of holistic national security cooperation between China and Bangladesh. This will not only lead to a disregard for Bangladesh's fundamental needs, but it will also lead to a misunderstanding of the notion of security, lowering the efficacy of security cooperation between the two countries. In order to fill the above research gaps, this paper will address the following research questions. What are the main traditional and non-traditional security threats faced by Bangladesh? In response to these security threats, how do China and Bangladesh engage in holistic security cooperation? What are its strengths and weaknesses? Finally, how to assess the holistic security cooperation between China and Bangladesh, particularly in the regional context of South Asia?

2. HOLISTIC SECURITY THREATS TO BANGLADESH

The holistic view of national security is a systematic governance concept that dynamically integrates traditional security and non-traditional security, targets human safety and serves to inform national security work at the practical level (Qi, 2021). Adherence to the holistic concept of national security requires the identification of a full range of security risks, in order for a country to respond effectively to various threats.

Within the holistic national security governance framework, security threats to Bangladesh can be divided into traditional security threats and non-traditional security threats. According to Nye Jr and Lynn-Jones (1988), security can be defined as the absence of acute threats at minimally acceptable levels of fundamental values that people believe are essential to their survival. Such an interpretation has dominated traditional security definitions since the end of the Cold War.

Bangladesh's geographical location requires it to properly manage its relations with its neighbors, India and Myanmar, in order to protect itself against the powerful threat of exposure to traditional security issues. Geographically, Bangladesh is surrounded by India on three sides, sharing more than 4,100km of border with India, and a small part of the remaining border with Myanmar. While Bangladesh is currently free of military wars with its neighbors and massive security losses, it has never fully escaped the potential for traditional security threats. Although the land border agreement signed by India and Bangladesh in 2015 demonstrates their friendliness and sincerity, the tragedy of bloody clashes between the two countries at the border is still unfolding (Observer Research Foundation, 2017). On January 22, 2020, along Hatibandha border, two Bangladeshi businessmen were reported shot dead by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) (Daily Star, 2020). On December 22, 2021, BSF shot a Bangladeshi resident on the Bagichapara border (Dhaka Tribune, 2021). Although the border clashes between Bangladesh and India have seen a significant drop in the number of deaths compared to the previous period, they continue to be a constant threat to the security of Bangladesh.

On the other hand, in Bangladesh-Myanmar border relations, records in September 2020 showed that, Myanmar suddenly and massively increased 2,500 troops on the border between Bangladesh and Myanmar (Dhaka Tribune, 2020). It caused alarm and panic to the Bangladeshi government. Moreover, due to issues such as cross-border water disputes, intra-regional extremist organizations and cross-border crimes, Bangladesh's bilateral security relations with India and Myanmar are facing severe challenges. Public declaration by India and Pakistan that they have pursued and developed nuclear weapons has cast a nuclear shadow over South Asia, making it another traditional factor posing security threats to Bangladesh. Building on the perceived threat, Bangladesh has developed its nuclear technology for limited purposes, such as research and education (Islam & Islam, 2016). According to the theory developed by Narang (2017), Bangladesh has adopted a technical hedging strategy for nuclear acquisition, retaining its own option to promote nuclearization in the future. However, insufficient infrastructure, staff training and research experience further challenge Bangladesh's nuclear security system, and reinforce traditional security threats faced by this nation.

Meanwhile, different studies have shown various definitions of non-traditional security. The Consortium of Non-Traditional Security Studies in Asia (NTS-Asia) (2016) defines non-traditional security as, non-military security issues arising primarily from transnational operations that pose political and social challenges to human survival and well-being. Caballero-Anthony and Cook (2013) argue that, despite the concept is primarily non-military in nature, it includes violent acts arising from state and non-state actors. In brief, among the various definitions of non-traditional security, researchers have reached a consensus on the non-military character of non-traditional security.

For a small state, Bangladesh's non-traditional security issues are influenced by both geographic features and third powers. Buzan (1984) claims that, a weak nation's domestic threats cannot be isolated from the influence of external powers, while its geographic characteristics determine whether it can effectively defend against natural vulnerabilities. Specifically, the main non-traditional security threats faced by Bangladesh can be divided into: cross-border crime, climate disasters, terrorism and infectious diseases. First, among the many categories of cross-border crime, such as arms, drug smuggling and human trafficking, in human trafficking alone, Bangladesh reports a potential 6,866 victims in 2021 (U.S. Department of State, 2021). Second, Bangladesh is one of the countries with the most significant environmental and social vulnerabilities. Based on data from Bangladesh Water Development Board (2019), floods affect nearly one-third of the country's total population between 2015 and 2019, which is shown in Figure 1 below.
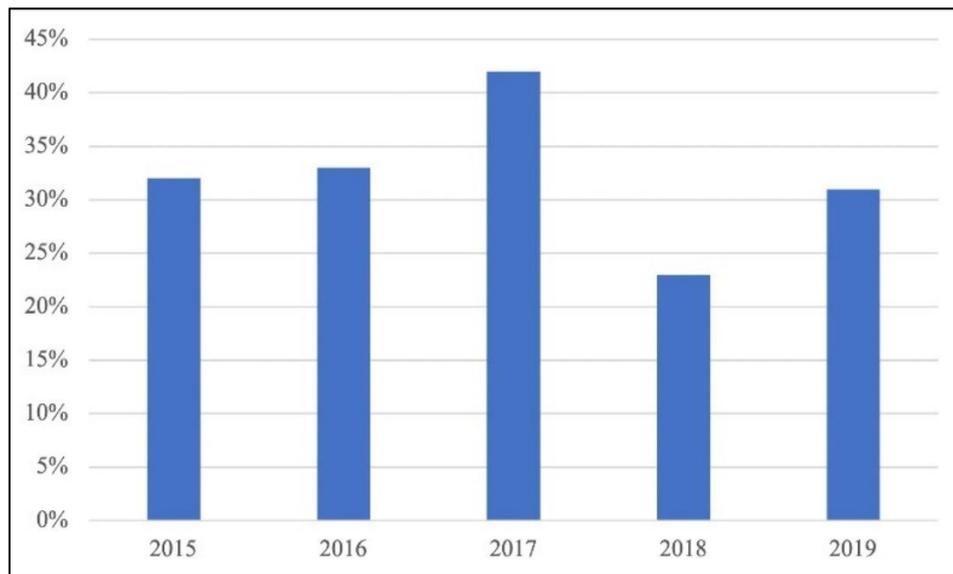
Figure 1. Percentage of People Affected by Floods in Bangladesh (Bangladesh Water Development Board, 2019)

Third, terrorism and extremism are complex problems facing Bangladesh. Islamic extremism and left-wing extremism have constantly and radically posed threats to its security. Moreover, infectious diseases negatively affect the health of local populations which represent one of the non-traditional security threats in Bangladesh. In this nation, two of the most common infectious diseases are diarrhea and malaria. In the first half of April 2019, diarrhea has caused the International Centre for Diarrheal Disease Research in Bangladesh to receive an average of nearly 800 security certificates per day (Daily Star, 2019).

3. HOLISTIC SECURITY COOPERATION BETWEEN CHINA AND BANGLADESH

Under the analysis framework of the holistic national security, China has established and developed strong and long-term friendly relations with Bangladesh.

3.1 Traditional Security Cooperation Between China and Bangladesh

The reasons for China and Bangladesh carrying out military cooperation are based on their national interests. For Bangladesh, Chinese weapons and armament facilities are cost-effective given Bangladesh's limited military budget. This allows it to effectively maintain its national defense system. For China, the military cooperation with Bangladesh has also brought it long-run benefits, especially in terms of economic benefits, political outcomes, and potential energy demands. In respond to traditional security threats, Bangladesh set the Forces Goal 2030 target in 2009, and revised it in 2017. The plan highlights Bangladesh's need to modernize the combat capabilities of its army, navy and air force. It has conducted a number of high-level exchanges with China. In 2008, Chinese State Councilor and Defense Minister Liang Guanglie said that, China highly valued the development of cooperative relations with the Bangladeshi military (China News, 2008). In 2016, China and Bangladesh established a strategic partnership, where military cooperation is an important component (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2016). In 2021, China and Bangladesh reached a consensus on upgrading military cooperation between the two nations.

In terms of the scale of military cooperation, China and Bangladesh have become important partners. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Arms Trade Database (Sipri, 2021), between 2010 and 2020, China's arms exports to Bangladesh accounted for 73.56% of the value of all weapons held by it, which is presented in Figure 2. This makes China the largest arms supplier to

Bangladesh, while the second-ranked Russian arms transfers are worth less than one-sixth of its value. Among China's export partners, Bangladesh receives the highest value of arms following Pakistan, the other partner of China in South Asia.
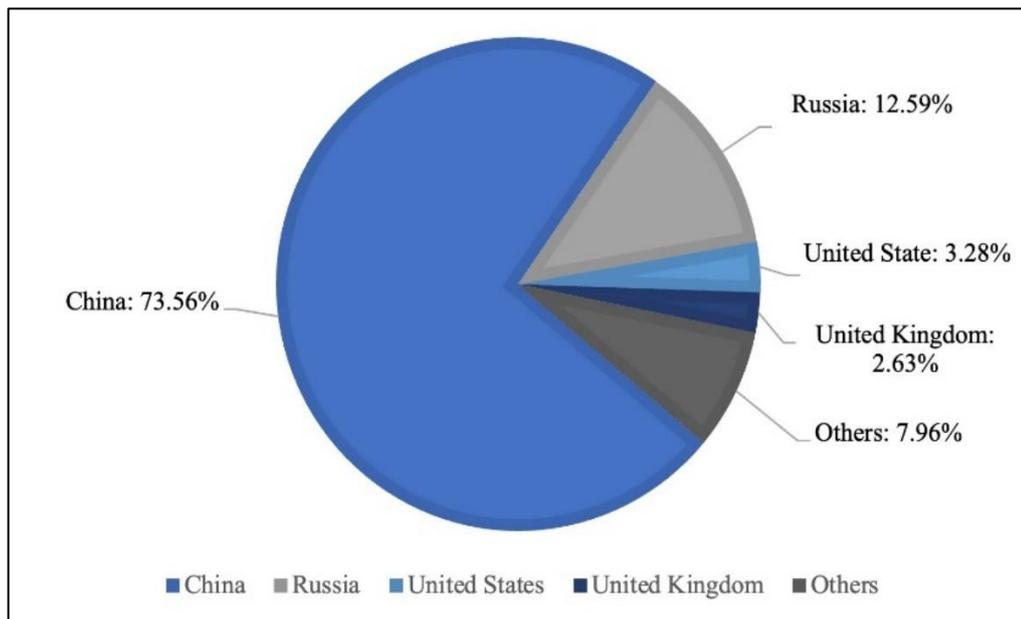

Figure 2. Arms Exports to Bangladesh Calculated by Total Trend-Indicator Value (Sipri, 2021)

To be more specific, China and Bangladesh have cooperated in various aspects in military development. Before the 21st century, China's exports of weapons mainly came from the former Soviet armament system. After the new century, the degree of modernization of China-Bangladesh military cooperation has been continuously improved. In 2002, China and Bangladesh signed a significant defense cooperation agreement, focusing on Bangladesh's need for modern weapons on army equipment (The Times of India, 2002). In 2006, China provided Bangladesh with more than 60 artillery pieces and more than 100 missiles with associated systems (Ranjan, 2019). Furthermore, armored personnel carriers, small arms and infantry equipment from China have armed the Bangladesh army in almost all respects. In terms of air force equipment, China has delivered more than 100 trainers and fighter jets of different types to Bangladesh. While some of them have been decommissioned or crashed, the rest remain the active mainstay of the Bangladesh air force (Zero Military, 2021). Furthermore, China and Bangladesh have jointly strengthened the navy of Bangladesh. BNS Navajatra and BNS Joyjatra are two Chinese-made submarines introduced to Bangladesh in 2017, which have been maintained and upgraded to help Bangladesh realize its full-fledged "three dimensional" force (Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha, 2021). Moreover, an increasing number of Bangladeshi armed forces have received technical training and experience sharing from China.

3.2 Non-Traditional Security Cooperation Between China and Bangladesh

Cross-border crime, climate disasters, terrorism and infectious diseases are the crucial non-traditional security threats to Bangladesh. These problems directly affect Bangladesh's security environment, and China has cooperated with it on the following three main aspects.

First, China and Bangladesh jointly tackle transnational crimes. Through high-level exchanges, the leaders of China and Bangladesh have demonstrated a high degree of consensus on cooperation in combating transnational crimes. In 2005, Premier Wen Jiabao of China held formal talks with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh. They pledged to fight terrorism and transnational crime, and agreed to share information, conduct intelligence exchanges, and cooperate in law enforcement in this area, so

as to ensure peace and stability in the region (China News, 2005). A representative collaboration was launched in 2006. More than 50 impoverished Bangladeshis, lured by fraudulent organizations, attempted to smuggle into Malaysia from the Chinese region of Yunnan. After resolving the case, China bought air tickets for the penniless stowaways and sent them home. Additionally, China worked together with the Bangladeshi police to criminally detain members of the illegal organization located in China (Sohu News, 2006).

Second, China and Bangladesh join hands to deal with climate disasters. In order to help it reduce the risk of climate disasters and reduce economic and security losses, China has cooperated with Bangladesh in pre-disaster prevention and post-disaster recovery. First, China continues to support Bangladesh in improving its disaster management capabilities. In 2015, China began to help Bangladesh carry out the river remediation project of the Padma Bridge, which mainly includes river dredging and river bank protection. This set a record for the largest river remediation project worldwide. During President Xi Jinping's visit to Dhaka in 2019, China and Bangladesh signed an agreement where China would provided Bangladesh with approximately $73 million in grants that would be partially used in disaster management (China Daily, 2019). In terms of post-disaster recovery assistance, in 2007, when Bangladesh was hit by a cyclone, China provided $1 million in emergency assistance (Xinhua News Agency, 2007). In April 2011, China Meteorological Administration donated a batch of meteorological instruments to Bangladesh to monitor and forecast disasters (Relief Web, 2020). In 2017, China and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched a post-disaster relief operation, and distributed relief items to the local people harmed by floods in northern Bangladesh (Daily Sun, 2017). In September 2018, China participated in the South-South Cooperation Initiative and partnered with the UNDP to support the post-disaster reconstruction project in Bangladesh (People's Liberation Army Daily, 2018). These actions played a positive role in improving the lives of the disaster victims in Bangladesh.

Third, China and Bangladesh cooperate in the prevention and control of infectious diseases. In 2007, the diplomats of the Chinese Embassy in Bangladesh voluntarily donated money to nearly 10 million local people threatened by malaria, cholera, diarrhea and other diseases (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2007). From July 16 to 21, 2009, a four-member delegation of Bangladesh AIDS Project visited China and donated a series of materials to China for publicity and exchange of experience in infectious disease prevention and treatment (Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). In 2019, China sent its first group of medical teams to Bangladesh. Eight core professionals and nearly 1 ton of medical supplies, medicines and about 1,000 first aid kits were sent to Bangladesh to provide medical services to local people (Yunnan Daily, 2019). Since the outbreak of the COVID-19, China and Bangladesh have further carried out beneficial anti-epidemic cooperation and overcame the difficulties together.

4. THE IMPACTS OF CHINA-BANGLADESH HOLISTIC SECURITY COOPERATION

4.1 Impacts on Bangladesh

The discussion of Bangladesh's main security threats and its holistic security cooperation with China have demonstrated the following features and generated various influences. First of all, the holistic security cooperation between China and Bangladesh is aimed at addressing the complex security threats faced by Bangladesh. Among them, forming a joint response to military threats and climate disasters is the aspects of in-depth cooperation between the two nations.

Second, the holistic security cooperation between China and Bangladesh focuses on financial support, equipment supports and technical exchanges. In the absence of hostility between Bangladesh and other South Asian countries, military equipment mainly exported from China has significantly

satisfied Bangladesh's defense needs. Due to the cost-effectiveness of Chinese military equipment, Bangladesh has modernized its military with its limited military budget.

In the area of non-traditional security cooperation, particularly in response to climate disasters, supplies from China have significantly improved Bangladesh's effectiveness in predicting and recovering from disasters. Although Bangladeshis have accumulated practical experience in dealing with natural disasters during the long time period, the dense population and insufficient government construction capacity still expose many of them to danger (Saul, 2012). Its security cooperation with China has helped Bangladesh effectively reduce the harm to its population.

Nevertheless, China has paid less attention to the complex religious, terrorism and extremism issues in Bangladesh, and the cooperation between the two sides in this regard is limited. During the bilateral communication, China shows its support for Bangladesh's counter-terrorism and domestic security maintenance with a firm attitude. For example, China conveys its support for Bangladesh in fighting terrorism and maintaining national stability, and claims to stand ready to cooperate with Bangladesh through information exchange, capacity building and personnel training (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2019). However, the available information does not show specific measures for China-Bangladesh security cooperation in this field. This may be related to the fact that China and Bangladesh do not share a border. Comparatively, as bordering neighbors, India and Bangladesh have developed closer security cooperation against terrorism and extremism.

Furthermore, while China has made efforts to help Bangladesh deal with water-related problems, there is insufficient evidence that it could help Bangladesh move beyond non-traditional security concerns regarding water disputes. Being constrained by transboundary rivers, Bangladesh faces severe seasonal flooding, shortages and water pollution, which negatively affects its security and development. China is currently supporting Bangladesh on infrastructure, including the Teesta project, and it is sharing information on water levels and rainfall with Bangladesh (The Diplomat, 2020). However, these actions have not led to the formation of a more effective multilateral mechanism (South Asian Voices, 2020).

4.2 Impacts on South Asia

Although China and Bangladesh's holistic security cooperation is a series of bilateral actions, in the regional context of South Asia, their bilateral actions have potential multilateral influences. In particular, the relationship between China and Bangladesh, to some extent, hints at the political choices of small countries in South Asia. As the top regional power in South Asia, India's strategic interests and attitudes not only affect China-Bangladesh cooperation, but also affect the overall security situation in South Asia.

Specifically, India's interests can be demonstrated in the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) vision first proposed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015, which emphases the neighborhood ties, the promotion of regional security and integration (Roy-Chaudhury, 2018). To a great extent, China's holistic security cooperation with Bangladesh challenges India's development goals. For example, the China-Bangladesh cooperation project in Chittagong is seen as a part of China's String of Pearls strategy. Due to the importance of large ports, such cooperation brings potential naval bases, depots and surveillance possibilities to China (Khan & Khalid, 2018).

Moreover, the holistic security cooperation between China and Bangladesh, to a certain extent, has increased the risk of complication and instability of the security situation in South Asia. Although Bangladeshi overall military strength is not sufficient to affect the two regional powers, it is an important factor for Indian security due to its geographical location. Bangladesh is close to India's Siliguri corridor and the disputed southern Tibet region between China and India, therefore China's influence in

Bangladesh has brought high security pressure on India and further increased the risk of regional instability.

Furthermore, Bangladesh's strategy provides a benchmark for policies of other countries which balances India's willingness to integrate South Asia. Both India and China view small states in South Asia as important development partners, and their competition continuously increase their cooperation and assistance, benefitting the small states (The Diplomat, 2019). This undoubtedly provides them with hedging and balancing options, and thus is likely to reduce the attractiveness of South Asian integration.

CONCLUSION

With an increasing number of factors engaging in national security, this paper aims to identify the main traditional and non-traditional security threats faced by Bangladesh within the framework of holistic national security. Moreover, this paper explores the motivations, measures, and influences of China-Bangladesh holistic national security cooperation in the context of South Asia.

The analytical framework of the holistic national security provides a unique perspective for studying the complex security issues in Bangladesh, which combines various considerations of traditional and non-traditional securities. For Bangladesh, territorial and border conflicts with India and Myanmar continue to affect its traditional security environment. In addition, the nuclear weapons that India and Pakistan have developed are a powerful deterrent, that make the small states of South Asia hidden in the nuclear shadow. In terms of non-traditional security, cross-border crimes, climate disasters and terrorism are prominent problems faced by Bangladesh. These problems frequently endanger the security of Bangladeshis, and sometimes, because of the violence involved, they may result in traditional security issues.

In response to these issues, China has strengthened its traditional security cooperation with Bangladesh through high-level exchanges and a series of military cooperation. At the same time, China has focused on providing financial, technical and infrastructure assistance to Bangladesh, improving its non-traditional security environment. In the process of long-term cooperation, China and Bangladesh have developed a profound friendship, thus generate long-term benefits to both sides.

Through the analysis China's security cooperation with Bangladesh, the paper illustrates that the holistic security cooperation between these two countries profoundly reflects that the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence is the basic philosophy of China's interactions with other countries. Regarding the potential external military threats faced by Bangladesh and the security threats that have negative impacts on the Bangladeshi people, China and Bangladesh have established in-depth cooperation. On the other hand, with regard to Bangladesh's domestic problems with historical roots, although China has publicly expressed its support for the Bangladeshi government, in fact it has kept a certain distance from these complex issues. This reflects one of China's critical diplomatic principles, named non-interference in other countries' internal affairs. Therefore, in practice, through the interactions at different levels, the holistic national security cooperation between China and Bangladesh has provided opportunities to better protect the Bangladesh's security, but it has not become a key variable affecting the peace and stability of South Asia.

However, the pursuit of security by different countries is sometimes a paradoxical dilemma. China's holistic security cooperation with Bangladesh has raised questions from some countries, with major forces coming from India. China's advantages in capital and infrastructure have weakened India's influence in South Asia to some degree. Based on their own security and national interests, China and India compete for South Asian partners, which dynamically affects the security situation in South Asia. However, effective multilateral cooperation and dispute resolution mechanisms have not been introduced to South Asia.

This paper draws the conclusion that, from the holistic view of national security, bilateral cooperation between China and Bangladesh has helped maintain Bangladesh's domestic security and stability, and serves as a beneficial factor in promoting regional security in South Asia. However, India's attitude has added uncertainty to the regional impact of China-Bangladesh security cooperation. Thus, this bilateral cooperation needs more partners in the region to fix diverse challenges of security. However, since this paper has not addressed the differential impacts of China, Bangladesh, and India's security policies at different time periods, a dynamic research perspective would probably benefit future researchers.

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NEW INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TRENDS IN CENTRAL ASIA

Guli I. Yuldasheva∗

Abstract

The goal of this paper is to determine new international cooperation trends in Central Asia (CA), to define its strong and weak points and work out some practical recommendations to reduce some instability of the political situation in the region. To this end, methods of systemic and strategic analysis, comparative and problem approaches have been used. Observations show that despite some differences in political preferences the CA countries are inclined to join their efforts against the arising global threats and challenges, and de-facto have very close foreign policy approaches. The CA states preserve their traditional partnership with Russia and China, build mutually advantageous relations with the West but at the same time, are gradually drawn towards Turkey and Iran. Such a trend can lead to consolidation of both the Organization of Turkic States and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), Russia and China remaining their close partners. The outcome of the process depends partially on the results of the ongoing Russian-Ukranian war, Iranian nuclear negotiations and Afghan reconciliation process that can influence but not stop these long-term trends.

Keywords: Central Asian states, conflicts, threats, cooperation, regionalism

INTRODUCTION

The international politics is aggravated now by three unresolved conflicts: the long-term Afghan instability and protracted Iranian-American negotiations, which are complicated now by the Russian-Ukranian war. These processes have an immediate or indirect effect on the regional cooperation in the Central Asian region, capable to divide or, on the contrary, unite them according to their preferences. This contributes to some indefiniteness and fragility of the political situation in Central Asia that demands to be addressed properly to avoid new instability points and build correspondent regional strategies.

The situation demands serious investigations to determine new international cooperation trends in Central Asia, which could define strong and weak points in this cooperation and work out some practical recommendations. The said determines objectives of this paper. At that, methods of systemic and strategic analysis, comparative and problem approaches have been chosen. While systemic analysis helps to understand inter-connectedness and inter-influence of all regional and global international relations (IR) elements taken as one single IR system, strategic analysis assist in determining vital state interests and strategies; comparative and problem approaches assist in comparing identical or opposing trends, thus revealing problems which need our attention.

Observations show that despite some differences in foreign policy preferences the CA states are increasingly inclined to join their efforts against the arising global threats including geopolitical challenges to the region, and de-facto have similar or very close approaches toward Afghanistan, Iran and Russia, as well as towards the US and European states. The CA states preserve their traditional partnership with Russia and China, build mutually advantageous relations with the West and are increasingly drawn towards Turkey and Iran, as their potential more reliable allies in this very vague international environment. Such trends can lead to consolidation of both the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) and ECO, Russia and China remaining their close partners, including within the Shanghai

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Cooperation Organization (SCO). The new tendencies depend partly on the outcomes of the Russian-Ukranian war, the Iranian nuclear negotiations and the Afghan reconciliation process but cannot be stopped due to their many-centuries' cultural-civilizational basis and objective character of this orientation.

To describe the current tendencies, the author stops briefly on the existing regional approaches first, then reveals commonality of interests in Central Asia and barriers to the regional development, Chinese and Russian, Turkish and Iranian factors in regional development, as well as the role of the West in Central Asia.

1. WHAT IS THE BASIS FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE REGION?

The early foreign literature analysing the Central Asian motives for international cooperation evolve from accent on the mythmaking, which justified the foreign policy agendas of states, to the recognition of Central Asian states as independent actors even "able to manipulate external actors' intentions to fit their own agendas" (Laruelle, 2017: x)

Local experts tend to describe the region form the security point of view. For some, the CA region is a "security quasi-complex", where the main security problems originated from outside the region (Vestnik Rudn, 2018). At the same time the CA region was examined as part of the Silk Roads and "Afghanistan neighborhood" (The New Silk Roads, 2007), a Northern Tier that connects Iran and Turkey to Russia and Central Asia (Yolaçan, 2019), and a component of the new Eurasia-centred world, "supercontinent" (Dorsey, 2019).

By now, the geopolitical and economical changes in and around the region stimulated concentration of specialists on the regional economic relations that could increase openness and facilitate trade, investments, and transport (Tsereteli, 2018). Understanding of Central Asia has become more complex and multi-layered, including such needs of the region as response to the growing new geostrategic importance and geopolitical competition to the above-mentioned (Yazdani, 2021). The concept of Central Asian order is more neutral, fairly stress some authors, it is able to incorporate elements of both the conflict and cooperation (Buranelli, 2021).

To sum up, I think inner and external policies are interdependent like two sides of a coin, and international cooperation is stipulated by the combination of needs arising at each of these sides. Besides, there are two objective reasons for the international cooperation in Central Asia: such IR system characteristics as interdependence of all states and globalization, which in its turn, proves indivisibility of global and regional security, hence, demands comprehensive security cooperation, first of all on issues of preserving cultural-civilizational identity in the era of erosion of national and regional identities. A complex set of these factors plays a decisive role in shaping international cooperation in Central Asia that is demonstrated in this paper.

2. COMMONALITY OF INTERESTS

Despite some specific differences, the Central Asian countries have much in common. Based on common history, religion and like ethnic origin they have close political culture that stipulates their inner and foreign policy. As relatively young independent states, they all have the tasks of consolidating further their sovereignty, modernizing their societies and undergo similar transitional difficulties. Moreover, this all is being enhanced in the context of the globalized world, similar global challenges and threats, including the issues of preserving cultural-civilizational identity of the Central Asian region in the globalized environment and withstanding potential instability from the territory of Afghanistan.

Correspondingly, the official documents (O Kontseptsii, 2020; Osnovnie tseli, 2022) in Central Asia pay similar attention to the interests in sustainable and stable economic development, prioritize

fulfilling economic tasks, achievement of efficient regional and global security systems. All of them, excluding neutral Turkmenistan, which in fact follows the same path, proclaim multivector policy, balanced, pragmatic and open foreign policy. Besides, all CA states are interested in constructing regional transport-communication network, embracing Iranian, Chinese and future trans-Afghan routes (Yuldasheva, 2013: 93-113). They participate in the same regional structures and groups with common goals: SCO, ECO, Organization of Turkic States, "C5+1", etc.

Moreover, since 2017 the trade turnover among the CA countries have been growing. As we can see in the following Infographics, the share of Central Asian countries in foreign trade for January-December 2021 totaled $6.3 billion, an increase of 15.1%.
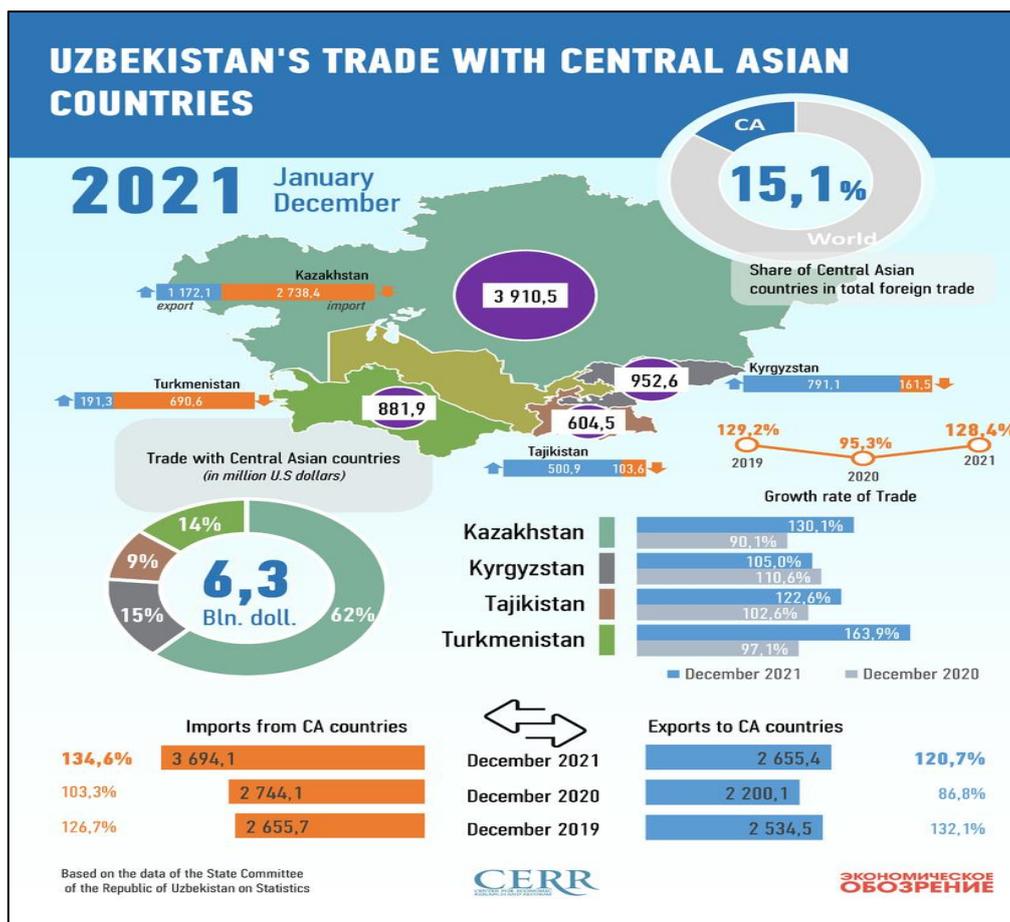
Figure-1. Infographics: Trade of Uzbekistan with Central Asian Countries for December 2021, 24 Jan. 2022.

Based on the results of January-April 2022, Kazakhstan is the third trade partner of Uzbekistan (8.2%), Kyrgyzstan (1,9%) and Tajikistan (Infographics: Foreign Trade Turnover, 2022) have an active trade balance with the country.

3. BARRIERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT

However, the CA states come across various inner and external barriers on the way to international cooperation. Inner barriers naturally proceed from the protracted transitional period and include the same problems as everywhere in the developing world: weak institutions, incompleteness of the all-round economic and political transformations, insufficiency of the highly-professional staff, bureaucracy and corruption, etc.

These problems are important and they can certainly slow the process of international cooperation. Still, they can be copied by the joint-up work and efficient collaboration when countries with similar problems unite their efforts and resources in one destination.

Most important therefore seem to be external challenges and threats dealt with the long-term and new international conflicts, such as the unsolved and protracted Iranian nuclear issue, unstable Taliban regime in Afghanistan and the Russian-Ukranian war.

Iranian nuclear issue negotiations in Vienna have in fact stalled between Tehran and world powers, the sides being unable to reach mutually acceptable consensus. For Central Asians this mean prolongation of the anti-Iranian sanctions with their negative influence on realization of the big regional projects, domination of the mainly Chinese-lead projects in Central and South Asia, prolonged Afghanistan instability and geopolitical tension in the region that will adversely affect international situation.

Still, I think there is a possiblity that in the context of the Russian-Ukranian war, the West, aspiring to stop its dependency on the Russian energy, can accelerate the process of signing a new nuclear deal with Iran to achieve an access to the Iranian energy as a result of some mutual concessions. But even in this case, there are views in the US that the prospects can be "tenuous" at best, in part because the war in Ukraine has hardened Russia's position (Khazani, 2022). Thus, in the foreseeable future some indefiniteness and instability will be preserved around Central Asia.

As to the new Afghan Taliban regime policy, there are no signs for their visible change: the government still continues its policy of exclusion and conducts too rigid conservative policy, especially in gender issues and education. Some radical organizations continue operating in the country (*Aljazeera.com,* 2022), the region is undergoing economic and humanitarian crisis. Despite their diplomatic contacts with the Taliban government, the CA states are still being endangered by various risks and challenges from the territory of Afghanistan.

Russian-Ukrainian war, in its turn, aggravates further this complex situation putting the world at the edge of new world war, adding new waves of international sanctions and geopolitical tension, negatively influencing Central Asian development as a whole. Although some new possibilities for the joint economic cooperation with Russian companies (*Podrobno.uz*, 2022) appeared in the region, still, Central Asian states are obviously influenced by all these sanctions restricting capabilities of regional economies and efficiency of any regional cooperation. The situation, as it has been mentioned, is influencing the decision-making on Iran – a sensitive issue for CA region too due to involvement of its economic interests. It has also caused outflow of the Central Asian labor migrants from Russia contributing to some social-economic instability in the CA region. Since the beginning of the year, for instance, 133 thousand labor migrants have returned to Uzbekistan from Russia, of which 50 thousand in March (*Gazeta.uz,* 06 April 2022).

Thus, altogether, the described situation in and around Central Asia complicates any large-scale international cooperation in the region, polarizing opinions and diverting attention at other urgent problems.

4. CHINESE AND RUSSIAN FACTORS IN REGIONAL COOPERATION

Most accessible partners for the Central Asian countries due to geographical, historical and economic reasons are Russia and China. To January-April 2022, for example, Uzbekistan's largest volume of foreign trade turnover out of total $17.2 billion was recorded with China (18.1%) and Russia (14.9%) (Infographics: Foreign Trade Turnover, 2022). In Kazakhstan Russia is the first trading partner, trade between the countries in 2021 increased by 34%, to $25.6 billion (*Sputnik*, 2 March 2022), and its

trade turnover with China reached $1.4 billion as of January 2022, which is 53.4% more than a year earlier (Assaniyaz, 2022).

To consolidate their positions in Central Asia Moscow and Beijing also advance regional partnership through Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and SCO under their aegis.

As for EEU, it is clear that much in future of this politicized and unequal organization depend on membership of the key CA country – Uzbekistan. Abstaining to entering this organization, Uzbekistan, however, keeps very close economic relations with its members. This is quite justifiable in circumstances of the pandemic, persistent international tension, shortage of investments to realize big breakthrough transport and other economic projects necessary for sustainable economic growth and guaranteeing social-economic stability of the region. Moreover, Eurasian partners are accessible and forecasted even in their present weakened position. It is not surprising, therefore, that the trade turnover of Uzbekistan with the EEU countries in 2021 increased by 30%, and since the beginning of 2022 it has grown by another 33%. Its annual growth rate of attracted investments from the EEU countries is about 25% (*Gazeta.uz*, 27 May 2022). Nevertheless, it is obvious that cooperation with the EEU developing countries is not enough to cover arising technological and investments needs of the region. Besides, majority of the Central Asian population are skeptical about the EEU political goals, and do not want to reiterate experience of the Soviet past, especially after the so-called "special operation" in Ukraine.

In this sense, Shanghai Cooperation Organization headed by China is more appropriate for the region. It smoothes some interstate contradictions and rivalries (Russia-China, India-Pakistan, etc.) as the organization's work is based on principles of mutual trust, peaceful coexistence, and mutually beneficial cooperation, as well as non-interference in each other's internal affairs. The years passed since organization of the SCO have only proved this since there were no sharp interstate conflicts during that period within the SCO members.

Despite some problems of transitional character, stipulated by the ongoing all-round modernization of its member-states, participation in the SCO opens up fundamentally new opportunities for economic integration between its member states, and realization of the mutually beneficial regional transport and communication networks (Bazarova, 2021). Over the past decades, the SCO elaborated a solid legislative framework and coordination mechanisms to counter regional threats such as global terrorism, drug smuggling and illegal migration, humanitarian catastrophe, health care and ecology issues.

Most important is that the national interests and security of the SCO member states are directly related to the situation in Afghanistan, and this issue is always on the agenda of the organization. In particular, a common position of the SCO member states on the Afghan issue was developed at the anniversary summit of the organization in September 2021 in Dushanbe. Iranian entry to the SCO can only positively contribute to the SCO Afghan policy due to its territorial, religious, linguistic and cultural proximity to Afghanistan, as well as available resources.

5. TURKISH AND IRANIAN FACTORS IN REGIONAL COOPERATION

One of the most attractive vectors of international cooperation for the Central Asian countries are kindred Turkey and Iran, close by geography, history and religion, culture and language. Civilizational closeness of these states predetermines their mutual tolerance and understanding, similar political culture that facilitates mutual communication and cooperation. Even more so, they are undergoing various transitional difficulties and come across same global challenges and threats, and need transport and energy links to prosper.

Not surprisingly, Turkey and Uzbekistan solved their past discrepancies (Yuldasheva, 2017: 113-119) and Uzbekistan officially joined the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (Turkic Council) in 2019. In February 2020, the President of Uzbekistan made an official visit to Turkey, and the President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Uzbekistan in March 29-30 2022. On November 11-12 2021, the 8th Summit of the Turkic Council was held in Istanbul, where the document "Vision of the Turkic world until 2040" was adopted. The importance of the summit decisions can be summarized as follows.

Firstly, it is to ensure a reliable belt of security and cooperation along the newly emerging network of transport and energy corridors in the Caucasus and Central Asia. This implies not only the creation of favorable conditions for the expansion of trade relations between the member-states of the organization, achieving economic independence and prosperity, but also confronting all known global challenges and threats, including from the territory of Afghanistan.

Secondly, this cooperation will help member-states to resist excessive geopolitical ambitions and pressure from other international powers involved in the activities of the transnational projects.

Thirdly, Turkic Union is important in terms of preserving and further developing civilizational and cultural identity of the nations included in the organization that is very important in the context of the erosion of cultural values   and spread of negative aspects of global culture today. Besides, fruitful partnership with a country previously embarked on the path of globalization and partnership with the world's leading powers could have a beneficial effect on the development of science, education, urban planning and technology, help in solving climate change and environmental problems for the post-Soviet countries participating in the union.

Within this trend, Turkey is becoming one of the most important trade partners of the CA region. Almost 4 thousand Turkish companies have been operating in CA. (Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022). In 2021, Uzbek-Turkish trade totaled some $3.4 billion, up from $2.4 billion in 2019, Kazakh-Turkish trade was nearly $3.9 billion in 2019 and $4.1 billion in 2021. Kyrgyz-Turkish trade almost doubled to $836 million between 2019 and 2021(Pannier, 2022).

 However, there are some risks and challenges for this cooperation: the growth of social mobility and Central Asian visits to Turkey can bring to contacts with some representatives of radical movements among other numerous Turkish migrants, and to growth of potential rivalry between Russia, China and Turkey, main competitors in CA and the Caucasus.

The rapprochement of the CA countries with Turkey most obviously irritate Turkey's other competitor – Iran, although their contradictions can and are in fact regulated due to their long-term historical stand in the region and leadership of both countries in the Economic Cooperation Organization.

For instance, it is known that Turkey does not have a common border with the CA region, which is a significant disadvantage. Iran is a transit country, which provides a shorter, faster and cheaper route to Central Asia. Turkey actively uses transportation through Iran. Its trade with countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States region through Iran increased from 565 thousand tons in 2016 to 1.08 million tons in 2019 (Khitakhunov, 2020). Besides, the Turkish government provided a budget of $500,000 to the project designed for the ECO member states (Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan) for the period from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022 to solve the food security issues (FAO, 2022).

In its turn, ECO activates its Central Asian policy. Thus, at the ECO 15th summit in Ashgabat, held in November 28, 2021, it was stressed that the Organization provided necessary platform and all

conditions to further development of multilateral regional cooperation to stimulate socio-economic growth of the member countries. It is worth to mention that Uzbekistan accepted chairmanship of the organization for 2022 from Turkmenistan. Following the summit, the Ashgabat Consensus for Action, and the conceptual program "Prospects for ECO – 2025" was adopted.

Moreover, the Organization for Economic Cooperation announced the main theme of 2022 - "strengthening interconnectedness" - emphasizing important role of transport in establishing economic ties in the region. The goal of this initiative is "to promote creation of a highly developed transport infrastructure, safe and unhindered cross-border transit of goods, digitalization of procedures, effective management of integrated networks of road, railway, sea and air transportation and communication networks, and expanded international cooperation that will contribute to the development of the region." (*IRU.org*, 23 Feb. 2022). In particular, the Islamic Republic of Iran partnered with ECO to ensure opening of new transport corridors: Islamabad - Tehran - Istanbul, Kyrgyzstan - Tajikistan - Afghanistan - Iran and Iran - Afghanistan - Uzbekistan.

As a whole, however, the trade activity of Iran in Central Asia is only on the rise due to existing political and economic barriers. It is not among the leading trade partners of the CA countries.

6. THE ROLE OF THE WEST

Regional processes are interlinked and much dependent on the actions of the global actors, the US-lead western community, which traditionally continue to protect sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the region, democracy, human rights, governance and economic development, regional connectivity and integration, as well as peace in Afghanistan (World Bank, 25 May 2022; Council of the EU, 2019). Political considerations, no matter how they are important, have been prevailing over the economic ones for decades that resulted in relatively weak Western stand in the region.

It is reduced mainly to the European Union, which is predominantly present only in Kazakhstan: it is among top three trade leaders in Kazakhstan representing $31.5 billion of the whole trade turnover, or 31.1% (Nurbay, 2022). In Uzbekistan, only Germany is among top trade partners, with 2.6% share in the trade turnover (Infographics: Foreign Trade Turnover, 2022). The total turnover of the EU's trade with Central Asia remains low (European Comission, 2021).

At present, the EU provides humanitarian assistance and supports regional cooperation to limit and contain the influence of the Taliban by a package of so-called "Afghan support" in the amount of €1 billion, almost half of which is actually intended for countries neighboring Afghanistan affected by the crisis. A very important initiative in the future promotion of the EU in the region will be the EU Global Gate project, a strategy that plans to allocate more than €40 billion for technology and infrastructure in EU partner countries, and which many see as a response to the Chinese Belt and Road program (Yeremina, 2022). At the same time, the European Union and Uzbekistan have launched a multi-year indicative program to expand cooperation for 2021-2027. Within it 83 million euros will be allocated for 2021-2024, including 76 million euros for jointly developed projects and programs of technical assistance and budgetary support, as well as 7 million euros to support activities to develop civil society and human rights (*Gazeta.uz*, 10 March 2022).

As to the United States, they are, as usual, more absorbed with the policy of counteracting Russian and Chinese presence in the region that is acknowledged now even by the US experts themselves. In particular, the former U.S. Ambassador to Kazakhstan and Tajikistan Richard Hoagland fairly considers that Washington is "more quietly focused on countering Russian and Chinese influence in the region". And regarding the US-lead "The C5+1" union, Fred Starr, Chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus

Institute, thinks that "the concept is good, they have meetings, but it's been very passive by comparison to what China and Russia are doing" (Imamova, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The analysis shows complex interdependence and interaction of subregional, regional and global trends in and around Central Asia, objective characteristic of any IR system in the globalized world.

Indeed, we see not only slow but also steady development of the Central Asian regionalism, this trend is combined with the Central Asian traditional partnership with Russia and China, and mutually advantageous relations with the West. At that, the new gradually consolidating tendency towards Turkey and Iran is being accelerated now by the turbulence of the international situation, as well as by the past centuries-old cultural-civilizational closeness of Central Asian countries. However, considering present weakness of Iran and Russia, both under sanctions, and too huge and heterogeneous SCO, it seems Organization of Turkic States is more perspective owing to unanimity and closeness of its members, accessibility of Turkey. In this context, and given the commonality of regional security and economy interests of most regional countries, and the fact that some OTS member-states are simultaneously members of the EEU and the SCO, there are chances that all parties can settle controversial issues, albeit with some difficulties.

In this complex interaction of different regional formations, de-facto preserved more or less during the past decades, Turkey will obviously play the role of a mediator between its various chains in the foreseeable future. Iranian direction is unstable, and hence, indefinite due to the stall in the nuclear negotiations.

The examined tendencies partially depend on results of the ongoing Russian-Ukranian war, the outcome of the Iranian nuclear negotiations and the Afghan reconciliation process that can negatively influence but not stop the newly born trends towards Turkey and Iran, which have long-term and objective character.

To achieve more stability and realization of mutual interests, it would be desirable that

• Turkey continue its peacekeeping efforts in Afghanistan, and mediating constructively between Russia and Ukraine gradually approaching them to peace;

• the US accelerated solution of the Iranian nuclear issue as necessary means to solve the energy dependency problem of the West and to boost Central Asian economic development – ignoring this fact will only strengthen further Chinese and Russian stand in the region, thus decreasing at the same time Turkish positions in Central Asia, let alone stimulating new instability and military conflicts;

• all regional actors continue negotiating with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, assisting the country in humanitarian and economic issues, and forcing it to realize all UN and world community demands.

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THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION: DIVERGENT SECURITY INTERESTS AND APPROACHES REGARDING AFGHANISTAN

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Abstract

In existence since 2001, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a regional security organization including significant member states and covering important themes, among which security comes first. Although other areas of cooperation such as economic and cultural are also stressed, it can be observed from the efforts to create a legal base and institutional structure as well as the time and money spent on military exercises that security has always been at the top of the SCO agenda.

On the other hand, the low profile of the organization following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in 2021 attracts attention because the withdrawal of the US and NATO from Afghanistan can be regarded as the second turning point in the SCO's history after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the US invasion of Afghanistan. From this viewpoint, the paper searched for the reasons of SCO passivity regarding the situation in Afghanistan and discovered that the diverging security interests of the members as well as adherence to a principle of non-interference are the main reasons for the organization's inactivity.

Keywords: Afghanistan, counter-terrorism, regional security, Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

INTRODUCTION

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a product of the strategic partnership between China and Russia, and for this reason it differs from other organizations established in the region following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Since its establishment, the SCO has mostly been acknowledged through discussions on whether it is a geopolitical counter to NATO and the United States (US), although there is a direct reference in the SCO's legal documents underlining that there is no intention to oppose any country or group (SCO, 2001, p. 1).

Over the SCO's lifespan there have been two turning points. The first was the 9/11 terrorist attacks, as it was for almost every security organization. The SCO was established just a few months prior to 9/11. Due to the lack of the necessary legal and institutional base for combating terrorism, the organization maintained a low profile during the US war in Afghanistan and SCO member states conducted the process through their bilateral relations with the US. The ineffectiveness of the SCO during such a significant period for its regional security was criticized by some and even its true power was questioned (Francois, 2008; Turner, 2005). As a result, the 9/11 attacks actually formed a frame for SCO activities and initiatives in the region until the second turning point. The Taliban's seizure of power in 2021 and the withdrawal of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan was the second cornerstone, because the SCO has been left as the only regional security organization in the vicinity of an unstable Afghanistan. As opposed to its unpreparedness for the US war in Afghanistan in 2001, the SCO's silence during the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 has been a surprise for some who held the belief that the retreat of the US and NATO was an opportunity for the SCO to take the initiative in Eurasian regional security. As an organization that had prepared its legal doctrine, set its institutional structure, and conducted several military exercises in the twenty years following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the SCO could be more active in uniting its members for a cause that is actually the essential goal of the organization: the maintenance and strengthening of peace, security and stability in the region

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(SCO, 2002). Although to date bilateral relations of SCO member states with the Taliban have been at the forefront, representing a united force for stability in the region would be more beneficial for SCO members especially when the Taliban's loss of control in northern Afghanistan is also taken into consideration (Pannier, 2022).

As an organization founded with a functionalist approach primarily for resolving selected regional issues, the SCO has striven to achieve the aims of fighting terrorism, separatism, and extremism that were set at its inception, and which are also referred to as the "three-evils." On the other hand, the inclusion of new topics in the SCO's agenda and the accession of new members has proven that the organization has the potential to not only be a security forum for the region but to also cover economic and social issues (Dadabaev, 2013, p. 7). However, the retreat of NATO and the US from Afghanistan and the Taliban's takeover has brought the SCO's raison d'être back to the table. There is an obvious threat in the middle of the region that has potential to cause instability in SCO members, but these members have not yet benefitted from the power of multilateralism. In this context, this paper examines the reasons behind the passivity of the SCO towards the situation in Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover in 2021, and the primary reason was found to be SCO members' divergent security interests. In the paper, it was also discovered that the principles based on the Shanghai Spirit, in which non-intervention is preeminent, are referred to as a cover for the SCO's non-intervention in events in Afghanistan.

1. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SCO AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

The SCO was officially established in 2001; however, the SCO's predecessor, the Shanghai Five, was established in 1996 primarily for resolving border disputes between China and four former members of the Soviet Union: Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. With the positive results of the meetings on regional security the group began to gather annually, and areas of cooperation were expanded to include combatting terrorism, separatism, and extremism, especially in light of an increase in terrorist activities and drug smuggling following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in 1996. In addition to common regional problems which have brought these countries under the same organizational framework, in 1999 at the Bishkek summit, the leaders of the Shanghai Five also found common political ground for themselves and criticized NATO's bombing in Yugoslavia, labelling this act an interference in domestic matters. This was because non-interference has been one of the primary principles applied within the group due to their sensitivities related to Uyghur Turks, Chechens, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) (Iwashita, 2007, p. 264).

In 2001, the Shanghai Five was formalized as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization with the addition of Uzbekistan. In 2017, Pakistan and India were added, and in 2021 Iran was accepted. As shown in Table 1, SCO members cover one-quarter of the world and total more than 40% of world population. Moreover, the SCO includes four nuclear powers and two UNSC permanent members. With these notable characteristics, the SCO garners attention as a significant actor for regional security.

Table-1 Basic Data on SCO (World Bank, 2020)

	Coverage (km²)	Population	GDP (Million USD)	Military expenditure (Million USD)
SCO (Iran included)	34 645 47	3 309 038	19 579 497	416 486
World	129 949 282	7 761 620	84 679 924	1 928 852
SCO/World	26.6%	42.6%	23.1%	21.5%

2. SCO AND AFGHANISTAN

The SCO has made efforts to combat terrorism since its establishment as counter-terrorism was one of the main reasons for its foundation. As an organization established a few months before the 9/11

attacks, the SCO was created not only for combatting terrorism, but also for combatting separatism and extremism. Although its focus at the beginning was to combat internal threats, following 9/11 its aim was reinterpreted. Although it had a low profile in 2001, the SCO became a kind of full-fledged regional security organization incorporating significant member states and made provisions for fighting terrorism in its legal doctrine, institutional structure, and military exercises.

The SCO prepared several legal documents to regulate and harmonize the fight against terrorism throughout its member states. However, the SCO's approach to each issue has been shaped mainly through the principles set in the Declaration on the Establishment of the SCO as follows:

"…mutually respect independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, not interfere in each other's internal affairs, not use or threaten to use force against each other, adhere to equality and mutual benefit, resolve all problems through mutual consultations and not seek unilateral military superiority in contiguous regions" (SCO, 2001, p. 2).

Some significant documents on combating terrorism are the Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism of 2001; the Agreement on Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure Between the Member States of the SCO of 2002; the Treaty on Long-Term Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation Between the Member States of the SCO of 2007; and the Convention of the SCO against Terrorism of 2009. Through these official documents, the SCO provided terrorism definitions, procedures for extradition and legal assistance, and prevention measures including intelligence exchange.

In the domain of institutional structure, the establishment of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) as one of two permanent bodies is another indicator of the attention given to counter-terrorism by the SCO. RATS was conceived as the main permanent organ for conducting all counter-terrorism related efforts in a centralized way. This branch is responsible for several duties such as collecting and analyzing information, creating and maintaining a databank, assisting competent agencies of members, sharing information with members, assisting in operations, establishing contacts with other relevant bodies, supporting the drafting of relevant legal documents and assisting in preparation of academic events (SCO, 2002, p. 3-4). Lastly, since its establishment the SCO has conducted approximately 25 military exercises to enhance interoperability among its members and gain experience in the field to better fight terrorism.

The SCO has always been aware of security threats that can originate from Afghanistan, which is the main source of terrorism and organized crime in the region. As shown in Figure 1, Afghanistan is surrounded by SCO members, the exception being Turkmenistan which has maintained a policy of neutrality. Nevertheless, the SCO's tangible actions towards Afghanistan have historically been insufficient, which can be attributed to US efforts to curtail drug smuggling and terrorism (two main sources of problems for SCO members) following 9/11 and the subsequent US invasion (Pantucci, 2021).

The first official step of the SCO towards Afghanistan was the establishment of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group in 2005 (SCO, 2005, p. 1); however, this mechanism was not effectively administrated. In the 2007 summit communique, it was declared that the contact group would be revitalized in order to focus attention on the drug smuggling threat originating from Afghanistan (SCO, 2007, p. 2). In the 2008 summit communique, the SCO initiated the preparations for a special conference on Afghanistan where the fight against terrorism, drug smuggling and organized crime was to be discussed (SCO, 2008, p. 3). The conference was held in Moscow in 2009 but no concrete actions were achieved. Later, starting from 2019, the contact group was dissolved and its activities were suspended (SCO, 2019).

Map 1. Afghanistan and the SCO (created by the author)

The main threats to SCO members originating from Afghanistan were transnational crime, illicit drug trafficking and terrorism. In order to fight these threats, the SCO made efforts among which the granting of observer status to Afghanistan in 2012 was the most significant. In the Beijing Declaration by the Heads of Member States of the SCO on Building a Region of Lasting Peace and Common Prosperity published in 2012, the situation in Afghanistan was addressed and it was stressed that: "They are of the view that the national reconciliation process in Afghanistan should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned" (SCO, 2012, p. 2-3). Beginning in 2015, Afghanistan applied each year for full membership in the SCO but was not accepted. Through SCO membership, Afghanistan hoped to have greater priority in the SCO agenda and to establish strong relationships with the SCO region (Khalil, 2021). Following the full membership application of Afghanistan in 2017, China offered to use the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group more actively and based on this suggestion the group started to gather yearly and produce roadmaps (Amiry, 2018). As a result of the Doha Peace Agreement between the US and Taliban in 2020, the US promised to withdraw militarily from Afghanistan and following that NATO also decided to conclude its mission there. However, in August 2021, before the finalization of the retreat by the US and NATO, the Taliban took control of Afghanistan. Whether this swift takeover after twenty years of US and NATO presence in the country is a weakening factor for the West is still a debated topic, in addition to continuing discussions on whether the US left NATO and its European allies in the lurch in Afghanistan. Setting this topic aside, whether such a quick retreat from Afghanistan brought opportunities for the SCO to increase its regional and global appearance and fill the economic, political, and military vacuum left by the US have also been trending topics. While the SCO gave indications for not assuming such a role in Afghanistan, SCO member states began to conduct their relations with Afghanistan bilaterally, leaving aside the advantages of remaining a unified front under the SCO for the possible threats that might originate from Afghanistan and affect regional stability.

The SCO has had limited discussions on such a significant issue right in the middle of the region in which they are concerned. Following the Taliban takeover, the situation in Afghanistan was firstly discussed at the heads of state meeting in Dushanbe, Tajikistan on 17 September 2021. The most significant decision made at this meeting was the acceptance of Iran as a full SCO member after almost 15 years (SCO, 2021). Iran's membership was the most concrete move to find a solution for regional security problems that could emerge from Afghanistan. At this meeting, Afghanistan's new Taliban government was not recognized by the organization or its members, and the Afghan delegate was not summoned for attendance although Afghanistan is an SCO observer state. Moreover, in the meeting, the importance of the principles of international law was emphasized and regarding the establishment of a new government in Afghanistan, it was underlined that: "The Member States believe that it is critical to have an inclusive government in Afghanistan, with representatives from all ethnic, religious and political groups of Afghan society" (SCO, 2021).

3. SCO MEMBERS AND THEIR SECURITY INTERESTS

The factors bringing SCO members together under the umbrella of an organization is not common values but common problems. The SCO was founded with a functionalist nature, which is why political divergences and mistrusts were separated from cooperation in the security realm just as Mitrany also asserted in his theory (Mitrany, 1966). Although it is also argued that with the inclusion of technology, education and economy as fields of cooperation the SCO is in search of a new identity (Dadabaev, 2013, p. 6). Especially with the acceptance of new members, the possibility of achieving commonalities among them increases in difficulty, except in the realm of security which was the main purpose for the SCO's establishment.

Leaving aside the differing world views and interests of SCO members in general, their perceptions of the situation, approaches towards the events as well as their expectations differ to a large extent regarding the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. Until now, SCO members have not recognized the Taliban administration in Afghanistan but have maintained communication channels. What is shared by all SCO members is the evaluation of the US withdrawal as a sign of the decline of US hegemony in the world and as a significant milestone in the transition to a multipolar world order (Fischer and Stanzel, 2021, p. 1-2).

The Chinese approach towards the situation in Afghanistan has several aspects, but security is a top priority. The first is related to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) where Uyghur Turks reside. China shares a small border with Afghanistan where the XUAR is located, and it has always been regarded by China as a vexing problem. For China, there is the possibility of an influx of terrorists from Afghanistan, including Uyghur Turks connected with organizations blamed by China for terrorist attacks such as the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) and the East Turkestan Independence Movement (ETIM), who according to Beijing may claim independence with courage inspired by the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan. China's second security concern is a spill-over effect on bordering countries which may bring destabilization in the region. In particular, interethnic conflicts that could arise in countries bordering China such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the possibility of the revival of jihadi elements such as through ISIS-K, and increases in migration and drug trafficking are among other threats that concern China. Another concern of China regarding Afghanistan is related to economics, because Afghanistan is rich in raw materials and energy sources. Terrorist attacks or an unstable government may cause delays and reluctance to invest. Related to this, Afghanistan is geopolitically at the crossroads of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is why it has strategic significance for the Chinese economy.

China has always maintained frequent political dialogue with Afghanistan. Following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, China was the first country to offer humanitarian aid and meet with Afghan representatives several times on different occasions (Kuo, 2021). On the international scene, China

has sought more international aid for the reconstruction of Afghanistan as well as pursuing the lifting of sanctions over the country. Based on the decisions and experience since August 2021, it can be argued that China will not take sole responsibility for the smooth transition in Afghanistan, primarily because of its adherence to the non-interference principle; however, Chinese efforts can be labelled "'constructive involvement' in Afghanistan, but with a thoughtful approach against hasty decisions to rush into the country" (Kofman, Stein and Sun, 2021). While conducting bilateral relations for its security and economy, China also invited the SCO to increase coordination for the smooth reconstruction of Afghanistan and suggested beneficial tools, such as the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group (Global Times, 2021). On the other hand, no concrete action has yet been taken by the SCO, except the acceptance of Iran as an SCO member.

For Russia, Afghanistan is no stranger due to the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979-1989. Following the Taliban takeover, much like China, Russia became concerned for its security and that of the region. To mitigate this threat, Russia has maintained close contact with the Taliban. The possible spread of instability to old Soviet republics and to Russia itself and the threat of an increase in terrorist acts and drug trafficking are Russia's major security concerns. On the other hand, unlike China, Russia has limited economic resources to offer Afghanistan. In terms of multilaterally addressing security-related issues stemming from Afghanistan especially in the old Soviet sphere of influence, Russia has turned to the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) rather than the SCO. After the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan in August 2021, Russia sent additional troops and equipment to the Tajik-Afghan border within the framework of the CSTO and conducted several military drills on the border (Gandhara, 2021), which according to some weakens the role of the SCO in the region (Wani, 2022, p. 12). However, with the recent Russian war in Ukraine and resultant economic sanctions, Russia will most probably leave the power vacuum for China to fill.

Pakistan also has significant security concerns similar to other SCO members, such as increased migration and terrorist attacks due to its long border with Afghanistan as well as its cultural, ethnic, economic and religious ties. Stability in Afghanistan and regional security have significance for Pakistan. In particular, the building of fences on the Durand Line, which is the formal border according to Pakistan, has caused tension among both countries because the Afghans contend that the line divides Pashtun tribes (Weitz, 2022). With such a barrier, Pakistan also aims to protect its borders from Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a terrorist group that might support terror attacks in Pakistan (Weitz, 2022). In addition to such security threats, the possibility of encirclement by India through Afghanistan is also a strategic concern of Pakistan. On the Indian side, the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan has caused worries due to nearly twenty years of economic and diplomatic relations as well as Indian investment in Afghanistan. However, India's opposition to the Taliban as well as its partnership with the US in several projects prior to the Taliban seizure of power did not stop it from officially contacting the Taliban to discuss regional security and stability issues (Sood, 2021).

Central Asian countries also have security concerns due to the unstable situation in Afghanistan, though the perceived threat for each one differs. For instance, according to Schmitz, countries other than Tajikistan have acted pragmatically with the Taliban and maintained their contacts (Schmitz, 2022, p. 1). For Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the possibility of the rise of Islamist movements inspired by the Taliban and an influx of migration are perceived as significant threats, since similar instances can be found in the history of these countries. On the other hand, for Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the Taliban in Afghanistan have not been evaluated as a pressing threat (Schmitz, 2022, p. 1). Although the Taliban have assured concerned countries that Afghan lands will not be a safe haven for terrorist organizations, changing dynamics in northern Afghanistan or loss of control by the Taliban would not be for the good of its neighbors (Pannier, 2022). Lastly, for Iran, the Taliban's seizure of power brought it SCO

membership. On the other hand, Iran also has security concerns such as possible migration flows, terrorist organizations, and Sunni-Shia conflict (Fathollah-Nejat and Azizi, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The SCO is significant for bringing important members together. Being co-founded by China and Russia, which are the most influential and powerful countries in the region, the organization was often perceived with suspicion by some. The accession of Pakistan and India as SCO members in 2017 again brought balancing questions, especially when discussions on the transition to a multipolar world continue. Although the organization was founded functionally at its inception to combat terrorism, separatism, and extremism, with the expansion into other areas of cooperation such as energy, trade, education, and health and with the acceptance of new members, the SCO has expanded its scope.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks occurred just a few months after the establishment of the SCO and the organization existed in the shadow of the US invasion of Afghanistan, which is a country right in the middle of the SCO members. During the SCO's lifespan, it can be argued that the second determinant after the 9/11 attacks has been the US and NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan. Henceforth, the stability of Afghanistan is a matter of concern for states in the region, as well as international organizations. There are multiple vacuums in Afghanistan, including military, economic, and political. On the other hand, who will fill this vacuum and how is still the question. Searching for an answer for this at the country level, leaving aside Russia which is economically and politically focused on Ukraine, as the world's most powerful state China comes to the fore. However, since the seizure of power by the Taliban, China seemed unwilling to bear such a responsibility, specifically citing its sensitivity to the principle of non-interference.

Having been in existence for twenty years, the SCO is a regional security organization that has been preparing itself to better combat terrorism, separatism and extremism. In the eyes of some, it could be the right time for the SCO to assert itself as the major actor in the maintenance of security in the region. However, it is an obvious fact that the SCO was founded by members that have very divergent views but similar problems. Regarding the situation in Afghanistan, there is again no consensus among members which is why they prefer to act bilaterally. Until now, as Wani highlights, "instead of presenting a united front, the SCO is rife with disagreements" (Wani, 2022, p. 1). Due mainly to its non-interference principle and lack of ready troops, the SCO may not be an ideal organization to replace the position left by the US and NATO in Afghanistan (Seiwert, 2021).

On the other hand, SCO members do share common concerns, such as the spread of terrorist organizations to countries in the region and the increase in drug trafficking. These are the areas where SCO actions and initiatives have proven successful before. For handling the shared security concerns of all members, the SCO can be a suitable multilateral platform. Representing a united front would be for the benefit of all SCO members because the situation in Afghanistan is not only related to the Taliban, especially when its loss of control in northern Afghanistan is taken into consideration. Therefore, through more effective use of RATS and its database, better implementation of the SCO's specific terrorism- and drug trafficking-related agreements, and enhanced cooperation among members, the SCO could be more active in addressing regional problems and could also test its institutional capacity.

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PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA

Abdusamat Khaydarov∗

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to show that cooperation between Central and South Asia does not meet their capacity and identify the main problems and prospects of cooperation between the two neighboring regions. Among these problems, the absence of a direct land corridor between the two regions is shown. Currently, the delivery of goods between the two regions is carried out by a long route that passes through the territory of Iran which is a part of the International Transport Corridor "North-South" promoted by New Delhi and aims to provide transport links between India and the Central Asian, CIS and European countries through Iran. A real alternative to the «North-South» corridor could be the trans-Afghan railway project initiated by Uzbekistan, which will connect the two regions by the shortest land route. In case of implementation the corridor would be the most economical and short-term route. The methodological basis of this research is a system analysis; the work is based on the principles of credibility and scientific objectivity. The work is based on study of actual contemporary material, chronicle of the events of the last decade and personal observations of the author during his work in Afghanistan; analytical materials published by foreign mass media are also used. The author comes to the conclusion that finding a consensus between the international community and the current interim Taliban government in Afghanistan to resolve the demands of international community will contribute to maintaining stability in the country and to implementation of the strategically important infrastructure projects. In turn, the implementation of infrastructure and energy projects in Afghanistan, including the trans-Afghan railway, TAPI and CASA 1000 projects could be a supporting structure of Central and South Asian cooperation.

Keywords: Central and South Asia, Afghanistan, Trans-Afghan Railway, North-South corridor.

INTRODUCTION

The independence of the Central Asian States opened a new page in their modern history. In a short time, diplomatic relations were established and the process of developing equal political, trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation with the countries of South Asia and other countries of the world began. However, in the 1990s and 2000s, the pace of development of cooperation between the countries of the Central Asian region, despite its geographical proximity to the South Asian region, was significantly inferior to the development of cooperation with the countries of Europe and other regions of Eurasia, located far from Central Asia. This was due to the lack of a direct land transport corridors between the two regions.

To solve this problem in a short time by May 1996 a 320 km long railway line Tejen-Serakhs-Mashhad, connecting the railway networks of Central Asia and Iran, was built with the participation of Iran, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. It opened access to Central Asian countries to Iran's ports in the Persian Gulf and the markets of South Asian countries. It also opened access to the Trans–Asian railway via the East-West line and later became a part of the international transport corridor now known as the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

Despite the opening of this route, it remained long and not quite economical. All this has left its mark on the development of trade and economic ties between the countries of South and Central Asia,

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in particular with India and Pakistan, with which, unlike other countries in the region, there is a certain trade turnover. Thus, the volume of India's trade with Central Asian countries in 2004-2005 reached $ 236 million, and in 2007-2008 – $ 344 million (Joshi N., 2010 Regional Economic Linkages. P.137-138. Reconnecting India and Central Asia). Pakistan's trade volumes with Central Asian countries in the same years reached $ 15.57 million and $ 100.49 million (Joshi N., 2010 Regional Economic Linkages. P.140. Reconnecting India and Central Asia.). The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) noted that India is not a key trading partner for any of the Central Asian states despite warm relations. Indian exports to the region stood at $658 million during 2020-2021 (Hindustan Times, Jan 28, 2022. India-Central Asia cooperation key to regional stability: PM Modi. Retrieved 17.05.2022, from https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/indiacentral-asia-cooperation-key-to-regional-stability-pm-modi-101643311801073.html). Both countries were not among the top ten largest trading partners of the Central Asian countries.

1. INDIA'S EFFORTS TO DEVELOP THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND COOPERATION OF CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA

It should be noted that since the late 1990s, there has been an economic rise of India and its formation as an important regional power. In order to expand cooperation with the Central Asian countries, India in 2012 proclaimed the "Connect Central Asia" policy, which means the development of political, economic and cultural ties, as well as in the field of security. India's desire to expand relations with the Central Asian region intensified after the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Central Asia in September 2013 and the announcement of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative.

In 2015, Indian Prime Minister N. Modi paid a visit to all five Central Asian countries, during which issues of expanding cooperation and developing transport potential were top of the agenda of the negotiations. According to Indian analysts, "starting somewhere in 2015, Delhi began to consider Central Asia not as the eastern underbelly of the former Soviet Union, but as a single promising region" (Muminov A. 14.01.2019. Indiya vstupaet v bor'bu za Tsentral'nuyu Aziyu. Retrieved 18.05.2022, from https://inbusiness.kz/ru/news/indiya-vstupaet-v-borbu-za-centralnuyu-aziyu). By mid-2010, the trade turnover of India and Central Asian countries had grown somewhat, but nevertheless did not meet the potential of the parties, as can be seen from Table 1.

Table 1. India – Central Asia average trade at a glance (USD Million)					
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Inida-Central Asia Average Trade at a Glance (USD Million)	1,481.42	956.558	944.039	1,052.955	1,291.437
Source: Constructed by author based on Export Import Data Bank of Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India. https://tradestat.commerce.gov.in/eidb/Default.asp# (Accessed: 07.04.2022)					

The basis of India's exports to the Central Asian countries consisted of pharmaceuticals, coffee, tea, spices, tannins and their derivatives, various chemical products, rubber and its products, electrical machines and equipment, clothing items and clothing accessories. The nomenclature of imported goods mainly consisted of building materials, mineral fuels, mineral oils, inorganic and organic chemicals, silk, and fertilizers.

Speaking about India's cooperation with the countries of Central Asia, it should be noted that it is based on the strategy of "Expanded Partnership", which includes countries bordering South Asia. The states of the Central Asian region "consider India as a fast-growing economy, a potential investor and an increasingly influential actor in the region ..." (Yakubov I. 06.02.2020. Indiya i Tsentral'naya Aziya:

ternisty put' sotrudnichestva. Retrieved 18.05.2022, from https://cabar.asia/ru/indiya-i-tsentralnaya-aziya-ternistyj-put-sotrudnichestva). The interest of both sides in the further expansion of multifaceted relations led to the emergence of a new negotiating platform at the level of foreign ministers, called the India–Central Asia Dialogue. To date, three meetings have been held within the framework of this dialogue. At the third meeting in December 2021, Uzbek Foreign Minister A. Kamilov proposed to create a "green corridor" (Uzbekistan predlozhil sozdat' «zelyony koridor» Tsentral'naya Aziya – Indiya. 20.12.2021. Retrieved 18.05.2022, from https://kabar.kg/news/uzbekistan-predlozhil-sozdat-zelenyi-koridor-tcentral-naia-aziia-indiia-podrobnee-https-asiaplustj.info-ru-news-tajikistan/) for mutual access of products to the markets of India and Central Asian countries. Apparently, the parties should deal with the agreed concrete content of this proposal.

The new political reality that has developed in Afghanistan since August 15, 2021 has again pushed India to intensify cooperation with the Central Asian countries. As noted by the Hindustan times newspaper: «India has sharpened it focus on the Central Asian states both to counter China's growing presence in the region and to strengthen cooperation on Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover of that country. However, India's total trade with the Central Asian states was worth $3 billion in 2020, significantly lower than the region's two-way trade with China, which stood at $40 billion in 2018» (Hindustan Times, 28.01.2022. India-Central Asia cooperation key to regional stability: PM Modi. Retrieved 17.05.2022, from https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/indiacentral-asia-cooperation-key-to-regional-stability-pm-modi-101643311801073.html).

The virtual summit of the leaders of India and Central Asia in January 2022 highlighted New Delhi's interest in developing cooperation with the states of this region, at which a full range of important proposals of mutual interest were discussed. In the context of expanding trade and interconnectedness, an agreement was reached on the optimal use of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), as well as the Ashgabat Agreement on the International Transport and Transit Corridor (ITTC) to improve communication between India and Central Asian countries (Bhattacharya D. 18.02.2022. India-Central Asia Summit: Shaping geopolitics in the extended neighbourhood. Retrieved 15.05.2022, from https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-central-asia-summit/).

Speaking about the International North-South Transport Corridor, it should be noted that India, interested in shorter access to Central Asia and Europe, in the late 1990s began to consider the possibility of opening a cross-cutting corridor from Mumbai to St. Petersburg through the territory of Iran. Russia and Iran were interested in opening of such a corridor along the North–South line. According to a study conducted by the Federation of Freight Forwarders' Association of India (FFFAI) in 2014, INSTC was 30 percent cheaper and 40 percent shorter than the traditional Suez route, slashing the transit time to an average of 23 days for Europe-bound shipments from the 45-60 days taken by the Suez Canal route (Bhardwaj N. 21.02.2022. India's Export Opportunities Along the International North South Transport Corridor. Retrieved 15.05.2022, from https://www.india-briefing.com/news/indias-export-opportunities-along-the-international-north-south-transport-corridor-22412.html/). The obvious economic benefits of the INSTC and the opportunities for the development of trade and economic ties led to the signing of the Agreement on the North-South International Transport Corridor by Russia, India and Iran in September 2000.

The project opened India's access to the countries of Central Asia, CIS and Europe, bypassing the territories of Pakistan, based on certain difficulties in bilateral relations. Afghanistan was also not considered as a transit link due to the lack of stability and security. The INSTC corridor project was also of obvious benefit for the States of Central and South Asia. The accession of almost all Central Asian states to the North-South ITC project gives them the opportunity to access the countries of South Asia and the Persian Gulf. However, the effective use of the corridor is experiencing difficulties due to a

number of unresolved technical and customs issues. Nevertheless, India, based on its difficult relations with Pakistan, continued to step up its efforts to use the INSTC as a key element for developing cooperation with Central Asia and Europe. In May 2016 During the visit of Indian Prime Minister N. Modi to Iran, an agreement was reached on the construction of a new railway line between the port of Chabahar and Zahedan, which will be shorter than the current route from the port of Bandar Abbas to the borders of the Central Asian countries. At the same time, it was announced that India will invest $ 500 million (India Today. 24.05.2016. India to invest $500 million on Chabahar port in Iran for easy access to Afghanistan, Europe. Retrieved 15.05.2022, from https://www.indiatoday.in/mail-today/story/india-to-invest-500-million-on-chabahar-port-in-iran-for-easy-access-to-afghanistan-europe-325141-2016-05-24) in the development of the strategically located Chabahar port in Iran, which will allow New Delhi to gain easy access to Afghanistan and Europe bypassing Pakistan.

Nevertheless, the modernization of the Chabahar port has not yet been completed and transport companies mainly still use the Bandar Abbas port and a longer overland route with access to the Central Asian countries and Russia. Along with this, as noted in the report of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP): "despite the existence of an intergovernmental agreement at the North-South ITC, it did not establish a clear legal framework through which it would be possible to effectively put the corridor into operation"(Developing Coordination and Institutional Arrangements for the Management of Intermodal Transport Corridors in the ESCAP Region. Study Report 2019. Retrieved 15.05.2022, from https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Finalized%20study%20report%20on%20intermodal%20corridors%20December%202019%20%20.pdf).

2. PAKISTAN'S VISION OF INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Central Asian States, Pakistan has sought to develop multifaceted cooperation. However, the Afghan conflict and the lack of direct land routes were the main obstacles to the development of such cooperation. This directly affected the trade turnover of Pakistan with the republics of Central Asia, which was significantly inferior to the Indian one and still persists.

Table 2. Trade of Pakistan with the countries of Central Asia in 2006—2016, mln., dollars US						
Index	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2016
Export	12,875	11,001	12,094	13,405	25,940	37,470
Import	33,463	101,340	92,326	22,104	20,871	49,965
Turnover	46,338	112,341	104,42	35,509	46,811	87,435
Trade Balance	−20,588	−90,339	−80,232	−8,699	5,069	−12,495
Source: Galishcheva N.V. Central Asian Vector of Pakistan's Foreign Economic Policy: Main Problems and Prospects. Bulletin of the RUDN. 2018 Vol. 18 No. 2 P-332						

A certain revival of cooperation between the Central Asian republics and Pakistan has begun to occur from 2017-2018. This is due to the new approaches and the desire of the leaders of Pakistan and the Central Asian republics to develop interregional cooperation and search for ways to resolve the Afghan conflict. In 2018, after the election of Imran Khan as the Prime Minister, the "Vision Central Asia" policy was formulated in order to increase cooperation with the republics of Central Asia. This policy, as noted by Pakistani analysts, is based on five main pillars. These include political and diplomatic issues, trade and investment, energy and communications, security and defence, and people-to-people relations (Mayar A. 12.03.2022. Vision Central Asia. Retrieved 18.05.2022, from https://dailytimes.com.pk/899343/vision-central-asia/).

In parallel with India's activity in the Central Asian direction and Uzbekistan's new initiative to develop and strengthen interconnectedness with the countries of South Asia, Pakistan has also taken a number of steps to develop its relations with the republics of Central Asia. In May 2020, Pakistan and

Uzbekistan signed a memorandum of understanding on the Joint Working Group on Trade and Investment. Along with this, an Agreement on transit trade between the two countries was signed. In February 2021 an agreement was signed on the construction of a railway through Termez-Mazar-I-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar (Central Asian Bureau for Analytical Reporting. 10.08.2021. Retrieved 18.05.2022, from https://cabar.asia/ru/obzor-mirovyh-smi-o-tsentralnoj-azii). An important step in the development of bilateral relations became the Joint Declaration on the Establishment of Strategic Partnership and the Transit Trade Agreement (TTA) signed during Imran Khan's visit to Uzbekistan in July 2021. In March 2022 a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) was signed between Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

The development of cooperation between Pakistan and Kazakhstan is also experiencing a certain rise. Meetings and negotiations of the parties at various levels indicate their desire to increase bilateral trade, improve logistics and ensure the smooth passage of customs procedures in mutual trade. Kazakhstan, along with Kyrgyzstan, China and Pakistan, have been parties to the Quadrilateral Transit Agreement (QTTA) since 1995, which entered into force only in 2004. The mentioned countries of Central Asia and China received access to the seaports of Pakistan. The agreement provides Pakistan with alternative access to Central Asia, bypassing Afghanistan completely through the Karakoram highway. In February 2017, Tajikistan expressed interest in joining the deal (Bhatta Z. 24.02.2022. Tajikistan to join Pakistan road link bypassing Afghanistan. Retrieved 09.06.2022, from https://tribune.com.pk/story/1337274/tajikistan-join-pakistan-road-link-bypassing-afghanistan/). A similar desire to join the agreement was expressed by Uzbekistan in May 2020 (Khan M. 8.05.2020. Uzbekistan looks to Pakistani ports. Retrieved 09.06.2022, from https://www.dawn.com/news/1555445/uzbekistan-looks-to-pakistani-ports). However, this road corridor runs at a high altitude in mountainous terrain and depends on climatic conditions, which limits its use, especially in winter season.

Turkmenistan, despite the insignificant volumes of trade turnover, also occupies an important place in the modern plans of Pakistan, counting on the implementation of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) project promoted by Turkmenistan. The project is intended to provide Turkmen gas to Pakistan and India through Afghanistan. The issues of expanding cooperation between Pakistan and the Central Asian republics were discussed by Imran Khan during his participation at the meetings of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Bishkek (2019) and Dushanbe (2021), where he met with almost all the leaders of the Central Asian republics. In general, the trade turnover of Pakistan with the Central Asian republics in 2021 compared to 2016, as can be seen from Table 3, has increased significantly, however, it does not meet the capacities of the parties.

Table 3: Pakistan – Central Asia Average Trade at a Glance (USD Million)			
Country	Export	Import	Turnover
	2021	2021	2021
Kazakhstan	$193.10M	$3.355	196.435
Kyrgyzstan	$2.81M	$0.553	3.363
Tajikistan	$2.48M	$0.420	2.900
Turkmenistan	$2.99M	$3.127	6.117
Uzbekistan	$48.79M	$2.536	51.326
Source: Constructed by author based on Trading Economics https://tradingeconomics.com/ (Accessed: 07.04.2022)			

According to Abdul Razak Daoud, commercial adviser to Prime Minister Imran Khan, Pakistan plans to increase trade with the five landlocked Central Asian countries - Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan — to about $1.5 billion a year from less than a billion dollars over the past decade. Pakistan plans to grow trade with five landlocked Central Asian nations —

Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan — to about $1.5 billion a year from less than a billion in the past decade (Haider K. 10.05.2021. Pakistan is looking for diversity, seeks more trade with Afghanistan, Central Asian nations. Retrieved 09.05.2022, from https://theprint.in/economy/pakistan-is-looking-for-diversity-seeks-more-trade-with-afghanistan-central-asian-nations/655419/).

3. UZBEKISTAN'S INITIATIVES TO DEVELOP COOPERATION BETWEEN CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA

Since the end of 2016, Uzbekistan, based on the understanding of the need to accelerate the development of its economy and expand cooperation with Central Asian countries and regions adjacent to Central Asia, has begun reforming its economy and foreign policy. In foreign policy, a number of initiatives have been taken to address these challenges. In a short period of time, relations with the Central Asian countries of the region have been brought to a new level. Tashkent has taken a number of foreign policy initiatives to eliminate existing discrepancies in bilateral relations. The volume of trade with them has significantly increased, border and water-energy problems have been largely solved. A new platform of cooperation has appeared in the region in the form of regular meetings of the heads of Central Asian states, at which a wide range of issues of cooperation and interaction are discussed. The Central Asian region has come to be perceived as a region whose countries have similar or close objectives on domestic and foreign policy development and there is an understanding of the need for joint cooperation in the face of the modern world challenges.

Significant changes have taken place in Uzbekistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan, the restoration of peace in which is considered as one of the main factors of sustainable development and security of the Central Asian countries, as well as access to the South Asian region. It was precisely these factors and the interests of breaking the geographical isolation of the Central Asian States, hindering socio-economic development and their full-scale cooperation with the States of South Asia, that required their resolution. Based on this, President of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev in early 2017 set the task of forming a belt of security, stability and good neighbourliness. Achieving peace in Afghanistan has become one of the main goals in Uzbekistan's foreign policy, which has become the starting point of Tashkent's regional preventive diplomacy. In the same year, it was stated that the republic makes and will continue to make a feasible contribution to the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan, the development of its transport and energy infrastructure, and the training of national personnel.

The next step towards finding a solution to the Afghan crisis was the Tashkent Conference on Afghanistan, held on the initiative of Uzbekistan in March 2018. A little bit later, Uzbekistan took the initiative to build a Trans-Afghan railway along the Mazar–I–Sharif–Kabul -Peshawar route and a new Surkhan-Puli-Khumri power transmission line, which will connect Afghanistan to a united energy ring of Central Asia. The Trans-Afghan Railway project, if implemented, can become a real alternative to the North-South corridor and link the two regions by the shortest and cheapest land route for cargo transportation.

A major step in the development of the interconnectedness of Central and South Asia was the International Conference «Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity. Challenges and Opportunities», held in Tashkent on July 15-16, 2021. President of Uzbekistan Sh. Mirziyoyev initiated the strengthening of ties between the regions, and the conference itself became a political and expert platform for multilateral discussion of the model of a mutually beneficial strategic link "Central Asia – South Asia" in the transport and logistics, energy, investment, trade, production, technological, cultural and humanitarian spheres. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Central and South Asian States noted the need to encourage for cooperation, in the development and use of the transit and logistics potential

of Central and South Asia, through expansion of the transport and communication infrastructure under international agreements and conventions like TIR, and the formation of new international transport corridors that open convenient commercially feasible and secure routes to seaports; emphasized the importance of Afghanistan's role as the "regional bridge" for connectivity between Central and South Asia (Joint statement by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Central and South Asian States on the Development of Regional Connectivity. 16.07.2021. Retrieved 20.05.2022, from https://mfa.uz/en/press/news/2021/joint-statement-by-the-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-central-and-south-asian-states-on-the-development-of-regional-connectivity---30018).

Moreover, in support of the main ideas of the conference a statement was adopted on July 15, 2021 by the United States, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan on their agreement in principle to create a new quadrilateral diplomatic platform aimed at strengthening regional ties (Andleeb S. 31.07.2021. Imran Khan's geo-economic vision making way to Central Asia through peaceful Afghanistan. Retrieved 09.05.2022, from https://www.app.com.pk/top-news/imran-khans-geo-economic-vision-making-way-to-central-asia-thru-peaceful-afghanistan/). However, the development of the events in Kabul in August 2021, namely, assumption of power of the Taliban movement in the country, made its own adjustments that complicated the situation both in Afghanistan and beyond. The complexity of the tasks facing Uzbekistan and other Central Asian states led Tashkent to choose a strategy for finding mutually acceptable ways to resolve the problems that have arisen in the new political reality in and around Afghanistan.

This strategy involves maintaining a dialogue with the Interim Government of Afghanistan in proportion to the fulfilment of its commitments. At the same time, Uzbekistan intends to continue implementing socio-economic and infrastructure projects in Afghanistan, considering these projects as economic factors to stabilize the situation in the country. It will also allow Afghanistan to join inter-regional ties and regain its historical status as a bridge connecting the regions of Central and South Asia. Other Central Asian countries, with the exception of Tajikistan, have close or similar positions.

4. THE ROLE OF CENTRAL ASIAN PROJECTS IN STABILIZATION OF THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATION WITH SOUTH ASIA

The Central Asian countries, despite the lack of land corridors, continuing instability in Afghanistan and the current complicated relations in the India-Pakistan-China triangle, are determined to implement their transport and energy projects that will connect them with the markets of South Asia. In order to resolve the first problem, the Republic of Uzbekistan made one of their first attempts to open a new transport corridor in the southern direction. The issue of opening a transport corridor from Central Asia to the South through Afghanistan was discussed during the visit of former Afghan President B. Rabbani to Tashkent in October 1992. However, hopes for stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan did not materialize and the issue of opening a transport corridor through Afghanistan was closed for many years.

Another option turned out to be more realistic, namely the connection of the railways of Central Asia with the railway network of Iran, whose territory has opened access to the sea communications of the Indian Ocean. This aim was achieved in 1996 by opening of the Tejen-Serakhs-Mashhad railway line and as a result the countries of Central Asia gained access to Iran's ports in the Persian Gulf and the markets of South Asian countries. This corridor, which has become a part of the INSTC, is used by Central Asian countries, but remains long and not quite economical.

The strategically important regional project for the construction of the Trans-Afghan Mazar–I–Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railway proposed by Uzbekistan looks more attractive. According to preliminary estimates, the length of the road will be about 600 km. The project implementation period

can be up to 5 years, the amount of credit funds – $ 4.8 billion. The route will significantly reduce the time and cost of cargo transportation between the countries of South Asia and Europe through Central Asia, as well as increase the volume of transit traffic through Uzbekistan. With the full implementation of the project, the transportation of goods from Pakistan to Uzbekistan may take 3-5 days instead of 35, and the cost of transporting a 20-foot container may decrease by almost 3 times. According to forecasts, the volume of cargo transportation can reach up to 10 million tons (News Central Asia. 01.12.2021. Uzbekistan: O perspektivakh sozdaniya Transafganskogo transportnogo koridora. Retrieved 09.05 2022, from http://www.newscentralasia.net/2021/12/01/uzbekistan-o-perspektivah-sozdaniya-transafganskogo-koridora/).

The construction of the trans-Afghan corridor will significantly increase the transit and export potential and interconnectedness of our regions. At the same time, the implementation of this transport corridor will allow the States of Central Asia and Afghanistan not only to reach the seaports in the Indian Ocean in the shortest and cheapest way, but will also enable these countries to connect to the Chinese Maritime Silk Road project and the Indian North-South project. At the same time, this corridor will be the shortest and most economical overland corridor for both Pakistan and India. It is quite possible that the opening of the corridor will also help to ease tensions in Indian-Pakistani relations and promote interregional cooperation.

Among the energy projects of Central Asia, in which the countries of South Asia are interested, it should be noted such large energy projects as TAPI, CASA-1000 and Surkhan -Puli Khumri electricity transmission power line.

The TAPI Pipeline extends for approximately 1,600 kilometres (km), from the Turkmenistan (TKM)-Afghanistan (AFG) border to the Pakistan (PAK)-India (IND) border. At full capacity, the pipeline will transport 33 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas annually from TKM to respective buyers in AFG (5%), PAK (47.5%) and IND (47.5%) during the 30-year commercial operations period (Asian Development Bank. Regional: TAPI Gas Pipeline Project (Phase 1). Retrieved 09,05 2022, from https://www.adb.org/projects/52167-001/main).

The $1.2 billion CASA-1000 project will bring 1300 megawatts (MW) of seasonal power from Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic to Afghanistan and Pakistan. It will be a major new source of revenue in the regional electricity market, transmitting 4.6 billion kilowatt hours (kWh)/year (CASA 1000. 2021. Electricity. It's essential for development, economic growth, job creation, and modern life. Without it, poverty endures. Retrieved 09,05 2022, from https://www.casa-1000.org/).

Both projects involve the delivery of energy from Central Asia through the territory of Afghanistan to Pakistan and India, which are in dire need of these two energies.

Another major energy project will be construction of the Surkhan Puli Khumri power transmission line. The construction of the Surkhan-Puli-Khumri transmission line will increase the supply of electricity from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan by 70%, up to 6 billion kWh per year. The power line will connect the energy system of Afghanistan to the unified energy system of Uzbekistan and Central Asia and may become part of CASA-1000. Its total length will be about 260 kilometers, of which 45 falls *in* the territory of Uzbekistan and 215 – *in* Afghanistan (Surkhan-Pul-e-Khumri Power Line. 2022. Retrieved 09,05 2022, from https://uzenergyweek.com/surkhan-pul-e-khumri-power-line/).

CONCLUSION

Today, all the countries of the Central and South Asian regions agree that the unsatisfactory state of interregional cooperation is based on two main problems. The first is the absence of a short, well,

functioning overland transport corridor between them. The second is the continuing instability in Afghanistan.

Along with this, the situation is complicated by the tense relations between India and Pakistan. At the same time, China supports Pakistan's position in the Kashmir dispute with India. Under the current conditions, India does not see for itself the possibility of goods transportation through the territory of Pakistan and Afghanistan and considers the INSTC as the main corridor to access Central Asia.

Pakistan, on the other hand, supports the transport corridor project through Afghanistan. This project will allow the Central Asian countries to have access to the sea ports of Pakistan and join the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This situation and the development of transport and energy communications with access to Pakistan and China are viewed by India as strengthening of the geopolitical influence of these countries in Central Asia. At the same time, India and China have unresolved territorial disputes, which also affects the development of the situation in this part of the world. Such disunity and rivalry between the two leading countries of South Asia in matters of cooperation with Central Asia does not contribute to removing the obstacles that hinder interregional cooperation.

If we talk about the structure of trade turnover of India and Pakistan with the Central Asian states, then in general it is based on the export and import of goods produced in these countries. Such forms of cooperation as investment and technological and others, remain out of sight of the countries of the two regions. In this regard, China, the neighbor of South Asia, looks in a position of advantage. Trade between China and Central Asian nations has grown by more than 100 times in the past 30 years and the stocks of China's direct investment in the five countries in Central Asia exceeded $14 billion (Xinhua. 18.01.2022. China-Central Asia trade grew by 100 times over 30 years. Retrieved 09,05 2022, from http://english.www.gov.cn/statecouncil/ministries/202201/18/content_WS61e60de2c6d09c94e48a3cf9.html).

However, but for the sake of fairness it should be noted that the Central Asian states did not show much activity and did not consider the leading countries of South Asia as potential investment partners and did not undertake necessary steps to find other forms of cooperation. All this requires new approaches and serious study of the existing problems that hinder interregional cooperation.

In general, the aforementioned projects of the Central Asian states are aimed at accessing the new markets of South Asian countries. As it is believed, the implementation of these major transport and energy projects, at the country level, first of all, will give a powerful impetus to the development of the economy of Afghanistan. Thousands of job opportunities will be required for the construction of these infrastructure and communication systems. To maintain these systems, qualified staff and new training centres will be also required. The basis of Afghanistan's transport and energy infrastructure will be created, without which economic development is unthinkable.

All this will contribute to the involvement of yesterday's armed opposition into the constructive processes and peaceful life. This will directly have a positive impact on the solution of migration and unemployment issues. The initiatives of the Central Asian countries to implement various projects should be considered as signals to the Taliban for the transition to constructive relations with the world community. In turn, finding consensus between the international community and the current interim Taliban Government in Afghanistan on resolving the demands of the international community will contribute to maintaining stability in Afghanistan and creating the necessary conditions for the implementation of infrastructure and energy projects in Afghanistan.

At the interregional level, the construction of the Trans-Afghan Railway, implementation of the TAPI, CASA-1000 and Surkhan-Puli-Khumri projects, will contribute to the development of the transport and logistics infrastructure of the two regions, which can become the supporting structure of the entire complex of cooperation between Central and South Asia. The role of Afghanistan, which is a natural bridge between the two regions, will be restored.

At the same time, it should be noted that issues of interregional cooperation could be discussed within the framework of international organizations such as SAARC and ECO, which include all countries of both regions. Such interaction could contribute to finding mutually acceptable solutions to the problems of interregional cooperation.

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A LOOK AT THE FUTURE STUDIES OF THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION DURING THE TRANSITION OF INTERNATIONAL ORDER (CASE STUDY: ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN)

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Abstract

Today, institutions and organizations have received more and more attention in the international community. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization also has the potential to become a large and valuable organization due to its diverse capacities during the transition to international order. Iran should also become a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and use its capacities, considering the benefits and multilateral cooperation. The purpose of this article is to examine the role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and its position during the transition of the international system. In this article, descriptive-analytical method has been used. In fact, through this method, an attempt has been made to answer the question, what role does the SCO play in the transition period of international order? The findings of this article also show that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can play a key role in the transition of the international system, given its diverse political, economic and cultural capacities, and has the ability to lead the world in the transition from international to international.

Key words: Shanghai Cooperation Organization - Transition of international order - NATO – Iran

INTRODUCTION

International order headed toward the unipolar leadership of the United States after the Cold War. In recent years, after the defeats of the United States in different parts of the world, including the withdrawal from Afghanistan, the decline of power in this country has become more evident. In addition to security and military issues, economic issues have also contributed to the United States' power decline. Rising debts and unprecedented inflation in the country indicate the seriousness of the United States' decline crisis. The international order has been disrupted by the decline of the United States and the rise of emerging powers such as China and Russia. China and Russia's cooperation within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) can be viewed as a unified front against the West and NATO. The membership of great powers such as China and Russia and the regional powers such as Iran, which has recently joined, shows the great power and strength of this organization. The SCO, which has a large population and vast resources due to its military, economic and political power, has the potential to play an important role in the world and the transition of international order. The international order transition, which many analysts believe began with the Wall Street economic crisis of 2009, is accompanied by an eastward shift in global power.

The SCO has become a powerful organization or institution, which, if it expands and increases bilateral or multilateral cooperation, could become an influential institution in the international order that could play a leading role in the post-United States world. Member states of the SCO, such as China, Russia, and Iran, can increase their influence in international order and relations and improve their position. Iran, which has recently become a member of the SCO, can play a pivotal role in energy and transportation, given its geopolitical position as well as its fossil fuel reserves and mineral resources. The SCO is not only advantageous for Iran, but Iran also offers the SCO mutually beneficial advantages

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and potential. On the other hand, it is impossible to ignore Iran's cooperation with China and Russia on the new Silk Road; Iran may play a crucial role in the transition of the international order.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory of realism came to the attention of politicians and thinkers after World War II. In fact, the crises that arose after the world wars caused countries to focus on the theory of realism.

Other actors, such as organizations, operate based on governments' relationships and interests. The critical point is that realists prioritize national interests as their top priority (Ghavam, 2011). In the aftermath of the post-World War II crises, realists believed that governments were internationally competing with each other based on a zero-sum game. Realists believe that eliminating the power instinct is impossible and that it is entirely natural to seek power and interests. On the other hand, realists believe that governments cannot be independent if governments do not have independence, and their nature is somewhat ambiguous (Moshirzade, 2005).

The realists believe that the international system in which governments exist is essentially anarchy. This concept was borrowed from Hobbes. The natural state of international relations is competition and conflict in which governments are formed based on their interests and act in the same direction. Neorealism has been since 1980 when the Cold War began. Several intellectuals in this field have provided theories. Classical realism, as noted, has used more of the views of Machiavelli and Hobbes, and in recent years the views of Hans Morgenthau, who have, in fact, placed more emphasis on human nature and instinct. (Korab-Karpowicz, W. Julian, 2018). After the beginning of the Cold War and the formation of the Western and Eastern blocs, the theory of neorealism emerged, which focused more on the structure of international order and the rules of the game, as well as the behavior and performance of governments (Etaat, Rezaei, 2011). In addition, offensive and defensive realism were developed by John Mearsheimer and Kenneth Waltz, and these two theories are different from each other.

2. HISTORY OF THE SCO

The collapse of the Soviet Union, the emergence of new states in Central Asia, and the lack of an efficient military force in the newly independent states brought them closer to China and Russia. In fact, the unresolved border disputes between China and the newly independent Soviet Union prompted China to seek cooperation and resolve border disputes with the newly independent states.

The newly independent countries of the former Soviet Union near the border of China's Xinjiang province raise concerns about the rise of Islamic tendencies, particularly Islamic fundamentalism, in the region (Koolaee ,2012). In this regard, China, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan established the Shanghai Five Organization in 1996. Establishing the SCO, which was first named Shanghai five and then Shanghai Cooperation Organization, was for military action and solving border problems (Koolaee, 2007).

Tajik civil war and the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia can be considered a significant turning point in establishing the SCO. On the other hand, economic problems and widespread corruption, such as drug and arms trafficking, had spread rapidly in Central Asia, and this required extensive cooperation between countries in the region to address these issues. The Shanghai Five's annual meetings were held in various countries. After Uzbekistan became a member of the organization, it was renamed Shanghai Six, which was the prelude to the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In 2005, the annual summit was attended by new countries such as Iran, India, Mongolia, and Pakistan. Ten years later, in 2015, India and Pakistan became members of the SCO (Akhtar, Javaid, 2021). Due to economic powers such as China, India, and Russia in this organization, the SCO, which

initially prioritized military and security issues, has shifted its focus to economic recovery and trade relations in recent years. In this regard, the design of the new Silk Road has been considered.

3. SCO CHART PICTURE

As can be seen, the SCO's highest decision-making body is the Council of Heads of State. The council meets annually in the capital of one of the countries, and the heads of state decide on the general issues of the organization. The SCO secretariat is also located in Beijing, China (Shanghai Cooperation Organization Secretariat,http://eng.sectsco.org).

Source: Tehrantimes
Figure-1: Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Currently, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan, and most recently, Iran are members of the SCO. Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia are observer countries in the SCO. On the other hand, some countries, such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Saudi Arabia, are among the partner countries of the SCO (Safavi, Noor, 2022).

4. COOPERATION AND MILITARY POWER IN THE SCO

As mentioned earlier, the SCO is based on security and military cooperation. The main goal of this organization was to fight terrorism, separatism, and widespread arms and drug trafficking. Accordingly, in the years after its establishment, in 2006, the organization signed a memorandum of understanding with the Collective Security Treaty Organization to pursue extensive cooperation in security and drug trafficking. In 2009, the organization also entered cyber warfare, seeking to counter economic and social cyber-attacks (mokhtari, 2009). Since 2003, the SCO has launched regular military exercises to expand and improve military strength and coordination among member states. The SCO's peace mission extends beyond the fight against terrorism; it is also a manifestation of China and Russia's confrontation with the West. China-Russian military exercises go far beyond counter-terrorism exercises, which has caused concern in European and Western countries. There are some disagreements among members regarding supplying equipment and cooperating with the armed forces. Overall, China and Russia provide the SCO with military equipment, while other nations provide the personnel for the peacekeeping mission.(Sadi, Ispir, 2021)

5. CONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF THE SCO (ECONOMIC INSTITUTIONS)

As mentioned earlier, world economic powers such as China, India, and Russia have given particular importance and place to economic topics in the SCO. Naturally, the presence of many countries and a large population have provided a good market for the SCO member states. An opportunity that has been very promising for countries with high economic production volumes, such as China and India, and it is possible to use it. In this regard, in 2003, the SCO member states signed an agreement to strengthen economic cooperation. Interestingly, the prime minister of china proposed to create a free trade zone, which is an interesting view. In order to strengthen economic cooperation, the Business Council of the SCO was established in 2006. The establishment of this council was based on the economic strategy of the heads of the member states. In a way, the Business Council expertly advises and evaluates the SCO's investment opportunities. The Business Council can be considered the research center of the SCO (Xue, Makengo, 2021). Another economic mechanism of the SCO is its Interbank Consortium. The established consortium in 2005 to provide services and finance investment projects in SCO member states. The consortium includes banks from India, China, and other member states (Russia's national economic development institution,https://veb.ru/en/international-multilateral-cooperation/the-interbank-consortium-of-the-shanghai-cooperation-organization).

6. SCO ENERGY CLUB

The membership of oil- and gas-rich nations has prompted the SCO to pay attention to these nations in terms of energy. Countries such as Russia, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan, which have significant world oil and gas reserves, have strengthened the energy position of the organization. On the other hand, the largest energy consumers in the world, namely India and China, are also in this organization, which gives a unique position to this organization. According to the latest statistics, 25% of the world's oil and 50% of the world's gas reserves belong to the SCO member states. The main goal of the Energy Club is to market oil and gas reserves in the SCO member states, as well as to transfer oil and gas from producing countries to European and Asian countries (India council on global relations,https://www.gatewayhouse.in/india-sco-energy).

Table1 1. Gas pipelines in the SCO regions

NAME OF PIPELINE	STATUS	SOURCE	DESTINATION	DISTANCE COVERED (KM)	CAPACITY (BILLION CUBIC METERS/YEAR)	INVESTORS
SRTO – Torzhok	Complete (2012)	Bovanenkovskoye	Torzhok	2200	20.5-28.5	Gazprom
Yamal – Europe	Complete (2006)	Torzhok	Frankfurt ad der Oder	2000	32.9	Gazprom
	Complete (2013)	Gryazovets	Vyborg	900	55	Gazprom
Nord Stream	Comissioned (2012)	Vyborg	Greifswald	1224	27.5	Gazprom 51%, Wintershall Holding GmbH (a BASF subsidiary) 15.5%, PEG Infrastruktur AG (PEGI/E.ON subsidiary) 15.5%, N.V. Nederlandse Gasunie 9% and ENGIE 9%
Nord Stream 2	Construction Commenced (2018)	Ust-Luga	Greifswald	1200	27.5	Gazprom 51%, Wintershall Holding GmbH (a BASF subsidiary) 15.5%, PEG Infrastruktur AG (PEGI/E.ON subsidiary) 15.5%, N.V. Nederlandse Gasunie 9% and ENGIE 9%
Minsk – Vilnius – Kaunas – Kaliningrad Gas Pipeline	Complete (2017)	Minsk	Kaliningrad	155	2.5	Gazprom
Blue Stream	Commissioned (2003)	Beregovaya	Samsun	1213	16	Gazprom 50%, ENI 50% (offshore), Gazprom (onshore)
Turkstreasm	Construction Commenced (2017)	Russkaya	Kiyikoy	930	31.5	South Stream Transport B.V. (subsidiary of Gazprom) and Allseas Group S.A.
South Caucasus Pipeline	Complete (2006)	Baku	Erzurum	692	8.5	BP, operator 28.8 %, AzSCP 10.0 %, TPAO 19%, Petronas 15.5 %, Lukoil 10%, NICO 10% and SGC Midstream 6.7%
Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline	Construction Commenced (2015)	Türkgözü	Kipoi	1850	16	Southern Gas Corridor Closed Joint Stock Company (SGC) 58%, BOTAS 30%, and BP 12%
Trans Adriatic Pipeline	Construction Commenced (2016)	Kipoi	San Foca	878	10	BP (20%), SOCAR (20%), Snam (20%), Fluxys (19%), Enagás (16%) and Axpo (5%)
SAGE Middle East to India Deepwater Gas Pipeline	Ocean survey and front end engineering and design (FEED) studies being conducted	Oman Gulf, Chabahar	Porbandar, Mumbai	1300	11.4	South Asia Gas Enterprise Pvt. Ltd.
Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline	Construction Commenced (2015)	Galkynysh	Fazilka	1814	33	Turkmengaz, Afghan Gas Enterprise, Interstate Gas Service, GAIL
Central Asia-China gas pipeline	Complete (2010)	Saman Depe	Khorgos Port	1833	30	Turkmengaz, Asia TransGas Intergaz, CNPC
Second West-East Gas Pipeline	Complete (2012)	Khorgos Port	Shanghai / Hongkong	8819	30	China National Petroleum Corporation
Third West-East Gas Pipeline	Complete (2015)	Khorgos Port	Fuzhou	6840	30	China National Petroleum Corporation
Altai gas pipeline	Commissioned (2014)	Novi Urengoy	Chuyskaya	2800	30	Gazprom and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC)
Power of Siberia	Construction Commenced (2014)	Blagoveshchensk	Kovyktin	3000	38	Gazprom and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC)
Sakhalin – Khabarovsk – Vladivostok	Complete (2011)	Sakhalin	Vladivostok	1800	5.5	Gazprom
Sakhalin	Construction Commenced (2004)	Sakhalin gas fields	Korsakov	~800	18.6	Gazprom 50%, Royal Dutch/ Shell Group, Mitsui & Company 12.5% and Diamond Gas-Mitsubishi Corporation 10%

Source: **www.gatewayhouse.ir**

7. INTERNATIONAL ORDER TRANSITION

Scholars and experts believe that the beginning of the international order transition from West to East was the financial crisis of Wall Street in 2009 (Naeimi et al. 2006). The financial crisis revealed the West's weakness and declined more significantly than ever. In fact, the West and the United States lost their economic power with the financial crisis of 2009. This crisis coincided with the astonishing economic growth of the eastern countries, especially China and India, and the economic power of the East became more and more evident. In fact, the Wall Street crisis has shed more light than ever before

on the economic weaknesses of the West. In addition to economic weakness, the weakness and failure of the United States in the political and military aspects in different parts of the world further supported the theory of international order transition. In addition to the West's economic weakness and the growth of China and India, we have witnessed large-scale investments by China and India in different parts of the world. With projects such as the New Silk Road or the New Spice Route, China and India have made extensive investments in various countries (Rab, Zhilong,2019). Countries like China and India in the East, counting on their economic strength and the Western countries' economic weakness, were able to make significant investments.

Extensive Chinese and Indian investments and the economic weakness of the West further strengthened the theory of international order transition. On the other hand, the war between Russia and Ukraine can be considered a sign of the transition in the international order. In fact, the formation of the Western Front against Russia and the Eastern countries' support of Russia can be considered in this direction. Moreover, unlike in the past, European nations no longer implement Western policies and instead act according to their national interests. The Russia-Ukraine war could somehow cause geopolitical and geostrategic changes in the world. A crisis with economic, political, and military aspects has led to a shift in power in the international order.

8. THE ROLE OF THE SCO DURING THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER TRANSITION

Another important point in this regard is the role of the SCO during the transition in the international order. The role of the SCO has been further strengthened by the transition of international order and the shift of power from West to East. Considering China, India, and Russia's membership in the SCO and their status as leaders in the East, the SCO's role can be considered unique. An organization that can play a unique role by having military, political and economic power. As the balance of power shifts from the West to the East, it is natural for an organization composed of the East's powerful states to play a unique role during this transitional period. The SCO, which includes the superpowers of China and India, plays a significant role. China, the world's largest economic superpower, has experienced tremendous economic growth in recent years. In addition, China has invested heavily in the military. China has two primary conditions for strengthening and modernizing its military, economic power and unique human resources. On the other hand, China's significant investments through the New Silk Road or BRI have strengthened China's presence and influence in various parts of the world, making China the number one economic partner of most countries (Wang, 2021). It is inevitable that, as the international order changes, China will play a leading role in the SCO and, in a sense, the hegemonic role in the SCO and the world.

On the other hand, we have witnessed significant growth in India in recent years. India is expanding rapidly with its economic growth. Consistent economic growth, according to estimates, will enable India to become the world's leading economic power in the coming decades and surpass all other nations (Jacob, Jiji, 2021). On the other hand, India's nuclear and military power, as well as its large population, have provided the necessary resources to strengthen India militarily and politically. In addition, India has cheap labor, which further strengthens its production capacity. Russia, which has historically held a remarkable geographical, economic, political, and military position, is another influential member of the SCO. Russia has a unique sphere of influence in Central Asia and the Caucasus due to its location and historical and cultural origins. Due to Europe's demand for oil and gas, Russia could withstand Western sanctions to a certain degree despite the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Iran is another unique country in the SCO. Iran can strengthen the transit capacity of the SCO with its geographical location and access to open waters. On the other hand, Iran can act as an intermediary and transport Turkish goods through its borders to Central Asian nations. On the other hand, as mentioned, Central Asian countries do not have access to open waters, and Iran can fill this gap

(Mihr, 2021). Iran also has extensive oil and gas reserves to export and swap oil or gas for SCO member states. Considering the presence of significant oil and gas-consuming countries in the world, namely China and India, the membership of Iran and energy cooperation under the SCO can be beneficial and remarkable for Iran, China, and India.

During the transition of the international order, as mentioned, it seems that this organization has a special place with the presence of the countries like China, India, Russia, and Iran. A position that is strengthened and promoted by the power change from West to East. It can be said that the SCO plays a leading role in the international order's transitional period considering the factors and capabilities of its member countries; this subject will be realized in future international order events. It is evident that the SCO played an important role in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as countries such as China, India, and Iran did not join the sanctions against Russia. This issue should be viewed as a significant indicator of the transition of the international order from the West to the East. Eastern countries and institutions such as the SCO have acted independently and in the best interests of themselves and the organization, and the Western orientations no longer influence their views as in the past.

9. IRAN'S DRIVERS AND MOTIVATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE SCO

There are unique benefits to being a member of any organization. Organizations provide the possibility of cooperation with different countries. Alliances can take place outside of the shared borders, and governments cannot be indifferent to the opportunity to cooperate with organizations. Iran also sees membership in organizations such as the SCO as an excellent opportunity to strengthen cooperation, given the problems caused by sanctions. In addition to its security and political aspects, this organization provides Iran with substantial economic capacity. Iran was not a member of any security organization after its withdrawal from the Santo Pact and Islamic Revolution, which is significant because, in addition to security and military issues, the SCO's economic capacity is very high (Khorramshad, 2018). These capabilities can be viewed as the impetus for Iran's membership in the SCO. The following factors can be considered the cause of Iran's membership and willingness to cooperate in the SCO.

9.1. Security Benefits of Iran's Membership in The SCO

1- Membership in the military-security organization strengthens Iran's military power.

Participation in military alliances can strengthen the military position, and Iran can use the SCO as a power against NATO and especially the United States. This cooperation will also reduce security concerns regarding the Israeli.

2- Strengthening military trade with Russia and China

The cooperation under the SCO will increase the trade of weapons and military equipment between Iran and the member countries of the SCO, especially China, India, and Russia.

3- Utilizing and benefiting from NATO-style collective security against potential aggression

Due to the strengthening of collective security by the SCO, Iran's membership will reduce potential threats and attacks (Eslami et al.2018)

9.2. Economic Benefits of Iran's Membership in The SCO

1- Bilateral or multilateral cooperation with SCO member states

2- Ability to create a market and a free trade area

3- Expanding projects and investments such as the new Silk Road, which brings considerable investments to Iran (Mardiha et.al. 2020)

4- Bypassing and neutralizing economic sanctions against Iran, given the economic power of China, India, and Russia

5- Having a large economic market, both in terms of size and population, which, in case of proper plan and export, Iran will face a large and profitable market (Nabipour, 2022)

9.3. Political Benefits of Iran's Membership in The SCO

1- Strengthening Iran's position in the world as a country willing to participate in international organizations

2- Reducing the U.S. policy of isolating Iran and strengthening political cooperation in the region

3- Creating a common front of Eastern countries against

Western countries and the United States

4- Strengthening Iran's position and role in regional and international decisions

5- Strengthening Iran's geopolitical position(Jamshidi et.al. 2020)

9.4. Cultural Benefits of Iran's Membership in The SCO

1- Expanding cultural cooperation with SCO member states

2- Employing the cultural capacity to expand economic cooperation with countries such as China, India, and Turkey

3- Holding various cultural festivals in the presence of neighboring countries such as Turkey

10. OBSTACLES TO IRAN'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE SCO

Some factors can be considered obstacles to Iran's membership in the SCO in recent years. Different factors have played a destructive role in Iran's membership in the SCO and prevented Iran's membership.

1- In recent years, Tajikistan's opposition to Iran's membership in the SCO, which stemmed from the country's pessimism toward Iran, has been resolved, and Tajikistan has agreed to Iran's membership in the SCO. Additionally, the strengthening of cooperation between Iran and Tajikistan with the visit of the President of Iran to Tajikistan and the visit of the President of Tajikistan to Iran on May 30, 2022, as well as the signing of various agreements, imply the strengthening of cooperation and resolution of issues between Iran and Tajikistan (Koshki, Hoseini 2004).

2- Western sanctions against Iran and Iran's nuclear program: Iran's membership in the SCO has raised concerns regarding the extensive Western and U.S. sanctions against Iran, which could result in secondary sanctions against them after trading with Iran. The signing of the JCPOA partially resolved this issue.

3- Israeli and U.S. pressure and lobby: Following the policy of isolating Iran, Israel and the United States tried to prevent Iran from joining the SCO through political lobbying and economic sanctions, which were unsuccessful, and Iran became a member of the SCO.

4-Iran's view of international order and Western countries: Some SCO members with close ties to Western nations and the United States have rejected Iran's membership application because of its perception of the West and its unwillingness to cooperate. These nations wished to maintain cordial relations with the United States.(Shoeib, 2018)

CONCLUSION

As mentioned, the SCO can play a leading and critical role in the international arena, given its vast economic, political, and security capabilities. In fact, the shift in global power and order from West to East has led to more attention and promotion of the SCO. Moreover, the SCO possesses extremely high economic and political power, allowing it to influence the direction of the international system and play a role in any issue or crisis. The SCO, which is expanding its power day by day with the increase in its members, can play a decisive role in the transition period of the international order. Given its large population and territory, this organization can become a unique organization in the transition period of the international order by expanding its members. In fact, the SCO can be viewed as a model with greater capabilities than NATO. Capabilities that were not unexpected given the presence of China, Russia, and Iran, each of which possesses its own economic and political capacities.

Iran also can play an important role in the SCO due to its geographical location and various resources. In fact, in addition to the benefits Iran receives from the SCO, it can also increase the organization's capacity and power. In the event of close and extensive relations with SCO countries, Iran could, in addition to neutralizing the sanctions, gain a permanent and advantageous market among SCO members with large populations, such as China and India. The expansion of Iranian cooperation, on the other hand, strengthens Iran's position in the region and places it at the center of regional attention and decision-making. This matter can be interpreted as a strengthening of the SCO's position during the transition of the international order because, if the SCO plays a vital role during this time, it is only natural that powers such as Iran, China, and Russia will also strengthen their standing in the international system. On the other hand, Iran's extensive cooperation in the SCO strengthens Iran's geopolitical and geostrategic position during the transition of international order, which strengthens Iran's presence in neighboring countries and its lobbying efforts. Considering the existing capacities of Iran and the SCO, we can consider the role and position of the SCO and Iran exceptional in the transition period of the international order. As mentioned, the power shift is from West to East, and it is natural for the eastern countries, which are members of the SCO, to achieve a unique position and role in this transition.

Here are some policy suggestions for expanding and strengthening the SCO:

1- Expanding the members of the SCO and utilizing the capacities of the member countries

2- Broadening bilateral or multilateral cooperation between member countries

3- Creating a free trade zone to expand trade and eliminate customs tariff

4- Establishing a banking and foreign exchange system based on each country's currency will diminish the importance of the dollar and euro in SCO regions.

5- The SCO should emphasize the cultural aspects that will shape future political and economic activities.

6- Extensive economic investments in SCO member states, which bring together the majority of nations

7- Developing plans for economic and cultural cooperation among the SCO member states

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