Dušan Proroković
Rich Mifsud
Rudy B. Baker
Zuokui Liu (Eds.)

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80 YEARS SINCE THE END OF WORLD WAR II:

Changes in International Relations 1945–2025

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May 7, 2025

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https://doi.org/10.18485/iipe_ww2end80y.2025

Co-Editors:

Dušan Proroković, Head of the Center of Eurasian Studies, Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade, Serbia

Rich Mifsud, Director of the Institute for National Security & Military Studies, Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, USA

Rudy B. Baker, Professor, Institute of National Security & Military Studies, Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, USA

Zuokui Liu, Director of the Institute of World History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, China

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Dr Miša Đurković, prinicpal research fellow, Institute of European Studies, Belgrade, Serbia

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WORLD WAR II AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WORLD ORDER: HOW INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS WERE SHAPED FROM 1945-2025

Dušan PROROKOVIĆ

Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade (Serbia)
dusan@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs, ORCID: 0000-0003-3064-2111

Abstract: The Second World War is one of the most important events in recent history. From the point of view of shaping contemporary international relations, it is actually the most important event. Today's world political system was established in 1945, and despite the fact that the international order has changed twice in these eight decades, the system has survived. Among other things, this has happened due to the maintenance of the rules of functioning for eighty years. This paper explains the difference between the world political system and the international order. For the creation of the system, 1945 is taken as the reference year, while in addition to 1945, 1989 and 2008 can also be taken as reference years for the creation of different orders, which denote the transformations from bipolar to unipolar or from unipolar to multipolar. What connects 1945 and 2025 is the continuity of a global political system, which continues to endure despite all the challenges that have arisen over time. After the election and inauguration of Donald Trump and his first decisions, and given the importance of the place and role of the USA in international relations, the question of changing the principles and rules on which the system is founded is open. Although it is too early to draw any serious conclusions about the possible consequences of Trump's decisions, from a theoretical point of view, due to what is currently happening, 2025 could become another reference year in the study of international relations.

Keywords: world political system, international order, principles of governance, rules of operation, World War II, UN, Donald Trump

Will 2025 be remembered as a key year for international relations? Undoubtedly, 1945 was one of the key years in that context, and it is quite understandable why it is often mentioned as a reference year in research and analysis. This is the year when World War II ended, the UN was founded, and the establishment of a new world political system and international order began. Key years are periods of time when certain "turning points" occur, events with which later processes are identified. The result of such processes is either systemic changes or the establishment of an order that has lasted. Most often, reference years are defined in this way to represent the time of the end of the war or the achievement of an important peace agreement. "In modern history, the years 1648, 1713, 1815, 1919, 1945, and 1989 are outstanding examples of critical points when the victors were given the opportunity to shape new policies, new rules, and principles of international relations. These are periods when a new distribution of power occurred and when leading states or hegemons faced choices on how to use their newly acquired power" (Акçapар, 2009, p. 1). It is noteworthy that, in this quoted passage, 1989 is also mentioned as one of the key years. Why? This year is declared a reference year because of the fall of the Berlin Wall (November 9, 1989), which symbolically marked the end of the Cold War. The truth is, in fact, that the Soviet Union disintegrated (self-dissolved) only two years later (December 26, 1991), which also marked the end of the Cold War on a (geo)political level. When it comes to the symbolic level, Donald Trump's decisions, signed or announced immediately before or during his inauguration (January 2025), may represent an event (or a group of interconnected events) that will identify the processes that will follow in the coming years. Because Trump's moves affect international relations, thanks to them, a new international order is being formed, but what is even more important is that they seem to be able to produce systemic changes. Of course, Trump's moves are largely a consequence of events in previous years (and decades); his strategies and policies are adapted to existing circumstances, so in a (geo)political sense, it cannot be claimed that everything in international relations will depend on the American president. However, the hypothesis presented primarily concerns the symbolic level when it mentions the possibility that, in certain developments, 2025 will be perceived as one of the key years in the future.

In general, if the answer to the initial question is affirmative, then it will also mean that after eight decades, the world political system built in 1945 has finally ceased to exist with the establishment of a new international order. Again, it is important to emphasize that even up until 1989, which is taken as the reference year, numerous turbulences within the established

system were detected, and it was only after 1989 that this became intense and easily noticeable. However, it is also necessary to emphasize that a change in the order does not always mean a change in the system; that is, the order can change due to a change in the balance of power (a disruption of the balance of power) between the key actors of international relations, while at the same time the principles of managing the system and the rules (even if they are basic) according to which the system operates remain largely the same or similar. Until 1989, neither the principles of governance nor the rules of operation were drastically or dramatically changed since the order was essentially bipolar, and an effective balance of power was established between the two superpowers based on reciprocity and mutual recognition of status. After 1989, in the era of unipolarity, there were recorded attempts by the USA to change the principles of governance, but they were not accompanied by a fundamental change in the rules of operation. During the era of unipolarity, the USA did want to bypass the UN system due to changes in the principles of governance and reacted unilaterally (even militarily, committing aggression against other sovereign countries) when it needed to protect its interests, but it failed to transform the UN and change the rules of operation of international organizations.

For the sake of further analysis of the phenomenon of the transformation of international relations, at this point, and in accordance with what was written earlier, it is necessary to explain four concepts: world political system, international order, principles of governance, and rules of functioning.

The world political system is one, and within it, the order can change (unipolar, bipolar, or multipolar). Changing the structure of the system also changes the order. According to the basic definition, a system consists of a fixed arrangement of parts that make up a whole. As the arrangement of parts changes, a new structure is created. The basic characteristics of the system are anarchy and disorder, and therefore, it is impossible to maintain a unipolar hierarchy or bipolar strictness in the long term. In other words, that is why every structure is temporary, and order is temporary. Because of anarchy, there are continuous dynamics within the system — political, security, and economic. In historical stages, when it becomes clear that due to the dynamics of the above processes within the system, it is no longer possible to establish even a temporary structure, that is, it is not possible to organize even a temporary order, the system collapses, and a new one is built on its foundations.

The international order arises as a result of the balance of power between actors within a system. Actors, among whom states are still the most important (although the growing importance of non-state actors, be it

international organizations, multinational corporations, transnational banks, etc., should not be ignored) differ in their potential for military, economic, and political power. As the interests of actors intertwine, coincide, and/or conflict, relations between them are repaired or damaged. Among states, according to one of the offered classifications – we distinguish between superpowers, great powers, regional powers, small states, and microstates. Also, the concept of a middle power is theoretically elaborated, which can be mentioned, although it is not crucial for the conclusions that will be drawn. The most powerful actors, states with the greatest and most pronounced power potential (superpowers and great powers), arrange the order in a way that is in their interest. More precisely, they try to organize the order hierarchically or temporarily arrange it. Of course, it is in the interest of these actors that the order with which they protect or satisfy their own interests lasts as long as possible. Therefore, they defend it with available means against the attacks or aspirations of challengers (mostly regional or middle powers or great powers with smaller power potentials – the actors who represent the challengers), which produces crises, conflicts of varying degrees of intensity, and ultimately -- wars. Regional and middle powers can adapt, satisfying their own interests through cooperation (alliances with superpowers and great powers) or confront each other and, in agreement with other dissatisfied actors, try to influence the transformation of the order. Small and micro-states, in the overwhelming majority of cases, must adapt, rely on international law, sign treaties, and protect their interests through alliances. Order implies hierarchy, and it is defined through principles of governance and rules of operation.

Management principles relate to the effective use of available resources (instruments, means) to achieve a specific goal. In general, the goal is related to the pursuit of interests, but as many specific interests there are, as many different goals that an actor wants to achieve are defined. The effective use of available resources is, to a certain extent, regulated by operating rules. Operating rules are regulations, decrees, agreements, contracts, and a complex legal heritage that restricts actors from using available resources as they wish and as much as they wish.

Practice shows that too often, the most powerful actors in the international order have not been successfully constrained by the rules of operation; that is, the most powerful actors have bypassed these rules without any consequences, violated them, and ignored them. In international relations, the rule applies: *quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi*! Superpowers and great powers have violated international agreements, failed to respect the territorial integrity and

sovereignty of smaller states, established illegal sanctions, and then, as a rule, expected others to verify their actions. However, it should also be said that, even if only formally supported by actors with lower power potential, the rules of operation in the form of declarations of principle often persisted, thus preventing the legitimization of the effective use of available resources without any restrictions. This turns out to be very important. If all restrictions are ignored, if all rules of operation are violated, the hierarchy is based solely on which of the actors will use the available resources more efficiently. Normally, resources will be used most efficiently by the actor who is ready to use his own power potential most brutally; when hierarchy is established based on the brutal use of force, wars occur, which inevitably change the order but can also change the entire system. The dynamics of the process exceed the ability of the system's (self-)regulation to create a temporary structure and organize a temporary order.

The Second World War broke out precisely for this reason. Due to the absolute anarchy that produced very dynamic processes, it was not possible to organize the hierarchy of a multipolar system at that time. There were no universal rules of operation; the various actors began to be guided by the principles that they defined themselves in accordance with the proclaimed goals. The end of the Second World War and the victory over fascism brought, first of all, the definition of new rules of operation embodied in the UN Charter, on the basis of which all members of this international organization had to formally adopt their own principles of management, and thus an international order was established in the new world political system. Tired and frightened by the devastating war, unable to impose their will, the actors agreed to certain restrictions (this is also seen in the UN system since the five permanent members of the Security Council were given the right of veto, which simultaneously rewarded and limited these victorious powers – all permanent member of the Security Council were given the opportunity to block each other's proposals). Further establishment of order, in the Cold War circumstances, took place around the two most powerful poles – the USA and the Soviet Union, and over time, almost all possible differences concerning two opposing worldviews were completely rounded off between these two poles (the differences were ideological-political, economic-social, cultural, etc.).

Despite the differences, despite the fact that the order has become increasingly asymmetrically bipolar over time (the Non-Aligned Movement emerged, which did not want to align itself with either of the two poles; China gradually moved away from the Soviet Union, although both states remain

in the communist bloc; socialist ideology "penetrated" Western European societies, resulting in the birth of "capitalism with a human face" that differs significantly from the American one and influenced the building of awareness of European identity and the subsequent creation of the EU), it is noticeable that the world political system persisted, even took root through the activities of an increasing number of international organizations and (pan)regional integrations. Even the military interventions of the US in Latin America or the Soviet Union in Afghanistan did not disrupt systemic solutions, as the overwhelming majority of actors remain on the stand that management principles based on declared rules of operation must be applied.

The test of the system's survival was provoked with the end of the Cold War, after the reference year of 1989. Only one superpower remained on the world stage. The order was transformed from bipolar to unipolar. Unipolarity is established in periods when the total power potential of one actor is in absolute and relative disproportion with the indicators of other participants. Absolute disproportion can be identified by comparing military and economic potentials, and relative disproportion can be identified by analyzing the political potentials of power.

"The symbol of a unipolar system is the dominance of a superpower in world politics. From one center of power, every issue in international relations and therefore international security can be influenced. And not only international, but also the national security of most other states. By entering into various arrangements with weaker states in different parts of the world, controlling geopolitical hotspots and creating regional security complexes, the superpower manages issues important for global and regional security, and therefore for the national security of other actors. Therefore, it can be concluded that pure unipolar structures simply do not exist in political practice. An ideal type of unipolar system would exist if one center of power could establish a world government, whose decisions would be legally and formally binding on other actors. This would happen, for example, if the USA, during a period of complete domination, managed to reform the UN Security Council and establish new ways of decision-making, thanks to which it would not be possible to make a single decision without them. This would establish control over the UN and build a solid foundation for the UN Security Council to grow into a world government dominated by the USA." (Proroković, 2018, p. 295).

Despite its military and economic superiority, the US has failed to establish control over the UN in a way that would allow it to use this resource to achieve its goal of establishing long-term global dominance. Instead, on the one hand,

it has relied on the concept of global governance. Anne-Marie Slaughter describes this concept as governance through a complex global network. Various state institutions, from those dealing with financial regulation through investigative bodies responsible for combating terrorism and international crime to legislative bodies that harmonize legal norms in agreement with other states and international organizations and encourage the cross-border exchange of information, capital, people, goods, knowledge, etc. on a daily basis. This is how global networks are formed, which are, to a greater or lesser extent, interconnected and dependent. These global networks are the basis of global governance, and states will have to adapt to the new circumstances if they have not already done so (Slaughter, 1997; Slaughter, 2004). On the other hand, the USA continued to strengthen the position of international organizations that it completely controlled, and this is best (and most clearly) seen in the case of NATO. The implementation of the first approach was supposed to result in "hegemonic unipolarity", and the second was supposed to make it impossible to achieve a balance of power. Simply put, the power of a superpower is such that it eliminates "hegemonic rivalries," which reduces the importance of the balance of power for international relations (Wohlforth, 1999, pp. 7–36). From the point of view of shaping international relations, the first approach was intended to create new rules of operation, while the second was oriented towards defining separate principles of governance.

It turned out, however, that such a thing could last only a few decades. Why? First, accepting the leadership of one (and the only one in the system) superpower means that it can establish the order it wants and, in this way, guarantee peace. Hegemonic stability excludes the balance of power. As Robert Gilpin explains, changes in the structure occur due to the "overexertion" of the superpower, which causes its power to decline. Maintaining order costs money, and every superpower faces a moment when the costs of maintaining the system become greater than the benefits it reap. This opens the way for the rise of a new hegemon, who will establish a new order with its own rules of the game and new values to promote (Gilpin, 1988, pp. 592–611). Instead of constantly balancing, the system faces cycles of stabilization – which occurs when the hegemon establishes order, and destabilization – when the hegemon's power begins to decline, and other actors begin to compete to occupy the vacant position (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 4).

Secondly, Kenneth Waltz, in criticizing the American policy towards NATO, underlined that "the ability of the USA to prolong the life of a dying institution best illustrates how more powerful states create and maintain international institutions to serve their assumed or wrongly assumed

interests" (Waltz, 2008, p. 2). He is against the expansion of NATO and explains this in several points: 1) this will create new dividing lines in Europe; 2) Russia will perceive this step as a threat and will enter into an alliance with China; 3) other actors in international politics will also perceive it as a threat, which makes it impossible to reach an agreement on arms reduction in the future; 4) Eastern European countries that become members of NATO will be obliged to spend large amounts of money on armaments, which will make their economic growth impossible; 5) NATO cannot influence the construction of democratic systems in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, because this is not the task of a military organization (Waltz, 2000, p. 24). Through global governance and investment in controlled international organizations, the USA has failed to achieve long and continuous global dominance, among other things, because the USA has established a new order but has not changed the system. The USA wanted to change the system by establishing parallel structures that would gradually take over the role of the structures formed in 1945, but they did not succeed in doing so. For the overwhelming majority of other actors, the rules of operation established in 1945 remained formally valid.

The formation of a multipolar order that has been intensifying since 2008 confirms this thesis since every reference to universal principles by any state or international organization is based on the rules of operation from 1945. In this context, eight decades after the end of World War II, we still live in a system that was built in 1945 and which could only now, if Donald Trump's announcements come true, be transformed. Undoubtedly, Trump, like previous US presidents, establishes his place in the order by presenting the principles of leadership, only he does so by unequivocally relying on force (threats of sanctions, asymmetric measures, announcements of unilateral moves, etc.).

But now, instead of the failed strategy of establishing parallel structures, which he is abandoning, Trump is showing interest in establishing new rules of operation that will suit the most powerful actors in international relations, primarily the United States. WTO rules do not prevent him from unilaterally increasing tariffs on other countries, and he does so even towards allies with whom the United States forms the NAFTA integration unit; he openly demands that Denmark give up Greenland, even though the United States and Denmark are members of NATO; for the second time in his career, he is withdrawing the United States from the Paris Agreement, etc. The system built on the foundations of 1945 is too narrow for Donald Trump, and that is why he is showing an aspiration not only to reshape the order in which the United States will occupy a more significant place but also to define a

new system, with new principles of management and rules of operation. Will he succeed? There is no unequivocal answer to this question. It does not depend only on Trump, nor does it depend only on the United States, but also on the other most important actors in international relations, who must agree with this and enable some kind of consensus. It also depends on the extremely unpredictable dynamics of the processes that will take place, which will be given impetus by Trump's decisions. In any case, what we face in international relations post-2025 is fundamentally different from almost anything we have faced since 1989. The intention now is not only to change the order but also to transform the world political system. The desire is not only to impose new principles of governance as legitimate but also to establish new rules of operation (at the expense of the old ones). This will, in every respect, have consequences in international relations. In fact, on a symbolic level, it has already had consequences. It remains to be seen what they will be like on a political level.

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SECURITY COOPERATION IN UKRAINE: A PROFILE OF THE STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Rich MIFSUD

Director of the Institute for National Security & Military Studies, Austin Peay State, Clarksville (USA)
mifsudr@apsu.edu

Roozbeh (Rudy) B. BAKER

Austin Peay State, Clarksville (USA)
bakerr@apsu.edu

Abstract: On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation launched a full-scale illegal invasion of Ukraine, building upon its previous incursion into Ukrainian territory in 2014. This piece begins by asking whether Ukraine's ability to endure three years of war can be attributed to Russian unpreparedness or to the strength of Ukraine's resistance supported by NATO allies and partners. It argues that security cooperation, particularly through the State Partnership Program (SPP), is a key contributing factor. Initiated after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the SPP created partnerships between U.S. states and countries in Central and Eastern Europe to encourage democracy, promote military reform, and enhance inter-operability. Ukraine's partnership with California, established in 1993, evolved through decades of joint training exercises, culminating in extensive cooperation after the Revolution of Dignity in 2014 and the illegal annexation of Crimea. This relationship continued during the COVID-19 pandemic and was critical in the immediate aftermath of the renewed aggression in 2022. Within 96 hours of the invasion, California and other state partners were instrumental in coordinating security assistance. The piece charts the evolution of this partnership and highlights how the SPP has contributed to Ukraine's resilience. Since 2014, the United States has provided over $69 billion in military assistance, with contributions from 50 allies and partners. These enduring partnerships and joint efforts illustrate the significant role of the State Partnership Program in supporting

Ukraine's defense and broader regional security cooperation. The strength of these connections underscores the impact of long-standing, relationship-based security cooperation.

Keywords: State Partnership Program, security cooperation, Ukraine-California partnership, NATO inter-operability, Russian Federation aggression.

Introduction

On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine from various points along the Russian-Ukrainian and Belarusian-Ukrainian border. This military action was a full-scale invasion and built upon the Russian Federation's previous incursion into Ukraine in 2014. In the initial hours of 24 February 2022, it appeared to the media that Ukraine would not withstand the assault, yet three years later the Russo-Ukrainian War continues to rage. Is this conflict continuing because the Russian Federation military was not prepared for such pushback from the Ukrainian military? Or rather have the Ukrainians stayed in the fight this long because they have received help from NATO Allies and Partners? This piece argues that security cooperation throughout Eastern Europe, mainly in the form of what is known as the State Partnership Program, has had an impact in the Ukrainian resolve against a numerically superior Russian Federation military. This piece will commence by charting the background to the State Partnership Program (SPP), which began in earnest almost immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Next, this piece will analyze in detail the mechanics of Ukraine's participation in the SPP and its partner in that program, the state of California in the United States. This piece will then discuss the Revolution of Dignity that occurred in Ukraine in 2014, the illegal Russian Federation aggression which followed, and the heightened Ukraine-California cooperation that occurred in the aftermath. This piece will then close with providing a discussion of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic had on the SPP Ukraine-California partnership, and efforts that followed in the wake of the renewed illegal Russian Federation aggression against Ukraine that began in February 2022.

Genesis of the State Partnership Program (SPP)

The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 changed the landscape of Europe and Eastern Europe while simultaneously changing the future for

security cooperation in Europe with the United States as the Cold War came to a close. Communism in Europe had ended, and many of the former Soviet Republics and countries of the Warsaw Pact began to declare for democracy and independence (Ristic, 2024). Poland was one of the first to declare for democracy in January, 1990. Lithuania was the first Soviet Republic to declare its independence in March, 1990. By the summer of 1991, the Soviet Union had dissolved, Baltic States of Estonia, and Latvia declared their independence followed by Balkan States of Former Yugoslavia, Croatia and Slovenia and, of course, Ukraine in August 1991. This state of affairs presented a unique challenge and opportunity for Western Europe and the United States.

With the mass exodus from the Soviet Union, both Europe and the United States were concerned with instability and uncertainty within the region due to new states quickly turning into failed states. The opportunity presented itself in 1992, when Latvia asked the United States for assistance in developing a military based on the National Guard's citizen-soldier model.[1] The United States Department of State (DoS) in conjunction with the Department of Defense (DoD) and the National Guard Bureau created the State Partnership Program (SPP) as a cost-effective Security Cooperation tool to minimize instability and encourage democracy in the former Warsaw Pact nations in Central and Eastern Europe (United States European Command, 2012). The goals of this program also included: improving the capabilities of partner nations to protect their citizens; strengthening relationships to facilitate access and inter-operability; improving cultural awareness and skills among United States military personnel; and fostering the integration of reserve and active component forces into a "total force," similar to concepts in the United States military. Through this program, nations would be partnered with a state that had similar characteristics such as a large diaspora, similar military composition compared to that of the partnering state's National Guard, and infrastructure within the country such as large agricultural industry. Utilization of the National Guard encouraged the "total force" concept, while not spreading Active Component forces across Central and Eastern Europe during a time of Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). In early 1993, the first

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[1] The United States National Guard is a reserve military force composed of part-time citizen-soldiers who serve both state and federal governments. It operates under dual authority, allowing state governors to activate units for state emergencies, and the United States President to mobilize them for federal missions, including overseas deployments.

partnerships were born with the three Baltic states: Estonia-Maryland, Latvia-Michigan, and Lithuania-Pennsylvania. By late summer of 1993, the following additional partnerships were established: Romania-Alabama, Kazakhstan-Arizona, Slovenia-Colorado, Poland-Illinois, Slovakia-Indiana, Hungary-Ohio, Bulgaria-Tennessee, Czech Republic-Texas/Nebraska, North Macedonia-Vermont, and Ukraine-California for a total of 13 partnerships in 1993 for the inaugural year of the State Partnership Program.

The Beginning of the SPP Ukraine-California Partnership

On 31 August 1993, Ukraine and California entered into a SPP partnership focused on promoting democracy, free market economies and military reform through established long-term institutional affiliations and personal relationships at the state and local level. The goal focused on maintaining supported objectives of the United States Ambassador to Ukraine and those of United States European Command (EUCOM), while engaging the California National Guard to facilitate partnerships throughout the state, local, and private sector with counterparts in Ukraine. Key Leader Engagements (Senior Leader Visits) were instituted early on as part of the relationship-building process as part of the State Partnership Program. With Ukraine's entrance into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) Partnership for Peace (PfP) program, more operational funds were now available to conduct joint exercises between Ukraine military and the California National Guard as part of larger coalition exercises (United States Department of State, 1997). The two partners began participating in Rough and Ready and Peace Shield exercises together in 1995. Rough and Ready was a joint civil-military disaster response exercise that involved both emergency first responders and National Guardsmen from Ukraine, California, and other nations such as Georgia, Moldova, and Azerbaijan (Gray, 2006). The exercise locations rotated annually between locations in Ukraine and locations in California from 1999 to 2009. Peace Shield, on the other hand, was solely a military exercise with simulated peacekeeping operations (replicating the Balkan Wars in the 1990s) involving multiple countries and elements of the United States military in conjunction with Ukraine and California National Guard members.

Peace Shield was held annually at the Yavoriv training area (International Peacekeeping and Security Center) in western Ukraine, as part of the Partnership for Peace Program (Global Security, 2014). After these two exercise events had begun to take shape annually, both Ukraine and California would send small Army and Air units to train with each other

regularly for 10 days, funded through the State Partnership Program throughout the late 1990's. Ukraine's participation in Peace Shield contributed to SFOR deployments in Bosnia and Herzegovina and later, to an agreement with Poland for an 800 servicemember peacekeeping battalion to serve in Kosovo as part of KFOR. Similar events were happening in the other partnerships as well between states and countries, and by 1999, SPP had added Republic of Georgia-Georgia, Slovakia-Indiana, Croatia-Minnesota, and Moldova-North Carolina. Additionally, 1999 saw NATO add the first wave of post-Cold War enlargement with Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2024). All three of these new members of NATO are part of the 1993 SPP inaugural year. The success of the State Partnership Program in the first seven years created additional interest and growth in the next century.

At the beginning of the new century, opportunities for strengthened security cooperation amongst Europe, the United States, and Central and Eastern Europe continued to arise. The United States and NATO allies and partners were engaged in the conflicts in both Afghanistan and Iraq; however, that did not stop states and countries from conducting SPP activities, nor did it stop the growth of the State Partnership Program or NATO. By the end of 2004, SPP had added Armenia-Kansas, Bosnia and Herzegovina-Maryland, Albania-New Jersey, and Azerbaijan-Oklahoma to the program within EUCOM. This does not include the growth of partnerships in Central Asia (4 partnerships), Africa (4 partnerships), the Indo-Pacific region (3 partnerships), and Central and South America (16 partnerships). Of the 54 states and territories in the United States, 41 states were partnered with nations around the world, with some states having two partner nations. Additionally, NATO saw the second wave of post-Cold War enlargement with the addition of Bulgaria, Estonia. Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2024). Similar to the first wave of post-Cold War expansion, all seven nations were part of the 1993 SPP inaugural year, suggesting that the military-to-military training engagements between partner states and countries added in the policy changes, doctrine changes, and compliance changes necessary for these ten former Soviet bloc nations to join NATO. Out of the original 12 former Soviet bloc partnerships from 1993, 10 nations were now in NATO; only North Macedonia (joined NATO later in 2020) and Ukraine were not members of NATO.

Being a non-NATO SPP member did not slow down joint training exercises, military-to-military engagements, and annual KFOR rotations

for Ukraine. Peace Shield had grown in size and complexity as a joint exercise shifting its focus from peacekeeping operations to combat operations, similar to those occurring in Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2006, Peace Shield was renamed Rapid Trident, and now included live-fire exercises as part of its field training exercises and command post exercises. Rapid Trident still took place at the International Peacekeeping and Security Center (IPSC) in Yavoriv, but now had over a dozen partner nations participating with the overall assistance of EUCOM and the California National Guard. Additionally, Ukraine and California conducted its final Ukraine Rough and Ready field exercise in Odessa (Gray, 2006), involving multiple nations and multiple emergency response agencies from both Ukraine and the United States. Five more Rough and Ready exercises occurred between 2006 and 2009: two in Kyiv (Tabletop) and three in California (Sinelnik & Smiley, 2012).

By the end of the decade, California received approval with EUCOM and United States Embassy in Ukraine to conduct air-intercept joint training exercises involving Polish, Ukrainian, and California Air National Guard fighter aircraft. Air-intercept joint training exercises had been done previously; however the SAFE SKIES 2011 (planning began in 2009) would be the first time United States aircraft would participate in Ukraine as part of an exercise. By the end of the decade, Ukraine had participated in 299 military-to military-engagements, 32 SPP events, and 18 events involving United States Army Europe (USAREUR), with more events being added each year. Furthermore, the State Partnership Program continued its growth across the globe, adding Montenegro-Maine and Serbia-Ohio in Europe, three additional partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region, three additional partnerships in Africa, and four additional partnerships in Central and South America. Additionally, NATO expanded by two nations with the accession of Albania and Croatia in 2009; both were also partnered with states in the United States. Similar to the expansion of NATO after the start of the State Partnership Program, the Europe Union (EU) also saw an expansion of members with the same 10 nations (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia) all joining the EU in 2004 and 2007. Again, it could be suggested that the partnerships, collaboration, and joint activities are related to assistance with EU membership (European Union, 2025).

Ukraine and the Revolution of Dignity

As Ukraine was drifting further from old Soviet ways with military and economic transformations over the past two decades, entry into the European Union became a realistic goal, and a desire by the people of Ukraine. Democratic reforms were well underway and the Association Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine was supposed to be signed in the fall of 2013. However, Prime Minister Mykola Azarov (on orders of President Viktor Yanukovych), told Ukrainians that Ukraine would not sign the agreement with the EU in late November 2013 (Official Website of Ukraine, 2024). On 21 November 2013, thousands gathered in Maidan (Independence Square) in Kyiv in the evening to protest claiming, "Ukraine is Europe." Protests were not limited to Kyiv; these same gatherings were occurring in Lviv, Donetsk, and Crimea.

By 24 November, the protests had grown by thousands, all demanding European integration. Special police units from the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs were used on 30 November to disperse protesters in Maidan attempting to put up a Christmas tree for the holidays. Hundreds of thousands returned to Maidan, and across many other Ukrainian cities, to protest the abuse of power, police violence and for European integration. These protests turned into the Revolution of Dignity (Official Website of Ukraine, 2024). Lviv had 40,000 people protesting the day after the Kyiv protests. These daily protests eventually turned into camps in Maidan, with thousands living in tents on the street throughout December and January in freezing temperatures. Barricades grew and clashes between special police units and protestor self-defense units were occurring on a regular basis. On 19 January 2014, protesters and special police units clashed on Hrushevskyi Street, with protestors hurling cobblestones and Molotov cocktails while police used water cannons, rubber bullets and stun grenades. Three days later, the Ukrainian Parliament (Verkhovna Rada) extended the powers of security forces for the use of smoke and stun grenades against pro-Europe integration protestors, with 1,400 people injured during the clashes that took place in late January.

On 18 February 2014, clashes once again took place between the police and the camp at Maidan. While the police tried to forcibly dismantle the Maidan camp, snipers stationed on rooftops targeted protestors. This violence lasted until 21 February, with 100 people were killed during these three days (48 protestors killed by snipers on the 20 February alone, known as "Bloody Thursday"). On 21 February President Yanukovych signed an agreement with opposition leaders for presidential re-elections to occur at the end of 2014,

however, Ukrainians demanded his resignation. President Yanukovych and Prime Minister Azarov fled to the Russian Federation on the evening of 21 February.[2] Coincidentally, the Sochi Olympics were taking place in the Russian Federation from 2-23 February. On 25-27 February, after the closing ceremonies, Russian Federation military units, conducting exercises as part of Olympic security, moved into the Donbas and Crimea regions of Ukraine. The West took notice of the Russian Federation's illegal actions.

Russian Federation Illegal Aggression in Ukraine (2014) and Aftermath

The Russian Federation incursion into Eastern Ukraine and the "annexation" of Crimea, both illegal under international law[3], got the attention of Europe and the United States. The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense turned to NATO, EUCOM, and California for assistance with the "little green men" (Russian Federation military forces in unmarked uniforms and vehicles —- again, a violation of international law) attacking the Armed Forces of Ukraine in Eastern Ukraine. With Ukraine's asks in multiple directions, United States European Command established the Multinational Joint Commission (MJC) in October 2014 to instill collaboration between partners and the Armed Forces of Ukraine leadership, while reducing training and support fratricide among NATO allies and partners within Ukraine.

The MJC initially consisted of representatives from the United Kingdom, Canada, Poland, and the United States (EUCOM and California National Guard representation). To assist the Armed Forces of Ukraine (UAF) with support and training to meet their needs, working sub-groups (Executive

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[2] By fleeing the country and thus abandoning his presidential duties, President Yanukovych created a constitutional crisis. In response, the Ukrainian Parliament passed a constitutionally valid resolution (21-22 February 2014), stating that President Yanukovych had unconstitutionally abandoned his duties, thereby justifying early elections under Article 85/7 of the Constitution of Ukraine; the resolution was signed by the Speaker of Parliament in accordance with Article 88/3, and carried the full legal force of law per Article 91.

[3] Such actions were illegal under international law because they violated Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, principles protected under the United Nations Charter. Additionally, the use of unmarked military forces and the absence of a legitimate, internationally recognized referendum in Crimea, further highlighted the illegality of the Russian Federation's actions.

Committee) were created to establish working goals for helping reform the Armed Forces of Ukraine. In November 2015, the Joint Military Training Group-Ukraine (JMTG-U) was established at the Yavoriv Combat Training Center (IPSC). The initial standup of JMTG-U consisted of a Brigade Headquarters from the California National Guard, trainers from United States Active Component forces and National Guard, and trainers from Canada, Denmark, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Training focused on the advising and mentoring of UAF battalions that were training for rotations in and out of the Donbas region in Eastern Ukraine.

Between 2015 and 2020, the MJC expanded to include Lithuania, Sweden, and Denmark, and the Executive Committee grew from a handful of Army-focused working groups to 17 working groups that included, Navy, Air Force, Non-Commissioned Officer development, Medical, Cyber, and Defense Reform. The structure and goal of these sub-committee working groups focused Ukraine efforts on NATO inter-operability. California provided support to the development of NCO training as well as Staff training. Greater assistance with this goal came from the Doctrine Education Advisory Group (DEAG), which was established from the United States Army's Security Assistance Training Management Organization (SATMO). DEAG assisted with the NATO inter-operability doctrine and both NCO and Officer development programs. Additionally, the Defense Reform Advisory Board (DRAB) comprised of military experts from NATO member states advised the Ministry of Defense and General Staff on NATO reform. Supporting partner nations as part of the MJC conducted over 131 different training events from 2017 to 2020 as part of security cooperation and Security Assistance with the Armed Forces of Ukraine, as well as funding and equipment from partnering nations.

Coincidentally, 2017 and 2020 marked the admittance of two more partner nations from the State Partnership Program into NATO, Montenegro (Maine) and the second to last partner of the original 1993 group, North Macedonia (Vermont). Now, 11 of the original 12 Eastern European nations who entered the State Partnership Program were NATO members; Ukraine was the only one remaining with NATO Reform in motion for policies and military structure. However, as with everything in 2020, COVID-19 had its impact.

The Impact of COVID-19 on the SPP Ukraine-California Partnership

As the outbreak of COVID-19 spread in the beginning of 2020, the impact first hit the MJC with meeting cancellations due to travel restrictions and policies from each of the partnering nations. Those nations that could still provide face to face support based on their COVID-19 polices and restrictions, continued to support training in and out of Ukraine. United States DoD policies largely impacted personnel travel to support training events inside Ukraine, especially for those traveling from the United States to Ukraine. Funding and equipment support continued along with some training, however, it was at a much slower pace. Virtual events tried to replicate some of the earlier events, such as MJC and Executive Committee meetings, however, with different time zones and the use of translators at times, the discussions were shortened in comparison to the face to face meetings prior to COVID-19.

It was during the latter part of 2020 that Ukraine Executive Committee representatives stated they were concerned with the buildup of Russian Federation forces along the Ukrainian border in the east and in Belarus. As COVID-19 protocols were developed and implemented, training resumed in Ukraine with the partners who were on the ground. Training and advising continued despite the obstacles and challenges presented by COVID-19, with multiple virtual engagements and face to face engagements in 2021. President Volodymyr Zelensky, visited the United States in September 2021 to garner continued support for Ukraine, stopping in California to visit National Guard leadership. With the close of 2021, the buildup of Russian Federation forces continued to grow, as well as the concern from the Ukraine Ministry of Defense, relayed through the MJC and the Executive Committee meetings.

Russian Federation Illegal Aggression in Ukraine (2022) and Aftermath

As 2022 emerged, the Russian Federation conducted its annual large military exercise in Belarus, as it has done in the past. However, the size and scope of the exercise was vastly different with equipment that had not been previously used in past exercises, such as an increased number of mechanized units, Air Force support, and the use of refrigerator trucks for large amounts of casualties. Coincidentally, the 2022 Olympics were set to start in Beijing, China on 3 February and last until 20 February. NATO, the

United States, and Ukraine took notice of the peculiarities of the exercise and the coincidence that the exercise was taking place during the Olympic Games similar to that of February 2014, when Russian Federation military moved into the Donbas region and Crimea. Ukraine began making its preparations, while Embassies began to vacate Kyiv, one by one from late January to mid-February. On 24 February 2022, at 0500, Russian Federation units illegally crossed the borders in Belarus and Russia proper into Ukraine,[4] while intensive shelling and airstrikes took place on the Boryspil, Chornobaivka, Chuhuiv, Kramatorsk, Kulbakino, and Ozerne airfields as well as the military infrastructure of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (General Directorate of Military Cooperation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, 2022).

As fighting raged in the initial hours, Ukraine contacted its partners for assistance. EUCOM and California received continuous status reports in the first 24 hours of the situation that included battle damage, status of Ukraine units, and requests for support. Given the 29-year relationship between California and Ukraine, California took lead on reports and support requests, relaying information to EUCOM and the Pentagon in Washington, DC. Within 96 hours of the invasion into Ukraine, EUCOM and NATO began pushing needed supplies into Western Ukraine. Arms, ammunition, equipment, and medical supplies were at the top of the list. The Ukraine-California relationship helped relay information through the appropriate channels to support the requests. California worked with other states to gather medical supplies and other forms of humanitarian assistance, which were delivered to Illinois. Illinois' 29-year partnership with Poland played a large role in the movement of humanitarian assistance supplies into Western Ukraine, along with the acceptance of large amounts of Ukrainian refugees. Other partnerships also contributed to the Ukrainian efforts, such as Bulgaria-Tennessee and Romania-Alabama assisting in supplies replenishment and providing training. As the conflict continued through 2022, California remained committed to the partnership, assisting where it could with equipment donations, medical supplies, etc.; however, California connected its relationships with Ukrainian leadership to EUCOM and NATO leadership where deeper support could be given. Of note, both Georgia and Moldova applied to the EU within one week of Russia's invasion into Ukraine. Georgia and Moldova having both been a part of the State Partnership Program since 1994 and 1996 respectively. Additionally, NATO original member Norway partnered with Minnesota in 2023, and

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[4] See *supra* note 3 above.

new NATO members Sweden (in 2024) and Finland (in 2023) have been partnered with New York and Virginia in 2024. This is a direct connection to the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine and the strength the State Partnership Program has provided to Ukraine through its direct connection to California and its periphery relationships in Eastern Europe. The strong partnership between Ukraine and California has contributed to the security assistance of Ukraine since 2014.

Since the original Russian Federation incursion into the Donbas region and the "annexation" of Crimea (both illegal under international law),[5] the United States and multiple nations have contributed to the security assistance of Ukraine. The United States has contributed $69.2 billion in military assistance since 2014, $66.5 billion in military assistance since 24 February 2022, and $31.7 billion from DoD stockpiles since August 2021 ("U.S. Security," 2025). Fifty allies and partner countries have provided security assistance to Ukraine in the form of munitions, weapons, equipment, vehicles, aircraft, and training to aid Ukraine in its resistance of Russian Federation aggression (United States Department of State, 2025). The list of weapons, munitions, training, and humanitarian assistance, outside of the United States is comparable in dollar value to what the United States contributed. Security assistance in the region has never been a solo effort, it has always been a team effort built on relationships through face-to-face meetings and training and because of this the Russo-Ukrainian War is now on its third-year anniversary.

Conclusion

This piece began by asking whether the Russian Federation was unprepared for the strength of Ukraine's military and civilian resistance, or whether Ukraine's ability to endure three years of war can be attributed to the security assistance provided by NATO partners and allies. It can be stated that it is a combination of both; however, security cooperation throughout Europe — and especially in Eastern Europe through the form of the State Partnership Program with the United States National Guard — is the strongest contributing factor. Since the program's inception, 11 of the original 12 former Soviet bloc nations have joined NATO, and eight of those are members of the European Union. All 11 original partners have played significant roles in training with Ukraine since 1995, and have aided, without

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[5] See *supra* note 3 above.

hesitation, since 2014. Furthermore, if these partnerships were not adding value, why did it grow in Europe from 12 in 1993 to 27 in 2024? With many of these partners either in NATO, the EU, both, or applying, the fact is that the State Partnership Program is a significant contribution to security cooperation around the world.

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ESTABLISHING A SCIENTIFIC VIEW OF WORLD WAR II HISTORY AND BUILDING A COMMUNITY WITH A SHARED FUTURE FOR MANKIND

Chaohua WANG

Institute of World History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing (China), chwang@cass.org.cn, ORCID: 0000-0002-3813-7171

Abstract: In the Second World War, peace-loving people fought side by side and relied on their own wisdom and strength to defeat fascism and finally win a great victory. International society should establish a scientific view of the history of the Second World War, actively build a community with a shared future for mankind, and safeguard the fruits of human civilization so as to avoid the recurrence of the tragedy of war.

Keywords: Second World War, community, mankind, world politics, history.

For many years, traditional Western narratives of the Second World War have tended to ignore the importance and contribution of the Soviet-German theatre, the Eastern theatre. Some a foreign scholar has pointed out that, for a long time, the histories of the Second World War written in Europe and the United States, even those that claim to offer a "global" path, have basically adopted a Eurocentric and American-centred perspective (Buchanan, 2019, p. 1). The shortcomings of this narrative have led to the growth of historical nihilism and revisionist views of history and have even given Germany and Japan the opportunity and courage to shirk their responsibility for the war. For example, since the 1980s, the extreme right-wing forces in Germany have tried to "relativize" the war crimes, stressing that the German army fought in defense of the motherland, that its aggression was a "reasonable response" to external threats, and that it attacked the Soviet Union only out of "self-defense", the crimes of the Holocaust should not be exaggerated. Japanese right-wingers, on the other hand, have repeatedly argued in recent years that Japan is a victim of the

atomic bomb, attempted to remove the hat of the war initiator and defeated country by strengthening the alliance with the U.S., and they even claimed that China and South Korea have been using "fabricated" historical events such as the "Nanjing Massacre" and the "comfort women" as weapons to launch a "history war" against Japan in an organized manner, and called on Japanese public opinion to actively counteract them.

If we do not forget the past, we can guide the future. Whether it is advocacy that promotes the contributions of one's own country and belittles the status of others or rhetoric that denies the history of aggression or even glorifies wars of aggression, they all depart from the truth of history and fail to present a full picture of the magnificent world war against fascism. The purpose of remembering the historical experience and lessons of the Second World War is to learn from history, look to the future, arouse people's desire for and adherence to peace, and cherish and preserve peace together.

To establish a scientific view of the Second World War History, we should be fully aware of the bloody predatory and anti-people nature of fascism and the harm it has done to humankind. The Second World War was a war of aggression and expansion deliberately launched by fascism. Politically, fascism is resolutely hostile to the ideas of freedom and democracy, advocates the overthrow of the democratic system by violent means, opposes socialism and communism, economically advocates the development of one's own economy by invading and plundering the resources of other countries, and culturally promotes ultra-nationalism, social Darwinism and racism, and is a force of evil that is anti-human. In the fourteen years since 1931, that force has wreaked havoc on people all over the world. Under the iron heel of the Japanese fascists, the land of China was filled with hell; cities were bombed, villages were burned, and people were massacred and ravaged; in December 1937, the Japanese invading forces committed a genocidal massacre of Chinese compatriots in Nanjing, killing 300,000 living beings, and the Yangtze River rolled in waves of bright red blood, which was an appalling atrocity in the history of human civilization. The Japanese invading forces unleashed heinous bacteriological and chemical warfare against the Chinese people and conducted inhuman human biopsies. During the War of Resistance against Japan, as many as 35 million Chinese soldiers and civilians suffered casualties. The destruction caused by the war waged by the Japanese militarists and their plundering of China's resources and wealth resulted in a direct economic loss of $100 billion and an indirect economic loss of $500 billion to China, according to

the 1937 rates. The heinous crimes committed by the fascists are hard facts that have been justly judged and cannot be denied, nor can they be denied!

In order to establish a scientific view of the history of the Second World War, we should have a comprehensive and objective understanding of the contributions and sacrifices made by important countries and write a comprehensive account of the glorious history of the joint defeat of fascism by all countries of the world. In China's war against Japan's aggression, the Chinese army killed, wounded, and captured more than 1.5 million Japanese soldiers, accounting for more than 70% of the total number of casualties suffered by the Japanese army in the Second World War after Japan's defeat, the Japanese army that surrendered to China totaled more than 1.28 million, more than the total number of Japanese soldiers in South-East Asia and the Pacific Islands, and accounting for more than 50% of the total number of soldiers surrendered by the Japanese army overseas at that time. China's war against Japanese fascist aggression lasted 14 years, two and a half times as long as Britain's anti-fascist war and three and a half times as long as the Soviet Union's and the United States' anti-fascist wars. In particular, from the September 18th Incident in 1931 to the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941, China fought independently and persistently against the Japanese invading forces for 10 years, and it was the only large-scale anti-fascist battlefield in the East. After the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Chinese battlefield still fought against the main forces of the Japanese army, the Japanese navy, and the air force, and they continued to play the role of the main battlefield in the East in the world anti-fascist war. The significant contributions made by the Chinese people to the world's anti-fascist war were highly appreciated by the outside world. Soviet Marshal Chuikov once said that Japan had not attacked the Soviet Union but had drowned China in blood, a fact which cannot be disregarded by anyone who has the slightest respect for objective facts (Chuikov, 1980, p. 38). The contribution of the Chinese resistance to the world war against fascism was also widely recognized by the leaders of the Allied powers at that time: "Look at the vastness of China, where millions are fighting," U.S President Franklin D. Roosevelt said in his "Fireside Chat" on 23 February 1942, "Those brave men and women who, for nearly five years, have withstood the Japanese attack, wiped out hundreds of thousands of Japanese soldiers, and consumed vast quantities of Japanese munitions. We must help China in its remarkable resistance now and in the counter-offensive that will inevitably come later, for this is an essential factor in the final defeat of Japan" (Roosevelt, 1985, p. 421).

The Soviet-German theatre was the main European battlefield of the Second World War. The people of the Soviet Union paid a heavy price of 27 million casualties to win the Patriotic War. A large number of heroic sons and daughters, such as the twenty-eight heroes of Panfilov's division, Matrosov, Zoya, and others, wrote touching battle poems in defense of the independence and dignity of the motherland. In the Patriotic War, the Soviet Army fought the Germans to the death and suffered great national sacrifices. It was against the Red Army of the Soviet Union that Nazi Germany lost 70 percent of its forces and 75 percent of its weapons and equipment. At the same time, the Soviet Union suffered considerable losses, and according to the materials published by Russia, the Soviet Union lost more than 8.6 million Soviet Red Army soldiers during the Patriotic War. At 1941 prices, the war caused material losses to the Soviet Union amounting to 679 billion rubles, which is 41 percent of all the losses suffered by the countries involved in the Second World War. The Soviet victory in the Battle of Stalingrad and the Battle of Kursk in 1943 laid the foundation for the successful execution of the Normandy landings in 1944, and the deployment of troops in northeastern China accelerated the collapse of Japan. The Soviet Union made an indelible contribution to the victory of the world anti-fascist war. In this regard, Franklin Roosevelt once said, "We cannot forget the heroic defense of Moscow, Leningrad, and Stalingrad, nor the astonishingly powerful Russian counter-offensives of 1943 and 1944, which annihilated many of the formidable German army groups" (Ibidem, p. 480).

History tells us that in order to win victory, we must bring together the forces of justice from all over the world. The signing of the Declaration of the United Nations by representatives of 26 countries, including China, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, in Washington, D.C., on 1 January 1942 marked the formal formation of the united front against fascism in the world, greatly strengthened the strength of the international anti-fascist struggle, changed the ratio of the forces of the two sides in the war, and accelerated the progress of the world anti-fascist war, laying a solid foundation for the final victory in the war against fascism. The Soviet Union, the United States, and Britain were the core of the international anti-fascist alliance. During the war, the heads of the three powers held a series of meetings, maintained frequent correspondence, consulted on major issues in the anti-fascist war, and co-operated comprehensively in political, military, and economic aspects. On the political front, the three countries sought common ground while reserving differences, determined to carry on the anti-fascist war to the end, to remove the forces of militarism, and to strive for and maintain world peace; on the military front, the three countries

affirmed the strategy of defeating the German fascists first, and then making every effort to deal with the Japanese fascists first in Europe and then in Asia, and co-operated with each other in the battlefields of Asia, Europe and the Mediterranean Sea of Africa, providing each other mutual support, and fought shoulder-to-shoulder; on the economic front, the three countries provided each other with assistance ensured the stability and development of the wartime economy. According to statistics, during the war, the United States implemented the Lend-Lease Act paid a total of more than $50 billion worth of materials; the Soviet Union and, the United Kingdom, and other countries also tried to support the United States with raw materials, fuel, so that the United States in wartime to obtain about $7.8 billion "inverse Lend-Lease". The wartime co-operation among China, the Soviet Union, the United States, and Britain greatly shortened the process of victory in the anti-fascist war.

In order to establish a scientific view of the Second World War History, it should be borne in mind that the world war against fascism was a just cause jointly undertaken by the peoples of all countries and that it was a people's war. During the war, Africa was the home of "Free France", and the supply of human resources and strategic materials for the Allies; Latin America was the supply of munitions for the Allies; and Australia in Oceania was an important base for the Allies in their war in the Pacific. In the Chinese people's war of resistance against Japan, various anti-fascist forces such as peace- and justice-loving countries and people and international organizations in the world gave valuable assistance and support. A large number of anti-fascist fighters from Korea, Vietnam, Canada, India, New Zealand, Poland, and Denmark, as well as Germany, Austria, Romania, Bulgaria, Japan, and other countries, directly joined the Chinese War of Resistance. Canadian doctor Bai Qiu'en and Indian doctor Ke Dihua came to China from far and wide to save lives and help the wounded; French doctor Béchiré opened the "Hump Route" for transporting medicines by bicycle; German John Rabe and Danish Bernhard Sindberg tried every possible means to protect the Chinese refugees in the Nanjing Massacre; and journalists such as British journalist Lin Maikel and internationalist warrior Hans Heber actively reported and propagandized China's heroic war of resistance. In the fight against fascism and militarism, the people of China and the Soviet Union forged a friendship with blood and life. During the Patriotic War, Mao, Anying, Tang, Duo, and other warm-blooded sons and daughters of the Chinese nation resolutely threw themselves into the fight against the fascist German army. During the War of Resistance Against Japan, more than 2,000 Soviet pilots took part in the

Volunteer Flying Corps for China, and more than 200 of them sacrificed their lives on the Chinese battlefields. The Red Army of the USSR went to the battlefield in Northeast China to fight against the Japanese, providing important support for the Chinese people to win the final victory in the War of Resistance against Japan. During the Second World War, the people of China and the United States also fought together for peace and justice. The Flying Tigers, led by General Claire Lee Chennault of the United States, fought directly against the Japanese invaders. More than 1,000 Chinese and American aircrews sacrificed their lives on the Hump Route in order to build a route for the delivery of much-needed supplies to China. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, 16 B-25 bombers of the U.S. Air Force raided Japan in 1942. Due to the lack of fuel, Lieutenant Colonel Doolittle and other pilots abandoned their planes and parachuted into China, and the Chinese army and people rallied to their aid, and the Japanese army went so far as to massacre 250,000 Chinese civilians as a result. These are vivid examples of the great unity of the peoples of the world against fascism.

Lastly, we must inherit the hard-won victory of the Second World War and resolutely uphold the international order with the United Nations at its core. One of the important legacies of the world war against fascism is the establishment of the United Nations, which has become an important institution of global governance; in April 1945, China, together with the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, initiated the San Francisco Conference to discuss the establishment of the United Nations, and with the introduction of the Charter of the United Nations, a new chapter in world peace and development was opened. A new chapter in world peace and development began with the Charter of the United Nations, which was established in 1945 with only 51 founding Member States. With the development of national liberation movements, more than 100 new countries were founded on the ruins of the imperial colonial system. Today, membership in the United Nations has grown to 193. The United Nations advocates the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means and is the cornerstone of the post-war international peace and security order. Without the United Nations, the post-1945 world would probably have been a much bloodier place. Considering that the number of States almost quadrupled during the same period, one might well expect a significant increase in inter-state wars. However, this has not been the case; fewer wars between nations appeared in the second half of the twentieth century than in the first. The United Nations deserves a great deal of credit for that (United Nations Association of China, 2015, p. 4). In addition, the UN has been a pioneer in promoting global economic and social

development and has done a great deal of fruitful work in promoting North-South dialogue, reducing poverty and unemployment, controlling global warming, promoting environmental protection, and increasing the life expectancy of the population. The attempt to create the United Nations has proved to be successful.

The various confrontations and injustices in today's world are not due to the fact that the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter are outdated but rather to the fact that they have not been effectively implemented. Therefore, in the face of uncertainty, all countries of the world should work together to safeguard the achievements of the Second World War and the international system with the United Nations at its core, abide by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, adhere to the universally accepted basic norms of international relations, resolve disputes and contradictions, and eliminate wars and conflicts, so as to promote the building of a community of shared destiny for humankind.

On 23 March 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered an important speech at the Moscow Institute of International Relations, in which he put forward for the first time to the international community the concept of a community of shared destiny for humankind, providing China's answer to the question of the times: "What is wrong with the world and what should we do about it?". Over the past decade or so, this concept has gradually developed into a scientific system of thought with rich connotations and has been incorporated into General Assembly resolutions and multilateral documents on many occasions, becoming a public product of great global significance. To uphold the scientific concept of the history of the Second World War is to work for the active building of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind.

The building of a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind should absorb the important results achieved in recent times in the pursuit of a fair and just international order. Judging from the long process of world history, the establishment of a just and reasonable international order has been a goal that humankind has diligently pursued. From the principles of equality and sovereignty established by the Peace of Westphalia more than 360 years ago to the spirit of international humanitarianism established by the Geneva Conventions more than 150 years ago, from the four major purposes and seven principles specified in the United Nations Charter more than 70 years ago to the five principles of peaceful coexistence advocated at the Bandung Conference more than 60 years ago, a series of universally recognized principles have been accumulated in the evolution of international relations.

Those principles should be the basic guidelines for building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind (Xi, 2015, p. 539).

In building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind, we should practice genuine multilateralism and take the path of peaceful development. Today, humankind is in a period of great development, great change, and great adjustment. The mode of international behavior has gradually evolved from the struggle for interests and hegemony by the Great Powers to the coordination of relations and interests among countries by means of institutional rules. At the same time, humankind is also in an era of endless challenges and increasing risks. Non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, the refugee crisis, major infectious diseases, and climate change continue to spread. Multilateralism, which embodies the principles of equality, mutual benefit, and openness, is of great significance to maintaining global development and stability and reflects the right direction of human historical development. The international community should learn from the lessons of the world anti-fascist war, remain vigilant against the resurgence of fascism, take multilateralism as the cornerstone for addressing common challenges and the basic principle for maintaining international order, and promote changes in the global governance system based on the concept of fairness and justice, so as to create a better future together.

In order to build a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind, we should have an in-depth understanding of the long origins and rich contents of various civilizations, promote exchanges and mutual understanding among civilizations, and allow the essence of all civilizations to benefit the present day and humankind. There are more than 200 countries and regions and more than 2,500 ethnic groups in the world today. Different histories and national conditions, as well as different nationalities and customs, have given rise to different civilizations. Civilizations are enriched by exchanges, and civilizations are enriched by mutual understanding. Civilization exchanges and mutual understanding are important driving forces for the progress of human civilization and the peaceful development of the world. Differences in civilizations should never become a source of conflict. To that end, we should learn from the lessons of the Second World War, implement the Global Civilization Initiative in-depth, jointly advocate respect for the diversity of world civilizations, adhere to the principles of equality, mutual appreciation, dialogue, and inclusiveness of civilizations, and transcend the barriers between civilizations by means of civilization exchanges, clashes by means of civilization mutual appreciation, and superiority by means of

civilization inclusiveness, with a view to continuously creating new civilization achievements.

The world war against fascism gave birth to the great anti-fascist spirit. This spirit is the spirit of confronting evil, darkness, and slavery, pursuing justice, light, and freedom, and the spirit of unity, co-operation, shared destiny, and indomitable and heroic struggle. To this day, it has long been sublimated into an important legacy for the survival of human civilization. Let us establish a scientific view of the Second World War History, put into practice the great anti-fascist spirit, safeguard the hard-won victory, promote the common values of all mankind, and write a new chapter of peaceful development and win-win co-operation!

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THE NECESSARY REVIVAL OF THE INDIC SYSTEM

Ramachandra BYRAPPA

*Hungarian Institute of International Affairs / History Institute, Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) -Humanities, Budapest (Hungary),
byrappa.ramachandra@btk.elte.hu, ORCID: 0000-0002-6053-0578*

Abstract: The concept of balance is crucial in the absence of a global institutional framework. Before the creation of the United Nations in 1945, the landscape was largely shaped either by the convergence of different civilizations or by the dominance of powerful empires. The First and Second World Wars were, in part, a consequence of the inability of Britain, as the leading empire, to maintain stability in the international system. Recognizing the lessons of past failures, the United States understood the importance of developing a strong and durable system based on universal institutions. It opted for an institutional approach rather than pursuing imperial ambitions. Ironically, this order has primarily favored a nation like China, which is now openly challenging the very system that has supported its rise. China is proposing a combination of sea and land trade routes to create an alternative hegemonic order. The United States has been too slow to recognize China's true intentions since 2012. It has realized that it no longer has sufficient resources to protect the post-1945 institutional order while engaging China on a level playing field. Since 2018, there have been signs that the United States has voluntarily disengaged from the international trading system it once built. Does this shift mean that the United States will openly engage in imperialist projects like China's Belt and Road Initiative? Or does it intend to abandon or delegate part of the international order to rising powers like India? And does India have the capacity to handle this newfound responsibility?

Keywords: Indian sphere, civilization-state, civilizational ecosystem, trust-sphere, safe zone, Indo-Mediterranean.

Introduction

Before Donald Trump's re-election as president of the United States, Thomas Hobbes's view of the international order as harsh and anarchic was primarily a theoretical construct. However, in just two months of his second term, President Trump has effectively transformed the global landscape into one characterized by unpredictability and brutality. (Desk, T. W., 2025, March 13) The notion of systemic trust, which was largely a necessary illusion, has been discarded with remarkable ease. The cohesion of the West, cultivated over several centuries, was dismantled in a matter of weeks. Many regions that had relied on the United States were astonished to find that it had quickly turned from protector to predator. (Trofimov, 2025) Moreover, the new US administration treats international solidarity, efforts to protect diversity, and climate concerns as malicious and anti-American. In general, the Trump administration does not believe in global institutions and their bureaucracies as positive elements in shaping and regulating world order. On the contrary, it sees them as constraints on national sovereignty and impediments to the executive action of political leaders legitimized by popular vote. Trump seems to believe that the law of the fittest is best suited to managing global affairs. For him, there is no rules-based system, only confrontation and compromise between strong leaders. Consequently, world order is derived from spheres of influence under these strong leaders.

Some observers may interpret these unexpected developments as unwarranted aggression against an international framework that, despite its imperfections, has managed to prevent disorder. However, it is clear that the system was struggling under the weight of inefficiency and dysfunction. Moreover, there was a collective uncertainty about how to dismantle this system, and, more worryingly, there was no consensus about what should replace it. It was clear that China was rapidly improving its capabilities and, if left unchecked, was likely to undermine the existing system in favor of its own interests. This situation was particularly worrying for the West, which faced challenges in formulating a coherent and coordinated response, especially within Europe. The rise of Trumpism may have been seen as a potential remedy to the inertia, as its approach offered a quick fix for global governance, as a comprehensive institutional reform of the system seemed unfeasible. However, a worrying consequence of this trend is the erosion of trust, the rise of discrimination, and the decline of international ethical standards.

As for the redrawing of the lines of control in world politics, it is no longer the West, China, and the Global South, as popularised by President Joe Biden. Since the new measure and qualification is strength and its projection, the new dominant players, according to some interpreters of Trumpism, are the United States, Russia, and China. (Ignatius, D., 2025, 12 March). According to this logic, the rest of the world will be integrated into these three spheres of influence. (Toft, 2025) The hope is that small countries, driven by economic and security concerns, will queue up at the gates of one of the three spheres. There is also the possibility that these countries will be swallowed up by the great powers for supposedly legitimate 'geopolitical' reasons. President Trump's desire to annex the Panama Canal, Canada, and Greenland is a good example of this and is in line with President Putin's reasons for military intervention in Ukraine. The fate of small states seems sealed.

However, the case of middle powers and hybrid entities such as the European Union remains. The main question is whether these two categories of powers will accept being streamlined into one of the three new global empires or whether they will resist and reorganize themselves. The key may be how the EU (Europe) wakes up to the challenge and how India sees itself in the new global power configuration. Nominally, both India and Europe have much to lose if the Trumpian order takes hold, as both believe in a rules-based international system. However, the risks of the Trumpian axis falling apart are very high. This points to a situation where Europe needs to become humbler and more open without abandoning its core principles and commitments. Both India and Europe, individually or together, will build a new code of conduct and ethics of relations between and within civilizations. In the process, the Indo-Mediterranean (European) super-region, historically seen as the corridor of civilizations from India to Europe, will come to life. In a positive evolution of things, the two systems, spheres of influence and civilizations, can tolerate each other before joining hands. Monica Duffy Toft wrote the following in the Foreign Affairs magazine:

> *"Spheres of influence are rarely static; they are constantly contested. The re-emergence of spheres of influence signals that the nature of the global order is being tested. This shift could lead to a transition back to the power politics of earlier eras. But there is an alternative: after experiencing a few cycles of destabilizing crises, the international system might reassert itself, reverting to a rules-based order centered on multilateral cooperation, economic globalization, and U.S.-led or collective security arrangements that discourage expansionist ambitions."* (Toft, 2025)

Toft assumes that the current chaos and institutionally dysfunctional order will "revert" to a rules-based order and that "expansionist ambitions" will be checked by U.S.-led or collective security arrangements around the world. But at the same time, as she rightly points out: "If Putin, U.S. President Donald Trump, and Chinese President Xi Jinping were to reach an informal consensus that power matters more than ideological differences, they would be echoing Yalta by determining the sovereignty and future of nearby neighbors." (Toft, 2025) The fear is that instead of a virtuous cycle of multilateralism, a coordinated tri-lateralism will emerge, dividing the world between the three predator powers on one side and the potential prey nations on the other, leading to coercion, instability, and war. This will be especially true if there are no powers or mechanisms to at least partially stabilize the world order by creating safe spaces for vulnerable nations.

The key question for the immediate future, and for the transition period before we arrive at a permanent world order, is this: If China, Russia, and the United States take on the mantle of predators, who will take on the responsibility of stabilizing normalcy? In short, who will be the next stabilizer? During the Cold War, Europe, and especially France and Germany, acted as a moderating influence in the international system, even though it was the theatre of conflict. However, Europe's overdependence on outsiders for its defense and other geostrategic miscalculations have left it without a credible place in the international arena. Beyond Europe, there are very few all-capacity players with the potential to act as stabilizers —-India has now become one.

In a recent landmark foreign policy speech, India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar said: "Simply put, a world in transition has a greater need for what India has to offer." *(Remarks by External Affairs Minister, Dr. S Jaishankar at Nani Palkhivala Memorial Lecture "India and the World," 2025)* He then went on to give a long list of reasons why India should be counted as a leading stabilizer in the global community of nations and concluded the remark by adding: Through the greater usage of the historical name "Bharat", we signal a civilizational state regaining its place in the comity of nations. It is interesting to note that India is increasingly combining the attribute of "greater need for what India has to offer" with that of "a civilizational state regaining its place". The order that India wants to offer the world is not simply a substitute for the American hegemonic order; it is an ambition to present something more resilient and less violent than what is now on offer.

As keen observers of world politics, what should be of interest to us is that India wants to offer an order whose basic unit is no longer the nation-state but a "civilizational state". This promises to change the nature and structure of the international system. That is, the place and importance given to "force" within the structure of the state and its international environment. Civilization does not seek to counterbalance one capacity for violence with another of equal potency; it proposes to reduce the level of systemic violence to a minimum. By taking a step back in its millennial history, India is confident that it can initiate a civilizational order beyond its sphere to create a safe zone in the international system from predatory powers. Throughout its long history, India has faced the challenge of dealing with global empires on several occasions. In its first confrontation, the state was weakened by internal strife, disoriented, and ill-equipped to deal with a fundamental threat. It awoke to find its civilization shattered. In contrast, India today faces a comparable threat but is fully alert and has made significant progress in rebuilding and revitalizing its civilization, as Minister Jaishankar's speech demonstrates. To understand India's new perspective in its outward projections, we must come to terms with the distinction between the nation-state and the civilization-state. Furthermore, we must understand the ecosystem in which a civilization state operates.

The Nation-State and the Civilisation-State

The nation-state is a socio-political structure that privileges controlled isolation and circumambulation. It focuses primarily on its internal affairs, taking pride in and protecting its self-imposed boundaries. It seeks to protect its internal environment while preventing external influences from transgressing these boundaries, engaging in what can be described as a process of delimitation that defines its structural boundaries and parameters as part of its identity. This focus, however, does not mean that nation-states do not attempt to extend their influence beyond these borders. However, such attempts at expansion can increase the risk of internal discord and expose the state to the dangers of territorial expansion.

Moreover, the process of delimitation, if not managed wisely, can have several internal consequences. A shift in power within the governing system, often triggered by changes in economic power dynamics, can create pressure to change the rules of delimitation in ways that benefit certain groups while disadvantaging others. And because cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diffusion does not correspond to territorial boundaries, internal tensions have the

potential to become external frictions. It is, therefore, an illusion to think that nation-states are viable because of their internal attributes, such as national interest and national sovereignty. States are able to survive because civilization is the foundation on which they are built, not because of some law of the jungle where the rule of the fittest prevails.

Above all, states are civilizational states and, in most cases, a copy or remnant of earlier such states. Not all of them can act in the manner of a civilized state, accepting the responsibility and burden of applying norms that permeate trust and compatibility. Creating new norms of accommodation/acceptance and adaptation to change. As has often been the case in the long history of civilizations still active today, the Indian, Chinese, and European civilizations did not have a single center or core. The responsibility for sustaining the civilization was passed on or taken over by another state, which provided its state assets and resources to further sustain the vital norms of the civilization.

Urban centers were the main creators of civilizations because of their high population density, but not only, the rural hinterlands also made their own contributions. Together, they formed a network of urban and rural relay centers, each responsible for local diffusion. Borders, demarcations, and distinctions between ethnic groups were the last thing the rulers cared about. Even the most powerful local despot understood the civilizing function of keeping trade routes and economic arteries open to ensure the free movement of goods and people. The same principle extended beyond the perimeters of a civilizational state, a process that further creates a civilizational ecosystem, as Minister Jaishankar indicates:

> *"Throughout its existence, India has been a pluralistic society open to the world. Unlike the vast majority of nations, India has never espoused a single ethnicity, language or belief system as a defining identity. On the contrary, it has a deep civilizational unity which has always allowed diversity to flourish. Today, that self-awareness of its heritage and traditions not only drives a national revival but actually encourages engaging the world more confidently." (Remarks by External Affairs Minister, Dr. S Jaishankar at Nani Palkhivala Memorial Lecture "India and the World," 2025)*

At its height, Indian civilization created an ecosystem that integrated several regions of Asia, including a strong symbiosis with the Greek and later Roman civilizations in the Indo-Mediterranean region. Today, these strong historical foundations could be used to give the Indian civilizational ecosystem a good chance of revival. This could, at the same time, be a chance for reform and renewal of the now de facto defunct Western world order

led by the United States. Americans can transfer responsibility to India without fear of it being used against them. A structural analysis shows that the transfer of responsibility will be seamless.

Civilizational ecosystem and the US-India transfer of responsibility

There are many similarities between India and the United States, making them ideal partners. Census Bureau statistics show that the US is as ethnically diverse as India. Although the US has only one official language, the linguistic communities are as active and vibrant as in the subcontinent. (Bureau, 2023) There is no need to mention the obvious cultural diversity that exists as a result of this multitude of ethnicities. From this perspective, both India and the United States should have the same structural approach to state and society, but they do not. India attaches great importance to preserving the uniqueness of communities, while the United States tends to push individuals and communities toward uniformity.

At the same time, the American system also pushes individuals towards fierce competition and the accumulation of material wealth. The French Academic André Siegfried made the following comment almost a century ago: "The effect of standardization on American civilization is greater than is generally thought. It is a civilization of production, and it is dominated by the ethics of production. … The moral and social consequences are enormous. The real aim is success and material production. There is nothing especially egoistic about it, but the value of a man is decided by his success in material and productive affairs." (Siegfried,1930, 752) Richard H. Stephens, for his part, argues that this does not necessarily mean a bad thing, on the contrary. He states that the existence of fierce competition indicates the presence of some very important values: equality, freedom, and opportunity. (Stephens, 1952, 10) Stephens says: "Individual traits of initiative and ambition were aided also by the absence of privileged and entrenched interests in trade and industry. These conditions, added to the belief that America was, and still is, a young country, produced an "open economy" where a man could find the place most suitable to his wants —- economically, socially and spiritually." (Stephens, 1952, 10). America believes that an ecosystem of free movement is one of its strongest civilizational attributes. As for the attempt to streamline and forge uniformity, it seems to be an attempt to forge a common purpose, ultimately in support of a national interest.

In contrast, in the Indian context, convergence is achieved through consensus on a certain set of shared values that tend to support diversity. As Makal et al. explain: "India is a nation where unity flourishes in the midst of great diversity of blood, color, language, dress, customs, and beliefs. The hallmark of Indian culture, civilization, and history is the unbroken continuity of religious practices coupled with a progressive spirit among its people throughout the ages. Consequently, India presents a multicultural tapestry within the bounds of a single, cohesive cultural entity." (Makal et al., 2024, 223) Even after its greatly reduced size, present-day India is home to 4635 distinct, vibrant communities. (Makal et al., 2024, 229). What this means is that India has a civilizational tradition that guarantees the preservation of communities, which could be cultural, ethnic, or linguistic. It also means that the integrative method of Indian civilization is more universal and open than one might perceive. More importantly, it is a non-coercive method that can be extended far beyond its core base.

The differences between the two approaches did not have a real impact on the structure of international relations for two reasons: First, although India had a strong presence in the international arena, it could not give depth to its presence because its economic capacity was very small compared to that of powers like the United States. (Cohen, 1964, p. 605) Even within its own region, it could not make a real impact or create a dominant position. The situation was slightly better in its civilizational basin, which stretched from East Africa to Indonesia. Second, middle powers, because of their shock-absorbing capacity, are more adept at handling the civilizational modes of interaction where mutual respect is the flag bearer. This kind of global presence had no tangible value in the Western-led world order. The combination of a Chinese shock and a Trumpian American shock has suddenly changed this; the Indian civilizational method has become the one that everyone is looking for, including the United States.

This method of civilization taking place outside the subcontinent, as an extension, is commonly referred to by Western anthropologists and Orientalists as the Indic system, method, or civilization. They were fascinated by the fact that it extended so far from the core areas. It had a strong and profound impact on the lives of the people, but visibly, there was no superior force or authority enforcing the principles of the Indic civilization. The genius of the system was that everyone adopted these principles on a voluntary basis. (Bayly, 2004, 720-722) This meant that there was a fully functioning system without the accompaniment and structure of an Indic state. This had many advantages but one devastating

disadvantage: it did not have a strong state to guarantee its physical unity against predators from outside the Indic sphere. Before transferring responsibility for the Indic Sphere to India, the United States must be certain that it is willing and wanting.

Revival of the Indic System: An Indian Perspective

Even today, the Indic civilization is a reality, but the question of an Indic structure, an all-encompassing physical protection system, is still unresolved. The civilization itself extends from East Africa, the Indo-Mediterranean, Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Sameena Hameed of the India Arab Cultural Center argues that: "India's culture is deeply rooted in many regions of the world. India's social fabric itself bears the cultural imprint of many civilizations. India's cultural links are particularly strong in its immediate and extended neighborhood in the Indian subcontinent and the Indian Ocean region, but independent India's foreign policy has not been able to draw on them adequately" (Hameed, 2009, 62). She argues that India has missed several opportunities to take its civilizational links seriously but has failed to do so. Nehru thought that the spirit of Bandung (1955) and later the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement would address this need.

Unfortunately, these naive hopes were dashed when both Russia and the United States turned the Indian domain into an arena for Cold War confrontation. Sameena Hameed rightly argues that: "For India, the civilizational links and cultural affinities among the peoples of the Indian subcontinent and the Indian Ocean region constitute a historical-cultural hearth. India's foreign policy concerns for security and prosperity cannot be effectively addressed without giving a strategic dimension to the concept of culture. (Hameed, 2009, 63) The problem is that to this day, Indian strategic thinking does not take Indian civilization as its basic unit, but rather a much reduced "1947 India", the legacy of British India. What defense and foreign policy formulators refuse to grasp is that without proper securitization of the Indic sphere, the defense of 1947 India is almost impossible (Dalmia & Malone, 2012, 1029).

Conclusion

The breadth and depth of Indian civilization is undeniable. Its universality is unquestioned. Its adaptability and functional efficiency in

permeating order and establishing compatibility among diverse communities is visible for all to see in much of the Indic sphere. What is lacking, however, is a strong Indic (state) structure to provide a strategic and defensive perspective to secure this sphere of civilization from malevolent and predatory powers. The reasons why India has not taken on this responsibility are mainly related to its underdeveloped economic capacity. Politically, by wanting to unify the Indic system, post-independence India did not want its actions to be seen as interference in the period of intense decolonization and nation-building. Today, however, from a global perspective and that of a withdrawing hegemonic United States, the vital stabilizing function of the Indic sphere needs to be restored so that the world order has a resilient system to act as a shock absorber, as growing instability may occur elsewhere. And from a systemic point of view, as a system based on voluntary acceptance and free movement, it does not contradict American interests. Moreover, it is very likely that regional powers within the sphere and beyond, such as Japan and Germany, will contribute their economic power to the formation of an Indic structure, hoping that this time, India will make the right choice to strengthen the protective shield of the Indic system.

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TRUST VS. RAPPROCHEMENT: CHOOSING THE OPTIMAL FORMAT OF INTERACTION IN GEOPOLITICAL CRISES

Olga LAZORKINA

Belarusian Institute for Strategic Research, Minsk (Belarus)
lazorkina@bisr.by, ORCID: 0000-0003-1290-6822

Abstract: Various factors contribute to the systemic international crises. In the present context, Western-centric value-ideological narratives are clearly exhausted. However, the loss of trust in international relations doesn't automatically lead to increased tensions. Modern states' extensive experience in navigating global crises offers hope for effective solutions. To build a new platform, we must carefully analyze the current trust infrastructure, evaluate its status, and pinpoint suitable components. Current geopolitical crises allow the system to be restarted using the historical experience of rapprochement.

Key words: systemic crisis, assessment criteria, trust, convergence, reset, infrastructure.

The system of international relations, like any other system, exists in different phases. Crises, including systemic ones, are inevitable due to the fact that the states and institutions that make up the system are a kind of living organism that enters a phase of exhaustion or aging.

Today, we are witnessing another crisis, which is systemic in nature and implies qualitative changes in the sphere of international relations.

The functioning of the system of international relations is based on trust as a key category that allows its creation, balance, and consistent development. The criteria for assessing the level of trust, its increase or decrease, are very subjective. At the same time, if we start from the infrastructure created by the states to ensure it, it is possible to make an approximate assessment of the state at different stages.

The infrastructure of trust consists of many elements, the key ones being the following. The starting point is diplomatic relations, which are

established according to international procedures and entail the opening of diplomatic missions. In the last 10-15 years, foreign representation was usually at the level of ambassadors extraordinary and plenipotentiary.

Meetings of heads of state, which were a rarity in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, are part of the diplomatic track, at the same time fulfilling special functions. Personal "chemistry" in relations between heads of state brings an element of stability and sanity to interstate interaction. Summits, forums, and meetings in the political and economic segments have been an important part.

After the end of the Second World War, a network of international institutions was established by consensus by the international community to act as a stabilizer of the system. Additionally, a network of regional and sub-regional associations was formed, the main task of which was to deepen co-operation in certain areas. International law and regional agreements acted as a framework of principles and norms, enshrining equal opportunities for all participants.

Numerous interdepartmental commissions, working groups, and special representatives were engaged in monitoring requests, developing tactical plans, and updating and launching new programs and projects. A separate track belonged to inter-parliamentary co-operation.

In recent years, the circle of actors in international communication has been significantly expanded to include the pool of experts and representatives of the scientific community. Non-governmental organizations occupy a special niche in building the infrastructure of trust.

By all accounts, youth diplomacy has become a driver of deepening dialogue and trust in the international environment. The cultural and humanitarian part was filled with days, weeks, and years of culture. A huge role was given to interaction in the information sphere. The teleconference became a symbol of dialogue and the beginning of a new era in the relations between the opponents.

The theme of people's diplomacy resounded in the international space, when citizens began to directly influence relations between countries, participating in the formation of their image.

In crisis conditions, it is important to understand which of these elements fulfill the main functions in the system of international relations. Obviously, the diplomatic track and face-to-face meetings between leaders provide a framework of trust. It is these elements that have suffered the greatest erosion today. Therefore, the world community has easily returned

to the rhetoric and logic of the Cold War. Summits are becoming synonymous with blocality and confrontation instead of dialogue and the search for new directions of development.

The UN, which is the only essentially universal international organization, does not meet modern demands, and therefore, parallel mechanisms can be created. They are especially in demand with regard to the application of sanctions. Within a short period of time, unilateral restrictive measures have gained a foothold in the information space as sanctions and are positioned as coercive measures against violations of the international responsibility of states. However, it is not a legitimate instrument of economic and political pressure or interference in internal affairs that uses financial, trade, logistical, and other tools.

There is a serious breakdown of ties through working groups, committees, and inter-parliamentary co-operation. The non-governmental sector has lost its status as an independent instrument of international dialogue and is seen in most countries as undermining the foundations of the state system. Financial impropriety, information pressure, and the vulgarisation of freedom of speech and human rights have practically paralyzed the activities of NGOs. Today, even the countries that have the most developed network of non-governmental organizations are reviewing their activities and ideology.

The cultural and humanitarian sector has suffered the greatest destruction since the Second World War. Today, it is not just the feat of the people who together liberated the world from Nazism that is being questioned. The memory of that terrible war and the millions of innocent victims is no longer seen as a common cause, as a point of unity for all people on the basis of humanity and mercy. Narratives are formed and promoted to perpetuate a black-and-white perception of events and public policy. In this way, opportunities to present alternative viewpoints are narrowed.

At the same time, the strengths of the international system remain, which allows us to talk about the possibility of its reset. First of all, most modern states have experience of emerging from two world wars. There is an active network of regional organizations and associations that have the potential to create new points of growth in the international system. Medium and small countries are actively reconsidering their roles in international affairs.

The objective historical process has brought the SCO and BRICS to the forefront. These associations are based on the principles of interstate co-operation that are in demand by the majority —- they do not tie co-operation

and mutual assistance to additional conditions and do not seek to dictate their will to other states.

Security and development, development through security is the slogan that unites the SCO and BRICS today. It is a new philosophy of integration based on the synergy of trends and expectations.

Therefore, the rapid expansion of the SCO and BRICS in the last two years indicates that there is an active search for escalation options and the formation of a new matrix of international co-operation.

The second track, or expert diplomacy, is building up its potential by strengthening the demand for strategic planning. Against the background of the destruction of the foundations of traditional diplomacy and the transition to closed formats for discussing sensitive issues, the expert track is becoming an important element of the new infrastructure of interaction in the crisis and post-crisis periods.

Medium and small countries retain the development agenda, which is the basis for their survival. Thus, escalation is balanced by the image of the future, and the approaches of great powers are constrained by the positions of medium and small states.

The layout of the world's problems, and hence solutions, lies in the plane of the following triad. The critical mass of international problems has accumulated, so the transformation of the system is inevitable, and it is impossible to reverse the processes.

Geopolitical confrontation is based on the exhaustion of ideological and value narratives of the Western world. They have become a full-scale obstacle to the development not only of their adherents but also of the countries that sought to adapt them to their own realities.

Economic globalization, perceived by the majority of medium and small countries as an element of a common image of the future, has been transformed into a vast mechanism of pressure and constraint on economic development.

Consequently, today, we can talk about the possibility of building an infrastructure of convergence that will prevent global escalation and serve as a basis for rebuilding the infrastructure of trust in the future.

The diplomatic track, which is necessary for the preservation of international legal norms and institutions, seems to be at its core. The expansion of activities within the framework of working groups, including in a closed format, also seems optimal. The experience of previous solutions to world crises has shown that the revival of face-to-face meetings between

heads of State is possible on the platforms of third countries. Strengthening the expert track is of particular importance for the professionalization of the discussion of acute international problems. This is especially important for the information space. Black-and-white perception in the assessment of certain situations forms an imbalance in the approaches of both states and citizens.

The example of the Republic of Belarus can be used as a practical example of building an architecture of rapprochement.

We can clearly see that the demand for transformation of the world order is long overdue. Multipolarity is clearly taking hold in the world's economic and political processes. It is no longer possible to slow down, let alone stop this movement.

It is difficult to overestimate the contribution of Belarus to the preservation of peace and stability and the creation of equal conditions for all countries within the framework of the UN and other international organizations. There is not a single international initiative on which Belarus has not declared its position.

In the conditions of a deep crisis of trust, which has acquired global proportions, preservation of the only structure, which is a universally recognized and authoritative platform for meetings of representatives with diametrically opposite views and opinions, is vital. Yes, the realities today are such that the UN mechanisms cannot always work promptly, but that does not mean that they cannot be used.

We are also looking for other international platforms that have the potential to ensure stability in various spheres. The value block of such associations as BRICS, SCO, and EAEU —- solidarity co-operation, and partnership —- meets the demands of most countries. They are on the way to developing new mechanisms of global economic development without rejecting the existing ones.

We are building strategic relations with Russia. The Union State is an organic association that is based on friendship, unanimity, and continuity. It is, in fact, the only association in our region that has a solid, tested legal basis for co-operation, which allows us to preserve our sovereignty, strengthen our international legal personality, and develop our economy in line with global trends.

The Minsk platform is always open for negotiations and the borders of the Republic of Belarus for our neighbors from the EU. On the initiative of the President of Belarus, an expert network is being formed within the CSTO; we have joined the analytical structures of the SCO and BRICS. In

the format of interviews, the Belarusian head of state is working with foreign audiences from a wide range of countries —- the USA, China, the UK, Oman, and others.

In the form of scientists, analysts, and experts, Belarus uses all available mechanisms to stabilize the world's situation. Each country has its own specific weight in world affairs. Belarus is ready to offer its own formula for resolving the current situation and further development, based on the three Ds —- trust, treaty-making, and moving forward.

Thus, cyclicality in the functioning of the international system is a natural element. It can and should be dealt with. For each cycle, a working formula of interaction and an appropriate infrastructure can be created. Today, the infrastructure of trust has been largely destroyed, but some of its elements can be incorporated into the infrastructure of rapprochement.

It is important to understand that under current conditions, the world does not need an alternative, which implies the destruction of old formats, but a parallel economic, ideological, cultural, and humanitarian reality. It will make it possible to preserve the best of the previous cycle and form a new system based on modern demands. A full-fledged dialogue and preservation of the stability of the international system in any conditions is possible only if the opinions of all participants are taken into account.

THE PROBLEM OF HISTORICAL PERCEPTIONS AND EAST ASIAN COMMUNITY OF SHARED FUTURE

Zhang YUEBIN

Institute of World History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing (China)
zhangyb@cass.org.cn

Abstract: Reaching consensus on historical perceptions is one of the foundational pillars for building an East Asian Community of Shared Future. To achieve this, it is imperative to affirm the following principles: a correct understanding of history serves as the prerequisite for constructing such a community; historical interpretations must be grounded in factual evidence; and historical discourse should not be instrumentalized as a tool for strategic interests among nations, but rather reflect the progress of civilization. Only through these commitments can the East Asian Community of Shared Future establish a solid foundation and advance toward a brighter tomorrow.

Keywords: China, Japan, historical perceptions, East Asian Community, shared future

Since the end of World War II, historical perceptions in Japanese society have followed a complex and winding trajectory. The post-war understanding of history, rooted in the Tokyo Trials, served as the starting point for Japan's historical reckoning. The Marxist historical interpretation of "imperial fascism" once held significant influence. The rise of positivism in the 1970s substantially revised earlier historical narratives, while the so-called "revisionism" that gained traction in Japan during the 1990s marked a major turning point in post-war historical discourse, exacerbating divisions and confrontations across Asia.

The issue of historical interpretation remains a formidable obstacle to Sino-Japanese reconciliation and East Asian integration. As a Japanese

scholar has noted, "On the stage of 'history', the 'Cold War' persists in Japan and East Asia. There was a high degree of ideological opposition centered on politics, economic policy, and defense issues; however, after the collapse of the USSR, the opposition now revolves around history". Consequently, resolving historical disputes to some extent constitutes foundational work for building an East Asian Community of Shared Future.

First, a correct understanding of history embodies human wisdom and reflects the progress of civilization. For East Asia, such an understanding is a prerequisite for constructing a shared future, yet consensus remains elusive. A nation's advancement requires values to sustain it, just as regional integration demands shared ideals. As a profound reflection on modern history, East Asia must unite through this lens to forge a brighter future. On the 80th anniversary of WWII's conclusion, some in Japan worry whether China's high-profile commemorations of its wartime resistance might strain bilateral relations. However, this logic is flawed—the essence of Sino-Japanese relations lies not in avoiding problems but in resolving them. As General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized, "History teaches us that peace must be fought for and safeguarded. Only when all cherish and uphold peace, and learn from war's tragedies, can peace endure." Remembering history is not about stubbornness but upholding principles. Compromising with erroneous narratives for superficial harmony may bring temporary calm, but it risks suffering in chaos, lawlessness, and perpetual instability in the long run.

Second, historical interpretations cannot be separated from historical facts. Only when grounded in verifiable evidence, can historical understanding thrive. In recent years, certain Japanese political factions have relentlessly criticized the "Tokyo Trial historical view" or "Comintern historical view," yet they cannot negate the factual reality of Japan's past aggression. Therefore, so-called "liberal historical views" and "revisionist narratives" fixate on marginal details but lack the factual foundation to construct a coherent theoretical framework. Or rather, they can only query, destroy, and deconstruct but cannot engage in constructive work. In fact, it is because they have no material to work with, that is, historical facts. Most of their assertions are based on imagination and speculation, and their "subjectivity" is focused on areas where historical facts are buried or where there are no facts. For instance, while many recognize China's rise as an opportunity, right-wing forces in Japan frame it as a threat, even absurdly alleging Chinese "aggression" and suggesting China might repeat Japan's past militarist errors. Against this backdrop, General Secretary Xi Jinping has

solemnly declared: "Having endured over a century of turmoil and war, the Chinese people will never inflict their past suffering onto other nations or peoples." Do "other nations" include Japan? Absolutely. This embodies the Chinese ethos of "Do not do unto others what you do not want done unto yourself." Japan's right wing dismisses China's assurances and cultural values, seeking instead to reconstruct a modern history aligned with their desires and a future China narrative that serves their interests. Regrettably, such narratives lack factual support, historical logic, or coherence with reality.

Third, historical understanding should not serve as a tool for national competition. Historical perceptions are not instrumental but rather concern worldviews and values, reflecting the degree of civilization and the moral caliber of a nation. A correct historical understanding is a ladder toward global harmony, not a means for hegemony. The so-called "history war" promoted by Japan's right wing fundamentally distorts the purpose of historical reckoning. By inappropriately linking historical interpretation to national pride and interests, they have embarked on a path of distorting history and glorifying aggression. China emphasizes the importance of historical understanding to avoid repeating past tragedies instead of seeking short-term gains. The Chinese nation is peace-loving and holds itself to high moral standards. After Japan's surrender, China advocated "repaying malice with virtue". Moreover, during the normalization of diplomatic relations, claims for war reparations were waived. As General Secretary Xi Jinping stated, "We hold public memorials for the victims of the Nanjing Massacre not to perpetuate hatred but to awaken the yearning and commitment to peace among all people of conscience. The peoples of China and Japan should foster enduring friendship, take history as a mirror, face the future, and jointly contribute to global peace." True peace serves the collective interests of East Asia and humanity at large—it is not a zero-sum game of narrow self-interest.

In summary, resolving divergences in historical perceptions remains one of the most critical steps for East Asia's future development. Such a resolution must be grounded in accurate historical understanding, factual evidence, and a commitment to learning from history rather than exploiting it for perceived national gains. In this regard, China must continue to articulate its perspective while patiently and meticulously explaining its stance, ensuring that principled historical narratives reach broader audiences. Only then can a solid foundation be laid for East Asian cooperation and the shared future it envisions.

THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER AFTER 1945: THREE WAVES OF CHANGE[1]

Marian KARAGYOZOV

Institute of Balkan Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia (Bulgaria)
marian.karagyozov@balkanstudies.bg, ORCID: 0009-0004-3768-3893

Abstract: The main thesis of the proposed article is that since the end of the Second World War the international order has experienced three waves of changes. Firstly, after 1945, a bipolar model was established with the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, playing leading roles in international relations. Second change came with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. This was the so-called 'unipolar moment' of global dominance by the United States, which was best illustrated by the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 and the occupation of Iraq in 2003, in relation to which this model began to crack.

The beginning of the third wave of change came in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008 and the Eurozone crisis. In their aftermath, the economic dominance of the US and the West has been challenged as the state capitalism of China, Russia and other countries has emerged as an alternative to the so-called 'Washington Consensus' and development financing options different from the traditional Western financial institutions (IMF and World Bank) have emerged, such as the Asian Development Bank, the BRICS bank, Chinese infrastructure projects such as One Belt, One Road. Over the past two decades, the G-7 countries' share of the global economy has fallen from 40 to 30 per cent, while China has become the world's largest economy.

At the same time, several other parallel trends have emerged in recent years - a global struggle not only between Russia and the West, but also between the US and China, as well as a trend towards the emergence of new global

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players and regional leaders, evident in strengthening of the role of middle powers. As a consequence, it can be concluded that an amorphous 'Non-West' is emerging, with the countries of the so-called 'Global South' wanting to have a more active role in international relations, especially in issues, related to the climate change.

Keywords: International order, Cold War, Unipolar moment, Global financial crisis, Emerging powers

This paper aims to explore what changes have taken place in the international order since 1945 and the reasons for this. This will be desk research, using as a main methodology process tracing, based on primary sources such as statistics and data and secondary sources such as reports, scholarly books, articles, and analyses published by think tanks. The current research is informed by different theoretical approaches and traditions, such as neorealism in international relations theory, hegemonic stability theory, and others. The paper is subdivided into three parts, dealing with the international order after World War II (1945–1990), the American "Unipolar moment" (1990–2008), and the current reconfiguration of the international order after the global financial crisis (2008 – to present) and conclusion.

The international order before and after 1945

With the age of the Great Geographical Discoveries, the Renaissance, and the First and Second Industrial Revolutions, Western countries gained a serious technological, economic, military, demographic, and other advantage over the rest of the world. A period of global dominance by the European Great Powers began. However, the First World War (1914-1918) led to a significant shift in the distribution of power between the Western states. As a result of the war, in which at least 20 million people died, European countries suffered significant economic, financial, demographic, and other losses, and industrial capacity was destroyed. With the First World War, for the first time, the role of the United States of America (USA) in global affairs increased. Its geographical position "across the ocean" allowed it to intervene actively in the conflict only towards its end – in 1917, on the side of the victors.

Since the end of the war, some of the structural causes that led to it have not been resolved. This, and the harsh terms of the peace treaties imposed on the defeated countries, pushed Germany towards revisionism, which culminated in the establishment of the Nazi dictatorship and the outbreak

of the Second World War. This global conflict affected Europe even more severely - some 50 million people died, and entire countries were devastated. The era of the "European concert" of powers was over. The international order quickly became bipolar with two poles - the USA and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The reasons these two countries rose to this role are as follows.

The Soviet Union emerged from World War II with the status of the country with the greatest contribution to the victory over Nazi Germany. Between 1941 and 1945, between 236 and 266 divisions, or about 75-80% of the German military effects fought on the Eastern Front: 70% of the infantry, 86% of the tanks, and 75% of the artillery. Second, the Soviet Union gained its sphere of influence throughout Eastern Europe. Thirdly, as often leading or at least being very important participants in the anti-fascist resistance in Europe, communist parties and movements, supporting and supported by the USSR had increased popularity and influence in a number of European countries.

In the case of the United States, while European countries suffered significant losses (human, economic, and material destruction), the US emerged from the war as the largest economy, the largest creditor, and gold reserves in the world. The war gave American industry, which was not destroyed, the opportunity to work at full capacity. This enabled the US to have a positive trade balance with all countries worldwide. Only Washington was able to provide the necessary investment to rebuild Western Europe, known as the Marshall Plan. The positive trade balance and available funds enabled the US to gain a leading role in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank created after the war, and the dollar became the international reserve currency. Meanwhile, politically, in line with new trends in international law - the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Asian and African peoples' demands for self-determination grew, and European states began slowly but steadily to lose their colonial possessions. Washington "inherited" the network of British military bases around the world and set about building a system of alliances - the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO, created in 1948) covering the countries of Western Europe, the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO, created in 1955), the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) - aimed at containing the Soviet Union and ensuring its global dominance.

In the following years, most countries in the world joined one of the two camps – the so-called "Western block" versus the so-called "Socialist block".

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), involving countries such as Egypt, India, Yugoslavia, and others, looking for a third path between both superpowers, was an interesting attempt, but it failed to transform the bipolar international system into a multipolar one.

In the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union faced economic stagnation. The reforms of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev led to the system's collapse instead of its recovery. The breakdown of the USSR meant the disappearance of one of the two poles of the international order, and the system of international relations was profoundly transformed.

The American unipolar moment

The post-Cold War period is often called a "unipolar moment" – the epoch of unchallenged American political, military, economic-financial, and cultural dominance. A vivid symbol of the beginning of the unipolar moment was the 1991 war against Iraq when the United States organized a global coalition to discipline Iraq for its annexation of Kuwait a year earlier. Another demonstration of American influence was the Oslo negotiations and the Madrid conference, aimed at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with agreements reached that had disadvantaged the Palestinians and favored the American client, Israel. The peak of the unipolar moment was NATO's bombing of the FR Yugoslavia in 1999. The war began despite Russian opposition and was not in accordance with international law.

NATO's eastward expansion also began in this period. In 1999, the first Eastern European countries – Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary – were admitted to it, followed by Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia in 2004. Albania and Croatia joined the Alliance in 2009.

The opportunity structure for the unipolar moment includes several factors. The Russian Federation, which succeeded the Soviet Union after its collapse, is inferior to the USSR on all counts. In comparison to the Soviet ones, Russia's borders were moved back some 1,500 km. from west and south. The population of the USSR was 220 million, that of Russia is 150 million. During the 1990s, the country experienced a deep economic, social, and demographic crisis. GDP shrunk by about 1/3.

For its part, the European Union, which was created in 1993 by the Maastricht Treaty as a continuation of the European Communities, was still in the process of building up its institutions at that time. The Union is often

referred to as "an economic giant but a military dwarf". Next, the question posed by Henry Kissinger of whom to call if he wanted to talk to Europe remains a significant problem. In other words, the lack of a common policy and the tension between supra-national institutions of the Union and the policies of nation-states is still an impediment for the EU.

Third, in the 1990s, none of the Asian countries still posed a challenge to the US (and Western) dominated international order. China and India were still poor countries, and the Asian economic crisis of 1997-1998 had a high economic and social cost for the so-called "Asian Tigers" – Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan. In addition to this, they are also politically and militarily oriented towards the US.

After the 11 September 2001 terror attacks, the administration of US President George Bush Jr. declared a "global war on terrorism". Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed his full support for it and allowed US troops to use bases in Central Asian countries for the war in Afghanistan. At that time, Putin continued the policy of seeking dialogue between Russia and Western countries.

However, a little later, the unipolar moment began to encounter challenges. The first signal of these was the 2003 Iraq war. The United States attacked Iraq despite the opposition of world public opinion, the lack of a UN Security Council resolution, and the diplomatic resistance of Germany, Russia, and France. Because of the torture used in the Guantánamo Bay detention camp and Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and the revelations of WikiLeaks, the US image as a democracy committed to the rule of law and human rights has been damaged globally.

Relations with Russia also started to change, with elements of distrust beginning to emerge following the 2004 NATO summit in Bucharest, during which a new call for NATO enlargement, potentially encompassing Georgia and Ukraine, was made. The Russian President, who was present at the summit, warned the NATO leaders that Moscow will consider this as a threat to its vital interests. His dissatisfaction with the current state of global affairs became even more vocally pronounced during the Russian President's speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007. Relations between Western countries and Russia were further strained after the 2008 war in Georgia.

Among the structural reasons for the beginning of the eclipse of the unipolar moment at the beginning of the new millennium are the stabilization and relative rise of the Russian economy during Vladimir Putin's first two terms as President, the ascendancy of the European Union, which

is expanding and has influence thanks to its "normative power" as an international player promoting the rule of law, democracy, human rights, consumer rights protection, and economic prosperity. Furthermore, globally, since 2000, a new economic cycle has begun, and the world economy is growing, strengthening the position of some developing countries, which are referred to as emerging powers. They benefitted from the relocation of a number of production facilities as a consequence of neoliberal globalization in the world in the 1980s and 1990s, from developed Western countries to them. Their enhanced economies and production output contributed to their rise to a more prominent role in the international order.

The Global Financial Crisis in 2008 as a critical juncture.
A birth of multipolar world?

There is a consensus in the literature that the global financial crisis (GFC) of 2008 was a watershed moment for the US-promoted liberal world order and the American unipolar moment. After the financial crisis hit the US, it was followed by a crisis in the Eurozone. Thus, for the first time since the Great Depression, almost all developed countries were affected by the financial meltdown at the same time. Over the next year after the crash of 2008, global output and world trade fell more rapidly than during the first twelve months of the Great Depression. In some views, the reaction of Western governments to the global crisis, where they bailed out banks with multi-billion dollar public financial injections while ordinary Americans lost their homes due to unaffordable mortgages, is leading to the collapse of the greatest promise of the modern capitalist system: "Work hard and you will succeed!" The impact of the 2008 crisis on the global order is also significant.

First of all, the role of developing countries in the world economy is increasing at the expense of developed countries. As a consequence, the G-20 (the group comprising the world's 20 largest economies) is beginning to replace the G-7 – the group of the largest Western economies as the forum for discussing and resolving global economic issues.

Secondly, at the instigation of the Brazilian and Russian foreign ministers, Celso Amorim and Sergei Lavrov, Brazil, India, China, and Russia formed a group (BRIC) that held informal meetings between 2006 and 2008. It is no coincidence that the group was formalized immediately after the 2008 crisis at the 2009 meeting in Ekaterinburg, Russian Federation. South Africa joined in 2011, and the group was renamed BRICS. In recent years, more countries

have joined. However, it should be noted that the member-states do not share the same ideological, political, and geostrategic preferences.

Third, China, which applies a specific form of state capitalism, was not affected by the crisis; its economic model turned out as an emerging alternative to the so-called "Washington consensus", which was until recently considered to be without any alternative, postulating fiscal discipline, reduction of spending/subsidies for state-owned enterprises, general deregulation and privatization, interest rate liberalization, free market exchange rates. Some observers were quick to call the alternative model "Beijing consensus" – a combination of a free market economy and authoritarian rule. However, this thesis is not without its critics. As Kyle Lascurettes argues, China is not interested in promoting an "authoritarian" international order – whose implementation would not be possible - but in the promotion of an "agnostic" one (Mearsheimer), an order in which ideological principles do not justify foreign interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

The significance of the fact that alternative financial institutions to Western ones are emerging after GFC could not be overstated. In October 2013, China led other 20 states to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to create the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). In March 2015, at the Boao Forum for Asia, China reaffirmed its intention to lead the AIIB. Addressing delegates there, Xi Jinping explicitly announced China's political motivation to "build a new regional order". The financial institution became operational in 2016, having non-borrowing members, even countries from the EU. One hundred ten countries joined its ranks so far (https://www.aiib.org/en/about-aiib/index.html). Even though its credit lines are relatively modest, AIIB diminished the global standing of the WB, the Asian Development Bank, and the IMF. In addition, the bank had the potential to become an alternative source of financing for China's strategic partners, such as Iran and Russia, which are not on good terms with Western financial institutions. A year later, the BRICS founded the New Development Bank, aiming to finance development projects typically overlooked by the IMF and WB. Its operations were launched in 2016. A number of countries that experienced IMF-prescribed "shock therapy" in the late twentieth century are interested in the opportunities that the AIIB and NDB offer.

In addition to the multilateral initiatives listed, China also announced several of its own global initiatives. In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the "One Belt, One Road" initiative (BRI), which provides

financing for infrastructure (land and sea routes) and development projects around the world. Beijing has pledged to allocate US$ 1.25 trillion to the initiative by 2025. The initiative lacks transparency with regard to the projects involved and the total amount invested. Between 2013 and 2023, 150 nations signed MoUs or similar documents with China to join the BRI. There are two main interpretations of BRI's function for China. One focuses on the initiative as being primarily driven by domestic interests, such as managing excess industrial capacity and stabilizing the country's borders, as well as guaranteeing profitable investments abroad, even if the domestic economy is stagnating. Another interpretation reflects the desire to secure access to key energy and natural resources in other countries for oil and gas-poor China and concerns about structural power, resembling the Marshall Plan. Although very often the projects the initiative sponsors lack specific methodologies, timelines, and models to achieve its ambitious goals, the number of countries that joined BRI is rising – from 32 between 2013 and 2016 to 25 in 2017 and 63 in 2018.

Next, the China-Russia partnership is growing, mainly due to external factors. First, the administration of US President Barack Obama is announcing a strategic pivot to Asia to counter the Chinese threat. As an answer, the newly elected Chinese President Xi Jinping chose Moscow as the destination of his first presidential trip in 2013. During the visit, he said that the two countries spoke a "common language" and that the relations were labeled as a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership".

Second, relations between Russia and the West deteriorated sharply in the spring of 2014. After the Ukrainian government withdrew its decision to sign an economic association agreement with the EU in late 2013, protests erupted in Kyiv, leading to a government change. Moscow deemed the change illegitimate and, fearing the new ruler's course occupied the Crimean peninsula in February 2014. In response, Western countries imposed sanctions on Russia. Separatist movements began in eastern Ukraine, and Kyiv responded with a military operation that forced Russia to intervene further.

These two trends – the straining relations between Russia and Western countries and between the US and China - inevitably push Beijing and Moscow towards rapprochement. In May 2014, the contract for the construction of the "Power of Siberia" pipeline aimed to deliver for 30 years Russian natural gas to China that had long been delayed, presumable because the concessions asked for by the Chinese side had been signed. The sale to China of the advanced Russian S-400 missile defense system and Su-35 fighter jets Moscow had been reluctant to provide until that moment was

approved. The sino-Russian partnership was deepened after the Donald Trump administration launched a trade war and the Joe Biden administration imposed a barrage of sanctions on China's tech companies, further developing the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) of the US, Australia, India, and Japan, and launched the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework and the AUKUS agreement with Australia and the United Kingdom to counter China's influence. That is why Xi Jinping made a special trip to Moscow in 2023 on the first anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Vladimir Putin was the guest of honor at the third BRI Forum held in Beijing in October 2023. That was Putin's first overseas trip after the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for him.

Systemic factors explain best how China and Russia can afford to challenge the current global order. The American government's deficit has tripled in the last decade. In the same period, public debt in the United States has jumped by $17 trillion, an increase equivalent to that in the previous 240 years. The US federal debt reached $34 trillion at the end of 2023, and this has been at record highs of more than 120% of GDP since 2020 (surpassing previous World War II highs). A sharp rise in the federal budget deficit, which exceeded 10% of GDP in 2020-2021, and a substantial increase in government spending to pay debt interest, with gross debt payment costs approaching $1 trillion by the end of 2023, is observed as well. The cumulative effect of these factors is the expected contraction of US military spending.

At the same time, the expansion of the Chinese economy – the most spectacular sustained burst of economic growth in recorded history – is narrowing the gap between China and the US in economic and technological might. Long ago, China was dubbed "the world's factory". It is the world's largest source of gross manufacturing output (35%) and investment (around 28%) (https://www.theglobalist.com/china-trade-exports-economy-gdp-investment-just-the-facts/). The "Empire Under Heaven" became the number one trading partner of more than 120 states as of 2023. In 2020, an IMF estimate showed that for the first time, the Chinese economy had surpassed that of the US. Measured in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), the IMF has determined that the size of China's economy is $24.2 trillion compared to America's $20.8 trillion.

This leads to the following question: Who is the leading country in the world? All these developments led to a situation in which the US is not the hegemon anymore but is still the leading power; not almighty, but preserving significant economic might and influence; culturally speaking, not an inspiration anymore, but still the dominant power. China is still unable to

match Hollywood's or Harvard's influence and prestige. Charles Kindleberger, a prominent American economist, has argued that leading powers have the responsibility to provide global public goods, such as peace, security, stability, prosperity, a clean environment, etc. On the one hand, the incumbent superpower, the US, is clearly losing its capacity – as well as willingness – to deliver global public goods. China proposes the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, and Global Civilizations Initiative, but their practical implementation and results remain to be seen. China, it seems, is not yet ready to live up to the status of a superpower.

Globally, China has a strong presence in Africa, where the interests of former colonial powers such as Britain and France clash with those of new players on the continent such as China, Turkey, Israel; Beijing is competing from a weaker position with the US in Latin America; competes with Russia and local heavyweights Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan – in Central Asia; and has a complex relationship – a large volume of trade combined with political mistrust with the EU. In addition to its unmatched military power (around 700 bases in foreign countries, defense budget, number of aircraft carriers and fighter jets, signal intelligence), the US-led system of alliances is one of the few elements of Washington's capabilities that has not diminished in relative terms vis-à-vis China in the past decades. More than half of the 20 largest economies in the world, in nominal GDP terms, account for more than half of the world's GDP, belong to this framework (whether NATO allies or major non-NATO allies). The rifts between the US administration of Donald Trump and the European allies are evident in the American Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Vice-President J.D. Vance's speeches during the Brussels NATO defense ministers meeting and Munich Security Conference (both in 2025), respectively, and the tariff wars must be followed cautiously. In this vein, the so-called pivotal states, which are suspicious of both the hegemon and the main rising power, are those whose capabilities may alter the balance between both.

After the beginning of the war in Ukraine on 24.02.2022, Russia's rhetoric about building a multipolar world is significantly increasing. Three years after the start of the conflict, even leading Western think tanks are beginning to acknowledge the world's entry into an era of multipolarity. The most likely scenario appears to be one that envisages a world without a solid architecture, a universally accepted playbook, and a clear leader. This creates a dangerous void and translates into heightened unpredictability. The only given at a time that could be dubbed "the end of certainties". There's no shortage of predictions that point to anarchy and chaos ahead. Hopefully,

such a dark outlook will not be fully vindicated, but it would be safe to assume that in the coming years, we are likely to see high levels of transactionalism, fickle allegiances, and fluidity in the global arena.

Conclusion

This text is divided into three parts. Each of them analyzes critical historical junctures that are leading to significant changes in the international order. After the Second World War, a bipolar order with two poles – the US and the USSR – was established between 1945 and 1990, and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the "unipolar moment" of US dominance occurred, lasting roughly until the global financial crisis of 2008. The world is now entering a period in which there is no hegemon due to the decline of the power of the United States, and essentially, no other country is strong enough for a bipolar model to emerge, nor have the contours of a multipolar world emerged clearly enough due to the US retaining the lead in terms of military power, the dollar as the world's reserve currency and soft power.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PERSPECTIVES ON INTERSTATE (ETHNIC) CONFLICTS

Dragan TRAILOVIĆ

Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade (Serbia)
dragan.trailovic@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs, ORCID: 0000-0001-9707-9867

Abstract: While the period following World War II initially saw a focus on interstate wars, conflicts occurring within the borders of a single state have become increasingly prevalent and devastating. This shift signifies a fundamental change in international security, demanding a corresponding evolution in the scholarly attention and analytical frameworks employed by the field of International Relations. The growing frequency and human cost of these internal conflicts, along with their international dimension, underscore the need to understand their causes, dynamics, and potential resolutions from an international perspective. This paper illustrates how the academic discipline of International Relations approaches the study of these intrastate conflicts, focusing mainly on ethnic conflict, by presenting theoretical perspectives, key concepts, and the relationship between domestic and international factors that shape them.

Keywords: international relations theory, realism, liberalism, ethnic conflicts, intrastate conflicts, international dimensions of ethnic conflicts, security dilemma, third-party intervention

Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, the number of intrastate conflicts, particularly ethnic ones, increased significantly in countries around the

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world. A wave of nationalism swept across parts of Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa. Ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Chechnya, Israel/Palestine, Iraq, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and India marked the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

In contrast to conflicts that occur between two or more states (interstate conflicts), intrastate conflicts are defined as sustained political violence taking place between armed groups within the borders of a single country. These conflicts can involve state forces on one side, but they may also occur between different non-state actors, such as ethnic or religious groups. So, these conflicts manifest in various forms, including civil wars, insurgencies, rebellions, ethnic violence, and territorial disputes, often fuelled by political, economic, or social grievances (Brown, 1996).

As for the ethnic conflicts themselves, there is no single, universally accepted definition of the term "ethnic conflict" in the literature. Most commonly, one of the main criteria for defining this concept is that it involves a conflict between two or more parties whose primary distinguishing characteristic is ethnic diversity. Ethnic conflict is, therefore, a form of hostility in which at least one party defines its goals, interests, and demands in relation to its ethnic identity and distinctiveness. We use the definition provided by Karl Cordell and Stefan Wolff (2009, pp. 4-5), who describe ethnic conflict as one that involves at least one party organized around the ethnic identity of its members, which claims that this distinct ethnic identity is the reason its members are unable to achieve their interests and do not have equal rights, and in which understanding the conflict and its causes is viewed through the lens of real or perceived discriminatory ethnic divisions.

Traditionally, the field of International Relations (IR) prioritizes the analysis of conflicts occurring between states. This state-centric focus, rooted in the traditional understanding of the international system as primarily composed of sovereign states, often relegated intrastate conflicts to the realm of comparative politics. The assumption was that wars within states stemmed from fundamentally different causes than wars between them. However, the dramatic increase in the number and intensity of intrastate conflicts, particularly in the post-Cold War era, coupled with their evident international ramifications, has spurred a significant shift in this scholarly focus. The rise of these forms of conflict, often driven by ethnic, religious, or identity-based grievances, further challenged the traditional state-centric focus of IR. This has led to a growing recognition within International Relations that intrastate conflicts are not merely domestic affairs but possess significant international dimensions (Carment, 1993).

International dimension of ethnic conflicts:
from overlooking to addressing

Ethnic conflicts in any country are rarely isolated violent or non-violent clashes triggered solely by domestic (internal) circumstances and factors. International actors can influence the emergence, spread, and resolution of ethnic conflicts in numerous ways. Moreover, although these are primarily internal conflicts, empirical evidence has shown that in many cases, they transcend national borders and often involve other actors beyond the two main parties in the conflict. Thus, while these conflicts are intrastate, one of their key features is that they often spill over national borders, directly involving other external actors.

For a long time, conventional approaches to ethnic conflicts (psychological and sociological) located their causes — both the motivations and enabling factors — exclusively within domestic factors at the sub-state level. For instance, according to Ryan (1988, pp. 164-168), theories like the plural society approach or consociational model have largely ignored the weight of international factors in shaping intra-state ethnic tensions. Since the 1990s, academic studies have argued that international actors, such as kin states, great and regional powers, as well as international organizations, are critical in shaping the course and outcomes of ethnic conflicts. As a result, there has been a growing need to seek explanations for ethnic conflicts at different levels, including the sub-state, state, and systemic levels.

Although the discipline of International Relations has traditionally focused on the use of war and power in interactions between states, it has often neglected these dynamics when they unfold within a single state's borders. As Ryan (1988, pp. 162-163) demonstrates, for a long time, the prevailing post-war ideologies of liberalism and Soviet-style socialism marginalized ethnic sentiment. Liberals emphasized individual equality and rationality, downplaying minority rights, while Marxists viewed nationalism as a distraction from class struggle. This ideological backdrop contributed to the neglect of ethnic conflict within IR. Furthermore, Western social scientists assumed that modernization and economic development would lead to the assimilation of minority groups, effectively erasing ethnic divisions.

During the Cold War, the strategic interests of the United States and the Soviet Union primarily focused on maintaining stability in a bi-polar world. Ethnic conflicts, although increasing in frequency, rarely affected these strategic interests, as they resulted in few significant border changes. This

lack of impact on great power interests contributed to the neglect of ethnic conflict within IR (Arriola, 2001, p. 2).

The state-centric approach of traditional IR scholarship further hindered the study of ethnic conflict. IR scholars focused on state integration (functionalism, federalism, and transnationalism), while realists, committed to the enduring strength of sovereign states, largely overlooked the potential for internal fragmentation due to ethnic particularism (Ryan, 1988, p. 163). Realism, a dominant theoretical paradigm, privileged systemic-level analysis over unit-level analysis, focusing on the distribution of power in the international system rather than internal factors within states. This approach left little room to consider ethnic conflicts, which were essentially unit-level phenomena from the field's perspective (Kaufman, 1996, p. 149; Arriola, 2001, p. 2).[2]

Ethnic conflicts are not isolated or confined to the state in which they occur; rather, they can have a significant international dimension. Ethnic conflicts within a single country can have implications for regional security and stability, influence other states in the international system, and affect international institutions and organizations. Likewise, all these actors in international relations can impact an ethnic conflict within a country, contributing to its emergence, escalation, or resolution. Conditions at the international system level can create favorable or unfavorable opportunities for access to resources, potential allies, or the legitimacy of demands made by parties involved in the conflict (Carment, 1993; Brown, 1996; Davis & Moore, 1997; Lake & Rothchild, 1998; Carment & James, 2000; Carment, James & Taydas, 2009; Paquin & Saideman, 2017).

Thus, if we examine the field of interstate/international relations and the field of interethnic relations, we will notice that they often involve the same units (actors) of analysis, only at different levels. Based on this, Cordell and Wolff (2009, p. 14) argue that: (1) ethnic conflicts that emerge at one level of analysis cannot be viewed separately from the consequences they have at other levels, and (2) ethnic conflicts are shaped by the ways in which actors at all levels (sub-state, state, regional, and global) respond to them.

However, the end of the Cold War ushered in a new era characterized by a surge in ethnic conflicts. The violent emergence of newly independent states, such as Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, highlighted the significance

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[2] Kaufman (1996, p. 149) applied Kenneth Waltz's three levels of analysis from international relations theory to ethnic conflicts.

of ethnic conflict in shaping the international landscape. Ethnic conflict within states was linked to greater regional instability in Central Africa, Central Asia, Southeast Europe, and South Asia (Arriola, 2001, pp. 2-3). Despite these developments, scholars faced challenges in understanding how such conflicts were connected to international relations.

These developments prompted a re-evaluation of traditional IR perspectives. In response to these challenges, the "world society paradigm" emerged, claiming that states were only one type of international actor among many, including ethnic minorities (Ryan, 1988, pp. 163-164). This paradigm challenged the state-centric view of traditional IR. It advocated for a broader understanding of international relations, encompassing a multitude of cross-border transactions involving various actors (Brown & Ainley, 2005, pp. 1-18).

The recognition that ethnic conflicts often spill over state borders and involve external actors underscored the need for a multi-level analysis. Scholars have begun to apply explanations from IR theory to internal conflicts, recognizing their impact on international stability and security.

Ethnic conflict in the framework of international relations theory

Conflicts between different ethnic groups, both non-violent and those involving the widespread and systematic use of violence, have long been a significant and central subject of research in numerous academic disciplines. As a form of interethnic relations, both violent and non-violent conflicts are key areas of scholarly interest in political science, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and other disciplines and subfields of the social sciences, such as international relations, peace, and conflict studies. Within these disciplines, new arguments and explanations continue to emerge, directly or indirectly addressing the causes of ethnic conflicts and the ways to prevent them.

International Relations theories, according to Cordell and Wolff (2009, pp. 9-14), offer valuable tools for understanding ethnic conflict. IR theory addresses ethnic or internal conflicts in two distinct ways. The first approach applies established theoretical frameworks, concepts, and explanations to analyze the dynamics, causes, and outcomes of these conflicts. The second approach seeks to explain why and how external states decide to intervene in such conflicts in other states.

Applying International Relations Theory Explanations and Concepts to Ethnic Conflicts

Neorealists were among the first to emphasize the importance of ethnic conflicts after the Cold War because of the possibility of their "spillover" to the international system level and its destabilization. The first concept translated from international relations theories to the level of intrastate conflicts, that is, ethnic conflicts, was the "security dilemma".[3] According to the concept, one party's attempt to boost its security inherently jeopardizes the security of another, inevitably prompting a similar response. This dynamic, where actions meant to safeguard one's own position end up destabilizing the situation for others, is at the heart of the security dilemma.

Realism, as a theoretical approach, is based on the idea that international relations are characterized by a state of "anarchy", meaning the absence of a central authority. In these anarchic conditions, states, as the primary units of international relations, are compelled to protect their interests and ensure their survival (the principle of self-help). Realist theory asserts that the anarchic nature of the international system prioritizes security as the primary concern of states.

Posen (1993) applies the concept of the security dilemma from international relations theory to explain the emergence of ethnic conflicts in the aftermath of "imperial collapse" (example of Yugoslavia)[4]. He argues that the security dilemma, characterized by the condition of anarchy and the resulting uncertainty about other groups' intentions, intensifies in such situations. The disintegration of a state, when the central authorities weaken or disappear, leads to a state of anarchy similar to that in international relations. In such conditions, the issue of security for various groups (ethnic,

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[3] Since Barry Posen's 1993 article, the concept of the security dilemma has been extensively applied to ethnic conflict. Following this, a significant body of literature has examined this theory, applying it to various case studies, including conflicts in former Yugoslavia, Georgia, Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Moldova, and Malaysia. Building on Posen's work, several other scholars, such as Stuart Kaufman, Paul Roe, Erik Melander, William Rose, and Chaim Kaufmann, adopted the security dilemma framework to explain ethnic and intra-state conflicts (Kuppevelt, 2012).

[4] He employs case studies, such as the breakup of Yugoslavia and the relations between Russia and Ukraine, to illustrate how factors like the indistinguishability of offensive and defensive capabilities and perceived superiority of offensive strategies contribute to heightened security dilemmas and the likelihood of conflict (Posen, 1993).

religious, cultural) within the state is among the first to arise. He emphasizes that strategic calculations under uncertainty often drive groups to act pre-emptively in the name of survival (Posen, 1993).

In an environment where the central state apparatus has collapsed or is unable to protect all groups, rival factions (often along ethnic or political lines) begin to compete for survival. Even if a group's initial intentions are purely defensive, efforts to build military capacity or secure territory can be misinterpreted by others as aggressive moves. This misperception leads each side to escalate its defenses, setting off a cycle where defensive actions become offensive threats. The ambiguity of military capabilities and intentions in internal conflicts makes this dilemma particularly acute, with even minor increases in armament prompting a disproportionate response. In this environment, ethnic groups may escalate conflicts by amassing power against perceived threats, mirroring the dynamics of inter-state warfare (Posen, 1993; Ångström & Duyvesteyn, 2001, pp. 193-195).

According to Kaufman, the security dilemma generally does not affect ethnic groups within a state since full anarchy is absent, but it can emerge when these groups challenge government legitimacy and control over territory. In such cases, ethnic organizations may acquire quasi-sovereign attributes, prompting them to take defensive actions like forming paramilitary groups, which in turn heightens insecurity among rival groups. So, what begins as a perceptual security dilemma, rooted in misjudgments about threats, can quickly evolve into a structural one, where unfounded fears lead to self-help measures and escalating violence (Kaufman, 1996, 150-152).

Traditional international relations theory often emphasizes anarchy as the primary driver of conflict. David Lake (2003, pp. 84-85) challenges this notion by arguing that in domestic settings, conflicts emerge not merely because of a lack of central authority but because groups within a state actively choose to challenge or reject existing hierarchies. He states that the security dilemma can precede the state of anarchy, meaning it does not have to be a consequence of anarchy but rather a cause that can lead to the disintegration of the state. He argues that "anarchy is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for violence, nor is it a cause of the security dilemma" (Lake, 2003, 88).

In addition to the security dilemma, several other concepts from the perspective of international relations have been applied to internal or ethnic conflicts. These concepts are predominantly those that originated in realist international relations theory. International relations theories concepts such as power transition theory and bargaining theory, the balance of threat,

compellence, arms race, and issues related to information failures and the problem of credible commitment are applied to internal and ethnic conflicts, with the concept of deterrence being utilized in this context. We will take a closer look at several of these concepts, particularly information failures, credible commitment, and deterrence.

Information Failures. According to this view, conflict can erupt because parties do not — or cannot — share accurate information about their capabilities, intentions, or resolve. In an environment where information is both incomplete and prone to manipulation, each side may misjudge the other's strength. This leads to a situation where both expect to prevail if war occurs, thereby reducing the incentives to negotiate (Fearon, 1995; Lake, & Rothchild, 1996). Internal conflicts are often characterized by a breakdown in communication and reliable information channels. When central institutions fail, groups no longer have a trusted source for verifying each other's capabilities or intentions. In such an environment, parties may deliberately manipulate or withhold information to improve their bargaining position. This lack of transparency creates an atmosphere where both sides overestimate their chances in conflict and are more likely to miscalculate the risks of escalation. When every actor expects to win because of misrepresented strength, negotiations collapse, and violence becomes the default recourse (Ångström & Duyvesteyn, 2001, pp. 195-197).

Problems of Credible Commitment. This explanation centers on the difficulty that rival groups face in assuring one another of their future intentions. In the absence of a central authority capable of enforcing agreements, any promise of peace or restraint is viewed with deep suspicion. Groups may fear that even if they agree to a ceasefire or power-sharing arrangement, their opponents might renege once conditions change. The inability to credibly commit to non-aggressive behavior can push parties into initiating conflict as a way to avoid a future where they might be exploited or even face existential threats (Fearon, 1995; Lake & Rothchild, 1996). Fearon (1995) argues that ethnic violence can be understood as a form of preventive war, where the core issue is the inability of parties to make credible commitments in an anarchic environment. In both international and ethnic conflicts, even when a peaceful bargain is mutually preferable, the potential future gains for a rising power, or an ethnic majority in the case of ethnic conflict, make it rational for a declining power or minority to initiate conflict now. This occurs because, under anarchy, no institution exists to enforce commitments, leaving states or groups unable to credibly promise

not to exploit their future advantage (Ångström & Duyvesteyn, 2001, pp. 197-199).

Deterrence. According to Lupovici (2010, pp. 720-721), most research on deterrence in ethnic conflicts tends to build on traditional deterrence theories, primarily examining the possibility of achieving immediate, extended deterrence of interventionist actors. These studies generally concentrate on preventing further escalation of violence rather than stopping violence before it starts. The essence of this concept assumes that an external actor attempts to deter an attack on an ethnic group or minority within another state.[5] Deterrence can also operate at the sub-state level, involving the use of threats and limited force in confrontations between significant groups within a state, such as deterrence between two sides of ethnic conflict. As Kaufmann (2001, p. 458) explains, Ethnic separation does not guarantee peace, but it makes peace possible. When populations are divided, the incentives for cleansing and rescue vanish, making war no longer inevitable. However, any effort to seize additional territory would require a major conventional military offensive, shifting the conflict from one of mutual pre-emptive ethnic cleansing to a form of interstate war governed by deterrence dynamics. Although mutual deterrence doesn't entirely prevent violence, it lowers the likelihood of its outbreak and limits both its scope and intensity.

Explanations of Third-party Involvement in Ethnic Conflict

The growing significance of foreign intervention in ethnic conflicts has drawn increasing attention in international relations over the past decades. States engage in such interventions for instrumental or affective reasons. Instrumental motives are driven by political, economic, or military interests, such as securing economic benefits, military power, natural resources, regional stability, or national security. In contrast, affective motives stem from shared historical grievances, common identity, religion, ideological principles, or humanitarian concerns. Unlike instrumental motives, which weigh costs and benefits, affective motives emphasize identification with one of the parties based on cultural, linguistic, religious, or ethnic ties, as well as considerations of past injustice or shared principles (Ryan, 1988, pp.

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[5] For instance, based on empirical evidence, NATO policy during the conflict in Bosnia demonstrates that by meeting the classical requirements for successful deterrence, NATO effectively deterred the Serbs (Lupovici, 2010, p. 720).

171-172; Carment, 1993, p. 138; Carment & James, 2000; Carment, James & Taydas, 2009, pp. 69-71). Interventions in ethnic conflicts may be non-violent (e.g., protest, condemnation, pressure), violent, or mediatory. They can alter the internal balance of power, influence the demands of conflicting parties, or serve as guarantees for newly established agreements (Lake & Rothchild, 1996, pp. 31-36).

According to Paquin and Saideman (2017), liberalism helps explain why some states intervene in ethnic conflicts in other countries, primarily by considering their internal structural factors, which are where domestic politics shape decisions. The vulnerability thesis posits that states avoid intervention due to fears of domestic secessionist repercussions, a Cold War-era explanation challenged by empirical studies showing vulnerable states often intervene regardless. Ethnic ties emerge as a key post-Cold War motivator, with states supporting kin groups abroad, evidenced by diaspora influence (e.g., Yugoslav conflicts) and irredentism. Diasporas, particularly in democracies like the U.S., leverage political access to sway foreign policy, raising debates about national vs. ethnic interests. Regime type also matters: democracies rarely back secession in fellow democracies, reflecting democratic peace norms, while authoritarian states lack such restraints (Saideman, 2002; Paquin & Saideman, 2017).

Additionally, states can influence the outcomes of ethnic conflicts in another country through international governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as economic cooperation with the ethnic group's homeland. For liberals, international institutions and norms -- such as those related to human rights protection —- play a crucial role. Therefore, states can intervene through international institutions and organizations to address ethnic discrimination and potential repression in another country (Moore & Davis, 1998, pp. 102-103). International organizations influence ethnic conflict management through conditionality (membership incentives tied to policy reforms) and socialization (norm internalization). Liberal-institutionalists highlight regimes promoting territorial integrity, such as norms restricting self-determination to post-colonial contexts and forbidding interference in internal affairs, arguing these stabilize the international system by discouraging secessionist support. International norms are the central constraint that inhibits states from intervening in intrastate conflicts (Paquin & Saideman, 2017).

According to realists, states in the international system balance power against their rivals by either increasing their military capabilities or forming alliances. However, a state can forge alliances not only with other states but

also with ethnic minorities engaged in conflicts within competing states. If two states are rivals in the international system, one may exploit ethnic divisions within the other to weaken it, aiming for "relative gains". Saideman (2002, pp. 28-31) argues that, following the realist perspective, one can expect broader and stronger support for ethnic minorities not only in "weak" states but also in "strong" ones, with the goal of undermining them as competitors.

The "defensive positionalist" approach, grounded in defensive realism, emphasizes that powerful states prioritize maintaining regional stability to safeguard their global influence, often avoiding support for secessionist movements that could trigger systemic instability. Balancing and bandwagoning, also realist strategies, explain intervention choices in ethnic conflict: states may oppose a rival's supported faction (balancing) or align with allies (bandwagoning). A state is more inclined to support an opposition movement when a competing state has already backed the incumbent government, aiming to counter that rival's influence. Furthermore, states are more likely to align with and support the same side as their allies in an ethnic conflict, thereby reinforcing existing alliances and strategic partnerships (Paquin & Saideman, 2017).

Conclusion

The study of ethnic conflict within the field of International Relations (IR) has undergone a significant transformation, particularly after the end of the Cold War. Traditionally, IR scholarship focused primarily on interactions between states, neglecting internal conflicts driven by ethnic tensions. However, the surge in ethnic conflicts in the late 20th and early 21st centuries necessitated a re-evaluation of these traditional perspectives. The field has moved beyond its traditional state-centric approach to encompass a broader range of actors and factors, reflecting the complex realities of contemporary international relations. This has contributed to a growing recognition in International Relations that intrastate conflicts are not purely domestic matters but have substantial international dimensions.

International Relations theory examines ethnic or internal conflicts through two distinct approaches. The first employs established theoretical frameworks, concepts, and explanations to analyze the dynamics, causes, and outcomes of these conflicts. The second focuses on understanding why and how external states choose to intervene in such conflicts in other countries.

Realists have primarily focused on applying their concepts to ethnic conflicts themselves — particularly the security dilemma — rather than examining how states respond to such conflicts elsewhere. IR theorists contend that the same strategic calculations guiding state behavior are also applicable to non-state, identity-based conflicts. In an anarchic international system, where no central authority guarantees security, actors must rely on self-help strategies. This reasoning is evident in ethnic conflicts, where groups, much like states, seek power to ensure their survival.

Most arguments on foreign interventions in ethnic conflicts have been developed by scholars who adopt liberal-institutionalist or constructivist assumptions, emphasizing the role of institutions and international norms in shaping state behavior in these situations.

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WESTERN RBO VS CHINA'S TRUE MULTILATERALISM: IMPLICATIONS FOR SERBIA

Aleksandar MITIĆ

Institute of International Politics and Economics, Belgrade (Serbia)
aleksandar.mitic@diplomacy.bg.ac.rs, ORCID: 0000-0001-6918-7561

Abstract: As the world marks the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the United Nations' founding, a crucial global fault line sits in the rivalry between the Western "rules-based world order" (RBO) and its challengers in the East and Global South. During the Joseph Biden administration, the United States of America, the European Union, NATO, and the G7 called for the upholding of RBO as a resilience mechanism in preserving the Western-dominated post-Cold War order against what they consider "autocratic challengers". On the other hand, critics have labeled the RBO as an instrument of the political West, which has used "double standards" and "unique cases" to interpret international law according to its needs and thus effectively undermine the UN system. Therefore, China's President Xi Jinping contrasted the fallacies of the RBO with the concept of "true multilateralism", calling for a return to the principles of the UN Charter, "shared benefits", and "indivisible security". The article contrasts the two concepts. It looks at four RBO cases with implications for the Republic of Serbia and concludes that it has been detrimental to Serbian national interests. In such circumstances, the appeal of "true multilateralism" stands to gain in Serbia's foreign policy thinking.

Keywords: United Nations; rules-based world order; true multilateralism; United States of America; EU; China; Serbia

Global fault line

When China's Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi chaired a February 2025 United Nations Security Council high-level meeting on revamping multilateralism, he chose the ripe moment to do so: a month into Donald Trump's second U.S. presidency, at the beginning of US-Russia direct talks on restoring trust and working for a peace deal in Ukraine, and at the outset of the year marking the 80th anniversary of both the end of the Second World War and of the founding of the United Nations. Indeed, at a moment when global security architecture is trembling with anxiety. Beyond the impact of the conflicts with worldwide repercussions in Ukraine and the Middle East, the securitization discourse flooding Europe and the narrative of the Thucydides Trap regarding Sino-American relations, a crucial fault line sits in the rivalry between the Western "rules-based world order" (RBO) and its challengers in the East and Global South.

As the UN Charter turns 80 and the Helsinki Final Act marks its 50th anniversary, both documents remain dramatically weakened by the breaching performed during the apotheosis of the post-Cold War U.S. unipolar moment and its RBO legal coating. The UN and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe mirror a profound crisis of performance and trust in multilateralism.

On the other side, under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, the People's Republic of China has vastly expanded the scope and the normative capacities of its multilateral foreign policy to pursue both internal and external stability. Furthermore, it has contrasted the RBO's fallacies with the concept of "true multilateralism" outlined by Xi in 2022 and made it compatible with China's new global development, security, and civilization initiatives.

While it is too early to assess the impact of Donald Trump's second presidency on US foreign policy practice and multilateralism in general, it is important to note that the majority of the liberal democratic West — epitomized by the European Union and the US Democrats of Joseph Biden/Kamala Harris — remains committed to the concept of the RBO.

Given the particular importance of the EU-Serbia-China triangle for Serbia's reform, development, and foreign policy, it is vital to contrast the implications of the concepts of Western liberal RBO and Beijing's "true multilateralism".

RBO

During Joseph Biden's presidency (2021-2025), his US administration, the European Union, NATO, and the G7 as the "minilateralist" crown of the political West have consistently underlined in their official statements the need to uphold the "rules-based international order" as an overhauled catchphrase for the Western liberal international world order. Already at the beginning of Biden's presidency and ahead of Russia's 2022 military operation in Ukraine, Walt has argued that "a ready ability to use the phrase 'rules-based international order' seems to have become a job requirement for a top position in the US foreign-policy apparatus" (Walt 2021). Although the concept had been used before, including at times by the Trump administration, the inflation of its use coincided with the period following the humiliating U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021 and in the context of Biden's narrative accompanying the follow-up "strategic partnership" with Ukraine in Eastern Europe and the formation of AUKUS (Australia, UK, US) in the Asia-Pacific. Biden's RBO narrative framed the Russian Federation and China as "authoritarian/illiberal threats" to the RBO "democracies" — hence the "Summit for Democracy" in December 2021, which reflected "a prominent view within the Biden administration that assembling a global coalition of democracies can counter China's rise" (Pepinsky 2021). Russia's military operation in Ukraine two months later shifted the focus more intensively towards Moscow's threat to the RBO.

Thus, its supporters see the RBO as the "foundation of liberal internationalism and a resilience mechanism in preserving the post-Cold War order — epitomized by the US 'unipolar moment' — against non-Western 'autocratic transgression'" (Mitić 2024a). On the other hand, the challengers, primarily but not exclusively China and Russia, argue the RBO "incorporates a set of mechanisms that selectively lean on elements of international law, interpret them freely and creatively, and align them with the interests of the political West, using double standards and the principle of 'unique', sui generis cases to fit the needs, thus effectively undermining the UN system" (Mitić 2024a). Indeed, there are two distinct interpretations of the RBO. According to the first one, closer to its proponents, it is a concept based on principles of international law plus "the standards and recommendations of international standard-setting organisations and conferences and rules made by non-state actors" (Dugard 2023, 225). However, the second view, closer to RBO critics, view it as "the United States' alternative to international law, an order that encapsulates international law as interpreted by the United States to accord with its

national interests" (Dugard 2023, 225). Talmon considers that the term "rules-based order", in fact, "blurs the distinction between binding and non-binding rules, giving the impression that all States and international actors are subject to this order, irrespective of whether or not they have consented to these rules" (Talmon 2019). He points to the fact that while international law is "general and universal", the "rules-based order seems to allow for special rules in special-sui generis cases" (Talmon 2019).

True Multilateralism

In April 2021, Chinese President Xi Jinping outlined the concept of "true multilateralism" at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference, before further elaborating in September 2021 at the Sixth Eastern Economic Forum, the 13th BRICS Summit, the 21st meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Xi argued that the practice of "true multilateralism" opposes actions that "undermine the international order and cause confrontation and division by claiming to use so-called rules: in the world there is only one international system, i.e. the international system with the United Nations at its core (…) There is only one set of rules, i.e. the basic norms governing international relations underpinned by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter" (Xinhua 2021).

The timing of Xi's promotion of the concept coincided with the Biden administration's similar RBO effort and could be interpreted as China's answer. However, it would be flawed to judge the concept as simply reactive, particularly to the Biden administration, as it is a concept in line with the overall diplomatic thought of Xi Jinping, from the "community with a shared future for mankind" to the flagship Belt and Road Initiative. The concept is contrasted to "pseudo-multilateralism", used by a group of states to "protect their self-serving agendas, significantly diminishing the effectiveness of international multilateral institutions' governance" (China Institute of International Studies 2024, 3). The first feature of "pseudo-multilateralism" is its reliance on the RBO: "under the pretext of a 'rules-based international order', the authority of the United Nations has been compromised by the imposition of exclusive 'small-circle states' within the international community, disregarding fairness and justice" and imposing "small-circle rules" which "only safeguard the interests of the 'small circles' and even target and undermine the interests of others" (China Institute of International Studies 2024, 14). This practice involves "selectively adhering

to or dismissing the foundational norms of international relations, established by the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter" (China Institute of International Studies 2024, 15). Other features of "pseudo-multilateralism" include the promotion of "universal values" in neglect of civilizational diversity, a Cold War zero-sum mindset over "indivisible security", "small group collective action" featuring unilateral sanctions, ignoring multilateral commitments to global governance and applying "double standards in all areas of international relations", effectively "undermining the international system with the United Nations at its core" (China Institute of International Studies 2024, 15-17). In contrast, "true multilateralism" focuses on the principles of the UN Charter as a foundational guideline", on extensive consultation, joint contribution, shared benefits and adapting to changes, particularly the rise of the Global South, global development and preventive diplomacy (China Institute of International Studies 2024, 44-46). On the other side, a research group at the US Army War College argued that "true multilateralism" is part of China's grand strategy, which aims to "develop and shape a China-led alternative to the US-led rules-based international order by 2035 through a "Covert Hegemonic Ambition" (CHA) strategy (Flury et al. 2024, 3). The team argues that the PRC has not formally articulated it but that "this grand strategy highly likely centers on aligning global governance with 'Xiism,' a combination of China's core national interests and Chairman Xi's ideological orientation", which must adhere to Xi's vision of "community of common destiny" and using hybrid tactics of economic, political and legal warfare, favorable energy and tech standards creation, cyber warfare and information/cultural influence operations (Flury et al. 2024, 3). Such framing is in line with the critical narrative that Western think-tanks had employed against Xi's 2022 Global Security Initiative (GSI), one of the three initiatives (the two others being the 2021 Global Development Initiative and the 2023 Global Civilization Initiative) compatible with the BRI and "true multilateralism". According to this framing, the GSI presents an alternative to the Western-led security order. This frame argues that China is seeking to promote a "China-led alternative" (Freeman and Stephenson 2022); "challenging the U.S.-led liberal international world order" (Office of the Director of National Intelligence 2023); "a manifesto for an alternative system of international affairs to the current 'rules-based' order led by the United States and its partners in Europe and the Indo-Pacific" (Schuman, Fulton and Gering 2023); "a roadmap and ideological framework for China's ambition to re-shape the international order" (Legarda and Stec 2022); an attempt to "build support among countries in the global south for a narrative

that positions China as the logical successor to a U.S.-led multilateralism that Beijing insists is failing to keep the peace" (Kine 2022).

It was thus not surprising to see China's MFA Wang Yi Security Council address the UN SC high-level meeting themed "Practicing Multilateralism, Reforming and Improving Global Governance" in February 2025. At the meeting, Wang argued UN members "need, more than ever, to remind themselves of the founding mission of the UN, reinvigorate true multilateralism, and speed up the efforts to build a more just and equitable global governance system" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2025). He outlined four key proposals.

The first one is "upholding sovereign equality", meaning that members "must practice international rule of law, ensure the effective implementation of international law, and reject double standards and selective application", while "any unilateral sanction that circumvents Security Council authorization lacks legal basis, defies justification and contradicts common sense". The second one, "upholding fairness and justice", argued that international affairs "should no longer be monopolized by a small number of countries" and that reform is urged particularly in the light of the inclusion of the Global South. Third, in "upholding solidarity and coordination", UN members should "replace confrontation with coordination, prevent lose-lose through win-win cooperation, and break down small circles". Finally, fourth, by "upholding an action-oriented approach" and "in the face of protracted wars", UN agencies "should seek solutions rather than chant slogans" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2025).

Serbia's troubling RBO experience

For the Republic of Serbia and the Serb nation in general, the rivalry between the concepts of RBO and "true multilateralism" generates implications for key issues of territorial integrity, sovereignty, identity, political independence, security, and economy. We will delve into four key cases.

The first one is the case of the 1999 NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Conducted at the apotheosis of the U.S.-led unipolar order, it was also the peak of the RBO, as NATO countries — led by three Western UN Security Council members — decided to bomb Yugoslavia without the approval of UN SC members China and Russia. Indeed, despite clear warnings by Beijing and Moscow. In an important blow to UN multilateralism, NATO countries breached international law and ignited ire

and profound strategic changes in foreign policy assessments of China and the Russian Federation. In the aftermath, the two countries – humiliated at both the UN level and at the level of military action involving the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade — vowed to speed up the process of multi-polarization.

The second case is the EU-US masterminding of the "unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo" (UDI), again in breach of international law, the UN Charter, and Moscow's and Beijing's warnings. At the G8 Summit in June 2007 in Heilegendamm, Russian President Vladimir Putin had warned that the "Russian position is clear, based on the territorial integrity of states and UN Security Council Resolution 1244, under which Kosovo is an undeniable part of Serbia" (...) but, "if we come to the conclusion that in today's world the principle of the people's right to self-determination is more important than the principle of territorial integrity of states, then it must be applicable to all the regions in the world, and not only where our partners want it to apply (…) the principles of self-determination in that case must be applied also to nations of the former Yugoslavia, and to the nations living the post-Soviet space" (Mitić 2007a). This was a clear warning that Moscow would not allow an RBO-style "sui generis" case. Nevertheless, at the December 2007 European Council, EU leaders agreed to mastermind "Kosovo's UDI" based on a plan by Swedish foreign minister Carl Bildt (Mitić 2007b). The document, entitled "A European Strategy for Kosovo", admitted that "trying to settle the question of the status of Kosovo without being able to anchor this process in the UN Security Council will be a most challenging task both in terms of respect for international law and handling the different challenges on the ground in Kosovo, the wider Balkan region as well as elsewhere", but that the EU must develop an EU policy with "a semblance of respect for international law" (Mitić 2007b).

Beijing and Moscow never accepted the "sui generis" narrative and indeed viewed both the NATO 1999 aggression and the 2008 "Kosovo UDI" as cases of RBO arrogance and Western "rules-setting". However, with an increased use of memory politics in Beijing and Moscow regarding 1999 and 2008, particularly in the context of the conflict in Ukraine, RBO proponents have felt the urge to dismiss this narrative by pushing Serbia into "legitimizing 1999" and "legalizing 2008" (Mitić 2024b). Thus, in the aftermath of Russia's military operation in Ukraine, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz prepared a plan for the "normalization of relations" between Belgrade and the Priština authorities, under which Serbia is supposed to abandon its policy of preventing "Kosovo" from joining

international organizations and opposing "Kosovo statehood symbols", such as passports, diplomas, and vehicle registration plates (N1 2022). This plan was backed by an ultimatum from EU and US envoys in Belgrade on January 20, 2023, requesting that Serbia accept the process or face political and economic consequences (RTV 2023). It ultimately led to the so-called "Ohrid Agreement," which, if implemented, would preclude Serbia from completing talks with the EU without at least "de facto" recognizing "Kosovo" as a separate entity. Such a scenario would mark an important victory for the legitimization and legalization of violations committed by Western powers under the RBO umbrella in 1999 and 2008.

The third case involves the issue of Bosnia-Herzegovina and, more particularly, the pressure against the leadership of Republika Srpska. In yet another demonstration of the RBO, Western members of the UN Security Council nominated German opposition politician Christian Schmidt to the post of the "High Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina" without the approval of Russia and China in the UN Security Council. The refusal of Republika Srpska to accept such a "nomination", particularly in the light of Schmidt's attempts to strip the entity from its property in violation of the 1995 Dayton accords, led to an escalatory crisis, including a trial against the President of Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik and one of the most serious political-security crises in the Balkans since the 1990s. Again, under RBO rules, the Dayton Peace Accord has been subject since 1995 to interpretation in line with the "spirit", not the Accord's letter.

Finally, the fourth case involves the issue of unilateral, non-UN sanctions imposed by the US and the EU. These have included "Serbian specific" sanctions against the President of Republika Srpska Milorad Dodik, the Vice-Prime Minister of Serbia Aleksandar Vulin, and Serbia's Minister for International Economic Cooperation Nenad Popović. They also targeted Serb entities within broader international packages of restrictive measures, such as EU sanctions against Serbian companies suspected of "assisting" Russia in the conflict in Ukraine or US sanctions targeting the Petroleum Industry of Serbia (NIS), which has a majority Russian ownership.

On the other hand, China's "true multilateralism" has conformed to Serbia's key national interests to a large extent. This is perhaps best understood through the example of the Global Security Initiative proposed by Xi at the 2022 Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference and operationalized in February 2023 by two concept papers, including one on the political settlement of the conflict in Ukraine. The key elements of these documents imply respect for the territorial integrity of all states —- without

double standards —- and opposition to the expansion of alliances and to unilateral non-UN sanctions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2023). Such principles address the disrespect of Serbia's territorial integrity by the majority of the political West regarding Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia's proclaimed military neutrality, and Serbian experiences with non-UN sanctions.

Conclusion

Political changes in the US following Donald Trump's re-election, Russian military successes in Ukraine, increasing tensions between sovereignist and liberal-democratic parties across the European Union, the failure of the European Commission's agenda of "geopolitical" empowerment, the refusal of three-quarters of the globe to align with Western sanctions against Russia and overall multi-polarization have weakened the appeal of the RBO. In the context of the aforementioned cases, such development is certainly not detrimental to Serbian interests.

Serbia has pursued an Eastward-looking hedging strategy despite being an EU candidate country surrounded by NATO members. In such circumstances, there have been attempts by Western powers, in particular proponents of the RBO, to pressure Belgrade to "de-hedge" voluntarily or through "wedging strategies" of coercion or "selective accommodation" (Mitić 2024a; Crawford 2021). Nevertheless, Serbia's position has remained firm in opposing double standards and sticking to the key principles of the UN Charter, in addition to preserving military neutrality and opposing non-UN sanctions.

Under such circumstances, the appeal of "true multilateralism" stands to gain in Serbia's foreign policy thinking despite limitations due to the country's specific geographic and geopolitical environment, internal political divisions, and the unpredictability of future European and global security arrangements.

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INTERNATIONAL COLD CONFLICTS: THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMY IN ARCTIC GEOPOLITICAL RIVALRIES

Guler KALAY

Department of Political Science and International Relations at Uskudar University, Istanbul (Turkey)
guler.kalay@uskudar.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-9235-9189

Abstract: The Arctic is emerging as a site of contemporary international conflict, characterized by its unique geopolitical dynamics, ecological environment, and vast untapped resources. This study focuses on the international power competition in the Arctic as a central theme in the discourse of international political economy. It aims to provide an in-depth analysis of how the evolving geopolitical agenda, international political economy, and particularly the competition for resources and geopolitical interests affect the interactions between world powers in this region.

Keywords: international political economy, Arctic, international conflict.

The Arctic is rich in critical natural resources, including oil, natural gas, minerals, and freshwater reserves, making it a preferred area for resource competition. According to estimates from various geological surveys, the continental plateau of the Arctic holds about 22% of the world's unexplored reserves of oil and natural gas, which is especially attractive for countries eager for energy. As traditional fossil fuel sources have become depleted or more expensive to extract, incentives for world powers to reduce grievances and guarantee access to polar resources have intensified. National interests are fueled by the fact that there is still an economic gain going on amid the increase in energy demand, leading to a scenario in which the acquisition of resources is not only an economic necessity but also a strategic imperative.

Geopolitical interests further complicate the situation, while nations live in a region that has historically been perceived as belonging to a single sovereign state. The Arctic Council, including eight Arctic Countries —-

Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States —- was established as a platform for cooperation and dialogue in the management of Arctic issues. However, competing territorial claims, especially on the extended continental plateau, have led to a complex web of legal and diplomatic disputes. For example, Russia's assertive military posture and expanded drilling operations underscore a strategy aimed at consolidating its presence in the Arctic, and some researchers affirm that this could destabilize the frameworks of cooperation established between the Arctic States. This logic is summarized in the idea that polar disputes are not just about territorial affirmations but also reflect deeper geopolitical ambitions that highlight the importance of influence on critical sea lanes and resource areas.

In addition, the Arctic serves as a theater for a broader power dynamic among global actors beyond its immediate borders. The implosion of China as a world mastodon brings an additional layer of complexity; His declared interest in the Arctic as almost a polar state "has raised concerns about sovereignty and security among the Arctic countries". Aiming to improve connectivity and access to resources, China's Belt and Road initiative includes several polar routes, highlighting the intersection of economic ambitions and geopolitical strategy. Bottom line: Towards a key node in the global landscape, where economic factors are aligned with traditional notions of state competition and power projection.

In sum, the interaction of competition from resources and geopolitical interests in the Arctic not only reflects the urgent reality of the international political economy but also signals the emergence of new forms of confrontation between world powers. As states sail through this changing ground, its implications for regional stability and international relations are profound and require continued analysis and commitment among the international community. The challenges are high because the future of the Arctic will likely be shaped by a confluence of environmental change, strategic maneuvering, and economic aspirations among these competing interests. Global warming has accelerated the fusion of polar ice, while previously inaccessible areas have unleashed significant reserves of oil, natural gas, minerals, and fresh water. This new accessibility has intensified competition between global powers, especially among members of the Arctic Council —- namely Canada, Denmark (via Greenland), Iceland, Norway, Russia, and the United States —- as well as non-Arctic states such as China and the European Union.

The strategic importance of the North Sea and the North-West Passage elevated the Arctic to a critical area for economic and military considerations. Russia, which has the longest Arctic coast and important military facilities in the region, has decided to consolidate its claims and strengthen its presence. This includes the restoration of the bases of the Soviet era, the expansion of the wick broker, and the promotion of polar development projects —- shareholders perceived by other world powers as aggressive sovereign endorsements. On the other hand, the United States has underlined the need to protect freedom of navigation, taking into account the increase in naval operations to offset Russian influence.

China's interest in the Arctic is multifaceted, encompassing the goals of resource extraction and participation in regional governance, and it has been established as a key player in the Arctic's shipping routes. The Chinese government has presented itself as an "almost polar state" and has put forward the Belt and Road initiative as a vital investment strategy that includes the development of infrastructure and trade routes connecting China to the Arctic States. This affirmation of influence is recognized both as a challenge to the current geopolitical status quo and as a lever for resource diplomacy, catalysis of the fears of traditional Arctic powers, and a stimulus to reassess policies related to sovereignty and resource management.

The Arctic Governance Framework is shaped by International Law, especially the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which delimits maritime borders and sovereign rights. Tensions arise in the interpretation of these legal frameworks, as states claim that territorial claims arise in an environment where environmental changes are rapidly altering navigation and resource availability. Disagreements, such as the current affirmations on the Lomonosov Hill, underscore the inherent complexities of Arctic Geopolitics, where scientific confirmations of the extension of the continental plateau result in direct claims of sovereignty and economic rights.

In addition, the indigenous communities of the Arctic region, who maintain traditional lifestyles and are often dependent on land and sea resources, are increasingly involved in dialogue about the future of the Arctic environment. Their perspectives bring vital thinking to the discourse of sustainability and the need for inclusive governance that balances exploitation with ecological protection. As world powers converge in the Arctic, the intersection of indigenous rights, economic development, and environmental management further complicates the geopolitical landscape, which requires cooperative governance mechanisms.

The impact of international political economy factors such as increasing resources, competition, and divergent geopolitical interests continues to shape the governance architecture of the Arctic. This interaction not only leads to bilateral and multilateral engagement between states but also encourages conflicts that have the potential to escalate into wider conflicts as global powers arrive for strategic dominance in this increasingly important region. The emerging story of the Arctic illustrates the complex balance between cooperation and competition, highlighting the urgent need for complete political responses that deal with both immediate and long-term impacts on land and resources. As climate change continues to exacerbate the fusion of polar ice caps, previously inaccessible natural resources, including oil and gas reserves, minerals, and strategic shipping routes, have reached the forefront of global strategic interests. This chapter considers the factors of fundamental international political economy that are reshaping relations between Arctic states and non-Arctic powers, leading to rising tensions and potential conflicts.

At the heart of the competition in the Arctic are 90 billion barrels of undiscovered oil, 1.669 billion cubic feet of natural gas, and vast deposits of minerals located beneath the Arctic Seafloor. These resources attracted the attention of many states, including Russia, the United States, Canada, Norway, and Denmark, which expanded their territorial and military claims in the region. Russia's aggressive stance, demonstrated by its renewed emphasis on military infrastructure and the creation of polar military brigades, reflects not only its historical ambitions in the region but also its need to secure energy resources in order to advance its economy and maintain its geopolitical position (Kramer, 2016). Such actions provoke reactions from other polar countries, leading to a cycle of militarization and countermeasures that increase tensions.

Geopolitical interests also extend beyond the immediate polar players; The Non-Arctic States, especially China, have tried to exert influence in the region. China has designed its presence as an opportunity to explore the potential of the "Polar Silk Road", which is an integral part of the Belt and Road (BRI) initiative. China's assertive approach, associated with significant investments in the Arctic's navigation and infrastructure, has led to concerns about the emergence of a new type of resource-centered imperialism among the Arctic States. The Arctic Council, an intergovernmental forum for promoting cooperation among Arctic States, has generally been limited to overcoming these challenges because it acts on the principle of consensus and does not have binding authority (Borgerson, 2013). The mix of non-

Arctic interests complicates regional dynamics, leading to potential conflicts over territorial waters, which are subject to varying interpretations of international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

In addition, the escalation of geopolitical interests is linked to broader calculations about climate change and environmental degradation. The region is experiencing rapid ecological transformations in traditional fishing and hunting grounds, raising global concerns about environmental sustainability and indigenous rights. External entities engaged in the extraction of resources often ignore the socio-economic and environmental impacts on the local population. The conflict between economic imperatives and indigenous rights adds another layer of complexity and potential conflict in the Arctic (Staples & Blue, 2019).

The intersection of competition from national security sources and causes manifests itself in various forms in Arctic geopolitics, territorial disputes indicated by the claims of the continental shelves of the Arctic, increased naval activity, and military exercises. The United States and Canada have participated in a number of joint military exercises aimed at demonstrating their commitment to the defense of the Arctic. Russia's recent actions, especially the creation of new military bases and the increase in the capacity of the icebreaker, strongly demonstrate its intention to secure the polar borders (Журавель, 2024). Such a military posture feeds into the framework of the security dilemma in which the steps taken by a state to strengthen its security inadvertently threaten others.

In summary, the influence of factors of international political economy, especially competition for resources and geopolitical interests, significantly worsens the existing tensions and potential conflicts in the Arctic region. As world powers navigate through these complex dynamics, the interplay between national interests, the availability of resources, and environmental considerations will continue to shape the Arctic geopolitical landscape. Initially, the Arctic was largely perceived as an inhospitable environment, dominated by its harsh climate and remote geography, leading to limited international interest. However, the emergence of climate change has dramatically altered this perception, opening up new opportunities for resource extraction and new shipping routes, thereby reshaping international political dynamics in the region (Heininen, 2018).

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BULGARIAN DIPLOMATIC ANALYSES OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN COLD WAR IN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE SOVIET NUCLEAR LEGACY

Darina GRIGOROVA

Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Sofia (Bulgaria)
darina.grigorova@uni-sofia.bg, ORCID: 0000-0002-7351-493X

Abstract: The article examines Bulgarian diplomatic cables and analyses Russian-Ukrainian disputes over the Soviet legacy with respect to nuclear weaponry from 1991 to 1996. Unpublished diplomatic archival documents from the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kyiv, Moscow, and Sofia and U.S. documents from the National Security Archive of the USA have been used. Bulgaria's official position is demonstrated, and a diplomatic analysis undertaken of the Russian-American 'pact' that obstructed Ukrainian ambitions to turn a post-Soviet Ukraine into a nuclear state.

Keywords: strategic stability, Cold War, NPT, START-1, Russia, USA, Ukraine, Bulgarian diplomacy.

Russian-Ukrainian relations, after the collapse of the USSR, are described by Bulgarian diplomatic reports as a 'cold war'(AMFAj, 1993, 43), tracing the development of two parallel trends: the decentralizing impact of (the Union's) disintegration, and of (gradual) rapprochement (AMFAi, 1993, 2) . The key elements in the Russian-Ukrainian 'cold war' of the 1990s were the disputes over the Soviet nuclear legacy and the fate of nuclear weapons in Ukraine (AMFAb, 1994, 64). For details on Bulgarian interests through the lens of post-1991 Ukrainian-Russian relations, see (Stoimenov, 2025, 2024, 2023).

The notion of a 'cold war' always implies the presence of an ideological clash. Such was also present in Russian-Ukrainian relations after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The ideological framework within which diplomatic

reports analyze Russian-Ukrainian relations in the 1990s is in the rubric of the "transition from totalitarianism to democracy" (AMFAi, 1993, 3), contrasting post-Soviet images of Ukraine and Russia with the European-Euro-Asian/ Eurasian dichotomy.

Soviet nuclear legacy between Ukraine and Russia

The Soviet nuclear weapons in Kiev became, at Ukraine's instigation, a key object of disputes over the Soviet legacy, in which Russia and the U.S. made no small effort to bring Ukraine back into the group of nuclear-free states as the price of sovereignty. Ukraine's nuclear-free status is enshrined in the Declaration of State Sovereignty of 16 July 1990: 'The Ukrainian SSR solemnly proclaims its intention to become, in the future, a permanently neutral state that does not participate in military blocs and adheres to three nuclear-free principles: to accept, to produce and to purchase no nuclear weapons.' (DSSU, 1990, 449).

Of the four Soviet nuclear republics, Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Ukraine pledged to hand over their nuclear capabilities to Russia. The Lisbon Protocol (23rd May 1992), appended to the START-1 Treaty[1] ('Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty'), obliged Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine 'to accede, as soon as possible, to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons - NPT, of 1st July 1968, as non-nuclear-weapon States Parties' (LP, 2002, 115).

In his recollections of the Lisbon Protocol negotiations, Ukrainian Foreign Minister A. M. Zlenko described their last meeting: 'US Secretary of State James Baker began to lose control ... it even seemed to me that, in his eyes, I had become the embodiment of the world's evil, which cynically opposed the divine authority of James Baker III himself.' (Kondratyuk, 2010, 372).

In his letter to George W. Bush (7th May 1992), the Ukrainian President reaffirmed Ukraine's nuclear-free status and the 'elimination of all nuclear weapons, including strategic ones', referring to both the Declaration on State Sovereignty and the Resolution of the Rada on Ukraine's Non-Nuclear Status (24th October 1991) (TPUSA, 2002, 115-116).

Russia, in Foreign Minister Kozyrev's written statement on the day of the signing of the Lisbon Protocol, hints 'in a very diplomatic form'

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[1] START-1, Strategic Offensive Arms Reduction Treaty between the USSR and the United States (31 July 1991)

(Shiptenko, 2019, 158) that the Russian side will not exchange the ratification instruments until the three 'non-nuclear-weapon States Parties' sign the NPT (WSRS, 2002, 117-118).

For Russia, the NPT was 'the most important element in the foundation of the global nuclear arms control system' (Arbatov, 2021, 21). The United States supported Russia's hardline policy on the nuclear status of the former Soviet republics because START-1 depended on ratification of the NPT, i.e., it put at risk the strategic stability that was the top priority of Russian-U.S. relations. Diplomatic analyses emphasize, not coincidentally, that 'above all, the United States is directly involved in influencing and pushing Ukraine to accept the status of a non-nuclear state' (AMFAe, 1993, 9), precisely for the sake of strategic stability that could not be jeopardized by Ukrainian instability.

The concept of strategic stability took shape in the Soviet-American START-1 treaty 'and was enshrined as a legal norm in a joint statement by Russia and the United States in June 1990. The term means 'a strategic relationship that removes the incentive to launch a nuclear first strike.' (Arbatov, 2021, 26).

Ukraine's nuclear status was also of particular interest in Bulgarian diplomatic reports, which observed Ukrainian inconsistency: 'There is an increasingly noticeable retreat from the agreements and promises made by Ukraine on the issue of nuclear weapons in its territory.' (AMFAi, 1993, 9).

The diplomatic analysis describes the volatility of Ukrainian politics and critical delay in signing the NPT as an 'unprecedented situation' in which 'for the first time Ukraine has a real opportunity to dictate its own "rules of the game" to the West.'(AMFAl, 1994, 15).

Whether this was a 'real possibility' is debatable; rather, Ukraine was trying to assert itself as a nuclear factor but did not have the potential to do so, especially against the Russian-US tandem (mutual desire) for strategic stability.

Kyiv began the 'nuclear power' game by violating the Minsk Agreement (30th December 1991), which placed nuclear weapons on Ukrainian territory under the control of the unified command of CIS Strategic Forces, planned to withdraw Ukraine's tactical nuclear weapons by 1st July 1992, and its strategic weapons by the end of 1994. Ukraine surrendered tactical materiel but refused to divest itself of strategic nuclear weapons and, in June 1992, declared itself the owner of 1,800 strategic nuclear warheads, making it the world's third strongest nuclear power with 'a nuclear arsenal exceeding that of Britain, France, and China combined.' (Orlov, Timerbaev, Khlopkov, 2001,

25). Ukraine's thesis was that it 'has not declared, but only stated its intention to be a non-nuclear state' (AMFAk, 1993, 2).

A diplomatic report analyzed Ukrainian political behaviour, 'as posturing', at the ease with which Ukraine obtained its own army. By unilateral action at the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992, Kyiv separated the 700,000-strong army stationed on its territory from the CIS troops. On 20 January 1992 (this force) swore an oath before the yellow and blue (Ukrainian) flag. With only one decision, which met no opposition, Ukraine acquired the second-largest army in Europe (AMFAm, 1994, 35-36).

Ukraine took the same approach with regard to nuclear weapons, again trying, unilaterally, to take third place in the hierarchy of nuclear powers. The Ukrainian situation, however, appeared 'paradoxical', according to diplomatic analyses, because the world's third nuclear power could not obtain 'any external guarantees for its national security' (AMFAb, 1994, 56).

Neither Russia, the U.S., nor even a single European country supported Ukraine in its nuclear ambitions. Even Canada, Ukraine's traditional partner, through Deputy Foreign Minister David Wright, called Ukraine a "black hole of international relations" (AMFAm, 1994, 39).

Kazakhstan, for its part, had fleetingly shown ambition to keep its nuclear weapons despite the agreements. Nursultan Nazarbayev told Russian journalists, 'As far as nuclear weapons are concerned, we signed a document in Almaty according to which Ukraine and Belarus became non-nuclear, and Russia and Kazakhstan retained their nuclear weapons. Article Nine of the NPT states that a nuclear-weapon state is one which has manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon and participated in the development and production of its elements before 1967. Kazakhstan cannot then be considered a non-nuclear weapon state' (Gagua, 1992, 5). While on 6th May 1992 Nazarbayev was ready to ratify the NPT as a nuclear-weapon state, on 19th May, before signing the Lisbon Protocol, he declared in his letter to George W. Bush that he 'guarantees the implementation of the elimination of all types of nuclear weapons, including strategic offensive weapons on its territory' (TPUSA, 2002, 116).

Ukraine was more assertive in its nuclear ambition. Diplomatic sources highlight how Russia was losing administrative control over Ukrainian nuclear weapons. Operational control, with radio codes, remained in Russian hands, but diplomatic developments assumed that the codes for Soviet-built SS-24 missiles produced at Yuzhmash near Dnepropetrovsk 'will pose no difficulty for specialists at the plant.' The diplomatic report quotes Ukrainian MP Boris Oleynik's assurance, 'We can get to the control

codes easily, in 3 days. This is a political decision for which there are no technical obstacles' (AMFAm, 1994, 36). Experts disputed the possibility of Ukrainian 'positive operational control' over nuclear weapons and assumed the existence of 'negative' operational control, i.e., the prevention of missile launches from Ukrainian territory. 'The code decoders ("electronic padlocks") of the codes are produced on the territory of Ukraine - in Kharkov. The command post of the 46th Missile Army...is in Vinnitsa. The Ukrainian military can calculate the trajectory of the missile and program it (...) The lack of satellite information...reduces positive operational control to a minimum, if not to zero.' (Orlov, Timerbaev, Khlopkov, 2001, 26).

Diplomatic briefings note polarization of the Ukrainian public, especially nationalists, 'firm supporters of the thesis that Ukraine should possess nuclear weapons', citing a poll that found 'one in three Ukrainian citizens supports this notion'. In addition to nationalists, diplomats observed interest in Ukraine's becoming a nuclear state among representatives of the military-industrial complex, 'keenly interested in its survival' (AMFAk, 1993, 1).

The diplomatic analysis highlights that the leading reason for Ukraine's non-compliance with the agreements is the 'obtaining of maximum economic benefit' (AMFAi, 1993, 10). If, at the beginning of 1993, Ukraine had demanded $1.5 billion in compensation for giving up its nuclear weapons, by the spring, that amount was already $2.8 billion. The U.S. responded, and in April, Kyiv was visited by U.S. congressmen, who promised increased financial aid to Ukraine. Leonid Kravchuk directly stated, 'We do not consider nuclear weapons as weapons, but as material wealth, and we want compensation for them' (AMFAm, 1994, 36-38).

Ukraine's main argument for keeping nuclear weapons was the lack of unquestionable political guarantees for Ukrainian security from the West. In its foreign policy concept ('On the Basic Directions in Foreign Policy', 2nd July 1993), Ukraine declared, on the one hand, that it 'reaffirms its intention to become a non-nuclear state', that it would fight for the proclamation of the Black Sea as a 'nuclear-weapon-free zone of peace', while, also stating that it 'makes the limitation and destruction of nuclear weapons deployed on its territory conditional on the provision of credible guarantees for its national security by the nuclear-weapon states and international community' (OBPUFP, 1993, 379).

The counter-arguments of the proponents of a nuclear-free Ukraine boiled down to the questions, 'What is the guarantee that, in the future, a strike will not be launched against the nuclear research and production base like that against Iraq? Where will nuclear weapons be tested if Kazakhstan

refuses to do so on its territory?'. The 'deterrence' thesis was refuted, in diplomatic analysis, by the fact that despite the presence in Ukraine of 30 TU-95-MS and TU-169 strategic bombers, their nuclear warheads 'do not pose a threat to NATO forces' (AMFAk, 1993, 2).

Ukraine's First Military Doctrine (19th October 1993) averred 'striving for a non-nuclear and non-bloc status' (Kuzmuk, 2013, 20-30). Diplomatic reports, however, observed the 'immediate link' between the Ukrainian nuclear weapons issue and evolving military doctrine, noting, as a contributory factor in Ukraine's quest for nuclear emancipation, the Soviet legacy of a 'highly militarized western frontier... Ukraine's conventional armaments are superior to Romania - three times, Hungary – 4 times, 7 times that of Poland and Belarus - 2,5 times, Moldova - 20 times' (AMFAk, 1993, 5) where most of Ukraine's military potential was concentrated. Despite claims of nuclear-free status in its military doctrine, Ukraine incorporated the missile and air forces into its military forces as early as 1992, after which it created a new staff structure within the Ministry of Defense, the Troop Administration Center for Strategic Nuclear Forces, which was followed by an official protest by Russia (AMFAh, 1993, 20).

The diplomatic analysis explained the Ukrainian policy by the presence, in the north of Ukraine, of 'a heavily armed neighbour that can use any excuse, including militarily, to protect the Russian-speaking population living in Ukraine'. The diplomatic forecast was that 'the prospect of a nuclear Ukraine is unreal', but did not rule out 'in the more distant future, under the right conditions, it may seek its place as a nuclear power', with the additional certainty of this Ukrainian ambition establishing the existence of a serious scientific, technical and manufacturing potential (AMFAk, 1993, 5).

The Ukrainian nuclear ambition manifested itself with even greater force on 18th November 1993, when the Rada proclaimed 'State ownership' of nuclear weapons on Ukrainian territory, with plans to eliminate only 36% of nuclear munitions and to keep 42% of nuclear warheads in the Ukrainian missile and nuclear arsenal. Russia did not recognize the Rada's decision and responded with a special statement on the violation of the Lisbon Protocol, obliging Ukraine to join the NPT as a non-nuclear state (AMFAf, 1993, 64). The Russian official position, supported by the U.S., was that 'only the Russian Federation, of the successor states of the USSR, is a state with nuclear status' (AMFAg, 1993, 59). An American telegram from the Embassy in Kyiv informed Washington of a meeting of the American Ambassador with Foreign Minister Zlenko and the head of the Rada's Foreign Policy Committee, Pavlychko. The meeting took place on 20th November 1993 on

the occasion of clarifying Rada's position on 18th November. The Ukrainian politicians assured the U.S. Ambassador that 'President Kravchuk and the Government have the right to proceed immediately to the deactivation/dismantlement of nuclear weapons pending fulfillment of the three conditions of the Rada'. Zlenko claimed that Kravchuk was waiting for the election of a new Rada and would immediately submit the Lisbon Protocol to the new Rada 'for full ratification.' After being left alone with the American ambassador, Zlenko, 'on Kravchuk's orders' and 'in strict confidence', reported that Ukraine had deactivated one regiment of SS-24 missiles 'on the eve of the Rada vote', and that the Ukrainian president 'is ready to deactivate all nuclear weapons if he can find common ground' with the U.S. administration 'on economic aid'. By 'aid', he specified that he did not mean 'only in money, but also participation in solving Ukraine's economic problems' (NSAa, 1993, 1).

Ukrainian politicians were trying to justify to the U.S. ambassador the Rada's behaviour. Pavlychko blamed Russia: 'We have a very 'good' neighbour. Russia's military doctrine is a very dangerous doctrine. I am sure that this is what prevented our Rada from proceeding with the NPT.' Zlenko, along with Russia, 'places the main blame on the West, which ignores or does not help Ukraine'. MPs, he said, have long been 'angry at the West's indifference to Ukraine and its interests, and their decision on Lisbon/NPT is a slap in the face to foreigners' (NSAa, 1993, 3).

The Russian president, in personal correspondence to Clinton, also addressed the Americans about Ukrainian intransigence on the nuclear issue. In a letter dated December 1st, 1994, Yeltsin said, 'Our recent contacts with Kyiv raise new concerns'. The problem was the wording that would be used when Ukraine was to join the NPT. Yeltsin insisted that it be 'stated unequivocally' that Ukraine was joining the Treaty as a non-nuclear state. Yeltsin warned Clinton that recognizing Ukraine, 'if only for a time', as the 'sixth nuclear state' would derail the planned 1995 Budapest extension of the NPT. Yeltsin suggested to Clinton 'to immediately send a clear signal to Leonid Kuchma that he must choose the only reasonable option' (NSAb, 1994, 1-2).

The diplomatic analytical paper used two 'formulae' to illustrate Ukrainian-US relations on the nuclear issue. The American formula was 'reforms first, money later', while the Ukrainian was 'money first, nuclear weapons later'. The American formula prevailed. 'The U.S. is closely tying its pledges of more than $700 million in aid … and demonstrating its

intransigence. Of the $350 million earmarked for 1994, by the end of August, only $6 million had been disbursed' (AMFAb, 1994, 72).

Bulgaria's position on the Ukrainian decision of 18th November 1993, shared at a meeting with Georgiy Muradov, the Chargé d'Affaires of the Russian Embassy, was that 'Bulgaria is, in principle, against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and against the expansion of the club of nuclear states'. For their part, Bulgarian diplomats were interested in 'the recent increase in accusations of a revival of Russia's imperial ambitions towards the Near Abroad'[2] (AMFAa, 1993, 56-60).

The Russian position was also presented to Bulgaria by Sergey Lavrov, Deputy Foreign Minister, at a meeting with Valentin Gatsinski, (Bulgarian) First Deputy Foreign Minister. According to Sergey Lavrov, Ukrainian act of 18th November 1993 'gave birth to a new nuclear state', which not only affected Russian-Ukrainian relations but 'undermines the foundations of international security'. Lavrov added, 'If one adds to this fact Ukraine's initiative in creating a Security Zone in Europe, without Russia, one will see that the danger is not only environmental'. (AMFAc, 1993, 67).

Conclusion

Ukraine followed its 'unrealistic expectation' of becoming a regional leader in all major geopolitical vectors: the Central-Eastern European, Black-Sea Baltic, and the Danube-South-Eastern European.

Ukraine's strategic geopolitical priority of establishing itself as an 'influential world state' is being undermined by a paradoxical situation. The possession of huge Ukrainian potential in all areas: territory, economy, demography (AMFAd, 1995, 2-3; AMFAn, 1996, 2-3), highly qualified scientific personnel, military scale (a powerful army of the Western military group of the USSR), and the presence of nuclear weapons (the third most powerful nuclear power after Russia and the U.S.), to wit all this Soviet legacy, proves insufficient when it is a buffer between the East (Russia and CIS) and the West (Europe, the U.S. and NATO).

Bulgarian diplomatic analyses from 1991-1996 paid special attention to Ukrainian policy on nuclear weapons, which was hardly predictable, and stressed the existence of excessive foreign policy ambitions on the part of Ukraine after the collapse of the USSR. Some Bulgarian analyses even warn

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[2] The 'Near Abroad' is a term used in Russia for the post-Soviet republics.

that Ukraine is emerging as 'the most dangerous place for European security' (AMFAm, 1994, 39), when in fact there is no indication of such a scenario emerging and developing.

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U. S. NUCLEAR POSTURE AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 11TH ATTACKS: THE DISSOLUTION OF THE ANTI-BALLISTIC MISSILE TREATY AND ITS STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

Erin ROWLAND CARLIN

Institute for National Security and Military Studies,
Austin Peay State University, Clarksville (USA)
carline@apsu.edu

Abstract: In late 2001, the United States announced plans to withdraw from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in order to establish a missile defense network to help shield the country against further attacks from rogue states or non-state actors after the September 11, 2001 Attacks on the US by Al Qaeda. Up until that point, the ABM Treaty had served as a cornerstone for nuclear deterrence for thirty years, with that deterrence centered around the concept of mutual vulnerability, or 'mutually assured destruction,' in a nuclear war between two or more nuclear powers. Therefore, the US's departure from the treaty created massive changes the nuclear security paradigm for the international community. Today, cascading effects from that decision continue to impact arms control regimes and strategic stability, creating questions for many over how nuclear deterrence can be guided back on track with the new complexities and strategic theory considerations treaty negotiations would require. This analysis traces the history and evolution of nuclear arms controls from the early Cold War period through the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 Attacks on the US, noting changes to U.S. security concerns and how terrorist threats and fears of rogue states with nuclear capabilities drove the U.S. to pursue the development of new missile defense systems previously prohibited by the ABM Treaty. At the same time the U.S. sought to improve its nuclear defensive capabilities, Russian leadership also offered multiple plans for joint missile defense networks that would have integrated Russian defense capabilities with those of NATO and the United States. I note how Russia's proposals ultimately failed because of command

structure disagreements, concerns regarding the sharing of sensitive technical information, and lingering wariness from the U.S. and its European NATO partners. I also note how China's apprehension over U.S. missile defense plans has influenced its own military modernization. Overall, this paper demonstrates how the U.S.'s 2001 departure from the ABM Treaty for justifiable reasons has, nevertheless, created seismic shifts to the international security system, complicated relationships between nuclear power states, and prompted a new era of competition for defensive dominance. This paper ends by mentioning how new technologies have made multipolar strategic calculus even more complex and therefore, the various complexities of this new security era underscore the importance of establishing new treaties and weapons limitations to avoid a return to perilous nuclear brinkmanship.

Keywords: nuclear, security, United States, Russia, missile defense.

On May 26, 1972, U.S. President Richard Nixon and General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid Brezhnev signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty at a summit in Moscow (Godsberg, n.d.). This treaty would establish a nuclear deterrence and arms control agreement that would serve as a cornerstone of global strategic stability for nearly 30 years. However, in 2001, Al Qaeda's terrorist attack on the United States would rewrite this strategic calculus of international security and change views of the global threat landscape for the United States and Russia, as well as all other countries in the international system. This paper argues that the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty fundamentally altered the nuclear security paradigm, creating cascading effects that continue to reshape global strategic stability and arms control regimes today. To demonstrate this, I begin by providing historical information on nuclear disarmament treaties between the United States and the Soviet Union, later Russia, and then shift to an explanation of why the United States chose to depart from the ABM Treaty in 2001 in order to develop a more widespread nuclear deterrence system. I then analyze the ramifications for the global environment after this departure and how that change precipitated adaptations in the international strategic landscape, especially when it comes to nuclear arms and deterrence.

The Cold War era

Beginning in 1945, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) entered into a Cold War period characterized by a nuclear arms race between the two major powers in a bipolar international system. In order to achieve power preponderance over the adversary, each sought

to outpace the other in both the number of nuclear weapons they possessed and the energy yield, reach, speed, precision, and defense evasion capabilities of those weapons. This arms race threatened to bankrupt the Soviet Union, and both nations began to realize that with the development of second-strike capabilities, a nuclear war between the two states would lead to mutually assured destruction (MAD) (Jervis, 2002). In other words, if one country launched a first-strike against the other, the target country had advanced notice capabilities that would provide it with enough time to launch second strike capabilities. These second-strike options would largely annihilate the adversary before the target country succumbed to nuclear destruction from first-strike weapons.

Despite this knowledge, tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union drove both to continue increasing their nuclear weapons stockpiles from 1945 through the October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. This 13-day confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States brought countries to their closest point for all out nuclear war. Realizing how close both countries had come to mutual annihilation, the United States and the Soviet Union established the Washington-Moscow Direct Communications Link (aka, the Moscow-Washington hotline), which was a teletype system for direct talks between the leaders of the two countries (Stone, 1988).

U.S.-U.S.S.R. efforts to limit nuclear capabilities

This 'hotline' between U.S. and Soviet leaders has been regarded as one of the first steps towards ending the nuclear arms race. After its establishment, the U.S. and the Soviet Union continued to negotiate other ways both could de-escalate tensions and the possibility of nuclear war. What resulted was a series of important nuclear arms control treaties. In 1959, both countries and 10 other signatories agreed to the Antarctic Treaty to make the continent international and refrain from nuclear testing or disposing radioactive waste in Antarctica. This was followed with the Limited Test Ban Treaty in 1963 between the US, USSR, and UK that prohibited nuclear tests or explosions in the atmosphere, underwater, or in outer space. The three countries would also sign the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 that disallowed placement of nuclear weapons or any other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) on the moon or in orbit about the Earth. Countries also could not test weapons on any celestial bodies. In 1971, the Seabed Treaty extended similar limitations to any portion of the ocean floor beyond 12 nautical miles of a country's coast.

While these treaties created non-militarized zones on land, sea, and air, the first steps by the US and USSR to limit and restrain their nuclear armaments came with the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) from 1969 to 1972 that resulted in signage of the Interim Agreement on the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. While the first limited offensive weapons stockpiles to their 1972 levels, the latter limited ABM defensive systems for each country to 100 ABM missiles and launchers – first in two deployment areas, then reduced to one deployment area in 1974 (Griffith & Rossenfeld, 2024). The ABM treaty also disallowed the testing or placement of air-, sea-, and space-based ABM systems. While 1979's unratified SALT II agreement and would lead to further reduction of nuclear weapons stockpiles, it was the 1972's ABM treaty that, by preventing the development and buildup of new defensive systems, enshrined the concept of strategic vulnerability through mutually assured destruction as the end result of nuclear war between nuclear weapons states. While the United States and the Soviet Union were the initial signatories on the ABM Treaty, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan would become successors to the agreement after the dissolution of the USSR, and other countries would also follow suit in limiting their own nuclear defensive capabilities (Graham, 2015).

The US and the Soviet Union, or its successor state of Russia, would continue to resign the ABM treaty every 10 years and enter into further threat reduction agreements, including the Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) Purchase Agreement in which the US assisted Russia with the dismantlement of aging nuclear weapons by purchasing its surplus of HEU and converting it to low-enriched uranium (LEU) that was commercial used by U.S. nuclear power plants for energy production (Burns & Mikhailov, 2014). This cooperation continued alongside other significant arms control agreements, including the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) of 1991 and the subsequent New START treaty, which further reduced strategic offensive weapons (Griffith & Rossenfeld, 2024).

U.S. strategic changes after September 11th attacks

However, al Qaeda's September 11th Attacks on the United States, which had followed a prior less destructive bombing of the World Trade Center 1993 and attacks on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, would drastically impact the U.S. national security mindset and intelligence structures. Prior to 9/11, many intelligence organizations in the United

States operated very separately from one another, creating an intelligence culture in which little information was shared between them. This meant the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) largely focused on foreign threats while the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was responsible for domestic threats. As a result, a large blind spot for the U.S. intelligence community developed in which the U.S. paid little attention to foreign actors that could infiltrate the United States and strike it from within the domestic landscape (Snow, 2019).

After 9/11, President George W. Bush and other executive branch leaders, including those in the bureaucracy, began restructuring the organization of the U.S. intelligence community to better share information. Through the establishment of the Patriot Act, the United States also began collecting mass electronic data on domestic targets to seek any 'chatter' of additional terrorist plots (Snow, 2019). Aside from foiling plans for additional domestic attacks, such as the prevention of al Qaeda's plan to also strike Los Angeles with an airlines plot, the United States monitored nuclear weapons threats from Osama bin Laden. Already bin Laden and other top Al Qaeda leaders had met with Pakistani nuclear scientists to get advice on how to build a nuclear 'dirty bomb.' Furthermore, with part of Al Qaeda in Pakistan, the US was concerned with the stability of the nuclear state and the problematic knowledge that Pakistani warheads were not guarded by permissive action links, or 'nuclear codes,' to prevent unauthorized usage. Some senior nuclear scientists in Pakistan were also sympathetic to Al Qaeda's cause and in August 2001, bin Laden openly shared with a small group of them that Al Qaeda had already acquired nuclear weapon materials (Windrem, 2007). This created a heightened sense of anxiety in some parts of the executive branch, increasing the Bush Administration's attention to any intelligence on 'rogue' states or statements by their leaders – whether true or bluffs – that suggested these countries had nuclear weapons and were ready to use them against the United States or pass them to terrorist organizations for their own usage.

The U.S. aims for strategic defense network

By December 2001, public fear amongst Americans had also led many to accept, at least temporarily, government invasions on personal privacy through the Patriot Act in exchange for preventing new domestic attacks, though at the time Americans did not realize the pervasiveness of warrantless searches into their election communications and Internet history

(Luna & McCormack, 2015). At points, anxiety in the Bush administration was also palpable as they dealt with onslaughts of new intelligence in its demands for more information to be delivered by the intelligence community or shared between entities to seek out any additional blind spots. In conversations of ways to increase domestic security, the idea was floated to President Bush to reapproach Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), sometimes referred to by its nickname of the 'Star Wars Program' in reference to the popular U.S. science fiction series of movies.

Development of Reagan's SDI concepts would have expanded U.S. ABM capabilities beyond the single ABM location allowed in the ABM treaty to create a 'network' or 'shield' to protect the country against rogue missile strikes from foreign actors. The technological components of this system would eventually include Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD) interceptors, Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense systems deployed on naval vessels, and advanced radar systems for early detection and tracking (Missile Defense Agency, 2023). However, Secretary of State Colin Powell and others cautioned Bush that any SDI system would require many years of research and testing before it could become operational, and even then, the concept might be impossible to implement fully. Therefore, there was no need to completely abandon the ABM Treaty at that time. On the other hand, Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John Bolton, National Security Council (NSC) Senior Director for Proliferation Strategy, Counterproliferation, and Homeland Defense Robert Joseph, and Vice President Dick – who many regard as wielding great power and influence over George W. Bush during his administration – pushed the President to depart from the agreement as they believed the development of a missile defense network would require scientific modifications and flexibility that could not wait upon new versions of the treaty to be negotiated, signed, and ratified each time changes to designs for the system needed to be tested or adopted (Rusten, 2010).

Bush acquiesced to Cheney's arguments. However, to move forward with system development, Bush needed to give Russia the 6-month advance notice required by the 1972 ABM Treaty that it would not be resigning the agreement again in 2002 because of U.S. intentions to build a Strategic Missile Defense network for nuclear deterrence, as well as deterrence of more conventional weapons (Rusten, 2010). The American public took Bush's announcement of plans to develop the network with a general sense of positivity, though many misunderstood what defenses a Strategic Missile Defense network could realistically provide for a country as vast as the

United States. Many viewed both Reagan's and Bush's SDI concept as promising a country-wide 'shield' against nuclear missile attacks. In reality, the Strategic Missile Defense network would only expand the number of locations in the U.S. homeland protected by ABM systems with a view first towards protecting more major cities, locations of weapons stashes, and other limited geographic areas of strategic importance to the United States.

Russia's response and U.S.-NATO motives for rejection

At first, bilateral talks between President Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin seemed to oscillate between Putin expressing the US decision to withdrawal from the ABM Treaty was a mistake to understanding Bush's need increase US protections against adversarial non-state and rogue state actors (Boese, 2002). Putin responded to the US decision by suggesting, in June 2002, the creation of a Missile defense system for Europe that could be a joint endeavor between Russia and NATO. For several years, he would continue to float this plan to Bush, including again at the G8 Summit in Heiligendamm, Germany in 2007 (Gerstenzang, 2007; Bush, 2002). Though the US agreed to increased information sharing from advanced launch detection systems, Putin's joint missile defense suggestion failed to obtain support.

Further, a later proposal in the early 2010s by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev for a 'sectoral missile defense' system, where Russia and NATO countries would each be responsible for intercepting missiles over their own territorial sectors, was also rejected or ignored (Weiss, 2011). As U.S. Under Secretary of State for Arms Control Ellen Tauscher stated in 2011: 'We cannot provide legally binding commitments, nor can we agree to limitations on missile defense, which must necessarily evolve with the threat and with technology' (Tauscher, 2011). This statement reflected the fundamental disconnect between Russian demands for legal guarantees and U.S. unwillingness to constrain its defensive capabilities.

These rejections raised an important question: why would these seemingly gracious offers by Russia fail to achieve agreement from the United States or NATO? First, in actuality, President Bush did continue to discuss plans for how the United States and Russia could move forward with shared defense concepts (Rusten, 2010). In the early months and years after the 2001 terrorist attacks, however, the US was extremely reluctant to share critical technical information about its battle management systems and interceptors, especially for fear the technical specifications might be accidentally leaked, stolen, or perhaps sold (Detsch, 2022). If that occurred,

it would have been much easier for US adversaries to design their own systems to either overcome US defensive systems or affect their capabilities through cyberattacks. At the time, the United States was also unwilling to share many of its technical innovations with its own allies, though unusual plans were also floated by executive leaders of possibly extending the US's defense network over Japan and Taiwan.

Second, some countries in NATO also insisted on maintaining a command structure separate from Russia's. This was not a matter of separating previously integrated systems but rather maintaining distinct operational control. Part of the concern was connected to how NATO countries could self-protect if a Russian leader suddenly decided to attack them, perhaps with nuclear weapons, and also had joint control of any missile defense network, as well as knew their technical capabilities (Zyga, 2012).

Finally, it was also known the sudden privatization of government-owned businesses in the Soviet Union, followed by the dissolution of the USSR, had led to much economic volatility, especially due to the lack of preparing and educating citizens on how they could acclimate to the quick change to capitalist systems. This ill preparation left many without steady resources needed for survival, including many former Soviet scientists, engineers, and researchers in nuclear facilities and weapons labs. Some facilities had also been abandoned, as well, leaving secret materials and sensitive equipment – the sale of which is limited to only nuclear weapons states – open to plunder (Reed & Stillman, 2010).

Furthermore, black markets continued to thrive as some former Soviet countries continued to struggle with how to root out corruption and shift away from old customs of bribery that had become ingrained in the old economic system. As a result, plunderers and sometimes, former employees of Soviet facilities sold military-related designs and equipment pieces or armaments on the black market, and eventually some of the information and equipment ended up in the hands of A.Q. Khan's worldwide network of nuclear-related sales. A.Q. Khan was the primary architect of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program and had facilitated the sales of sensitive nuclear weapons designs and equipment to Iran, Jordan, Syria, and other potential countries or non-state groups (Reed & Stillman, 2010). Therefore, the time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the stability of democracy in Russia, and Russia's long-term abilities to guard highly sensitive nuclear defense information were all important factors for those considering whether or not to agree with Russia's push for a joint missile defense system when the US was already guarded with its allies regarding the sharing of technical details

on its defense innovations, especially those innovations still early in the research and design phases.

China's response

Meanwhile, China's perspective on these developments added another layer of complexity to the strategic environment. Chinese leadership viewed the U.S. missile defense system with deep suspicion, concerned that it might neutralize China's more limited nuclear deterrent and potentially embolden the U.S. in regional disputes, particularly regarding Taiwan. As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhang Qiyue stated in December 2001: 'China is concerned about the negative impact of the U.S. missile defense program on global strategic stability and international arms control efforts' (Rosenthal, 2001). This concern would eventually contribute to China's subsequent expansion and modernization of its nuclear arsenal.

Overall impacts and conclusions

The September 11, 2001 Attacks on the United States not only created a new era for US national security to the point that a new period for US security was established in textbooks for the field (Snow, 2019). However, the September 11th Attacks also shifted global strategic security. As Russian frustration grew with US and NATO reluctance to further integrate security efforts, NATO distrust also grew with Russia's 2008 war with Georgia and later 2014 annexation of Crimea, as well as the 2022 war with Ukraine. In reaction to US departure from the ABM Treaty, Russia began to design newer nuclear weapons with much larger energy yields and hypersonic capabilities, like the RS-28 Sarmat (or 'Satan II') intercontinental ballistic missile (Turner, 2022).

This period also saw the erosion of other key arms control agreements. The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty collapsed in 2019 after U.S. allegations of Russian violations, and the Open Skies Treaty suffered similar setbacks. The New START Treaty, while extended until 2026, remains one of the last standing pillars of the U.S.-Russia arms control architecture that began with the ABM Treaty fifty years ago. However, Russia has not complied with treaty obligations since 2022 though it continues to make public and private statements that it aims to continue to follow treaty limitations (Bureau of Arms Control, Deterrence, and Stability, 2025).

On the US's side, it has also sought ways to increase its defensive capabilities, sparking a new race of defensive technologies. The actions of both sides have also led other countries to seek to develop or further their own defensive and offensive capabilities. These endeavors have also been complicated by the question of how cyber innovations and the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning capabilities might also impact international nuclear strategies and, perhaps, render some systems unsecure.

No matter which side researchers, diplomats, and leaders fall on, all must eventually face the need for joint considerations between adversaries of how this next wave of weapons developments should be mutually limited in order to prevent a return to the brinkmanship and nuclear near misses of the Cold War period. This calculus shall be further complicated by the added mathematics of many more players with their own strategic calculations in a multipolar world where the principles of mutual vulnerability that guided the Cold War era have been fundamentally altered by the pursuit of defensive dominance that began with the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in 2001.

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TOWARDS A CLOSER US-SERBIA MILITARY RELATIONSHIP

Daniel J. O'CONNOR

Austin Peay State University, Clarksville (USA)
oconnor.danny0@gmail.com

Abstract: With Russia's war in Ukraine dragging on without a clearly defined resolution, other sources of instability are increasing on the European continent. Now is the proper time to reassess how the United States engages with partners. In the Balkans, Serbia presents a particularly interesting prospect where the US can make serious inroads towards better partnerships. In this article, the author lays out a method by which the military relationship between Serbia and the US can be greatly strengthened. By the application of tried-and-true methods in novel ways, the US stands to realize substantial benefits. First, the US must seek to build relationships in Serbia. These relationships must be built by treating the partner as an equal – a full partner – to build legitimate trust. Second, the US should seek genuine interoperability with the Serbian Armed Forces (SAF). This must extend beyond basic training and equipping activities into areas as wide-ranging as doctrinal development, tactical modernization, and even intelligence sharing. Finally, it is incumbent on the US to ramp up regular and repeated quality touchpoints with the SAF. This should include more joint exercises, military exchanges, and generally following the age-old adage of "practice, practice, practice." By the proper allocation and execution of resources – money, time, and people – the US can generate the conditions for a much better future relationship with the Serbian Armed Forces. This relationship can have very tangible and direct implications for security and stability for the Balkans and Europe.

Keywords: international relations, security cooperation, Balkan security, US-Serbia military cooperation, interoperability

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, the Department of State or the U.S. government. No other known conflicts of interest exist to disclose.

Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the very political landscape of Europe shifted in a massive way. These tectonic shifts have included two neutral counties joining NATO, an EU that is arguably stronger than it has ever been, and perhaps most importantly, more unity within the vast political spectrum on the continent. One area that has seen much debate and where the security environment remains contested is the Balkans. The role that the Balkans might play in the next decade is still unknown. In a similar manner, the debate on the future role of Serbia – and particularly, its military – within Europe is hotly debated with wildly differing views being expressed regularly.

One of few overarching issues that is well established, is that there can be no stable Balkans without a stable Serbia.[1] With the conflict in Ukraine raging into its fourth year and similar instability throughout several other regions, Serbia continues the precarious balancing act that is its adherence to military neutrality; a concept that was introduced in 2004, and has been further reiterated in various forms since (National Assembly of Serbia, 2007; Ministry of Defense of Serbia, 2021). Serbia operates on its well-worn idea of balancing the four pillars of diplomacy: the US, EU, China, and Russia. But, with the recently increasing focus on finding a way towards a ceasefire in Ukraine, the proverbial "road to the east" is unlikely to remain closed forever. Driving a wedge between Belgrade and its Eastern partners is no simple thing, but the current moment is certainly the most viable – and also the most dangerous – moment with which the West has been presented in decades. This presents a unique and indeed, a generational opportunity for the US to forge a closer bilateral military relationship with non-NATO partners (Bassuener and Vogal, 2022). Failing to seize the opportunity might not be disastrous. It would, however, ignore current US policy documents and overtly stated goals. It would also provide an opening for America's adversaries to take the initiative and set European stability off balance (Cavoli, 2024).

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[1] These sentiments were conveyed to the author during a conversation with a senior General Officer from one of the Balkan militaries.

The US employs a highly developed playbook to forge and improve military cooperation throughout the world, however Serbia provides a case study which defies comparison to other parts of the world, thus requiring a different approach (Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 2021). Challenging as it may be, by seeking a different tact, the US stands poised to create a stronger, lasting relationship with the Serbian Armed Forces (SAF).[2] It would further have a secondary effect of seeing Serbia able to export stability. It may even reduce current and potential defense burdens on the US, EU, and even NATO through more burden-sharing (NATO, 2022). One must further, not lose sight of the important fact that 'militaries need to adjust their thinking and training to the war they will likely be called upon to fight…' (Lynn, 2003). European militaries need to constantly be preparing for future conflict, even while the current situation in Ukraine is at the forefront of people's minds.

To this end, the US should actively seek approaches that, while not new in themselves, are quite novel in their application to Serbia. Further, the approach must be deliberate, because as Gray pointed out, 'haste and folly tend to be close companions in international strategic affairs' (Gray, 2018). First, the US must seek to build relationships in Serbia. These relationships must be built by treating the partner as an equal – a full partner – to build legitimate trust. Second, the US should seek genuine interoperability with the SAF. This must extend beyond basic training and equipping activities into areas as wide-ranging as doctrinal development, tactical modernization, and even intelligence sharing. Finally, it is incumbent on the US to ramp up regular and repeated quality touchpoints with the SAF. This should include more joint exercises, military exchanges, and generally following the age-old adage of "practice, practice, practice." By the proper allocation and execution of resources – money, time, and people – the US can generate the conditions for a much better future relationship with the Serbian Armed Forces.

It doesn't take the casual visitor long in Belgrade to feel the considerable scar tissue that is prevalent in Serbia; an antipathy towards the US and NATO. To a certain extent, this is understandable, considering the memory of NATO's 1999 Operation Allied Force (OAF), which included air strikes throughout Serbia during the Kosovo War. This anti-Americanism has

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[2] The current study solely addresses the military-to-military relationship between the US and Serbia. However, many of the prescribed methods are perfectly applicable to other non-military arenas. Further, proper application of these methods will likely see benefits that assist other diplomatic efforts.

political costs that harm the bilateral relationship, but also imposes costs of each country individually (Keohane and Katzenstein, 2007). On the side of many Western countries, there remains a palpable hesitance to engage meaningfully with Serbia. In an era of shrinking defense budgets and continued, expensive support to Ukraine, countries need to make wise use of limited resources. However, both Serbia and the US are not now what they once were. Relations must evolve to keep pace with the development of both countries, and with 26 years gone by since the end of OAF, both countries need to consider their place in the world. On the US side, this means letting go of past scar tissue with regard to the atrocities of the 1990s. On the Serbian side, this means a similar movement, not forget the past, but to move beyond it to forge a better future. This is not to attempt the claim that any of the preceding is simple or easy. Americans tend to perceive history in a linear fashion, but as Kaplan famously pointed out, 'in the Balkans, history is not viewed as tracing a chronological progression… history jumps around and moves in circles' (Kaplan, 1993).

Building relationships in Serbia has long been a challenge for Western countries. An all-too-common excuse is the longstanding Serbian links to "greater Slavdom." This includes strong ties to other Slavic countries – like Russia – in areas like culture, religion, history, cuisine, and general personality. But, getting to know Serbians closer, a clearer picture emerges of a Serbian mentality that genuinely wants a more global outlook rather than being pigeon-holed into some overly simplistic and generalized personality (Kapor, 2018). By jettisoning this faulty view, the US immediately stands a better chance of building relationships. One of the greatest strengths of US military relationship building is in its relation to the traditional Russian model. While there is a strong history of Russian military cooperation consisting of Russian soldiers telling partners in no uncertain terms how things must be, the US seeks an alternate model.[3] This model is framed in mutually beneficial outcomes, equality in partnership, and mutual trust (US Department of Defense, 2022). This has not always been the case, and US failures in this area abound. However, this model is particularly powerful with a country like Serbia, a country with a strong military past, long-standing institutions, and pride in their armed forces. Treating a competent military in the Russian vein causes frustration and antipathy. Treating the partner with even a modicum of respect builds immediate

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[3] Though anecdotal, this point is pulled from the author's experience with several of Russia's training partners throughout Europe and Asia.

rapport by finding common ground, similar agenda framing, and traditional persuasion (Nye, 2011). Put another way, Lebow points out that 'mutual initiatives that succeed generally have positive follow-on effects. They can build friendships and solidarity across borders that in turn structure shared identities' (Lebow, 2020).

Taking this concept a step further, the US should seek not only equal partnership, but also equal responsibility. This should include both sides making similar financial investments into the relationship, taking equal responsibility for collective security, and having equal buy-in on all joint interactions. The challenge with this step is the cumbersome and slow-moving legal framework that would accompany this sort of development. The US and Serbia would need to negotiate several documents, like a new Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), just to name one. However, taking this action would provide a strong foundation for years of positive growth in the relationship. The interactions these documents would allow would further serve the dual purpose of ensuring Serbia's active engagement in Balkan security, while potentially relieving some of the security burden on other European and NATO partners (Clarke, O'Connor, and Ellis, 1997). Helping Serbia become an exporter of security is of paramount interest to various organizations and Serbia has a long and appreciated history of contributions to global security (United Nations, 2021). Based on Serbia's historical record of contributions and a simple estimation of cost-benefit, actions in this vein seem perfectly justifiable and prudent.

Interoperability continues to be the golden standard in bilateral and multilateral military engagements globally (US Department of Defense, 2022). Speaking a common operational language with common tactics and approaches to problems creates a powerful military force. It also acts as a powerful deterrent for potential adversaries. NATO has made considerable maneuvers regarding interoperability in recent years. This provides a powerful example of just what interoperability can offer. Regarding the US and Serbia, this interoperability must be taken a step further. This means not just interoperability in tactics, but also interoperability in military gear, divestment of aging legacy systems, modernization in military doctrine, training methods, and should even include some degree of intelligence sharing. This focus on institutional cooperation has been noted to be a beneficial method of building relationships (Nye, 2020).

In this arena, there has been some tangible change in recent years. Examples include the Serbian purchase of French Rafale fighters, which will replace the Russian Mi-29 fighters, or the acquisition of the Spanish CASA

295 transport plane. Military modernization is a top priority for the Serbian Ministry of Defense (Ministry of Defense of Serbia, 2021). With the recent growth of the Serbian economy, there is little reason to think that this push for military modernization will abate any time soon.

With an aging fleet of Mi-17 helicopters, and several other legacy Soviet and Russian systems, now is the proper time to seek genuine US-Serbian interoperability. As the war in Ukraine continues, Russia is unable to provide the repair parts, training, and additional modern systems that Serbia desires from a logistical standpoint. Further, the threat of US sanctions on countries that buy from Russia through the Combatting America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) provides strong, albeit controversial, motivation to look elsewhere for military acquisitions (Parachini, Bauer, and Wilson, 2021). The other Eastern alternative, China is appealing to Serbia, but as many nations have discovered, Chinese systems are of low quality and come with strings attached – strings with which Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic is likely unwilling to bind himself. In fact, 'freedom-loving' Serbs are extremely unlikely to accept any infringement to perceptions of their freedom (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024). This is precisely where the US and other NATO partners must come in. The collective West should be considering how best to engage Serbia in targeted sales of weapons systems which will bring about genuine interoperability. Anything less would be folly, given the golden opportunity that currently exists.

The US should also be considering where regulations and restrictions can be relaxed regarding release of information. This should include inviting Serbia to more NATO courses, sharing of selected close-hold doctrinal tactics, and even some level of intelligence sharing. While there are many inside the DC Beltway that would argue this stance, building trust and interoperability will require nothing less of the US. A certain level of 'measured risk' must be incurred to accomplish a serious change in trajectory in Serbia, in service of US strategic priorities (US Department of Defense, 2022).

The final method of building a stronger, lasting relationship with Serbia is an aspect of repetition. This element of continued focus and constant touchpoints is a must if the US wants to seriously overcome the shared emotional baggage of the 1990s. The US is not Sebria's enemy, and Serbia is not the US' enemy, but without overtly signaling this, there is little hope of proving genuine intent. The US currently conducts dozens of security cooperation events annually with Serbia in areas as disparate as military

medicine, engineering, chaplaincy, peacekeeping operations, and airborne operations. This number is only growing, as powerful and personal relationships are emerging and bearing fruit (Ivanovski, 2024).

However, simply sucking all the air out of the room to the extent that Serbia is unable to work with any other partners is counterproductive and even wasteful. Rather, there must also be a quality component to this element of repetition. Events should show a continuous progression towards higher complexity and difficulty. This means that the US doesn't necessarily need to conduct more low-level engineering projects or entry-level chemical training with Serbia (Ministry of Defense of Serbia, 2025). It means that the US should seek to engage Serbia more on advanced training in more areas. It means that the US should seek to bring Serbia into more major exercises around Europe, and to more senior leader engagements.

On its face, the preceding may seem like a piece of blatant idealism, but in reality, it is sound, practical psychology. It has been noted that competitive advantage can be gained over rivals for countries that can better cooperate (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 1999). In essence, the logic of this method of building a better military relationship between the US and Serbia is realist in nature. Nye has noted that military forces can create strong sources of persuasion regarding other partner countries (Nye, 2004). Further, a strong US-Serbia relationship, while a good thing for collective security on the European continent, is also good individually for both nations' domestic security. A stronger Serbia, unequivocally tied to European and American defense structures and a common defense picture, creates a stronger Europe. Finally, a stronger Europe relieves some of the defense burden on US, EU, and NATO defense structures and continues to improve multilateral defense organizations both inside and outside NATO with 'flexible partnerships' that can reinforce European security (Droin, Monaghan, and Townsend, 2024).

A common criticism of this logic in today's security analyst population argues that the spectrum of competition with Russia and China requires something of a zero-sum game; the US seeks to reduce Russian and Chinese touchpoints to reduce influence in the region. In reality, the current situation need not be a zero-sum game. The traditional focus on a unipolar or multipolar world is both unnecessary and unhelpful, due to the reality of the world actually being unipolar, multipolar, and chaotic simultaneously (Nye, 2011). Showcasing the US variants of training and equipping, fostering a relationship based on mutual respect, and being a steadfast partner is at odds with the Chinese and Russian approach. The benefit of the proposed model is that it allows the US to clearly show that US equipment and

training is far superior to its Russian and Chinese equivalent, while simultaneously showing how the US values its partners for their strengths and contributions to collective security.

While some of these concepts should be considered enduring, like seeking mutually beneficial outcomes, common defense, and trust, the situation on the ground in Europe is shifting all the time. By taking the initiative to build a better military relationship with Serbia, the US will be poised to benefit greatly over the coming years, regardless of the outcome of the plethora of ongoing tense situations on the continent. By the astute application of relationship building, increased interoperability, and quality repetition, the US and Serbia can build a stronger, lasting military relationship – together.

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DRAFTING FOR NO WAR?
– THE PERSISTENCE OF CONSCRIPTION DURING PEACETIME

Simon ROTZER

Austin Peay State University, Clarksville (USA)
rotzers@apsu.edu

Abstract: What makes states maintain conscription during peacetime? Conventional wisdom suggests that conscription primarily serves security needs, with scholars highlighting its economic inefficiency, negative impact on individuals, questionable cultural benefits, and military disadvantages compared to professional forces. Yet, empirical evidence reveals that over half of all conscription cases globally occur when countries face no apparent security threats. This paper argues that three factors explain this puzzle: uncertainty about future security environments, cultural and civil-military relations considerations, and institutional resilience to policy change. Rather than being merely a reactive security policy, conscription persists as a complex institution shaped by risk perception, national identity formation, and institutional resilience to change. Using Austria as an illustrative case, this paper demonstrates how conscription can survive for decades despite the absence of threats, suggesting that policies like Conscientious Objection help maintain public acceptance. This theoretical framework contributes to both security studies and civil-military relations by reconceptualizing conscription as more than a military staffing model, highlighting instead its multifaceted political and social functions.

Keywords: Conscription, Military Recruitment, Peacetime Security, Civil-Military Relations, Conscientious Objection, Institutional Resilience

Introduction

"Nation Ends Draft, Turns to Volunteers" – This headline on the front page of the New York Times in late January 1973 marked the end of forced recruitment in the United States (Rosenbaum, 1973). While there was still a

requirement for eligible men to register for the Selective Service, nobody would be compelled to serve in the country's armed forces against their will. By ending conscription, the U.S. followed the example of Great Britain, which rid itself of the policy over a decade prior. Yet, despite these states abolishing the draft, it was maintained by many countries throughout the Cold War (Poutvaara & Wagener, 2011a). This changed with the fall of the Soviet Union, which led to an increasing number of states phasing out this form of recruitment. Conscription, so the prevalent notion during these years, was on its way out (Leander, 2004).

However, the policy proved to be more resilient than expected, with more than 70 countries worldwide maintaining forced recruitment in some shape or form in the year 2022, mainly in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia (CIA World Factbook, 2022). On the one hand, this is not surprising since there are states with conscription that are engaged in war or under active internal or external threats, e.g., Ukraine, Russia, North Korea, and South Korea. In those cases, the draft can be a viable and effective tool to increase power and security. On the other hand, conscription makes less sense in cases where there are no security threats. However, there are several places in which the draft is active despite obvious security reasons, such as Austria, Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Morocco, Switzerland, and Vietnam. This is puzzling since common knowledge would expect those countries to not have conscription anymore, especially during peacetime, i.e., periods without any external threat or rival. As a consequence, this paper will ask, "What makes a state maintain conscription, especially during peacetime?". It will investigate the question by first laying out reasons why countries would not consider conscription. Afterwards, it will look at the empirical reality of conscription, discuss why it still exists during peacetime, and end with an illustrative example of conscription surviving in the Republic of Austria.

Why not have conscription?

There are many reasons for a state to have conscription, such as economic benefits (Ben-Ari et al., 2023; Hosek et al., 1994; Levy, 2007; Margulies, 2021), cultural or ideological reasons (Ben-Eliezer, 1995; Kant, [1795] 1991; Kubik, 2001; Kuemmel, 2006; Leander, 2004; Røislien, 2013; Rousseau & Frankel, 1947), foreign influences (Djankov et al., 2002; Hadass, 2004; Margulies, 2021), or security considerations (Anderson et al., 1996; Asal et al., 2017; Choi & James, 2008; Haltiner, 1998; Stephens & Baker, 2006).

Even though the reasons why states might want to introduce or maintain conscription seem compelling, especially the ones centered around security, under most conditions outside of threat to a country, conscriptions are massively outclassed by their disadvantages:

Economic Drawbacks

From the perspective of society as a whole, conscription is deemed highly inefficient. Adam Smith argued forcing every citizen to serve in the military would negate the benefits of job specialization (Smith & McCulloch, 1863). Instead of using professional soldiers as a dedicated group of experts on all things military, conscription cycles cohort after cohort of fresh recruits through the system. Since these always start with a clean slate and no knowledge of the armed forces, they will waste valuable time learning the basics of what it means to be a soldier. The better alternative would be to employ the comparative advantage that volunteer militaries offer and reap the benefits of their experience (Poutvaara & Wagener, 2011b; Smith & McCulloch, 1863). Scholars largely agree that professional armed forces allocate labor more efficiently (Ross, 1994) and that conscription is difficult to maintain in advanced industrial societies (Higgs, 1999). Moreover, the draft places a burden of social cost on every country, especially when considering the price of deferments. These costs can be so high that even the United States only once hit a point in which the costs for conscription and a professional military were almost equal: World War 2 (Perri, 2010). Consequently, it comes as no surprise that economists took a critical role in the process of ending conscription in the country (Henderson, 2005; Perri, 2010).

Forced recruitment negatively affects the individual draftees as well: Even though military service can provide recruits with certain skill sets or qualities, as mentioned above, research has established that these positive impacts appear to vanish in comparison with citizens who did not serve in the military when selection effects are taken into account (Bauer et al., 2012). Additional negative drawbacks for the individual and the larger economy stem from the delayed job market entry for draftees. This postpones their careers or education and hampers their progress (Poutvaara & Wagener, 2011a, 2011b; Renshaw, 1960). These fallouts continued to negatively impact draftees for decades, with Angrist finding that white veterans of the Vietnam War earned 15% less annually than nonveterans (1990). Even though the effect was not statistically significant for non-whites (Angrist, 1990) and lost its impact in the 1990s (Angrist et al., 2011), it still highlights the negative

economic influence of conscription on the individual. Furthermore, even if the drawbacks disappear over time, there are no substantial financial benefits that former soldiers reap over time, with research finding that veterans of WW2 made the same or lower wages than nonveterans during the 1990s (Angrist & Krueger, 1994).

Culture and Ideology

While scholars, as mentioned further above, highlighted the positive connection between conscription and democracy, some caveats exist. For one, there exists some doubt concerning citizens' appreciation for the draft, especially when taking into account deferments of any kind. Then, "conscription is socially preferable to a volunteer military only if a large percentage of eligible individuals are demanded by the military" (Perri, 2010, p. 22). Consequently, if a draft is not fair and does not impact every citizen the same way, i.e., selective instead of universal conscription, populations will be less inclined to support it (Haltiner, 1998, p. 32). Others, such as Mulligan and Shleifer argue that conscription does not seem to be influenced by democracy at all (2005). This is supported by recent investigations into the determinants of conscription, which found that democratic regimes decrease the likelihood of conscription (Asal et al., 2017). Moreover, the often-used idea of the military representing the school of the nation does not hold up in empirical tests (Krebs, 2004). Lastly, the coup-proofing properties of conscription are also questioned with current recent findings that drafted militaries are more likely to overthrow autocratic forms of government than volunteer-based ones (Vasquez & Powell, 2021). While this bodes well for pro-democratic movements, it does question the idea of conscription bringing stability to a regime.

Foreign Influence

This category builds on the idea of conscription representing a substantial violation of individual rights. Thus, a culture of liberalism focused on personal liberties will prefer voluntary over forced recruitment (Cohen, 1985, pp. 35-35). States, such as Great Britain, that follow liberal ideas will also be reluctant to implement conscription and share this hesitation with their colonies (Asal et al., 2017; Cohen, 1985; Cohn & Toronto, 2016; Hadass, 2004). These will then embed liberal values in their institutions. As a consequence, former British lands are less likely to adopt

the draft than their non-British counterparts, even after they gained independence (Asal et al., 2017). This connection remains statistically significant (Margulies, 2021).

Security

Even though conscription is a quick and efficient way to respond to threats and increase security, there are some downsides connected to it, mainly the potential for aggression and issues with conscripted militaries in general.

First, even though some research suggests that volunteer militaries are the tool of choice for governments wanting to engage in aggressive action (Choi & James, 2008), there is some evidence that this might not always be the case. Jeffery Pickering establishes that countries that mainly staff their armed forces with conscripts "have a significantly higher propensity to use belligerent military force than states with volunteer armies" (2011, p. 119). Furthermore, these states have an increased likelihood of picking fights with nonstate actors (Pickering, 2011).

Second, conscripted military suffer from a variety of issues: In general, they are less effective than their volunteer or professional counterparts (Mulligan et al., 2004). This is due to the fact that conscripts do not stay in the armed forces long enough to build up substantial expertise. Additionally, limited service terms for draftees lead to a high personnel turnover rate (Warner & Asch, 2001). Therefore, they are less trained in the usage of sophisticated equipment and sometimes lack the skills to operate high-tech weaponry to the fullest extent (Warner & Negrusa, 2006). While this is preferable in a situation in which leaders want to prevent the military from overthrowing them, it hinders battlefield effectiveness. Another consequence of the low skills and high turnover that are characteristics of conscript militaries is an increased casualty count (Horowitz et al., 2011). Since conscripts are forced to serve, sometimes against their will, their use in conflict also leads to lower war support (Horowitz & Levendusky, 2011). This reduction support even exists when conscripts are used in a defensive manner, such as a response to an attack (Kriner & Shen, 2016). Lastly, changed security environments, especially since the 1990s, with more deployments abroad and less focus on territorial defense via mass armies, make it harder to justify conscription (Bieri, 2015). This is mainly due to draftees generally not being suited for extended deployment abroad (Burk, 1992; Simon & Lovrich, 2009). These compelling arguments against

conscription—from economic inefficiency to security disadvantages—make its continued existence in peaceful states all the more puzzling.

Conscripton's persistence during peacetime

The theoretical evaluation above presents a clear picture: Various scholarship on the topic suggests that states would rid themselves of the policy, even going so far as to call it a "wasteful means of mobilizing manpower" (Horowitz et al., 2011, p. 909), especially when compared to the fighting performance of professional militaries. Yet, based on data on the status of conscription globally from 1816 to 2000 collected by Asal, Conrad, and Toronto, there are some surprising discoveries: From 10,068 country-year observations, 6,260 (62%) featured some sort of conscription. Out of these, more than half (3,450; 55%) employed forced recruitment despite there being no indicators of dangers to a state, be it internal, external, or through a rival (Asal et al., 2017).

These numbers are puzzling since they go against most established wisdom that would only see conscription justified under a particularly narrow set of circumstances, such as threats. Thus, even though theory would expect a decline in conscription globally, there are still quite a few countries that refuse to phase out conscription or buck the trend entirely by (re-) introducing conscription (e.g., Israel, Sweden or the Arab Gulf states). Other cases, such as Austria, introduced and kept conscription for decades despite a lack of threat to the state. This, again, raises the question of why countries would choose to maintain a recruitment policy that is clearly deemed inefficient and outdated by scholars, particularly when there is no need to improve security. Consequently, I ask: "What makes a state maintain conscription, especially during peacetime?"

Reasons for maintaining conscription

There are several explanations for why countries might want to keep conscription even after the threat to them has ended. Some of them build on what was written further above. First is uncertainty about the future: leaders might hold on to forced recruitment because they are unsure about their country's security in the coming years or decades. On the one hand, this goes back to the sociological concept of risk society in which "we experience, suddenly, the unwelcome return of frightening uncertainties" (Beck, 1992; O'Malley, 2004; Sørensen & Christiansen, 2012, p. 9). These risks

affect not just individuals but also governments and states. In order to prepare for the uncertainties that the future might bring, countries decide to keep conscription around, even though there might not be any threats on the horizon in the short or long run. This also fits the notion of anarchy in the international system since its inherent uncertainties make security the number one priority for states, as stated further above (Axelrod, 1984; Mearsheimer, 1990). On the other hand, governments might want to pursue a more aggressive foreign policy in the far future. In these cases, conscription appears to be the tool of choice for belligerent leaders (Pickering, 2011). Consequently, it would not make much sense for these states to end conscription just to re-introduce it a few years or decades later.

Second, there could be cultural, philosophical, or civil-military relations factors that can compel leaders to hold on to forced recruitment despite a lack of threats to security. From the perspective of the latter, the institution of conscription is a key element in maintaining civilian control over the military (Janowitz, 1960; Kümmel et al., 2009). An example of this is Germany, which saw the "necessity for general conscription as a general device to counteract anti-democratic political ambitions of the officer corps of the armed forces" when it introduced the policy (Von Bredow, 1992, p. 291). Other states might adhere to the notion that the military is the school of the nation, which is necessary to create civic identities. Even though Krebs (2004) debunks this, the idea is still present in several countries. The Arab Gulf states recently introduced conscription in a "departure from world trends" to increase their security and pursue a more active foreign policy (Alterman & Balboni, 2017, p. VII). Yet, they also highlighted the fact that they aim to use forced recruitment as a way to "enhance national identities" and to create "ideal citizens"[9] (Ardemagni, 2018). Additionally, in terms of cultural reasons, some states might view conscription as an institution that promotes the perception of masculinity in a society (Moon, 2005).

Third, institutional resilience to change might prevent a leader from abolishing conscription. This can be due to the existence of veto players that prefer the status quo, i.e., keeping conscription, over a change of policy (Tsebelis, 1995). Additionally, established institutions can become sticky and resilient to change (Béland, 2009). The institutional idiosyncrasies connected to this can severely limit the freedom that policymakers have in making decisions such as ending conscription. Lastly, the inherent costs of keeping certain policies, e.g., conscription, are lower than the costs of establishing a new one, e.g., a professional military (Margulies, 2021).

Regardless of the specific reason why a government would want to maintain forced recruitment, the decision to do so must be justified by the relevant parties involved in the decision-making process, especially when traditional reasons for conscription, i.e., threat, are lacking. This becomes especially challenging in democracies where leaders must convince more people than in autocratic societies. In order to sell the idea of maintaining the draft in democratic societies, leaders will have to sweeten conscription with other policies to make it more palatable to supporters. One way of doing that is by introducing Conscientious Objection as an alternative to service in the armed forces. Conscientious Objection, meaning the right to object to forced recruitment based on conscientious or religious reasons, is generally well-liked in the states where it is in effect, such as Germany (Beher et al., 2002, p. 21). Therefore, it has the ability to give a human face to conscription, thereby making it more acceptable to the people.

Conscrition's fate in Austria

The Republic of Austria is a prime example of maintaining conscription during peacetime. The country has relied on forced recruitment ever since it regained sovereignty in 1955, even though there are no instances of either internal or external threat or international rivals. Despite the lack of threats to the country and a policy of "active neutrality," the state kept conscription active (Meyer, 2007, p. 2). Moreover, Austria's foreign policy became more engaged after the end of the Cold War, and the country saw increased support for military missions abroad (Molnár, 2021). Following traditional explanations for why countries have conscription, the combination of high security and more deployment abroad should have led the government to give up on the draft. Nevertheless, it chose to buck the trend and even decided to keep conscription when a referendum on its future was conducted in 2013. This referendum is particularly noteworthy as almost 60% of all participants voted in favor of maintaining conscription (BBC News, 2013), even though most other countries in Europe had already rid themselves of this policy. Public debate during the referendum centered not only on security considerations but also on the social benefits provided by conscripts and the alternative civilian service. The existence of Conscientious Objection, which Austria implemented in 1955 (Brett et al., 2021), provided an alternative for draftees who refused to serve in the armed forces based on moral grounds. It became an integral part of Austria's social sector, with conscientious objectors serving in a variety of institutions. This created a

scenario in which the conscription system fulfilled a social need, which might explain why it had been upheld for so long.

Conclusion

This paper set out to investigate the question of "What makes a state maintain conscription, especially during peacetime?". It argued that arguments based on uncertainty about the future, culture, philosophy, civil-military relations, institutional resilience, and the justifications for forced recruitment can affect conscription's survival outside of war. This reasoning adds to existing scholarship in two ways, in particular, International Security and Civil-Military Relations. In terms of International Security, it challenges the idea that conscription is a reactive policy that follows a state's security environment. Instead, it highlights that forced recruitment can exist outside of traditional threat scenarios and that it is impacted by a vast array of different factors. In terms of Civil-Military Relations, this paper indicates that conscription is more than just a way of staffing the military and that states sometimes have to rely on policies like Conscientious Objection to make the draft more palatable. It also reinforces the idea of a complex relationship between society, the military, and the government.

Since this project was mainly focused on theoretical discussions of why countries maintain conscription, future research could put its claims to an empirical test, e.g., by engaging in comparative studies of states that maintained conscription vs ones that abandoned it, looking into how public opinion affects the future of conscription, and investigating how Conscientious Objection can impact the security of a country.

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COMPARATIVE GRAND STRATEGY IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

Havva KÖK ARSLAN

Üsküdar University, Political Science and International Relations
havva.kokarslan@uskudar.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0003-0029-7628

Abstract: This article examines the resurgence of grand strategy in the post-Cold War era, focusing on the comparative strategies of great powers (the United States, China, and Russia) and the adaptive mechanisms of middle powers (Turkey, India, Brazil) in the digital age. The study identifies critical gaps in existing literature, including the lack of comparative frameworks, neglect of middle powers, and insufficient integration of technological and economic dimensions into grand strategy analysis. Using a multidimensional approach—combining realism, liberal institutionalism, and constructivism—the article demonstrates how digital technologies (5G, AI, cyber warfare) and economic statecraft (trade wars, BRI) have redefined traditional power dynamics. Findings reveal that middle powers employ "flexible balancing" strategies to navigate great power rivalry, while technological supremacy emerges as the new battleground for hegemony. The study contributes to grand strategy theory by proposing an interdisciplinary model for analyzing 21st-century statecraft.

Keywords: Grand strategy, digital age, great power rivalry, middle powers

Historical Evolution and Modern Transformation of Grand Strategy Concept

Grand strategy is a concept that refers to the coordinated use of military, economic, diplomatic and cultural instruments developed by a state to ensure its long-term national interests and security. While the roots of this concept can be traced back to ancient times, its modern formulation took place in the 19th and 20th centuries with the contributions of strategy theorists.

Classical Period: Contributions of Clausewitz, Mahan and Liddell Hart

Clausewitz's "On War" (1832) is one of the cornerstones of grand strategy. According to him, war is "the continuation of politics by other means" and strategy requires the rational use of military power to achieve political goals. However, Clausewitz focused only on the military dimension of grand strategy and did not emphasize the economic and diplomatic elements enough.

Emphasizing the role of sea power in global hegemony, Mahan brought a new dimension to grand strategy with his work "The Influence of Sea Power on History" (1890). According to him, sea control and the security of trade routes determine the long-term power of a state. The US focus on maritime dominance in the 20th century is a practical reflection of Mahan's theories.

Liddell Hart expanded grand strategy with his concept of "Indirect Strategy" (1954). According to him, indirect methods such as psychological operations, diplomacy and economic pressure are more effective than direct confrontation. This approach was seen in the proxy wars and propaganda struggles of the US and the USSR during the Cold War.

Cold War Era: Nuclear Balance and Deterrence

The Cold War radically transformed the concept of grand strategy. With the advent of nuclear weapons, within the framework on George Kennan's "Containment Policy", the USA aimed to limit the USSR's expansionism through economic and political means. Based on Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) Doctrine, nuclear deterrence became central to grand strategy. Since the use of military force now carried a direct existential risk, strategies shifted more towards economic blocs (NATO vs. Warsaw Pact) and the struggle for technological superiority.

The Impact of the Post-Cold War Period on the Concept of Grand Strategy

The end of the Cold War ushered in a period of instability in the international system, which significantly affected the grand strategies of states. Brzezinski's "Grand Chessboard" (1997): The post-Cold War US strategy of Eurasian dominance emphasized the geographical dimension of grand strategy. While during the Cold War, the bipolar system was shaped by the geopolitical rivalry between the US and the USSR, the establishment

of unipolar hegemony by the US since the 1990s has to some extent reduced the need for grand strategy.

The US strategic approach in the post-Cold War period was defined as "Liberal Hegemony" and aimed to support democratic transformations around the world (Ikenberry, 2001). However, the strategic relaxation offered by the unipolar structure caused the classical grand strategy approaches of the US to take a back seat. In this process, Europe focused on economic integration, adopted collective security strategies such as NATO enlargement, and preferred to develop common foreign policy mechanisms rather than creating its own grand strategy under the security umbrella of the United States (Menon, 2007

Since the mid-2000s, there has been a trend towards multipolarity, which has led to a renewed need for grand strategy by the United States. In particular, China's growing economic and military capacity and the expansion of its geopolitical influence through projects such as the "Belt and Road Initiative" have necessitated the US to adopt new strategic approaches (Rolland, 2017). In this framework, the US "Pivot to Asia" policies aim to reshape the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region (Campbell & Ratner, 2018).

In conclusion, in the post-Cold War era, the concept of grand strategy has regained importance with the return of the multipolar system, although it was somewhat put on the back burner during the US unipolar hegemony. The rise of China and the US response to this situation provide important clues about the evolution of grand strategy in the future.

"Great Power Rivalry Era" in the Digital Age

The "Great Power Rivalry Era" of the last 20 years refers to a period of increasing strategic competition and conflicts of interest among the leading countries in the international arena. This period is characterized not only in the military or economic spheres, but also in new areas of competition, such as technological superiority. The main elements of this period are explained in detail below:

Economic Competition and Trade Wars

- Trade Wars and Economic Policy: Great powers clashed with each other over trade balances, tariffs and technological transfers. Economic policies have been tightened to protect domestic production in strategic sectors and reduce foreign dependence.

- Technological and Strategic Investments: Economic competition is largely centered on technology. State-sponsored investments and R&D activities have become important tools to consolidate the country's position in global supply chains.

Military Tensions: The Case of the South China Sea

- Areas of Regional Conflict: The South China Sea has become an important area of competition for the concentration of military assets and control of strategic sea lanes. In this region, there are disputes between different countries over maritime jurisdiction and resources, and regional military tensions are on the rise.

- Military Show of Force: Great powers seek to increase their influence in the region through military exercises and the deployment of naval and air assets.

The Struggle for Technological Supremacy: 5G and Artificial Intelligence

- 5G and Communication Technologies: The proliferation of 5G technology has created an important area of competition in both economic and security dimensions. Countries aim to gain both economic and strategic advantage by controlling 5G infrastructure.

- Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Technologies: Investments in areas such as artificial intelligence, cyber security and semiconductor technologies are considered critical for future competitiveness. Technological superiority has become a decisive factor in both the economic and military spheres.

Redefining Grand Strategy in the Digital Age

In the 21st century, grand strategy has gained new dimensions by going beyond traditional battlefields:

- Cyber Warfare and Digital Diplomacy: States weaken their rivals through cyberattacks and information warfare (e.g. Russian interference in elections).

- Economic Strategies and Technology Wars: China's "Artificial Intelligence 2030 Plan" and US efforts to control the semiconductor supply chain emphasize the economic dimension of grand strategy.

- Soft Power and Institutional Struggle: The US's cultural influence through Hollywood and global NGOs, and China's Belt and Road Initiative are examples of the grand strategy's use of soft power tools.

In conclusion, grand strategy is no longer shaped by military power alone, but by the control of technology, economy and information. Global challenges such as artificial intelligence, space competition and climate change will determine the grand strategies of the future. By specializing in these areas (e.g., Turkey's defense industry breakthroughs or India's digital diplomacy), medium-sized powers are trying to create room for maneuver vis-à-vis great powers.

The above literature review reveals how grand strategy is dynamically evolving and being redefined in today's multidimensional power struggles.

Gaps in Existing Studies:
Comparative Analysis Gap in Grand Strategy Literature

Although the grand strategy literature has expanded in recent years, there are significant gaps in comparative grand strategy studies. While most studies examine the strategic behavior of individual states (e.g., the Cold War-era policies of the United States or China's rise strategy), they lack holistic approaches that systematically compare the strategic choices of different states. This calls into question the universal validity of the grand strategy approach and makes it particularly inadequate for understanding the behavior of medium-sized powers. Shortcomings of existing grand strategy approaches:

• Singular State Orientation and Lack of Holistic Perspective

Much of the existing literature has been limited to analyzing the historical strategic behavior of a given state. For example, Paul Kennedy's "The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers" (1987) analyzes the dynamics of the economic and military decline of the great powers, but does not compare their strategic interactions with each other. John Lewis Gaddis' "On Grand Strategy" (2018) analyzes the strategic decisions of historical leaders (from Athens to Churchill), but does not systematically compare why different state models developed different strategies. Hal Brands' "American Grand Strategy in the Age of Trump" (2018) details the recent US strategy, but does not analyze in depth how China or Russia reacted to it.

By providing one-sided analyses, these studies ignore how states' strategic choices are influenced by the behavior of other actors. For example, how have US technology sanctions against China shaped Beijing's strategy to develop its own semiconductor industry? Such dynamics cannot be fully understood without a comparative framework.

• Neglecting the Strategies of Middle Powers

Grand strategy studies have generally focused on the great powers (the US, China, Russia), while the strategic adjustment mechanisms of medium-sized powers (Turkey, India, Brazil, South Africa) have not been sufficiently examined. For example:

- Turkey's balancing policy in the NATO-Russia-China triangle is often presented as an "anomaly" and not subjected to a comparative analysis with other countries adopting similar strategies (e.g. India's QUAD-Russia-China balancing).

- Brazil's economic cooperation with China and its political tensions with the United States are usually discussed in the context of Latin America, but studies on its similarities with other "continental powers" such as Indonesia or South Africa are scant.

This deficiency weakens the claim of "universality of grand strategy". If grand strategy theory applies only to great powers, it is incapable of explaining the behavior of medium-sized states.

• Lack of Interdisciplinary Approach

Grand strategy studies have generally been limited to the disciplines of International Relations (IR) and military strategy, and economics, technology policies and sociological factors have not been sufficiently integrated. For example:

- While China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is generally treated as a geopolitical project, its debt diplomacy impact on local economies (such as the Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka) is not sufficiently emphasized in strategic analyses.

- New areas such as artificial intelligence and cybersecurity have not been addressed in an integrative manner in modern studies, as they are not included in classical grand strategy theories (Clausewitz or Mahan).

The Need for a Comparative and Multidisciplinary Approach

These deficiencies in the existing literature indicate that grand strategy studies need a more comparative, regionally focused and interdisciplinary approach. In particular, the following steps can be taken:

• Studies comparing the strategic behaviors of medium-sized powers (e.g., Turkey-India-Brazil's multipolar balance policies).

- Integration of technological and economic strategies into grand strategy (e.g., the impact of chip wars on military strategy).
- Models measuring the impact of great power competition on medium-sized actors (e.g., the reflection of US-China tensions on Indonesia's or Vietnam's defense spending).

Such an approach, will make grand strategy theory more comprehensive and dynamic, helping us understand the strategic behaviors of not only great powers but also medium-sized actors.

It will focus on the basic assumptions of realist theory in grand strategy analysis, but will also provide a more comprehensive framework by taking support from liberal institutionalism and structuralist approaches. While considering the concept of "strategic balance" from a realist perspective to explain the strategic behavior of medium-sized powers in the face of great power competition, it will also include factors such as economic dependency and institutional diplomacy in the analysis.

Realist Foundation: Balance of Power and National Interest

Realism is the most widely used theoretical approach in grand strategy studies and will form the main axis of this study. The basic assumptions of the realist perspective are as follows:

- States pursue power to survive in an anarchic international system.
- Great power competition shapes the strategic preferences of medium-sized actors.
- Balance of power and alliance policies are the basic strategic tools of states.

Reasons for using the realist approach in this study:

- The "balancing" and "pacifying" strategies of medium-sized powers against great powers are the main discussion topics of classical realist theory (Morgenthau) and neorealism (Waltz). For example:
  - Turkey's continued NATO membership while making the S-400 agreement with Russia is a realistic example of the "partial balancing" strategy.
  - India's participation in QUAD and its stay in BRICS can be interpreted as "flexible alignment" in the multipolar system.
- Security dilemma and deterrence are of critical importance in explaining the defense policies of medium-sized powers. For example:

- Brazil's militarization efforts in the Amazon region are a reflection of the struggle for regional hegemony.

However, due to the shortcomings of classical realism (ignoring economic factors and institutional dynamics), the analysis needs to be supported by other theories.

Liberal Institutionalism: Economic Dependency and Institutional Diplomacy

Liberal institutionalism argues that states act not only in power struggles but also in economic interests and international institutions. In this study:

- The commercial dependencies of medium-sized powers with great powers (e.g. Brazil's agricultural exports to China) will be analyzed from a liberal economic political perspective.
- The function of institutions such as BRICS, ASEAN and NATO in providing room for maneuver for medium-sized powers will be examined.

For example, Turkey's remaining in NATO despite its energy purchases from Russia demonstrates the role of institutional dependency in balancing realistic security concerns.

Constructivism: The Role of Identity and Norms

The constructivist approach emphasizes the influence of identity, norms, and historical perceptions on the strategic choices of states. In this study:

- Turkey's claim to regional leadership based on its Ottoman heritage can be addressed through a constructivist perspective.
- India's "non-aligned movement" tradition has shaped its post-Cold War foreign policy.

For example, Brazil's identity as the "spokesperson of the South" leads to its own diplomacy in its relations with China and the US.

Conclusion

A multidimensional approach based on realism but also including liberal and structuralist elements is needed in contemporary grand strategy analysis.

- Realism is the most appropriate theory to explain the basic dynamics of grand strategy, such as power struggle and security concerns.

- Liberal institutionalism deepens the analysis by adding the role of economic dependency and diplomacy.
- Structuralism allows us to understand behavioral motivations by taking historical and cultural factors into account.

The strategic behavior of medium-sized powers is shaped not only by the balance of power, but also by economic interests, institutional affiliations and identity politics. Therefore, an integrative model is to be adopted instead of a single theoretical approach in grand Strategy studies.

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THE EVOLUTION OF INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY SERVICES AFTER WORLD WAR II: A TESTIMONY TO PERPETUAL CHANGE

Relja ŽELJSKI

National Security Academy, Belgrade (Serbia)
relliusmc@yahoo.com, ORCID: 0009-0001-2848-3564

Dragan ŽIVALJEVIĆ

National Security Academy, Belgrade (Serbia)
zivaljevic@gmail.com, ORCID: 0009-0005-3829-4344

Abstract: World War II, with all its consequences, played a pivotal role in establishing the organizational, personnel, methodological, and professional-value foundations upon which, despite a broad spectrum of mutual differences and specificities, contemporary intelligence and security services around the world continue to operate. Wise and responsible state leadership, primarily through assessing the scope and limitations of intelligence and counterintelligence operations as crucial instruments in warfare, drew essential lessons from the period following 1945 and embarked on the creation of services capable of making the expected contributions in the decades that followed. Such an approach significantly influenced the ultimate outcome of the Cold War, which was succeeded by new recompositions within the entire intelligence community and individual agencies. This paper aims to examine and elucidate the stages in the evolution of intelligence and security services over the past eighty years, tracing their development up to their present-day configurations.

Keywords: World War II, intelligence and security services, Cold War, international terrorism, Russo-Ukrainian conflict

The history of intelligence and security services demonstrates that major and transformative events in the development or decline of our civilization have exerted a profound and far-reaching influence on the evolution and structuring of these highly specialized state institutions, often shrouded in

secrecy and prejudice, which should, whenever possible, be dispelled through scientific methods. Undoubtedly, "the two world wars left an indelible mark on the further development of intelligence work" (Parezanović, Željski, Stajić, 2024, p. 45), with World War II and its repercussions playing a pivotal role in shaping the organizational, personnel, methodological, and value-based foundations upon which modern intelligence services operate across various regions of the world, despite their considerable differences and distinct characteristics.

In a broader sense, this process began even before World War II, as "during the era of imperialism and the heightened militarization of developed capitalist states, intelligence services underwent further refinement, with their tasks correspondingly expanding. In particular, states with totalitarian regimes (Japan, Germany, and Fascist Italy), developed their intelligence structures to the maximum extent in line with their expansionist ambitions. Their doctrine of intelligence activity, known as „total espionage", remains unparalleled in modern society for its comprehensiveness and ruthlessness in applying the principle that „the end justifies the means". These countries established powerful and multifaceted organizations tasked with complex missions and granted extensive authority. The operational experiences of these regimes practically laid the foundation for the functioning of contemporary intelligence services, particularly those of major powers with imperialist and hegemonic aspirations" (Stajić, 2021, p. 233).

Perhaps the most illustrative example of how the events during and immediately following World War II influenced intelligence and security services, as well as intelligence activities more broadly activities that long predate the institutionalization of modern intelligence agencies, is the establishment of what remains the world's most formidable intelligence structure: the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). This process was formalized through the passage of the National Security Act of 1947 (https://www.cia.gov/legacy/cia-history/). Decision-makers in the United States, after evaluating the operations of the CIA's predecessors, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the Central Intelligence Group (CIG), particularly regarding their effectiveness in organizing and coordinating intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination (including intelligence-sharing with allies and strategic deception against adversaries), recognized significant weaknesses but also pragmatically acknowledged the advantages and opportunities that a modern, well-structured intelligence agency could provide. The key element of this new agency, as emphasized in its name,

was its centralization. This proved to be a strategic decision of paramount importance, positioning the United States, its political leadership, and its entire intelligence-security apparatus for the Cold War era, a period of intense geopolitical confrontation in which the U.S. faced a formidable adversary: the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had already organized its intelligence apparatus, most famously known as the KGB (Committee for State Security), into a centralized structure well before the CIA's official establishment.

Other nations, including socialist Yugoslavia, were also compelled to align their intelligence services with the post-war global intelligence landscape. Yugoslavia's intelligence service underwent multiple structural and organizational transformations, ultimately evolving into Serbia's present-day Security Information Agency (BIA), whose historical roots can be traced back to the Confidential Police Affairs Department, established in 1899 within the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Kingdom of Serbia. This adaptation process is aptly described by British intelligence historian Keith Jeffery as an "adjustment to peace" (Jeffery, 2016, p. 577). Essentially, for many intelligence services worldwide, this transition marked a sharp shift from wartime operations to peacetime functions, though it quickly became evident that this new operational mode was, in fact, defined by the Cold War's strategic framework. This necessitated not only organizational and logistical modifications but, more importantly, ideological, doctrinal, and strategic adaptations. Additionally, the post-war period was characterized by the emergence of new states, such as Israel, which necessitated the establishment of new intelligence structures. In Israel's case, this resulted in the creation of the national intelligence agency known as the Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations, far better known as the Mossad. Over the following eight decades, Mossad would distinguish itself as one of the most effective and renowned intelligence organizations, playing a pivotal role in what is loosely termed the international intelligence community.

The evolutionary trajectory of intelligence and security services in the decades following World War II, viewed from a global perspective, was largely characterized by continuity, with expected exceptions and regional peculiarities. Rather than abrupt disruptions, the process unfolded in accordance with the logic of evolving security threats, shifts in international relations, and advances in modern technologies, which have always played a crucial role in the enhancement of intelligence systems. The first significant "seismic shift" in this regard occurred in the final phase and aftermath of the Cold War, marked by German reunification and the dissolution of the

Soviet Union (and, from a regional perspective, the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia). These geopolitical transformations led to a substantial reassessment of intelligence priorities, operational methods, and strategic objectives, as well as corresponding organizational and personnel changes. As in previous periods of transition, the primary objective of intelligence and security services was to adapt to the new geopolitical landscape and security environment at global, regional, and national levels.

The next major milestone with far-reaching consequences for the global intelligence and security community, arguably the most significant since World War II, was the terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001. From that moment onward, counterterrorism, particularly the fight against jihadist terrorism, became the paramount priority for the majority of intelligence services. Some agencies, such as Russia's, had already shifted their focus in response to domestic security dynamics, specifically the brutal wave of Islamist terrorism that engulfed the Russian Federation, culminating in the First and Second Chechen Wars in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Željski, 2018, p. 19).

This redefinition of priorities had profound and lasting consequences, permanently altering the configuration of numerous national intelligence agencies and the broader intelligence community. Agencies that had previously lacked dedicated counterterrorism units established specialized divisions focused exclusively on combating international terrorism and its local networks. In agencies that had already possessed such capacities, substantial human and material resources were redirected to counterterrorism efforts. Highly experienced professionals, particularly field operatives and analysts who had spent years working on intelligence and counterintelligence operations, rapidly transitioned to this emerging and increasingly critical area of intelligence work.

Certainly, the most profound and far-reaching transformation resulting from the shift in focus toward combating international terrorism has been the unprecedented expansion of cooperation among intelligence and security services. This development has led to an openness toward foreign counterpart institutions to an extent that would have been unimaginable only a few decades earlier. Recognizing the undeniable reality that Islamist terrorism knows no borders, possesses an almost global reach, and has the capability to rapidly generate real and immediate security threats at diverse locations worldwide through the cooperation and coordinated actions of groups and individuals of different nationalities and citizenships but united

by the same ideological convictions (Živaljević, 2022), intelligence and security services had to adjust their response to reflect this reality, adopting an inherently international character. Consequently, a continuous series of joint activities ensued, most frequently in a bilateral format but also through various multilateral bodies established to enhance the effectiveness of countering the common threat.

As the human inclination toward expansion in all fields and the broadening of the context in which one lives and operates is an intrinsic trait, the sustained engagement of intelligence services in counterterrorism cooperation soon led to the emergence of new topics of mutual interest. Over time, alongside counterterrorism efforts, two other areas gained prominence on the list of priorities for intelligence agencies, both in terms of their significance and the frequency and depth of international cooperation: the fight against transnational organized crime (primarily drug trafficking) and illegal migration. This focus was further reinforced by their functional interconnection with terrorism.

Beyond these evolutionary developments in intelligence and security services, the first two decades of the 21st century saw new issues rising to prominence due to broad modernization trends, technological advancements, socio-political shifts, economic fluctuations, and security dynamics. The repositioning of traditional and the emergence of new global economic actors, fluctuations in world markets, varying degrees of economic crises, disruptions in supply chains, and similar factors led to an increased focus on economic and energy security. This became even more relevant from 2019 onwards with the outbreak and escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic when concerns related to biological, environmental, and medical security began to be treated as indispensable components of national security. Consequently, intelligence and security agencies responsible for safeguarding national security were either motivated or compelled to acquire new expertise in these areas, leading to organizational and personnel restructuring.

Near the end of their nearly eighty-year-long developmental trajectory, one that effectively began toward the conclusion of World War II and its aftermath, modern intelligence and security services encountered yet another extraordinary challenge of immense scale, so complex, intense, and deep-rooted that even the involved and opposing actors cannot agree on its name. For some, it is a "special military operation", for others, the "Russia-Ukraine conflict," and for yet another group, a "war", one that, due to its characteristics, aligns closely with definitions of a "third world war". Initiated

in 2022, this conflict rapidly began exerting a profound influence on relations between intelligence services of different nations, as well as on their strategic priorities and daily operations. While it is already evident that the repercussions of these events will leave a lasting imprint on the work of intelligence agencies and serve as a foundation for new evolutionary processes in the future, it is currently impossible to predict with precision their trajectory, pace, or direction. However, even at this stage, this ongoing transformation serves as further proof of the initial premise: that the fundamental characteristic of modern intelligence-security systems is their constant and uninterrupted adaptation to socio-political and security realities.

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POLITICAL EPISTEMOLOGY AND NOOPOLITICAL STRATEGIES

Feride Zeynep GUDER

Uskudar University, Istanbul (Türkiye)
feridezeynep.guder@uskudar.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-3244-3004

Abstract: A new world order has been constructing new "cybernetic pillars" on top of the old, ossified issues by combining an idealistic and realistic viewpoint (Pasquinelli, 2023). International diplomacy has changed from top-down to bottom-up methods to address these enduring issues. The "World Order Models Project" was developed by Richard Falk and is a model for a new system of world order (Falk, 2021). Based on Sophos 1, Sophos 2, and Big Data, respectively, Falk (2002) argues that AI technologies can be viewed as "wisdom technology" and have advanced to a new level of political discourse as Noopoliticus. The foundation of noopoliticus is the deliberate dissemination and management of knowledge. Noopoliticus focuses on controlling ideas, information, and cultural narratives rather than traditional political power, which is based on control over material resources. This change emphasizes how important information technologies are becoming in determining societal power structures. In addition to discussing the roles of strong and soft powers in promoting perpetual peace and conflict resolution techniques, this study seeks to critically examine these new political discourses as the final shifts in international relations. Recent instances of these shifts include the speeches of Elon Musk and Donald Trump, as well as their use of X (Twitter) as digital diplomacy. The international order has been falling into the hands of algorithmic governmentality based on the latest form of neoliberalism and autocracy, notwithstanding their seeming existence as political actors. Everything could be changed by this new algorithmic civilization. Within the framework of noopoliticus as a political epistemology, this study will provide the current understanding of these emerging political discourses.

Keywords: Algorithmic Governmentality, Big Data, Noopoliticus, Political Epistemology, Wisdom Technology.

Introduction

A new global order has been building new "cybernetic pillars" on top of the old challenges that have been ossified in the process of synthesizing a realistic and idealistic worldview (Pasquinelli, 2023). Bottom-up strategies have supplanted the conventional top-down approach to international diplomacy in order to solve these deeply rooted problems. Richard Falk started this "World Order Models Project" with the goal of creating a model for a new global order system (Falk, 2021). In the context of politics, artificial intelligence technologies could be regarded as "wisdom technology" (Falk, 2002). The political debate has also advanced to a new level thanks to these technologies, as demonstrated by Noopoliticus, which is based only on Sophos 1, Sophos 2, and Big Data. The political philosophy of noopolitics is based on the deliberate manipulation and distribution of information.

The aim of this study is to investigate the roles of strong and soft forces in strategies for preserving peace and resolving conflicts, as well as to develop a critical viewpoint on these new political discourses as the last developments in international relations. The discourses of Donald Trump and Elon Musk, as well as their use of X (Twitter) as a form of digital diplomacy, are examples of these more recent changes. Even though they appear to be political actors, algorithmic governmentality—which is based on platform capitalism and the latest incarnation of neoliberalism—has been taking control of the global order.

Old agendas in new worlds and parameters

One of the main forces underlying the establishment of social organizations throughout human history has been the accumulation of knowledge. However, the three steps of knowledge accumulation—information gathering, storage, and application—have changed as a result of the advancement of artificial intelligence. The term "noopolitics" is used to characterize the power structures involved in the creation and dissemination of knowledge in order to understand the impact that information has on the social, political, and ethical spheres. However, "procedural epistemology" focuses on the methods and norms that are employed in the process of expressing, validating, and then applying knowledge. When combined, these concepts demonstrate the complex dynamics at play in artificial intelligence memory systems and the significant social repercussions these systems have.

Noopoliticuss as Political Ideology and Noopolitical Strategies and Soft Power

The political philosophy of noopolitics is based on the deliberate manipulation and distribution of information. The control of concepts, data, and cultural narratives is the main focus of noopolitics. This perspective is in opposition to traditional political power, which is predicated on material resource control. This shift shows how information technologies are playing a bigger role in shaping society's power structures. Noopolitical tactics in the framework of international relations center on the manipulation of knowledge and ideas in order to exert influence and mold international interactions. Soft power, which encompasses cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy, and the strategic use of media to create and project certain national images, is becoming more and more linked to these tactics (Nye, 2004).

Noopolitical tactics concentrate on influencing opinions and beliefs through discourse rather than using economic or military force. For instance, this change has been most noticeable in the foreign policy of superpowers like China, Russia, and the United States. The United States, for instance, has long employed cultural diplomacy to spread its ideals overseas, using media, educational exchanges, and Hollywood movies to project an image of a liberal, democratic powerhouse. On the other hand, China has used its Confucius Institutes to disseminate its political and cultural beliefs, establishing itself as a future world leader (Kurlantzick, 2007). In response, Russia has projected its power in the post-Soviet sphere and beyond through the employment of information warfare and state-run media as instruments of noopolitical strategy (Galeotti, 2017).

There are serious concerns regarding the ethical ramifications of the growing use of soft power and noopolitical tactics. The lines between authentic cultural interchange and political propaganda are becoming increasingly hazy as governments work to influence public opinion and control perceptions. The ethical obligations of governments, media outlets, and international organizations to control and protect the dissemination of information in the global public sphere are also called into question by the deliberate use of discourse and the media.

Algorithmic Governmentality and Wisdom Technologies

AI decision-making is impacted by social prejudice, which emphasizes the need for ethical and political research (Pasquale, 2015). The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a proactive approach to AI regulation,

aims to ensure transparency, accountability, and equity. Other nations' sluggish adoption of comprehensive AI governance frameworks has prompted calls for international cooperation and standardization. As AI continues to have an impact on society, ethical frameworks must be established to ensure responsible AI development and deployment. The continued advancement of AI's role in society's development will have both positive and negative repercussions.

Procedural Epistemology

From a procedural epistemological standpoint, the focus shifts to how artificial Luciano Floridi (2014) examines how artificial intelligence affects information verification standards in "The Fourth Revolution," highlighting the moral obligations that come with new technologies. The persistence of social injustice has been brought to light by research on algorithmic decision-making systems such as search engines (Noble, 2018). AI's procedural memory enables systems to continuously learn and adapt, but political decisions are made about what data should be included and what shouldn't. Crawford (2016) highlights the importance of transparency and equity in the development of AI in his work on algorithmic responsibility. The relationship between procedural epistemology and noopoliticus in AI, specifically in criminal justice systems, has been highlighted by a recent study. There are concerns about the dominance of big tech companies over AI knowledge, and laws are required to increase public access to AI. According to the idea of communal intelligence, cooperative methods may produce more equal outcomes in the creation of artificial intelligence.

Political Epistemology

The study of how knowledge and power are intertwined in political life is known as political epistemology. It emphasizes the intricacies of political life as well as the relationship between science and power. The discipline is linked to historical epistemology, which links political philosophy and knowledge theory (Binns, 2018). Prominent political epistemologists Thomas Hobbes and Robert Boyle provide excellent examples of how knowledge and political life are intertwined. Hobbes showed how knowledge and political life are intertwined by rejecting factual knowledge and proposing a rational scientific truth.

Omodeo (2019) examines the idea of political epistemology, a novel method that seeks to comprehend the group goals underlying scientific discoveries. He contends that the subject of which collective motivations underlie scientific endeavors is frequently overlooked by intellectuals who are formally tasked with discussing science. This is a result of their blindness to the hidden agendas present in every discourse, especially those whose purposes and objectives are hidden behind assertions of abstract universality and indifference. Omodeo adheres to Antonio Gramsci's definition of ideology as cultural politics, which centers cultural analysis around history, human dignity, and subjectivity. Instead of merely structurally reducing culture to objective mechanics and functions, this method centers cultural analysis around history, human dignity, and subjectivity.

Political epistemology begins by assessing the ideological roots and consequences of historical and cultural conceptions of science and history writing. The disciplinary affiliations of scholars who write on science range from the history of science to the sociology of knowledge, the philosophy of science, and their sub-fields, such as SSK (sociology of scientific knowledge), the anthropology of science, STS (science, technology, and society studies), and social epistemology. Political epistemology, influenced by Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser's perspectives, is crucial for understanding the interplay between science, ideology, and society. It bridges the gap between structural analysis and political comprehension, distinguishing between ideology and science and exploring methods and theoretical categories.

In knowledge theory, Edmund Husserl's political and historical epistemologies are critical methods that address the ideological difficulties of positivism and contest constructivist views. By concentrating on the discourse-object relationship and the political significance of reality, political epistemology questions constructivist ideas. A subfield of knowledge theory called historical epistemology seeks to understand science in light of historical and cultural contexts, eschewing positivistic assumptions and emphasizing the research topic and the objects of study.

New political discourses

The interrelated functions of procedural epistemology and noopolitics in any attempt to understand the evolving discourses in international relations. These frameworks offer useful instruments that can be applied to

analyze the manner in which artificial intelligence technologies affect knowledge creation, dissemination, and application in society.

The Role of Ideology, Hegemony, and Political Epistemology

According to Gramcian theory, hegemony is the prevailing culture and ideology that, with the aid of the state and media, molds society. Political epistemology examines how these relationships are correlated. When Elon Musk's speech is examined in this context, it becomes clear that his ideology has influenced his inventions and technological breakthroughs. Trump, as a political figure, uses a type of ideological control that aims to impose a vision of society based on a particular set of values, whether they are based on traditional family structures, racial purity, or technological advancement, just as ideology is influencing scientific endeavors and societal structure. In each instance, the prevailing ideologies—whether related to technology, race, or families—are portrayed as both normal and essential to the survival of society. This illustrates how science and technology are used as instruments to uphold the predominance of particular cultural and political norms. Similar to eugenics advocacy, Trump's demand for the maintenance of WASP family values, and Musk's drive for technological advancement, these ideologies all emphasize the significance of regulating human development and reproduction in order to maintain or strengthen social institutions.

According to political epistemology, these political leaders utilize science to further their own ideological objectives, even though science and technology are frequently presented as impartial, objective solutions to societal issues. Examples of how scientific pursuits can be guided by ideological imperatives include Musk's dependence on biotechnology and artificial intelligence to affect human evolution, Trump's selective promotion of family values, and the application of eugenics as a scientific solution to social problems.

Donald Trump's Advocacy for Family Values and WASP Ideology

Trump's emphasis on traditional family values and the preservation of American identity, rooted in White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) culture, is seen as a form of social engineering. His focus on the nuclear family and the nuclear family is seen as essential for maintaining societal stability. Trump's advocacy for WASP values can also be linked to eugenic ideologies, where certain genetic traits and cultural practices are more desirable than others.

Trump's statements, especially those from his 2016 presidential campaign, express a fundamental conviction that the weakening of "traditional" family values and cultural norms is the cause of society's degradation. This argument makes clear reference to an ideology that views particular family arrangements and modes of reproduction as essential to the survival of particular ethnic and social groups.

Elon Musk's Advocacy for Larger Families and the Neuralink Project

Leading businessman Elon Musk, who is well-known for his space exploration and technology endeavors, has also joined the discussion on social engineering and eugenics, but from a more technological and futuristic perspective. Musk believes that human reproduction is essential to the survival of the human species, which is reflected in his remarks regarding the necessity for people to have more children, especially in light of dropping birth rates (Musk, 2020, p. 212).

Musk has urged individuals to have larger families in an effort to buck the trend of population decline, which he claims is one of the biggest challenges to civilization. Musk's focus on big families is related to a type of social engineering wherein it is believed that the prosperity of society as a whole depends on the procreation of people who can guarantee humankind's economic and technological progress.

Furthermore, Musk's idea that scientific innovation has the power to drastically alter human evolution is reflected in his Neuralink project, which aims to combine artificial intelligence with human brains. As a type of bioengineering, Neuralink specifically aims to improve human cognitive capacities, hence producing a new human species that can adapt to and prosper in a technologically driven future. Shaw's eugenic ideas, in which the "unfit" are left behind, and those who can adapt or are thought to be genetically superior are allowed to thrive, are consistent with this vision of human development through technological intervention.

According to Musk, in order for humanity to survive in a world that is changing quickly, it will be necessary to improve its biological capacities in addition to increasing the pace of reproduction. In a way, this links the use of technology to produce a "superior" human race to eugenics and social engineering (Pernick, 1996). According to Musk's rhetoric, humans will be valued in the future not only for their inherent traits but also for their capacity to adapt, procreate, and survive in the face of swift ecological and technological change.

The Dystopian Nature of Society Engineering

Both Musk and Trump, who are political allies, portray their ideas of society as answers to today's issues, yet the results of their philosophies have gloomy ramifications. Trump's support for maintaining conventional family structures and cultural standards may cause people who don't fit these molds to be marginalized. Despite being based on technological optimism, Musk's vision of the future runs the risk of fostering a society in which the wealthy and powerful are the only ones with access to technology advancements like Neuralink, thus widening socioeconomic gaps.

Conclusion

"Political epistemology" is the study of how political knowledge is created, disseminated, and verified. Currently, political epistemologies have changed in the modern world. A focus on the creation of narratives, symbols, and ideologies that influence the global political landscape has been added to the conventional, state-centric understanding of power. The way political knowledge is shared, absorbed, and used has changed dramatically as a result of media, communication technology, and digital platforms.

Diverse narratives and modes of knowing are being incorporated into political knowledge, which is changing away from Western liberal democratic values. The emergence of alternative facts and fake news threatens established sources of political information, necessitating a nuanced understanding of global power relations (McNair, 2017).

A major change in the conduct of international relations in the twenty-first century may be seen in the convergence of soft power, noopolitical tactics, and new political epistemologies. The power of ideas, narratives, and media becomes more and more significant as the world gets more linked and complex. Discourse analysis shows how noopolitical tactics are used to influence opinions and behavior around the world and provide insightful information about how soft power works as an ideological influence tool. The future of international relations will continue to be greatly influenced by the strategic use of language, discourse, and knowledge as the globe enters the digital age.

Different societal visions based on eugenics, technological advancement, and the preservation of particular cultural or racial standards are presented in Donald Trump's and Elon Musk's speeches and public declarations. Although each individual takes a distinct stance on the problem of societal

engineering, their discourses all discuss the use of science and ideology as instruments to influence society. A dystopian future where human life is only valued for its utility and social engineering is used to maintain specific power structures could result from the realization of such ideals. These discussions urge us to think about the ethical ramifications of political ideology in determining our future and serve as a reminder of the perils of employing science and technology to support such beliefs.

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THE CHANGING ATTITUDE OF *THE TIMES* TO THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S WAR OF RESISTANCE AGAINST JAPANESE AGGRESSION

Zhang WEI

The Institute of World History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijnig (China)
zhang_wei@cass.org.cn

Abstract: The September 18th Incident and the July 7th Incident are two major landmark events in the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. Both events received extensive coverage in *The Times*. The attitude of *The Times* changed from condoning Japan's aggression to growing disgust at its behavior. This change of attitude shows that by the time the Chinese people's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression broke out in full swing, China's international public opinion environment had gradually improved.

Keywords: *The Times*, September 18th Incident, July 7th Incident, Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, framing analysis.

With the further expansion of the international community in the 20th century, the mass media is also moving towards a higher level. With the further popularization of newspapers and the emergence of new media such as radio and television, the influence of these mediums in the field of international relations continues to expand. It can be said that mass communication has become an indispensable part of modern international relations.

The September 18th Incident (1931) was a major event in which Japan shattered the Versailles-Washington System by force and broke the international balance of power in East Asia and the Pacific. The Japanese army occupied the entire northeast China in less than five months, thus opening the prelude to the armed invasion of China. The July 7th Incident (1937) was a further expansion of Japanese operations in North China and a sign of the beginning of the Chinese people's all-out War of Resistance.

Britain was one of the Western powers with great interests in China and had extensive influence on international affairs at that time. As an important British media, *The Times* paid great attention to the changing situation in East Asia during this period.

On the basis of comprehensively collating the relevant reports and comments of *The Times*, this paper will compare the reports of *The Times* in the two incidents by using the method of framing analysis in order to understand the changing attitude of the Western media when the war gradually escalated.

Themes Setting

The Times' response to the September 18th Incident was swift. The Japanese army began its military operation at 10:20 p.m. on September 18, and the news of the Sino-Japanese conflict could be read in *The Times* on September 19. During the five months of the Japanese military operation in northeast China, *The Times* published 147 related articles, including 132 news reports and 15 editorials. The themes set up by *The Times* during the September 18th Incident are various, among which the most important is the military conflicts between Chinese and Japanese troops in northeast China, which has been the focus of the newspaper for a long time, and the number of reports on this theme is close to 1/3 of the total coverage.

A close second theme was the Chinese student protests. During these five months, the newspaper's reporters have always played up the student marches, petitions, and demonstrations as highly newsworthy material. In addition, the activities of the League of Nations and relevant people in Britain and the United States are often reported.

In dealing with the July 7th Incident, the newspaper adhered to its characteristics of timeliness, and only one day after the incident broke out, it began to publish articles on the military conflicts. According to incomplete statistics, from July 9th, 1937, to the end of July, when the Japanese Army finally occupied the cities of Peiping and Tianjin, the number of related articles was 21, including 19 news reports and 2 editorials. This has reached an average of one report per day.

Compared with the September 18th Incident, the theme setting of the newspaper in the July 7th Incident was relatively simple, and the reporters almost devoted all their energy to reporting the war between the two sides, with a small mention of Song Zheyuan, the military leader of the Peiping and Tianjin at that time, and basically did not involve the reaction of the

Chinese people, the League of Nations and the local residents. The only increased focus was on the British government's diplomatic activities during the incident.

Keynote and Keywords

At the time of the September 18 Incident, *The Times* did not consider the Japanese military action to be aggressive and pointed out that the provocative behavior of the Chinese army was also a major factor in the Japanese action. The various protests organized by Chinese people, especially students, and the wave of boycott of Japanese goods and hostility toward the Japanese were, in the view of *The Times*, totally barbaric acts carried out by a group of disorderly people, and China was breeding a dangerous anti-foreign sentiment. The newspaper also sympathized with the situation and suffering of the Japanese in China.

In addition, the newspaper's account of Chinese and Japanese rule in Northeast China suggested that the main responsibility for causing the so-called Manchurian trouble rested on the Zhang Xueliang's government," which, by depreciating the currency and imposing the most oppressive taxation, bled the country white and turned what should be a magnificent land of promise for peasant proprieties into a land of bond slaves for the benefit of military adventures". On the contrary, after Japan took the privileges of northeast China, the wealth of South Manchuria, the Anfeng Railway, and the Liaodong Peninsula, which were controlled and protected by Japan, continued to grow.

The coverage of the July 7th Incident, on the other hand, has changed markedly in the keynote. In its International News column of July 10, 1937, the newspaper pointed out that it was because the Japanese were constantly conducting military exercises in front of the Chinese army that military clashes occurred. Compared with the earlier period, military reports in the later period of the July 7th Incident showed a more significant change in attitude. On July 27, when the Japanese army was about to launch a full-scale offensive to seize the cities of Peiping and Tianjin, *The Times* said with a slight warning that China generally does not want war, and the outcome of the present situation depends on whether the Japanese side is determined to provoke an incident. In a summary article published on July 29, the newspaper described the incident as the most serious crisis since the September 18th Incident in 1931, and said that it had clearly demonstrated Japan's economic and territorial ambitions.

This shift in attitude is also evident in the handling of popular protests in China. News reports during the period of September 18th Incident were uniformly negative about the reaction of the people and presented a litany of images of China's "mob." When the July 7th Incident happened, although there were still various forms of protests across the country, the reporters of *The Times* basically only mentioned them slightly in their reports, without adding any rendering, which reflected from one side that the newspaper had basically recognized the legitimacy of the protests.

News Source

News sources are one of the important bases for evaluating whether a news report is credible. During the September 18th Incident, there was an imbalance in the news sources of *The Times* reporting on the Far East in favor of the Japanese. The Japanese aggression took place mainly in northeast China, but the great majority of coverage of such military operations came from Tokyo, and China-based journalists produced relatively little during this period. The newspaper relied heavily on statements by Japanese government officials, while speeches by Chinese government leaders were rarely published.

By the time of the July 7th Incident, *The Times* was more active in the selection of news sources and reached a relatively balanced state between Japan and China. Since North China(including Peiping and Tianjin) has been the main base for Western journalists in China, they have easier access to information. The news from Peiping and Tokyo was evenly divided, and the number of news from Nanjing and Shanghai increased significantly in the later period of the incident. Unlike in the past, newspapers in this period rarely published the full text of various contradictory statements issued by the Japanese Foreign Ministry and War Ministry, and they carried more of the voice of the Chinese government leaders.

Editorial

Editorial is the official voice of a newspaper, which reflects the newspaper's clear attitude towards news events to a large extent and is also an important means to exert direct influence on readers.

The Times' editorials during the September 18th Incident were largely in line with the keynote of news reports, if not more bare-faced. It saw the Japanese military action as a form of revenge against the Chinese army and

people and considered Zhang Xueliang's order not to resist wise. *The Times* maintained that the domestic order in China at that time was too chaotic to form a strong central government, and the treaties with foreign countries could not be fully implemented, so there was a general distrust of China. *The Times* even suggested that the conflict with Japan might have been avoided if the Manchurian government had separated itself from the Nanjing government.

The commentary of *The Times* on the July 7th Incident was more comprehensive and mature, and it no longer doubted Japan's ambition of aggression and expansion, thus forming a strong pressure on Japan in public opinion. In the early days of the incident, the newspaper still focused on peacekeeping but also issued a warning to Japan that the Japanese army could usually win but never conquer. The editorial said that the fruits of victory in North China only meant heavy financial and military burdens. Moreover, such an occupation would not enhance Japan's influence in the region; it would only lead it into a spiral of massive economic boycotts.

On July 22, *The Times* published an editorial entitled "Sabre-Rattling", which clearly defined the nature of the Japanese action and expressed support for the British Foreign Secretary Eden's announcement in the House of Commons to postpone trade negotiations with Japan. The author gave a positive evaluation of Chiang Kai-shek's Lushan speech, believing that it was a resolute and reasonable statement. The editorial pointed out that the incident had embarrassed the world, that even the Nazi press had taken an objective view of the incident, and that Britain, while sympathetic to the problems facing Japan, could not agree with the Japanese attitude towards war as a game.

Conclusion

The Times incorporated September 18th Incident into its consistent imperial narrative and regarded the Sino-Japanese conflict as a dispute of treaty interests between the two sides. Related reports and editorials emphasized Japan's rights and ignored China's plight. From the point of view of defending national interests, *The Times* failed to note that the mortal threat to Britain's position in China was no longer the Chinese nationalist movement but the imperialist action of Japan.

By the time of the July 7th Incident, *The Times* had a relatively clear grasp of the changes in the international configuration of East Asia. The attitude of *The Times* changed from supporting Japan and belittling China to growing

disgust at Japanese aggression. By this time, Western media's coverage of the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression had gradually shifted in China's favor.

MOVIES AND THE WORLD WAR TWO MEMORIES IN THE UNITED STATES, SOVIET UNION, AND CHINA

Xiangyun XU

Institute of World History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing (China)
sjlsxuxy@cass.org.cn

Abstract: Movies are a powerful tool in shaping people's memories and understandings of the Second World War. Filmmaking becomes closely associated with the contexts under which directors and producers work. In the United States, Soviet Union, and China, various movies about World War Two in different time periods reflect the evolution of war narratives in these countries. While becoming increasingly contested, films that featured multinational cooperation as well as close attention to details might open a door towards a more balanced and objective war narrative.

Keywords: movies, war memory narrative, World War II, USA, Soviet Union, China.

Presenting the War Through Individuals' Eyes

The shooting of war-themed movies in the wake of World War Two largely followed the style of wartime newsreels and propaganda films. They almost exclusively focused on their respective countries' deeds and used footage from actual combats. While most films tended to shed light on the individuals, the 1950 Soviet movie *The Fall of Berlin* served to aggrandize Stalin's role during the Great Patriotic War.

Meanwhile, though, some movies from this time period left a strong impression with their innovative approach and multidimensional perspective. In the United States, 1949 *Twelve O'Clock High* presents a vivid peep into the psychological torment that bomber crews experienced. The author, Beirne Lay, used to fly ten combat missions with the 100th bomb group, so he knew exactly what they had gone through(John Fleischman,

2018). In the newly established People's Republic of China, as a tribute to the fifth National Day, 1954 *The Letter with Feathers* tells the story of how a twelve-year-old boy managed to sneak an urgent letter under the Japanese nose through bravery and wisdom. This character symbolizes the all-out Chinese efforts in its fight against the Japanese invasion, especially the guerrilla warfare. It gained international recognition as the winner of Best Film Award at the Edinburgh International Film Festival in 1955. In the Soviet Union, thanks to Khrushchev Thaw, films like 1957 *The Cranes Are Flying* and 1959 *Ballad of a Soldier* glimpse into the war's toll on the Soviet society and were well received both at home and abroad because of their resonance with the individuals(Liu, 2005).

These trailblazing films paved the way for movies of similar genres to come. 1954 *The Caine Mutiny* and 1957 *The Bridge on the River Kwai* continued to explore what bravery and chain of command actually meant in war. In China, works like 1956 *Railway Guerrilla*, 1962 *Mine Warfare*, 1963 *Boy Soldier ZhangGa*, and 1965 *Tunnel War* became household names, and lines and songs from these films turned into catchphrases in daily lives. In the Soviet Union, 1962 *Ivan's Childhood* and 1972 *The Dawns Here Are Quiet* capture the sacrifice that children and women made for the eventual victory.

The Age of Blockbusters and the Contested War Memories

The preference for individual stories began to be shadowed in the 1960s by the production of blockbusters that present a panoramic view of the campaign. Around the time period, Hollywood was producing epics like 1960 *Spartacus* and 1963 *Cleopatra*. So, when Cornelius Ryan's novels on Normandy Landing and Operation Market-Garden came out, they were sought out by film companies and turned into movies that feature epic campaigns and realistic war scenes. The fact that many actors in 1962 *The Longest Day* and 1977 *A Bridge Too Far* had been at war further served to enhance the films' claim to authenticity. Together, these two movies portrayed the Western front as turning the tide in Europe, without any reference to the Eastern front. For instance, at the very beginning of *A Bridge Too Far*, the voiceover stated that in 1944, Germany still controlled much of Europe, until D-Day changed all that. 1965 *Battle of the Bulge* and 1970 *Patton* further highlighted the Western front's significance. In *Patton*, the Soviet Union was presented as a threat that should be dealt with right after the war with Germany. It is also worth noting that among Ryan's war trilogy, only

The Last Battle which portrayed the fall of Berlin failed to make it to the silver screen, even though there was a 1967 joint American-Russian effort to do so.

Under these circumstances, in the Brezhnev era, the Soviet Union began to churn out epic war films, as epitomized by 1971 movie series *Liberation*. Starting with the Battle of Kursk in 1943 and stretching all the way to the Fall of Berlin, they vividly depict the Eastern front's fight against the Nazi Germany, including Polish and Yugoslavian resistance forces that fought alongside the Soviet troops. The movie series also contained scenes of the liberation of concentration camps in Poland. Coming out in the wake of the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, these plots and the title aimed to reiterate the significance of Soviet troops in Eastern Europe during World War Two.

While indeed depicting events on the Western front, like the Allied landing in Sicily, *Liberation* mostly used an ironic tone. For instance, they present the Sicily landing as only occurring after the victory at Kursk and emphasize that the Soviet troops rushed the attack across the Vistula River in order to relieve the Allied disaster at the Battle of Aden. While inspecting the frontline, Marshal Zhukov ran into soldiers dining on American spam. They nicknamed it "the Second Front". It may sound like a compliment to the United States' material support through the land-lease act, yet the following conversation reveals its intent for mockery. The soldier inquired into when the Second Front would materialize and quoted a proverb that said, "the last one to join the fight boasted the most after all is over". In another scene, Stalin presents a picture of Allen Dulles meeting with a German emissary and accuses the Americans of colluding with the enemy. The tradition of blockbusters was carried into the later era, as reflected in 1985's *Battle of Moscow.* Yet, as the Soviet economy went downhill in 1990, *Stalingrad* could only proceed with help from American funding under the condition of casting U.S. actors.

In the 1980s, under the influence of *Liberation*, China also started to produce its own World War Two blockbusters. In an attempt to bolster the relationship with the Nationalist Party and underline the common Chinese identity, the 1986 *Bloody Battle in Taierzhuang* depicts the Nationalist forces' fight for the first time on a mainland screen. It is said that Chiang Chingkuo himself was so touched by the movie's recognition of their contribution to the war effort that he allowed veterans to visit mainland China. 1995 *The July 7th Incident* could be seen as a sequence to the film.

Towards a More Diverse yet Controversial War Memory

As time went by, films dug out more aspects of the war and placed them under the spotlight. The war's cruelty and its toll stood out. A series of films like 1993 *Schindler's List*, 2002 *The Pianist*, and 2008 *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* focus on the Holocaust. In China, numerous movies depicted the Nanjing Massacre, which was long overshadowed in the whole war narrative.

As social movements engulfed Western societies in the 1960s, previously marginal groups like racial minorities and women made their way into history writing. The movie industry finally caught up with this trend in the past thirty years. For instance, in 1995 *The Tuskegee Airmen*, 2001 *Pearl Harbor*, 2008 *Miracle at St. Anna*, and 2012 *Red Tails*, we got to know the heroic deeds of African Americans, a group that at best appeared in snapshot as truck drivers and cooks in other films. Moreover, 2002 *Windtalkers* and 2006 *Flags of Our Fathers* shed the spotlight on Indigenous American soldiers. Previously overlooked Latinos also appear in 2014 *Fury* as a member of the tank crew. In China, 2011 *The Flowers of War* was dedicated to women in the face of war's brutality. In a nutshell, we see more movies dedicated to individual experiences rather than the overall campaign.

The revelation of more details can be seen in movies at the Pacific Theater, too. While epics like 1970 *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and 1976 *Midway* portray the Pacific War solely as a conflict between the United States and Japan, and the Chinese only appeared for a few seconds in 2001 *Pearl Harbor*; because of the Chinese involvement in production, 2019 *Midway* devotes more efforts to describe the sacrifice that Chinese people made for helping the downed American airmen. To a certain degree, this revived the tradition set by wartime movies like 1944 *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*.

However, more new details and perspectives usually mean new controversies. 2019 *Midway* caused controversy by explicitly dedicating itself to "American and Japanese sailors who fought at Midway", and stating that "the sea remembers its own". Voiced in the context of increasing American-Japanese security cooperation in the region, such statement ignores the war crimes that these very Japanese sailors committed in China. In fact, we can find similar problems with 1987 *Empire of the Sun* and 2006 *Letters from Iwo Jima*.

Similar phenomena emerged in films about the war in Europe. 2001 *Enemy at the Gates* devotes significant episodes to Soviet blocking detachments that shot anyone daring to fall back in the face of the enemy fire and claimed that Soviet soldiers went into battle at Stalingrad without sufficient weaponry. While Order No. 227 indeed existed, the movie might

have exaggerated it out of proportion. Together with the widely applauded 1998 *Saving Private Ryan* and 2001 *Band of Brothers*, the movie further underlines the Western front as the determining factor in the war that formed a strong contrast to the savage and inhuman Eastern front. In order to rebuke the above narrative, in recent years, Russia has churned out numerous films on the Eastern front. With the help of the latest graphics and special effects, these films achieved what their predecessors had to accomplish with real troops and equipment.

Controversies over the war memory aside, recent filmmaking also features international cooperation that brings up transnational stories. War was a calamity that fell equally on all human beings regardless of race and ethnicity, and humanity shined across opposing camps. For example, 2008 *The Children of Huang Shi* traces the ventures of a British war correspondent in China. Likewise, 2009 *John Rabe* tells the story of a German merchant who saved lives amidst the horrific NanJing Massacre. It is often lauded as the Chinese version of *Schindler's List*. International cooperation in filmmaking helps bring diverse perspectives into storytelling and enhances transnational understanding.

In addition to getting more nations involved, paying close attention to details and historical accuracy are also crucial for shaping the right kind of war memory. The main reason that *Saving Private Ryan*, *Band of Brothers*, and 2010 *Pacific* were such a hit is because they truly convey what the war looked like from ordinary soldiers' viewpoint to the audience. In China, the enormously popular 2005 *Drawing the Sword* features similar traits and is still considered one of the best World War Two movies China ever made so far.

To sum up, from the earliest days, movies on World War Two have always been an arena in which countries contend to promote their own versions of war memories. Yet, in light of the increasing international cooperation and close attention to details, we can still hope that a certain consensus and transnational understanding can be reached. People are delighted to see that in 2024 *Masters of the Air*, even though it is mainly about the American Eighth Air Corps bombing Germany, the film contains a bar scene in wartime London in which a lady sang about the Great Union against the enemy, and the lyrics began with "I thank the Soviets and the mighty Chinese vets". Moreover, downed American airmen in prison camps also closely followed the Soviet troops' advancement in the East Front. Let's hope that such a spirit can be carried on by future films.

THE BULGARIAN PATH TO THE AXIS POWERS

Voin BOJINOV

Institute of Historical Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,
Sofia (Bulgaria)
voinbojinov@abv.bg

Abstract: After the end of World War I, the Bulgarian Tsardom was among the defeated countries. For three years, little Bulgaria held a front of nearly 800 km, for which the nation paid a high price. The Thessaloniki Armistice, which brought the state out of the Great War, outlined a new national catastrophe, confirmed by the signing of the Treaty of Neuilly. After the treaty, Bulgaria fell into a total crisis that brought society into a civil war. Moreover, the Tsardom was in international isolation, which placed the Bulgarians, who remained outside the political borders of the motherland, at the mercy of the victors. Logically, Bulgaria became a revisionist state which wished for the destruction of the Versailles *status quo*. For many reasons, more than fifteen years after the end of World War I, the voice of Bulgaria on easing the terms of peace was not heard. This happened only after Hitler came to power in Germany, which was the beginning of the end of the Paris Peace System. On the eve of the World War II, however, it was clear that Bulgaria did not have the support of London and Paris to realize its claims. The only alternative remained Germany, led by Hitler.

Keywords: Bulgaria, Germany, Hitler, Romania, Tsar Boris III, Yugoslavia, Southern Dobruja.

The loss of World War I put the Bulgarian Tsardom on the list of countries that wanted a revision of the Versailles Peace System. The peace treaty disposed of sanctions against the Bulgarian army: it faced a reduction to 30,000 soldiers and 3,000 officers, and it had no right to possess any heavy weapons, a battle fleet, or military aviation. As such, the Tsardom became weakened and completely disarmed. In addition to the military sanctions, economic measures were also taken: Bulgaria had to pay the allies the astronomical amount of 2,25 billion gold francs (Герварт, 2017, 220-221). This led to a severe economic crisis, accompanied by complete international

isolation, especially from neighboring states (Сладек, 2019, 14). These facts were just the material and moral losses of the Bulgarian state. The Neuilly Peace Treaty essentially confirmed the Treaty of Bucharest (1913) and plunged the country into another National Catastrophe. The victors of the Great War took territories from Bulgaria (the Western Outlands, Macedonia, Dobruja, Thrace) (Генов, 2000, 27-79). As such, there was a great moral collapse in the nation, and many Bulgarians from these regions left their homes, which were now under foreign rule and escaped to what was left of Bulgaria, where they searched for physical and spiritual salvation (Петрова, 1988, 116-119).

Due to the loss in the war, a severe civil conflict broke out in the country. The old bourgeois parties were bankrupt, both politically and financially. In this post-war period, two parties began gaining popularity – the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU) and the Bulgarian Communist Party were ideological opponents (Петрова, 1999, 63-67). The main difference was the fact that the Agrarian Union was some kind of a bourgeois party that supported small private property. However, this did not stop the BANU authorities, ruled from 1920 until 1923, from confiscating the large urban and rural properties of the rich. This led to tensions between the wealthy circles in the cities and the government, on one side, and the cabinet and the BCP, on the other, because, according to the Communists, the Agrarian Union was not radical enough against the capital. These tensions culminated in the coup d'état of June 9, 1923. The military, with the support of the rich bourgeois, carried out an overthrow of the government of BANU in a bloody political change (Ристић, 2023, 63-67). After the coup, a civil war ensued. The Communist Party, instructed directly by Moscow, organized a counter-coup, which took place in September, but the riot was brutally repressed by the Junta, which cost the lives of thousands of innocent Bulgarians (Павловић, 2018, 333-334).

While the internal motivations played a significant role in the coup of June 9, 1923, another key reason for the overthrow of the Agrarian Union, was the foreign policy of the BANU cabinet. Under the government of the Union the Bulgarian state adopted a new approach to its neighbors, particularly towards the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and, Slovenes and Romania. The government of BANU decided to freeze the Macedonian and Dobrujanian questions. This allowed to the cabinet of the Agrarian Union to focus its attention on the outlet of the Tsardom to the Aegean Sea (Митев, 2014, 74-237). Consequently, the relations of Sofia with Belgrade (and Bucharest) moved in some way, but such behavior, however, was

considered treacherous by the bourgeoisie and some national elements in Bulgaria. For this reason, the coup-government altered the foreign policy of the Tsardom. The authorities in Sofia wanted to establish stronger connections with Rome since Italy was victorious in World War I, but the Versailles peace system did not satisfy Mussolini's foreign policy ambitions (Milak, 1987, 26). Such aspirations made the Balkans a prime target for Rome. Hence, there was a perception among those in power in Italy that the borders in Southeastern Europe had to change, especially those of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. This circumstance was seen by the Bulgarian government as an opportunity to raise the Macedonian question once again (Vinaver, 1985, 53). The internal Macedonian revolutionary organization (IMRO) – the illegal organization of the Bulgarians from the three parts of Macedonia, also accepted quite well the Italian attitude towards Belgrade and placed itself at the complete service of the interests of Rome. In this way, IMRO, for one more time, consolidated its reputation as a serious enemy of the Serbs and the Serbian rule in Vardar Macedonia.

The coup government in Sofia was destined to fail. From the beginning of its rule, it started bloody repressions against political opponents, mainly left-wing formations. The severe crisis in Bulgaria required a large sum of money to resolve the problems with the living conditions of the Bulgarians who left Dobruja, Macedonia, and Thrace after the end of the Great War. A decision to secure a large external loan was taken. Italy was not able to provide such large financial resources, and so the Bulgarian authorities turned to the British and French banks. However, London and Paris officials demanded the replacement of the pro-Italian cabinet in Sofia. The Bulgarian Monarch – Tsar Boris III- managed to impose a change in the coup government. The new cabinet, led by Macedonian Bulgarian Andrey Lyapchev, ended the repression against the Communists and brought the possibility of a loan from Britain and France closer. The foreign policy of Bulgaria, however, did not change much. It was still very much aligned with Italy. Sofia continued to see in Rome the only guarantee for the revision of the Balkan borders. In 1930, Tsar Boris III even married the daughter of the Italian King – Giovanna of Savoy, which was an unpleasant surprise to Britain, France, and their Balkan allies (Глигоријевић, 2010, 93).

The wedding between the Bulgarian Monarch and the Italian Princess did not help the Bulgarian foreign policy. At that time, Rome was alone against London and Paris, and Italy itself was very weak on the European political scene. This was one of the reasons that led to another change of government in Sofia, which was realized in 1931. The People's Bloc – a

coalition of parties with pro-British/French views established a cabinet. The Bulgarian public largely believed the government would bring Britain's and France's attention to Sofia's demands for a revision of the Neuilly Treaty. Because of that, the disappointment was immense when the Balkan Pact was created with the support of London and Paris (Avramovski, 1986, 115-135). The political trends in Europe, however, have already changed. Hitler rose to power in Germany with a single goal – to destroy the Versailles Peace System. A little later than a year, another coup d'état took place in Bulgaria (May 19, 1934). A far-right military Junta took control and sought to establish diplomatic connections with the Soviet Union (Спасов, 1987, 22-27). The idea of the new Bulgarian authorities was through good relations with Moscow to use its support regarding the return of Southern Dobruja.

After a few months, Tsar Boris III removed the coup-cabinet from the governance of the state, but he maintained the new line in the Bulgarian foreign policy – the return of Southern Dobruja and Western Thrace. In order to achieve these goals, a breakthrough in the Balkan Pact, which guaranteed the borders of the Balkans, was necessary. Sofia turned to Belgrade, where Milan Stojadinović had ruled with some support of Italy (Симић, 2019, 31-57). The first serious Bulgarian attempt to break the *status quo* was the signing of the Bulgarian-Yugoslavia Pact of an Eternal Friendship in early 1937. The agreement, as its title suggested, stated that the peace between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia would last forever. This ensured Yugoslav neutrality in the Bulgarian territorial dispute with Romania and Greece. In return, Belgrade received the Bulgarian promise that the Macedonian question not be brought up on the international stage (Симић, 2007, 34-45). The Yugoslavians also secured their eastern border and directed the Bulgarian revisionism towards Romania and Greece.

The second serious attempt to implement Bulgaria's peaceful revision of the Neuilly Treaty occurred at the Munich Conference, where Tsar Boris III acted as a mediator between London and Berlin. In the British capital, Tsar Boris III learned that London strongly supported the Versailles borders in the Balkans. Furthermore, the Brits were focused on preserving the integrity of Greece. This was a significant obstacle to Bulgaria's claim over Western Thrace. The Bulgarian Monarch urged Chamberlain that the Sudetenland should be given to Germany (Генчев, 1998, 23-24). Obviously, Tsar Boris III encouraged the change of borders in Central Europe in order to trigger a similar process in the Balkans. Such a wish paved the way for Bulgaria's territorial claims.

On April 19, 1939, the government in Sofia sent Directive No. 19 to its embassies abroad. It turned out to be a cornerstone of the Bulgarian foreign policy (Сирков, 1979, 127-128). The Directive, which clearly outlined the Bulgarian foreign policy interests on the eve of the German attack on Poland, said the following:

1. The Bulgarian Tsardom refused to accept the borders established by the Neuilly Peace Treaty;

2. Bulgaria could join the Balkan Pact only if Southern Dobrudja, Western Thrace, and "*possibly*" the Western Outlands would be returned to the Tsardom;

3. The authorities in Sofia would maintain a neutral foreign policy;

4. Due to the fact that 75% of the Bulgarian exports were towards Germany, it would be a difficult task to stand with London and Paris;

5. The mistrust among the World War I victors against Sofia forced Bulgaria to arm itself exclusively from Germany.

Several conclusions could be drawn from the Directive. The authorities in Sofia directly outlined their territorial claims for the first time since the end of the Great War. The first priority was the return of Southern Dobrudja from Romania. The British Embassy in Sofia proposed to the Foreign Office that Southern Dobruja had to be returned to Bulgaria in order to preserve Bulgarian neutrality (Кузманова, 1989, 268). So, the Bulgarian diplomacy knew well that Southern Dobruja would be easy to return. Next came the issue of Western Thrace, which was very difficult as the Brits supported Greece. The British authorities did not want a new state in the Mediterranean, especially one under German influence, as Bulgaria was considered to be in London. This aligned the Bulgarian aspirations of a territorial outlet to the Aegean Sea with Berlin's plans for the region. Next came the territorial claim of the Western Outlands aimed at Yugoslavia. However, the Bulgarian authorities carefully described these claims as "*possible*". The Macedonian question was deferred to future generations. Yugoslavia's neutrality was too important for Bulgaria's plans to the north and south. Last but not least, Bulgaria's economy was very closely tied to that of Germany, and in practice, Bulgaria was already in the German sphere of influence.

What happened with the implementation of Directive No. 19? The Bulgarian authorities saw the German invasion of Poland as an opportunity to act, and for tactical reasons, Sofia declared its neutrality. At the same time, diplomatic notes that expressed the desire to reclaim Southern Dobruja were

sent to Berlin, London, Paris, and even Moscow. The Great Powers were interested in satisfying Bulgaria's demands because Britain and France wanted Bulgaria to join the Balkan Pact, and the Brits and French did not mind the fact that the bill for this had to be paid by Gigurtu's Romania. On the other hand, Hitler wanted to advance his plans for the Balkans through Bulgaria. The Fuhrer focused his attention towards Bucharest, ensuring that Romanian authorities would satisfy the Bulgarian territorial claim. Simultaneously, the Soviet Union, which had already taken Bessarabia, offered Bulgaria the northern part of Dobruja as well so a Bulgarian-Soviet border could be established. This territorial bid forced Hitler to become even more insistent in his intention to satisfy the Bulgarian territorial claims. The Romanian side wanted to keep the city of Silistra and the royal palace in Balchik because the heart of the Romanian Queen was buried there, but in response, Hitler shouted before the Bulgarian Prime Minister Filov: "*We cannot talk about hearts when some heads will roll*" (Филов, 1990, 209).

On this political background, the Craiova Agreement was signed (September 7, 1940) between Bulgaria and Romania, and Southern Dobruja was returned to Bulgaria after serious German pressure on Bucharest (Калинова, 2004, 13). Immediately, Berlin wished to take the maximum of its role as mediator between Sofia and Romania and already, in the next month (October 7, 1940), proposed to the Bulgarian government to join the Axis, but Tsar Boris III was in no hurry to tie Bulgaria so close to Germany (Филов, 1990, 221). And if Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia joined the Axis in November, the Bulgarian Monarch refused Hitler's offer. Tsar Boris III hoped that not joining Germany's side would send a signal to Britain regarding some support for the Bulgarian territorial claims on Western Thrace. Italy's invasion of Greece and Berlin's increased interest in Balkan affairs proved to be roadblocks to Bulgaria's interests. Britain made Greece its outpost in the Balkans. The Greek territorial integrity was of great importance to London, and the only way to achieve a Bulgarian outlet for the Aegean Sea was to align with Berlin.

The Italian failure in Greece forced Hitler to launch the Marita Plan to secure the Balkan flank in relation to the implementation of the Barbarossa Plan. The German invasion of Greece was impossible without Bulgaria's cooperation due to political and geographical reasons. Bulgarian resistance meant only one thing – war with the Third Reich (Груев, 1991, 341-342). This made the Bulgarian joining the Tripartite Pact inevitable. Hitler made a promising offer to Tsar Boris III, expressed his security guarantees from Turkey, and assured that Yugoslavia would soon be joining the Axis as well

and that the Bulgarian state would not be threatened by any side. Berlin promised Sofia that after the victory over Greece the western part of Thrace would be returned to Bulgaria. In this way, everything was predetermined. In the final days of February 1941, the Wehrmacht entered Bulgaria as an ally. On March 1, 1941 the, Prime Minister Filov signed Bulgaria's accession to the Axis, which turned the Tsardom part of the complete revision of the Versailles peace system.

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INSPIRED BY THE SPIRIT OF INTERNATIONALISM: CHINESE IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Zhan LIANG

Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing (China)
zhan.liang@163.com

Abstract: The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) was a historical event that broke out in Europe in the first half of the 20th century but had a global impact. In February 1936, the left-wing Spanish Popular Front won the election. In July 1936, the National Army led by Franco declared an uprising, attempting to seize power by military means, overthrow the newly formed Second Republic government, and implement fascist rule. Franco's fascist behavior immediately received a large amount of military assistance from the fascist countries of Germany, Italy, Austria, and Portugal, which also hated the left-wing government; at the same time, the Spanish Republican Army also won the support of the Soviet Union and the Mexican government. The "International Brigade" was composed of communists and leftists from various countries, as well as anarchists and syndicalists, who fought side by side with them to fight against the rebellion launched by the fascists. Although the Spanish fascists eventually won, the anti-fascist spirit and internationalist enthusiasm of the "International Brigade" left a deep impression on people who love justice all over the world.

Keywords: Spanish Civil War, internationalism, China, Communist Party of China, International Brigade.

Academic circles generally believe that the Spanish Civil War was a rehearsal for World War II and a precursor to the Cold War that broke out between the two major camps of the United States and the Soviet Union after the war. Franco represented the landlords and Catholic conservative forces, while the People's Front represented the forces of democracy, reform, and progress. The forces supporting and opposing Franco formed two hostile ideological camps. Therefore, the Spanish Civil War can be said to

be a desperate battle between democracy and dictatorship, fascism and anti-fascism, imperialism and socialism, and socialism and fascism. In the eyes of both parties involved in the war, the outcome of the war will determine the future political destiny of Spain. At the beginning of the civil war, Britain, France, and the United States were afraid of the People's Front, which was backed by the Bolsheviks. The latter's victory would lead Spain to communism, so they generally took a wait-and-see attitude. The Soviet government was afraid of triggering diplomatic conflicts with Britain, France, and the United States. Although it joined the agreement not to interfere in the Spanish Civil War on the surface, it secretly transported a large amount of weapons, supplies, and military combatants to the People's Front government through various channels.

The International Brigade was a combat unit composed of volunteers from various countries recruited by the Communist International led by the Soviet Union. In addition to the Spanish Republican Army, it constituted an important international force against Franco's fascist rebels. The idea of forming the International Brigade originally came from the British left-wing writer Thomas Windlingham, and his suggestion was supported by Willy Mutzenberger, who was responsible for propaganda work in Western Europe for the Communist International. In September 1936, the Communist International established an International Brigade recruitment center in Paris. For safety reasons, every volunteer who wanted to enter the Spanish battlefield had to be screened by the Soviet intelligence agency. These volunteers came from 53 countries including France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Poland, Britain, the United States, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Canada, the Netherlands, Denmark, Hungary, Sweden, Belgium, Romania, Bulgaria, Ireland, Switzerland and other European countries, as well as Australia and New Zealand in Oceania, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, India, Vietnam and Japan in Asia, and Mexico, Cuba and Costa Rica in the Americas, with a total number of 40,000. In order to facilitate smooth communication on the battlefield, these communists, workers, left-wing intellectuals, poets, writers, and artists from all over the world were organized into different detachments according to different nationalities or languages, including the German "Thälmann Detachment", the French "Paris Commune Detachment", the American "Lincoln Detachment" and the Polish "Dubrovsky Detachment". Between November 1936 and October 1938, the International Brigade participated in the Battle of Madrid, the Battle of Jarama, the Battle of Brunel, the Battle of Belchite, and the Battle of the Ebro River. However, due to the lack of weapons, insufficient military training, communication difficulties, and internal contradictions of the left,

most of these battles ended in tragic failures, with 10,000 casualties. In September 1938, the Republican government headed by Hu An Negrin decided to disband the International Brigade in exchange for the withdrawal of the German, Italian, and French fascists from Spain and the lifting of the embargo on the Republican Army by Britain and France. This put many members of the International Brigades in a difficult situation: some who fled from the fascist countries of Germany, Italy, and Hungary were unable to return to their homeland safely and had to continue fighting in Spain; others were trapped in the Gore concentration camp in southern France after evacuating from Spain, living an inhuman life; the worst were the Belgian and Dutch volunteers, whose nationality was revoked because they served in foreign armies.

The Spanish Civil War took place at a time when the Chinese people were in an extremely severe situation in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. The common fate of facing fascist aggression naturally brought the hearts of the two peoples together. The leaders of the Communist Party of China expressed deep sympathy for the Spanish people's struggle against the Franco-fascist regime. In May 1937, Comrade Mao Zedong wrote to the Spanish people that "this war is not only for the life of the Spanish nation but also for the oppressed nations of the world." In the autumn of the same year, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, and Peng Dehuai presented a silk banner to the Chinese soldiers in the International Column supporting Spain on behalf of the Party Central Committee. The Kuomintang also paid attention to this incident. After the Xi'an Incident, Yang Hucheng's trip abroad for inspection had no purpose or plan. Under the coordination of the All-European Chinese Anti-Japanese National Salvation Association, Wu Yuzhang, the representative of the Communist Party of China to the Communist International, and the "National Salvation Times", Yang Hucheng led a team to visit Spain. During his stay in Spain, he delivered two speeches, emphasizing that China and Spain "have not only a common enemy but also a common goal," so "the two countries' war of resistance has a mutually reinforcing relationship." He published "A Letter to Spanish Youth" and "The Stages of the Spanish People's Front", calling for "the Chinese United Front and the Spanish People's Front to be the only powerful weapons against fascism.

In the context of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, all sectors of society paid attention to the Spanish Civil War. In addition to the widespread dissemination of the song "Defending Madrid", on March 2, 1938, Tao Xingzhi wrote a poem, "To the Chinese Soldiers in Spain": "The

battlefields in the east and the west were originally one, even though they were thousands of miles apart. What we are fighting for is the same resistance against aggression; what we want to implement is the same democratic proposition. You are injured for the great Spanish nation, and the blood and stone you leave behind are the red light of the God of Liberation!" The "National Salvation Times" printed this poem on a banner and asked someone to bring it to Xie Weijin and others. When the Spanish Civil War was about to end, "Liberation" summarized the experience and lessons of the Spanish People's Front for the Chinese Anti-Japanese National United Front, which was to learn from the revolutions of other countries, protect their own independence and freedom with flesh and blood, and at the same time maintain world peace and fight against the entire fascist invasion.

According to existing historical records, Chinese volunteers had various identities and joined the Spanish Civil War through different channels, reflecting the great impact of the Spanish Civil War at the time as a global anti-fascist event. According to the research of Taiwanese authors and current archival investigations, the total number of this group of Chinese volunteers cannot be fully determined, and it is estimated that no more than 20 people. There are 13 people whose identities can be confirmed (including Indonesian-Chinese), mainly overseas students, overseas Chinese, and Chinese workers working overseas. Although differences in cultural level have led to a large disparity in the survival of individual records, existing historical materials show that this group of volunteers generally recognized the spirit of internationalism; most of them participated in the left-wing labor movement and joined the Communist Party before joining the war.

The Chinese who participated in the Spanish Civil War can be roughly divided into two categories: one is the Chinese living in Europe, and the other is the volunteers who traveled from China to Spain. These Chinese are mainly distributed in different fields, such as medical teams, international brigades, and news media. Their participation not only reflects the spirit of internationalism but also shows the positive role of the Chinese in the global anti-fascist struggle. In terms of medical teams, there are records showing that at least two Chinese doctors provided medical services to the International Brigade during the Spanish Civil War. Among them, Dr. Zhang Jizheng was highly praised by the International Brigade and the Spanish people for his outstanding surgical skills and selfless dedication. In addition, there are several Chinese nurses working in field hospitals to provide nursing services for the wounded. In the International Brigade,

although the number of Chinese volunteers who directly participated in the war was small, their performance was also remarkable.

As a member of the International Brigade, Xie Weijin, a member of the Communist Party of China, returned to Yan'an afterward and continued to participate in the war of resistance. More than 20 doctors, including Canadian doctor Norman Bethune, German doctor Robert White, Indian doctor Edward, Indonesian doctor (Tio Oen Bik,1906-1970), and Austrian doctor Yan Feide, who withdrew from the Spanish Civil War, also came to China and joined the anti-Japanese war team. The arrival of the anti-fascist internationalist fighters not only provided the Chinese people with valuable combat experience in fighting against the Japanese invaders but also greatly inspired the courage of the Chinese and even the people of the world to defeat fascism. Stories like this group of internationalist fighters and friends who ran on the front line of the anti-fascist war emerged in an endless stream during the Second World War. What supported their heroic actions was the belief that light and justice must prevail and the great spirit of resisting fascism.

The great anti-fascist war illustrates the spirit of human beings uniting in times of crisis, sharing a common destiny, overthrowing evil rule, and pursuing peace and progress for mankind. When life and development suffered unprecedented setbacks, threats, and destruction brought by the war, people all over the world transcended the conflict between Eastern and Western civilizations, opened the ideological barriers of socialism and capitalism, and united under the glorious banner of anti-fascism to resist imperialist aggression. The number and scale of the army were unprecedented. On the land occupied by the enemy and on the vast sea, people of different races, skin colors, and religious beliefs in the world are united closely. They not only demonstrated strong organizational capabilities and burst out tenacious fighting power but also forged an indomitable will to resist and a heroic and fearless fighting spirit. The victory of the Second World War was the victory of the people of the world against the dark rule of fascism and the spirit of pursuing light, peace, and justice. The great anti-fascist spirit fully embodies the spirit of unity and cooperation in seeking the greatest welfare of human development by abandoning ideological differences and national self-interests at the critical moment of human destiny facing a historical turning point.

MAO ZEDONG AS AN INTERNATIONALIST: MAO ZEDONG'S ANALYSIS AND FORECASTS REGARDING WORLD WAR II

Aijun HOU

Institute of World History of the Chinese Academy of Historical Sciences, Beijing (China)
houaijun1971@126.com

Abstract: Like most modern experts on international political affairs, Mao Zedong, as a statesman, attached great importance to forecasting the international situation. He said: "Those who cannot foresee cannot be leaders." From 1931 to 1945, Mao Zedong analyzed and assessed the nature, course, stages, direction and outcome of World War II in the form of long essays, interviews, speeches and letters. Such famous essays as "On the Protracted War" and "Strategic Issues in the War of Resistance against Japan" were of great significance for guiding the Chinese people's war against Japan and established Mao's status as a strategist. The vast majority of more than 200 analyses and predictions were confirmed. This shows that Mao Zedong was not only an outstanding statesman, militarist and poet, but also a highly qualified expert on international affairs. A retrospective look at Mao's analyses and judgments on World War II will help us to gain a deeper understanding of Mao's military strategic thinking and perhaps also to better understand today's insidious international political process.

Keywords: Mao Zedong, international relations, military strategy thinking, forecasting, China.

Materials Regarding Mao's Statements on World War Two (Articles, Correspondence, and Interview)

Mao Zedong characterized the Second World War as the "Second Imperialist War" — an imperialist global conflict that began with Japan's invasion of Northeast China (Manchuria) in 1931. He viewed Japan's aggression against China as the first phase of this imperialist war. The

second phase, according to Mao, commenced in September 1939 with Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union.

Japan's occupation of Northeast China (Manchuria) marked the start of China's 14-year War of Resistance (1931–1945). Full-scale Japanese invasion began with the July 7, 1937 Marco Polo Bridge Incident, leading to the seizure of Beijing and other regions.

During the six years between the Mukden Incident (1931) and the Marco Polo Bridge Incident (1937), the CCP and Red Army were primarily engaged in military struggles against the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) in the Jiangxi Soviet. Despite these challenges, Mao closely monitored domestic and international developments, producing analytical writings on global affairs.

In April 1934 the CCP issued the "Six-Point Program for Resisting Japan and Saving the Nation"; In the same year, Mao wrote the article: "The Current Situation and the Red Army's Anti-Japanese Vanguard" (July 31, 1934); as well as "The Zhiluo Campaign and Current Tasks" (November 30, 1935), "Proclamation of the Chinese People's Red Army Anti-Japanese Vanguard" (March 1, 1936), "Strategic Issues of China's Revolutionary War" (December 1936). Mao's seminal military treatise analyzing the laws, principles, and dual nature (class struggle *and* national liberation) of revolutionary warfare. It emphasized using revolutionary war to counter counterrevolutionary war, national revolutionary war against national counterrevolutionary war, and class revolutionary war against class counterrevolutionary war.

According to the *Collected Military Writings of Mao Zedong*, Mao authored 244 works (essays, interviews, telegrams) on the Anti-Japanese War and the broader Second World War between July 1937 and August 1945. Starting from the first one, "Telegram to Chiang Kai-shek on the Japanese Attack at Marco Polo Bridge", written after the full-scale Japanese invasion of China in 1937, and ending with the last one, "The Final Battle Against Japanese Aggression", written in August 1945.

It contains several important strategic analyses that have become classic masterpieces:

1. *Strategic Issues in the Anti-Japanese Guerrilla War*

2. *On Protracted War* (1938)

3. *A 15-Month Summary of the War of Resistance* (October 12, 1938)

4. *The New Stage in the Development of the Anti-Japanese National War and the United Front* (October 12, 1938)

5. *Problems of War and Strategy* (November 6, 1938)

6. *On the Second Imperialist War* (September 14, 1939)

7. *The Two Lines in the Anti-Japanese War* (April 24, 1945)

Additionally, Mao issued extensive tactical directives (interviews, letters, telegrams) guiding operations of the Eighth Route Army and New Fourth Army. Over the 14-year period from 1931 to 1945, Mao produced approximately 300 materials — including articles, letters, telegrams, speeches, and interviews — analyzing and forecasting the trajectory of the Second World War.

Mao's Analysis and Forecast of the Anti-Japanese War

Mao analyzed the conditions of both China and Japan and concluded that the war would be a protracted conflict. He argued that China would neither be annihilated nor achieve a quick victory. Instead, the war would unfold in three distinct phases: strategic defense, strategic stalemate, and strategic counteroffensive. In July-August 1937, following the Zhanggufeng Incident (a clash between Japan and the Soviet Union), some in China speculated that foreign intervention (e.g., Soviet involvement) might hasten Japan's defeat. Mao rejected this as another form of "quick victory" fallacy. He emphasized:

"The world's focal point lies in Europe, with the East as its periphery. The major democratic and fascist powers are entangled in the crisis of European war. Whether on the eve of war or in its outbreak, resolving European issues will dominate the agendas of all nations." Thus, Mao insisted that China's resistance would adhere to the three-phase framework, with no shortcut to victory.

In 1939, after an English translation of *On Protracted War* was published in Shanghai, Mao wrote *The Relationship Between Resistance and Foreign Aid*: "Democratic nations like the U.S. and Britain cling to isolationist illusions, failing to recognize that China's defeat would destabilize their own security. This outdated mindset must be discarded. Aiding China is aiding themselves—this is the concrete truth of our time".

Mao stressed that while China would rely primarily on its own strength, international support was indispensable because Japan was a "global enemy." He predicted:

"China fights under immense hardship, but the flames of war among major powers draw closer daily. No nation can remain neutral". Mao framed Japan's 1931 invasion of Manchuria as the start of the Second Imperialist

War — a global conflict driven by imperialist rivalry. He identified two phases: Japan's aggression in China was Phase 1, followed by Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union that marked the Phase 2 of the imperialist war. In *On the Second Imperialist War* (September 14, 1939), Mao argued that the war had already begun in 1931, with Japan's actions in China setting the stage for subsequent imperialist conflicts: Italy's invasion of Abyssinia (1935), the Italo-German intervention in Spain (1936), and Germany's annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia (1938).

Scholar Yang Dongquan analyzed Mao's 591 predictions from 1931 to 1945, spanning long-term strategic forecasts to specific tactical assessments, with an accuracy rate exceeding 90%. Key WWII-related predictions among them includes the following forecasts. November 30, 1935: Japan would attack Siberia and provoke WWII and Japan's full-scale invasion of China was inevitable. December 27, 1935: Japan would push into Mainland China; Japan would attempt to keep China to itself; The Guomindang (Nationalist) camp would fracture under national crisis and the united front (led by the CCP) was essential to defeat Japan. January 1936: Anti-Japanese War could not succeed without a united front. July 1936: Japan is the enemy of the peoples of the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union; A global anti-fascist alliance will emerge; After China's independence, foreigners' legitimate trade interests in China will gain greater opportunities than before; Once the Chinese people are liberated, they will stimulate economic development and elevate global cultural standards; If Britain continues kowtowing to Japan, it will bring no benefit to Britain; Japan will become an ally of Germany and Italy; China will fight with full strength on the anti-Japanese front, and final victory will belong to China; Japan will attack the Yangtze River Delta, southern Chinese ports, and seek to occupy the Philippines, Siam (Thailand), Vietnam, the Malay Peninsula, and the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), aiming to dominate the South Pacific; Japan cannot blockade China's Northwest, Southwest, or Western regions; China will not be defeated; The Soviet Union, Britain, and the United States will be unable to maintain neutrality between China and Japan; Organized Chinese peasants will overwhelm Japanese forces, keeping them overstretched; China will capture many Japanese soldiers, seize weapons and ammunition, and foment anti-war sentiment among Japanese troops. August 13, 1936: Yang Hucheng may join the anti-Japanese front; Chiang Kai-shek will rely on the Southwest to preserve half of China; Foresaw the Xi'an Incident as a pivotal event to save North China, Northwest China, and the nation itself. August 25, 1936: Japan's plan to annihilate China will not change unless shattered by resistance; Japan will not stop at occupying Hebei and Chahar;

it will advance beyond the Yellow River; Total war against Japan is inevitable; "The Chinese nation will one day rise and stand tall in the East." September, 1936: Predicted that Chiang Kai-shek could be compelled to resist Japan. October 26, 1936: "The Japanese had come before the annihilation of the Red Army". March 1, 1937: The Nine-Power Treaty cannot halt Japan's aggression against China; China, Britain, the U.S., France, and the Soviet Union must establish a Pacific united front; Japan's war against China will culminate in Japan's collapse; A prospect exists for the Nationalists (KMT) and Communists (CCP) to unite against Japan. May 8, 1937: A full-scale Sino-Japanese war is imminent. May 15, 1937: Britain will not perpetually appease Japan; China's resistance must not overly rely on Britain; The British public may not sympathize with their government's pro-Japanese compromises. July 23, 1937: Concessions and retreats will lead to the loss of Beiping (Beijing), Tianjin, and all of North China to the enemy. September 17, 1937: Japanese forces will capture Taiyuan; They will seize territories north of the Yellow River. September 21, 1937: Yan Xishan's forces cannot sustain a prolonged decisive battle; Taiyuan and North China are as precarious as 'a stack of eggs'. September 29, 1937: The situation in Hebei is already concluded; Shandong will fall without a fight; The Shanghai campaign will undergo changes; The Nationalist government will relocate its capital; The Soviet Union will provide substantial aid to China; Shanxi will become the base for guerrilla warfare involving millions. October 6, 1937: After occupying Shijiazhuang, Japanese forces will advance westward; Chinese troops must concentrate heavy defenses at Longquan Pass and Niangzi Pass. October 25, 1937: Japan will face unprecedented difficulties in Shanxi. November 12, 1937: Guerrilla warfare will dominate the resistance in North China. February 28, 1938: The future war will involve intertwined interior and exterior lines of combat. March 3, 1938: Wuhan will fall; The Nationalists will continue resisting. March 12, 1938: Japan will attack Xi'an, Zhengzhou, Wuhan, Nanchang, Fuzhou, Changsha, and Guangzhou; Japan cannot occupy all of China. March 23, 1938: After capturing Wuhan and Guangzhou, Japan's offensive will temporarily pause. May 5, 1938: Britain will not fight Germany over its invasion of Czechoslovakia. May 20, 1938: Henan and Wuhan face imminent crisis; Our forces (CCP) will operate in Henan, Anhui, Jiangsu, and Shandong. May 26, 1938: Japan's central objective will shift to attacking Wuhan. May 26 – June 3, 1938: The scale of China's War of Resistance will be vast and protracted; Japanese imperialism will meet its destruction; International opposition to Japan will surpass its international support; International aid for China will arrive; Japan will attempt to persuade China to surrender, but China will never yield; Three

forces in China will resist Japan: the CCP, the KMT, and the masses; The Sino-Japanese War will transform both China and Japan; During the stalemate phase, guerrilla warfare will dominate; Economic hardship will plague Japanese-occupied areas; a unified puppet regime will emerge.; Japan's threats to Southeast Asia and Siberia will spark new conflicts; Japanese troops will grow war-weary and anti-war sentiment will rise; Hitler will plunge the world into a global war; Japan will eventually adopt a defensive posture in Siberia; The War of Resistance is a protracted struggle, but final victory belongs to China. May 1938: Japan will eventually face complete strategic passivity; A Pacific anti-Japanese front holds promise; Japan will attack guerrilla bases in occupied territories. September 24, 1938: The war will enter a stalemate phase; Friction and counter-friction will arise within the United Front. November 1938: The KMT will not negotiate peace with Japan; Frictions are temporary and can be resolved. December 1938:We will face financial and food shortages, but self-reliance through production will sustain us. January 20, 1939: A world war is imminent; no nation can remain neutral. January 28, 1939: Japan will attack Xi'an, Lanzhou, Changsha, Nanchang, Wuzhou, and Hengyang; Japan will expand into Southeast Asia, Burma, Vietnam, and India; Japan's only allies are Hitler and Mussolini; Britain and the U.S. are unlikely to aid China significantly; A larger world war is inevitable. March 8, 1939: Within ten years, all Chinese people will be liberated. April 8, 1939: Japan will continue its offense. April 12, 1939: North China's revolutionary bases may shrink temporarily. June 10, 1939: Restoring pre-1937 conditions through Anglo-American pressure alone is impossible; A British-French-Soviet alliance is possible; Three types of governments will coexist: KMT, CCP, and Japanese puppets; North China's situation may deteriorate severely. Over 200 predictions related to the Anti-Japanese War were validated by history.

Mao's Forecast on the Soviet Union and the Eastern Front

During World War II, Mao Zedong closely monitored the Soviet Union's situation, offering numerous analyses and predictions. Immediately after Germany's invasion of the USSR, Mao recognized the profound implications for China's war and domestic politics. The Soviet-German conflict would reshape the balance of power within China and the broader anti-fascist struggle. On June 23, 1941, the day after Germany invaded the Soviet Union, Mao Zedong penned an editorial calling for the establishment of an international anti-fascist united front. He immediately tasked his secretary, Hu

Qiaomu, to draft an article titled "The Soviet Union Will Triumph, Germany Will Fall" (published in *Liberation Daily* on June 29, 1941). While the article was authored by Hu Qiaomu, it embodied Mao's ideological framework.

The early setbacks suffered by the Soviet Red Army deeply surprised Mao, who closely monitored the progress of the Soviet-German war. Despite anxieties within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) over the Soviet Union's struggles, Mao remained steadfast in his conviction that the USSR would ultimately prevail. Hu Qiaomu's article thought that the USSR was "the most unified nation in the world," with a government and military that "enjoyed the broadest support" globally. Furthermore, The Soviet Union stood as a friend to all nations enslaved or threatened by fascism, making it imperative for these nations to align with the USSR. As a result, the Chinese people must "exert their utmost efforts" both to defend their own nation and to aid the Soviet Union. Admittedly, Soviet victory would not come easily, but the outcome was inevitable: "China will triumph over Japan; the Soviet Union will triumph over Germany". The article served as both moral and ideological support for the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War and a rallying cry to bolster Chinese confidence in their own protracted resistance against Japan.

On October 4, 1942, upon learning that the German forces had been repelled by the Soviet troops at Stalingrad, Mao Zedong became extraordinarily exhilarated and successively authored three articles: *The Turning Point of World War II* (published October 12), *Lessons of History* (October 14), and *A Commentary on the Berlin Declaration* (October 16), all featured in the *Liberation Daily*. In *The Battle of Stalingrad Marks the Turning Point of World War II*, Mao asserted that the Battle of Stalingrad represented not merely a turning point in the Soviet-German War, but also the decisive shift in the global anti-fascist conflict, and furthermore, a watershed moment in the entirety of human history.

In the article *Lessons of History*, Mao Zedong called on all anti-fascist forces to unite further and deliver the final blow to the enemy: "The entire Soviet-German War has proven that as long as people refuse to show mercy to fascism—that is, as long as they demonstrate greater courage—fascism will inevitably collapse. This is the lesson of history". In *A Commentary on the Berlin Declaration*, Mao argued that Hitler's shift from defense to offense at Stalingrad differed fundamentally from his similar tactical shift during the Battle of Moscow. After the Moscow campaign, the German army still retained the capacity for offensive operations; the prospect of Anglo-American forces opening a second front remained uncertain; and Japan still

posed a potential threat to Siberia, which could have coordinated with Germany. However, after the Battle of Stalingrad, none of these three conditions persisted. Consequently, Mao concluded that following Stalingrad, all fascist states, including Germany and Japan, had lost their strategic initiative. "The fate of fascism has already been sealed," he declared. "Only the utterly cowardly would still fear fascism".

Mao Zedong personally authored and publicly published at least 12 articles: "On the International United Front Against Fascism"; "Radio Address on the Global Anti-Fascist Struggle and China's War of Resistance Against Japan" (November 7, 1941); "Strengthening Forces, Preparing for the Counteroffensive" (Written on March 4, 1942; published in *Liberation Daily* on March 19, 1942); "The Turning Point of World War II" (October 12, 1942; editorial in *Liberation Daily*); "Lessons of History" (Published in *Liberation Daily* on October 14, 1942); "A Commentary on the Berlin Declaration" (October 16, 1942; editorial in *Liberation Daily*); "Commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the October Revolution" (November 6, 1942; editorial in *Liberation Daily*); "Declaration of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on the Sixth Anniversary of the War of Resistance" (July 2, 1943; editorial in *Liberation Daily*); "Commemorating United Nations Day, Defend Xi'an and the Northwest!" (June 14, 1944; *Liberation Daily*); "The Tasks of 1945" (December 16, 1944; *Liberation Daily*); "Conversation with the Chinese and Foreign Journalists' Northwest Tour Group" (June 12, 1944); "The Final Battle Against the Japanese Invaders" (August 9, 1945).

He also penned seven letters on this issue: "Preparing to Coordinate Strategically with Soviet Forces in Combat" (Mao Zedong to Peng Dehuai, July 2, 1941); "Adhering to the Long-Term Guerrilla Warfare Strategy to Assist the Soviet Red Army" (Mao Zedong to Zhou Enlai, July 15, 1941); "The Eighth Route Army and New Fourth Army Must Persist in a Prolonged Struggle" (Mao Zedong to Liu Shaoqi, July 18, 1941); "The Principle of Self-Defense Should Be Sustained Indefinitely" (Mao Zedong to Huang Kecheng and Liu Shaoqi, July 13, 1941); "Assessment of the International War Situation" (Mao Zedong to Zhou Enlai, December 12, 1941); "The Shandong Base Area as a Pivotal Hub for Strategic Shifts" (Mao Zedong to Liu Shaoqi, July 9, 1942); "The General Guiding Principle for New Fourth Army Operations" (Mao Zedong to Chen Yi and Rao Shushi, January 5, 1943).

In response to the Soviet Union's request for the Chinese Communist Party's military forces to coordinate with Soviet operations, Mao Zedong wrote to Peng Dehuai on July 2, 1941, emphasizing: "We must prepare to coordinate

strategically with Soviet forces in combat. At present, we are making such preparations to act when the timing is ripe. However, this coordination must be strategic and long-term, not campaign-level or temporary".

On November 30, 1935, Mao asserted: "Japanese imperialism aims not only to conquer China but also to attack the Soviet Union's Siberia and annihilate the Mongolian People's Republic. Our victories demonstrate that if Japan dares to invade you [the Soviet Union], we will strike its flanks and rear. We are your comrades, and we will hold the frontline!" On March 30, 1936, Japanese forces attacked Adagdoran (Mongolia), but were repelled by Soviet-Mongolian troops. In May 1939, The Nomonhan Incident (Battle of Khalkhin Gol) erupted when Japan launched another offensive against Mongolia.

On August 23, 1939, The Soviet Union and Germany signed the Non-Aggression Pact. On September 1, 1939, Mao Zedong addressed the international situation in an interview with Xinhua News Agency correspondents. He argued that the collapse of Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations would lead to direct conflict between two imperialist blocs: Britain/France and Germany/Italy. He further predicted that the ongoing "partial war" (with Germany and Italy on the offensive while Britain, France, and the U.S. remained passive) would escalate into a "total war" involving all major powers. On the same day, Germany invaded Poland, and two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany.

Mao Zedong further analyzed that within the capitalist world, beyond the Anglo-French bloc and the German-Italian bloc, there existed a third bloc led by the United States, which included nations across Central and South America. Under the guise of "neutrality", this bloc deliberately avoided immediate alignment with either side of the war, aiming to preserve its strength and later assert itself as the dominant force vying for leadership of the capitalist world.

On September 14, 1939, at the Yan'an Cadres Conference, Mao Zedong delivered a landmark speech, asserting three key predictions about World War II, Firstly, "this war will be a protracted conflict, far surpassing the scale of World War I." Secondly, "the Soviet Union will play a pivotal role in determining the war's outcome." Thirdly, "a free and independent China will emerge from this struggle, liberated from imperialist domination."

On October 20, 1941, at a CCP Politburo meeting, Mao Zedong assessed the critical situation on the Soviet-German front, stating: "Moscow is in peril—the German offensive against the city has reached its climax. Yet the Soviet Union can hold firm; there is no cause for pessimism."

On May 28, 1942, during a report to the Senior Study Group, Mao Zedong critiqued Allied strategy in World War II, stating:"The Anglo-American powers show little enthusiasm for opening a Second Front, but such a front will inevitably emerge. Once Hitler teeters on the brink of collapse, they will strike—like beating a dying tiger—to claim their share of victory."

On October 12, 1942, in his *Liberation Daily* editorial titled "The Turning Point of World War II", Mao Zedong declared:"After October 9, Hitler has only one path left: the road to annihilation. The Battle of Stalingrad has sealed his fate. Though the Western Allies continue to delay and hesitate, the Second Front will inevitably open once there is a dying tiger to strike. Japanese fascism, too, will march toward its grave."

On January 5, 1943, in a letter to Chen Yi and Rao Shushi, Mao analyzed the Soviet Union's decisive counteroffensive:"The USSR's winter campaign has achieved monumental success. In the Stalingrad sector alone, over 40 divisions of German, Italian, and Romanian forces have been routed, with 22 German divisions encircled and cut off. The enemy's casualties and captured troops exceed 310,000. Hitler's total collapse is imminent. Once Hitler is defeated, China's situation will improve, and Japanese invaders will lose their morale—strengthening our resistance."

On June 12, 1944, in his "Talk with the Northwest Press Corps of Chinese and Foreign Correspondents", Mao Zedong emphasized the strategic significance of the Allied invasion of Normandy: "The opening of the Second Front carries a significance akin to the Soviet counteroffensive at Stalingrad. Europe has now entered the decisive phase of the war. Militarily, this marks a new stage. The impact of the Second Front will extend beyond Europe, shaping the Pacific theater and China's struggle against Japan". On June 14, 1944, in the *Liberation Daily* editorial "Commemorate United Nations Day: Defend Xi'an and the Northwest!", Mao analyzed the war's global turning points: "The past two years have reshaped world history, marked by two pivotal events: The first occurred on November 1942 when the Soviet counteroffensive at Stalingrad reversed the tide of war, shifting the Allies from defense to offense. The Red Army's heroics were decisive in this transformation. The second happened on June 6, 1944 when the Anglo-American Second Front in Normandy escalated the conflict into its final decisive phase. This dual momentum—Stalingrad and Normandy—seals fascism's fate"

In his pivotal address "The Tasks for 1945" (December 15, 1944, *Liberation Daily*, December 16, 1944), Mao Zedong outlined the CCP's strategic priorities as World War II approached its climax: "As 1944 nears

its end, what are our tasks for 1945? What specific work demands heightened attention? The global anti-fascist war has achieved monumental victories. Hitler's defeat is imminent in the coming year."

On August 9, 1945, in his declaration "The Final Battle Against Japanese Aggressors", Mao Zedong hailed the Soviet Union's entry into the Pacific War: "On August 8, the Soviet government declared war against Japan, an action warmly welcomed by the Chinese people. This decisive move will drastically shorten the duration of the war against Japan. The conflict has now entered its final stage—the time to thoroughly crush the Japanese aggressors and all their collaborators has arrived."

Conclusion

Mao Zedong was no prophet, yet history affirms his prescience on global affairs. From the 1930s to the 1970s, Mao authored seminal strategic works like *On Protracted War* and theorized the "Three Worlds" framework, while issuing remarkably accurate analyses and predictions on international politics. Most of his assessments were validated by events, underscoring his prowess as an exceptional geopolitical strategist. His analytical edge stemmed from: 1) Multidisciplinary Mastery: Decades of accumulated expertise in history, geography, politics, and military science; 2) Relentless Intellectual Discipline: Habitual consumption of domestic/foreign publications and rigorous critical analysis, even amid the isolation of Yan'an—a remote northwestern base where firsthand information was scarce during the 1930s–1940s; 3) Systems Thinking: Ability to synthesize fragmentary data into coherent strategic frameworks, anticipating cascading geopolitical shifts.