

Stuck Between Great Powers: The Geopolitics of the Peripheries



Editors:
Viktor Eszterhai – Renxin Wang



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Stuck Between Great Powers: The Geopolitics of the Peripheries

Corvinus University of Budapest

Budapest, 2020

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ISSN 2560-1784
ISBN 978-963-503-781-0
ISBN 978-963-503-841-1 (e-book)

“This book was published according to a cooperation agreement between
Corvinus University of Budapest and The Magyar Nemzeti Bank”



Publisher: Corvinus University of Budapest

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Foreword from the Publisher

The recognition of the rising role of geography in international politics calls for deeper and more frequent research in geopolitics. This book fits into this new major trend and attempts to add a new research topic to the literature. While the media and the academic research in geopolitics are mostly focusing on the major powers, the periphery and small countries among great powers has remained almost invisible. The common endeavour of the studies in this book is to challenge this traditional view by introducing the readers to the major characteristics of the peripheries and smaller states. A group of studies provides examples of how peripheral geographical conditions affect countries and manifest themselves in the elite's strategic choices and decision-making processes. Other studies introduce the reader to how great power competition in different regions is emerging in a multipolar international system, forcing smaller countries into asymmetric relations with great powers. Finally, there are studies arguing that the periphery can be defined on different spatial levels, while the problems have different meanings for these layers. Besides its academic value, the book also provides opportunities for young researchers related to the Department of Geography, Geoeconomy and Sustainable Development (Geo Department) at Corvinus University of Budapest to publish part of their research results. The Geo Department is committed to reach a wide range of readers interested in geopolitics, global affairs and sustainable development, including different expert groups, future professionals, and the general public. We hope that this book can be the first step in forming a new generation of geopolitical books that will represent the importance of this research approach in order to guide the readers in our quickly changing world.

Géza Salamin
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The Return of Geopolitics and Global Peripheries

Viktor Eszterhai

After the Cold War, in the so-called unipolar moment, the United States focused on trade liberalisation, nuclear non-proliferation, the rule of law, human rights, war against terrorism, climate change, and so on. The ideological triumph of liberal capitalist democracy and the new world order suggested that old-fashioned geopolitics will never return because in the time of globalisation, the zero-sum mentality has become outdated. In today's interconnected and interdependent world, geopolitics has simply lost its sense: nation-states as analytical units and the competition on controlling territory have become far less relevant.

However, there is no doubt that in recent years, a re-emergence of geopolitics can be observed. First, there is a rise of hard power and great power competition – including the direct use of military power in a more multi-polarised international order. China, Russia, or Iran as rising powers are openly challenging the US's leading position, that is its desperate attempts to maintain the status quo. Initiatives concerning the unification of Eurasia (the Eurasian Economic Union or the Belt and Road Initiative), or the counter “Rimlands” strategy of the Trump administration all contain clear geopolitical elements and provide new geopolitical narratives for the future. New alliances are being formed (e.g. between Russia and China), while proxy wars (e.g. in Syria, Ukraine, or Yemen) have globally intensified. Furthermore, protectionism and the resurgence of inward-looking politics clearly challenge the previous architecture of global leadership. Consensual norms and globally accepted standards are being questioned and the force of globalisation long believed to be irreversible, with the setback in the growth of global trade following the 2007 financial crisis, has been widely considered as the end of a global phenomenon. Trade wars and the rejection of multilateralism are fragmenting global interconnectivity, which

parallelly makes the major economic centres (China, the USA, and the European Union) less dependent on each other and more dominant within their regions. “Sticks” (economic warfare) and “carrots” (economic incentives with deeper regional economic cooperation) are widely used by the great powers to enlarge their sphere of influence. Finally, geopolitics has strongly reappeared in the discourse of state leaders and popular media, increasingly making use of geopolitical concepts to understand and analyse global events. The long-avoided word has become part of the mainstream vocabulary.

In the new era, with the return of geopolitics, much attention is focused on the core powers, while the periphery in which the great power competitions are often manifested are less visible. Peripheries have a significantly weaker ability to amass and project power and they are often seen as a mere theatre of operations. However, from a geopolitical point of view, these regions are far from being irrelevant. First, this type of space is crucial since great powers will neither collide head-on, nor on their own territory. Therefore, achieving and maintaining – material and psychological – control over these regions are crucial for the great powers in their strategies (e.g. when a peripheral country becomes a major supplier of critical commodities for the bigger power). Thus, when a major power identifies a state or a region in the periphery as strategically important to its goals, the former geopolitical relevance increases. As an answer, the peripheral state must decide whether to support or to resist the great powers: balancing or bandwagoning are the classical relevant strategies. Active participation in global issues and forums further increases the geopolitical relevance of a peripheral region or country. Consequently, peripheries are geopolitically important and relevant to investigate their dynamics.

The ambition of the present collection of studies is to introduce the reader to some of the special cases of geopolitics on the periphery. Even

though the topics are intentionally varied, with wide regional focus, the reader can recognise similar patterns within the chapters.

Fitting into this trend, the first chapter, *Ádám Csenger's* study entitled the "Rivalry between Australia and China in the Pacific Islands" highlights the rarely investigated Pacific Islands (the Micronesian, Melanesian, and Polynesian islands) region's intense rivalry between the traditional great power Australia and the newcomer China. China's growing presence in the region inclines the smaller countries to rethink their long-standing partnership with Australia, while the rivalry among these major powers can turn into an economically favourable situation for the region.

Ráchel Czirják's study entitled the "Neo-colonialist efforts in Africa in the light of EU–African and Chinese–African relations" focuses on the neo-colonisation strategies of the European Union and China. The former has the colonial legacy, while the latter is controversially portrayed either as the saviour of the continent or the enslaver of Africa. The paper argues that history repeats itself and due to neo-colonialism, the African region is integrated into the global structures in a dependent way, making the convergence to the global centres impossible.

Murat Deregözü's paper the "Geographical Complexities of Turkey in the Post-Cold War Era" investigates the new directions of Turkish foreign policy in the increasingly multipolar international order. With the Arab Spring, new geopolitical challenges have risen in the Middle East, combined with new actors in the region, and the country, which belonged to the Western bloc during the Cold War area, has to answer stressing questions about its identity, alliance system and so on. Even though Turkey identifies itself as a regional middle-power, diffuse values and diverse interests often characterize peripheries.

The chapter by *Zoltán Megyesi* and *Éva Beáta Corey* entitled "Romania: A Pragmatic Buffer State between East and West" argues that Romania is considered a typical buffer state from a geopolitical

perspective since it has been at the forefront of great powers' interests. Romania fits well into the classical example when the role of a peripheral country is increasing because its geographical location is crucial to the great powers in their strategies. Although there are several impediment factors, the country's geopolitical weight is growing since it plays a key role in the power aspirations of Euro-Atlantic powers, especially the United States, to contain Russia.

Ádám Róma's chapter entitled „Geopolitics and Environmental Consequences of Water Scarcity in the Peripheries of China and India” investigates the peripheral borderland of two emerging great powers, China and India. The Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region is one of the most remote spots on Earth from one point of view, but at the same time, it is playing an indispensable role in global climate and weather patterns, and it also hosts a multi-coloured “ethnoscape” between the Himalayan mountains and valleys. This paper, therefore, compares three distinct perspectives of the global environmental, the great power, and the local level, arguing that these different scales are crucial not only to understanding the interrelationship between them, but the complex interdependence of the peripheries on their environment.

Hnin Mya Thida's study entitled “Stuck Between Great Powers: The Myitsone Dilemma and the Challenge of the NLD Government” investigates the classical asymmetric relationship between the peripheral Myanmar and China. In 2015, the political picture of Myanmar changed when the military government turned over power to a semi-civil government with immense policy changes taking place both in domestic affairs and foreign policy alignment. The new government in its foreign relation tried to reduce the dependence on China and balance more between great powers. The case study of the Myitsone Dam project, however, shows the limits of this balancing strategy for the periphery.

Finally, Wang Renxin's study entitled “The Fundamental Principle of Singapore's Foreign Policy: The Balance of Power” examines the once

poor and insignificant Singapore's foreign political strategy, balancing, which it has pursued for decades. The study argues that balancing has not only influenced Singapore's foreign policy making to this day, but also played an essential role in its national development success.

Rivalry Between Australia and China in the Pacific Islands

Ádám Csenger

The Pacific Islands (the Micronesian, Melanesian and Polynesian islands) extend over 303,000 square kilometres of land (80% of which is Papua New Guinea) in an area of 52 million square kilometres of the Pacific Ocean (Brown, 2012, p. 3). The region's islands (of which the 14 independent states are relevant to this analysis: the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Cook Islands and Niue) are at a disadvantage in several aspects. Their areas and populations are small, they have few natural resources (minerals in large amounts are only to be found in Papua New Guinea; the leading export items in the other countries are fish, wood, and coconut palm products, among others [The Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2019]), are located far from the main economic and commercial centres, and are among the countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and worst affected by natural disasters in the world (The World Bank, 2018).

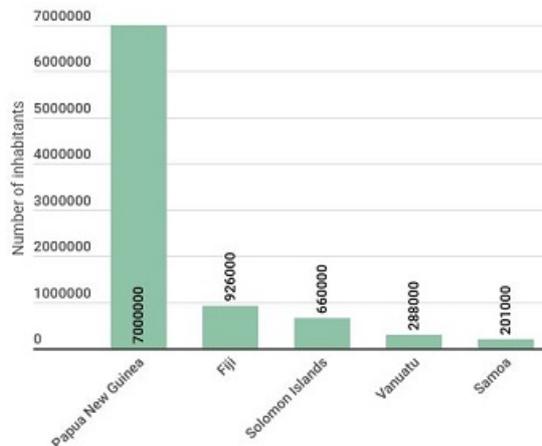


Figure 1: The five largest Pacific island countries by population (2018 estimates). Source: Central Intelligence Agency, 2019.

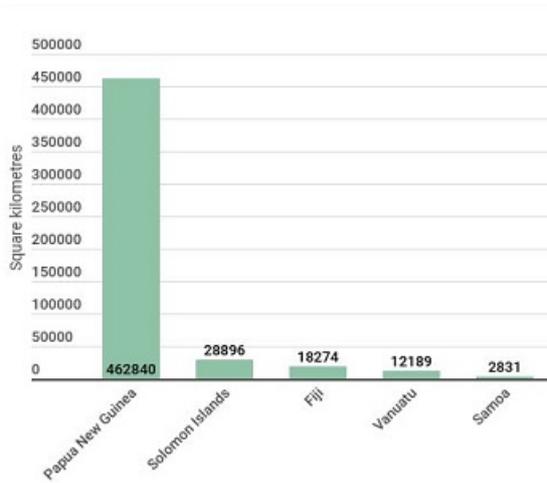


Figure 2: The five largest Pacific island countries by area.
Source: Central Intelligence Agency, 2019.

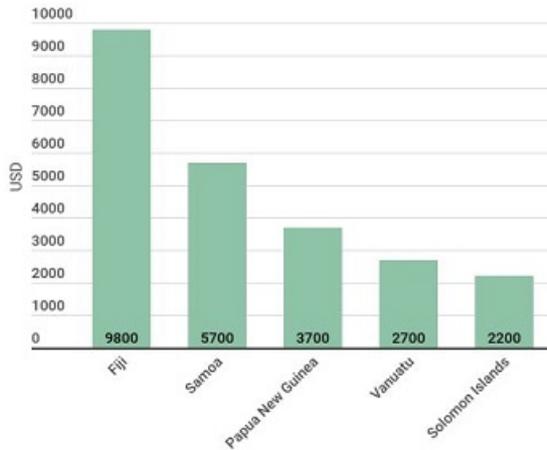


Figure 3: GDP per capita of the five largest Pacific island countries (2017 estimates). Source: Central Intelligence Agency, 2019.

Australia and the Pacific Region

Owing to its relative proximity, the region is considered by Australia part of its natural sphere of influence. It is of strategic importance to Australia because it is in the country's interest that the Pacific be stable in terms of economy, politics and security. This is in line with Australia's overall geopolitical objectives which focus on stability: as a major beneficiary of free trade and the rules-based global order, its national interest is the preservation of the current status quo both in its immediate region and in Asia. Australia relies on the US, its long-standing ally, to protect the status quo in Southeast and East Asia from China's disruptive actions (Morris, 2018), whereas in the Pacific Islands it considers maintaining stability and promoting development its own duty.

Australia has supported Pacific Island countries' sustainable development through both bilateral and regional programs and has worked closely with them to develop their law and order, border security, and economic management. The region's most important organisation is the Pacific Islands Forum (Brown, 2012, p. 1-4), which includes Australia as one of its 18 members (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2019). The significance of the Pacific to Australia is demonstrated by the fact that it has sent troops and police to quell unrest in the region on several occasions: in 1999 to East Timor, in 2003 to Solomon Islands, and in 2006 again to East Timor and Solomon Islands as well as Tonga (Brown, 2012, p. 2).

Australia became the region's leading power after the islands gained independence from British colonial rule in the 1970s. Building upon the experience of World War II, Australia's main priority during the Cold War was to prevent a potentially hostile power from establishing a military base in the region, which would pose a threat to Australia. With the end of the Cold War, this threat was over and Australian influence was limited to granting aid to the region's countries; however, its terms – e.g. that beneficiary states should try to decrease their dependence on Australian aid – created the impression that the territory was essentially a burden for Australia (Brown, 2012, p. 5-6).

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Australia decided to support the region's weaker states more actively in order to avoid their possible collapse, which would potentially allow terrorist and criminal organisations posing a threat to Australia to gain ground in the region. The country, in this spirit, participated (as the mission's leader and key financier) in the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) between 2003 and 2017, which aimed to restore the chaos-struck Solomon Islands (which had seen a period of civil unrest from 1998 onwards that the government could not cope with) into a functional state (Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, 2019).

In recent years, the Pacific has again appeared in a new light in Australia owing to the significant growth of China's influence in the region. The government recognised the significance of the situation in 2018, in part likely due to news surfacing in April that year about discussions between Vanuatu and China regarding the establishment of a Chinese military base on the island. The news was discredited by both countries; however, the possibility of a Chinese military base in the region gave rise to concerns in Australia since it would mean a direct military threat to the country ("Aust worried about Chinese military base", 2018).

China's Presence in the Region

In order to understand China's presence in the Pacific Islands, it is necessary to briefly discuss its geopolitics in general. In contrast to its mostly restrained and peaceful development from the 1980s to the late 2000s (characterised by the principle of "hiding our capabilities and biding our time"), from the 2010s China has been increasingly assertive internationally. Several factors have driven this change: America's declared "pivot to Asia" under President Barack Obama, Japan's perceived efforts to expand its military capabilities, and continuing American and allied military and other activities in areas close to China have contributed to the Chinese perception that the US and its allies and partners are attempting to contain China. Another factor is the rise of nationalism in China, particularly since Xi Jinping became president in 2012. As a result, the public and the government no longer want to "hide and bide" and instead believe that China should claim its rightful

position in the world as a superpower (Gill & Jakobson, 2017, p. 149-153). Naturally, being a superpower involves having a global presence, including in the Pacific region.

China has been providing financial assistance to the Pacific since 1990. One of its goals is to marginalise Taiwan diplomatically: there has been a rivalry between the two countries in which they expect the island states to establish diplomatic relations (and thereby not recognise the rival party) in exchange for financial assistance (Brant, 2015, p. 1). China's aid to the region began to sharply increase in 2006: it was this year when China organised the first China-Pacific Island Countries Economic Development and Cooperation Forum, where it promised greater support to the eight countries with which it has diplomatic relations (Dayant & Pryke, 2018) (Taiwan has diplomatic ties with six states in the region [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), 2019]). Since then, China's presence in the area has increased spectacularly: Chinese public companies build and restore roads, conference centres, ports and airports, Chinese fishing vessels operate in its waters ("Australia is battling China for influence in the Pacific", 2019), a Chinese "floating hospital" ship visits the region's ports (except for those countries which recognise Taiwan, of course) (Bainbridge, 2018), and Fiji has received a hydrographic and surveillance vessel from China as a gift (Panda, 2018).

Debates are going on all over the world about whether Chinese public loans granted to many developing countries lead to these states having unsustainable debt. This is also true for the Pacific region. Critics say that Chinese aid is not transparent and likely contains unfavourable terms for the affected countries (the agreements are classified, hence the term "likely"). In January 2018, Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, the Australian Minister for International Development at the time made an unusually open remark, saying that China invests in pointless infrastructure developments in the region, which, moreover, lead to unsustainable debts for the affected island states (Graue & Dziedzic, 2018). In mid-2018, former Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop also expressed criticism about the increased Chinese activity. Her statement that Australia, as the region's main development partner, prefers investment that does not make local communities seriously indebted, did not mention China explicitly, but clearly referred to it (Dziedzic,

2018). Responding to the criticisms, China states that its aid is always “sincere and unselfish” and, before granting loans, strict economic and technical evaluations are conducted to establish the beneficiary’s ability of paying its debt back (Dziedzic, 2018).

There is much uncertainty and misunderstanding surrounding the extent and goals of China’s aid programs in the Pacific. This is partly due to a lack of information: China does not publish detailed information about the grants, and neither do the island states in many cases (Lowy Institute, 2018c). Some basic facts, thus, have to be pointed out. The assumption that Chinese support provided to the region is growing might seem to be logical due to the increasing Chinese influence, but examining the data suggests otherwise. According to a detailed analysis conducted by Australian think tank Lowy Institute in 2018, between 2011 and 2018 the amount of both the promised and the actually spent Chinese support varied greatly, rather than increasing linearly. The fact that the largest share of the region’s support by far comes from Australia also makes the situation more complex. Between 2011 and 2017, the country provided USD 6.58 bn to the region (no data is available for 2018 yet) compared to China with USD 1.26 bn (including 2018) (Lowy Institute, 2018b). (Australian and New Zealand aid combined accounts for 55% of support for the region [Lowy Institute, 2018].) China, moreover, promises much more aid than it actually provides: until early 2019 it disbursed only USD 1.26 bn out of 5.88 bn it promised between 2011 and 2018 (Australia pledged USD 6.72 bn between 2011 and 2017 and granted 6.58 bn). In 2017, China promised an exceptionally high amount of aid of USD 4 bn; however, the value of the assistance actually provided in 2017 and 2018 totalled only USD 210 mn (Lowy Institute, 2018b).

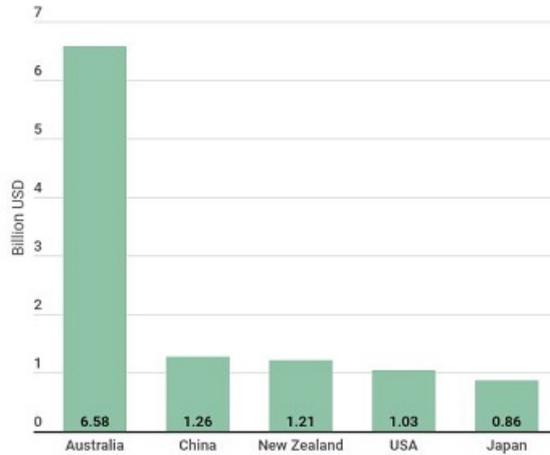


Figure 4: The biggest aid donors in the Pacific Islands between 2011-2018 (data about Australia is for 2011-2017). Source: Lowy Institute, 2018b.

Estimates by the Lowy Institute show that 70% of Chinese aid consists of concessional loans (Dziedzic, 2018) (Australian aid, in contrast, is entirely made up of donations [Fox & Dornan, 2018]). The effectiveness of the use of Chinese aid is questionable, since, in line with Beijing's preferences, it is typically used to realise spectacular projects and infrastructure investments which demonstrate China's regional presence (Dziedzic, 2018) (as opposed to projects financed via Australian and New Zealand support, which on average are one-tenth the size of Chinese projects [Lowy Institute, 2018a]). In addition to individual countries, China also provides aid to the major regional organisations, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in particular (Brant, 2015, p. 1).

In order to better assess Chinese aid, it is worth examining it in Vanuatu and Tonga, the two countries where Chinese money plays perhaps the greatest role in the Pacific.

Vanuatu

Chinese presence has been apparent in Vanuatu for years: one can find Chinese-built government buildings, stadiums, conference centres, roads, etc. on its islands; the landing strip of the Port Vila airport was extended with Chinese money, and the port on Santo Island, opened in 2017, was also built by China (the contractual terms of its building sparked off intense debate, which will be explained below). Australian concerns, caused by news in 2018 that China intends to establish a military base in Vanuatu and use the Santo Island port for military purposes too, are therefore not without reason. (This anxiety is likely increased by the fact that Vanuatu, despite its official neutrality as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, was the first Pacific country to side with China in the South China Sea disputes [Bohane, 2018].)

The port on Santo Island is one of the central elements of the debate over whether the states in the Pacific are becoming trapped in debt because of China. Many draw a parallel between the port on Santo Island and that of Hambantota in Sri Lanka, which was built by the Sri Lankan state from Chinese credit. Being unable to repay the loan, the country leased the port to a Chinese-owned company for 99 years in 2017 in return for decreasing the credit (Marlow, 2018).

The Santo Island port, opened in August 2017, was built by the Chinese Shanghai Construction Group Co. Ltd. Many Australian officers and experts believe that the agreement between the company and Vanuatu is unfavourable for the island state, since China could get hold of the port in case of insolvency, as was the case with the port of Hambantota. In order to prove Vanuatu's ability to repay the loan and that the agreement does not contain a debt-for-equity swap (that is, China cannot obtain the port), the Foreign Minister of Vanuatu, Ralph Regenvanu published the contract on the construction of the port, concluded with the Chinese EXIM Bank. The published contract indeed does not contain a debt-for-equity swap. Experts say, however, that the contract clearly favours China in case of insolvency. Japan has granted a loan to Vanuatu for a similar port and the discrepancies between the terms of the two credits stand out: the grace period of the Japanese loan is 10 years, while that of the Chinese loan is 5 years; the interest on the Japanese loan is 0.55% as opposed to 2.5% on the Chinese credit;

the repayment schedule of the Japanese loan is 40 years, compared to 15 years of the Chinese credit. In an event of default, China can recover the whole amount in one sum, the contract is entirely governed by Chinese laws, and a possible arbitration would take place in the China International Economic and Trade Arbitration Committee (CIETAC). It therefore seems that even if the contract does not contain a debt-for-equity swap, it clearly favours China over Vanuatu. However, it should also be noted that the 30% debt-to-GDP ratio (half of the debt is owed to China, while the other half mainly to the Asian Development Bank) of the island state is not uncommon in the region (Bohane, 2018), and the risk of debt distress is moderate according to an IMF report (International Monetary Fund, 2018, p. 9).

Tonga

Chinese aid may be the most apparent in Tonga in the Pacific region. The island state received two major cheap loans from China (in 2008 and 2010), which were partly used to restore the business quarter of the capital, Nuku'alofa following the riots in 2006 (Fox, 2018). The two loans are worth around USD 160 mn (Dziedzic, 2018), which is equivalent to 64% of Tonga's public debt, which, in turn, constitutes 43% of the GDP (Brant, 2015). It is not clear, in light of this, whether Tonga will be able to repay the loan (Fox, 2018). The government has been asking China to waive the debt for years in vain (Fox, 2018). The country would have started to repay the loans in late 2018, but Prime Minister Akilisi Pohiva said the repayment would have been difficult, so he publicly asked the other regional states taking out a Chinese loan to jointly request China to waive their debts (Dziedzic, 2018). Eventually, in November 2018, Tonga joined the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and thereby received a five-year extension to the loans' grace period ("Tonga gets five years' grace on Chinese loan as Pacific nation joins Belt and Road initiative", 2018).

Overall, it is appropriate to speak of a debt trap in the case of Tonga, although the country was granted a five-year extension to repay the loan. The claims of a debt trap, however, are unsubstantiated in the case of Vanuatu, along with the other countries of the Pacific region: although, based on the risk ratings by the IMF and the Asian

Development Bank, debt distress has increased in the region over the past five years (over 40% of the region's countries have a high-risk rating), half of the countries worst affected by this issue have not received a Chinese loan (since they have diplomatic ties with Taiwan, they are not eligible anyway), and Chinese loans account for only less than half of the total credit in each of these countries, with the exception of Tonga. Chinese loans (which constitute around 12% of the region's total debt) have also flowed into countries where debt repayment does not represent a problem (Fox & Dornan, 2018).

Aside from the unsubstantiated Chinese debt trap claim, however, it is undeniable that China is increasingly present in the Pacific. The country appears to have several objectives in the Pacific Islands: it wants to expand its economic presence; marginalise Taiwan; increase its influence in order to gain political support in regional and international matters; challenge Western dominance in the region and test how far it can go in doing so; and possibly lay the groundwork for future military bases (Garrick, 2018). Australia (as it will be explained below) aims to halt the growing Chinese influence by strengthening and extending its ties with the region – but this effort is complicated by the fact that its relations with the island states are not free from tensions.

Tensions Between Australia and the Pacific Region

The island states believe that Australia often patronises them in an arrogant way, reminding them of its great power status and not treating them as equal partners. Therefore, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who took office in August 2018, made an unfortunate decision when he did not attend the Pacific Islands Forum meeting held just a couple days after his appointment, because he reinforced the regional countries' feeling that Australia often regards them as important partners only in its rhetoric (Easterly, 2018). This also seems to be supported by the infrequency of leading Australian politicians visiting the region: before Scott Morrison's visit in January 2019, Australian prime ministers had not visited Vanuatu and Fiji since 1990 and 2006, respectively ("Australia is battling China for influence in the Pacific", 2019). However, this has been changing since the "waking up" of the Australian government in 2018. In the first weeks of 2019, in

addition to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Assistant Minister for the Pacific, the Chief of the Defence Force and the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police also visited the region (Whiting & Dziedzic, 2019).

Australia's attitude towards climate change is also problematic for the Pacific island nations. Climate change is of vital significance to the region's countries as the sea level rise caused by global warming threatens their very existence and they can hardly protect themselves from the ever more frequent natural disasters induced by climate change. However, the conservative Australian government coalition, in power since 2013, has an ambivalent stance on how much Australia – which has the world's eleventh largest ecological footprint according to the 2018 data of the Global Footprint Network (Global Footprint Network, 2018) – should contribute to the global fight against climate change. As a matter of fact, Scott Morrison became prime minister thanks to the fact that his predecessor had become a victim of a coup within his own party because its conservative wing was unwilling to accept that the government would introduce a law that restricted greenhouse gas emissions (Yaxley, 2018). Thus, although Australia signed a treaty established at the meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum in autumn 2018 that identified climate change as the number one priority of the Pacific, this probably did not release the doubts of the island nations over Australia's commitment (McLeod, 2018).

During the term of the current Australian government, a major convergence of the parties' positions is not expected; however, the Australian government has made significant efforts since early 2018 to strengthen and extend its existing relations with the region in other areas.

Australia's Actions Against Chinese Influence

In the 2018-2019 budget, the Australian government allocated record high, AUD 1.3 bn support to the Pacific. The growing significance of the region is reflected by the fact that while this amount is AUD 200 mn more than the previous 1.1 bn, Australia's total foreign assistance budget remained AUD 4.2 bn. With its increased amount, the Pacific region now accounts for 30% of the foreign aid budget (Fox, 2018).

The supported projects include laying an underwater internet cable connecting Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea with Australia, which will be realised by an Australian company through a public grant worth around AUD 137 mn (the entire project costs AUD 170 mn) (Armbruster, 2018). Solomon Islands originally agreed with Huawei in 2016 that it would lay a cable which ensures connectivity with Australia; however, Australia informed the island state in 2017 that since it considers Huawei a national security risk because of its alleged connections to the Chinese government, the cable would most likely not be authorised to join the Australian internet network. Australia then proposed that the planned internet cable connecting Papua New Guinea and Australia could be extended to Solomon Islands and Australia would undertake the majority of costs. The island nation eventually chose Australia instead of Huawei for the project (Fox, 2018).

Australia has “overtaken” China on another occasion as well. Instead of China, the country will finance the upgrade of the Blackrock Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Camp on Fiji, which the Fiji government hopes will become the region’s training centre. The trainings here will be held by the Australian Defence Force, thereby deepening the cooperation with the region’s military forces (Wallis, 2018).

The reinforcement of Australia’s regional military position is also served by a plan announced in autumn 2018 that Australia, the US and Papua New Guinea will jointly upgrade the naval base on Papua New Guinea’s Manus Island, which, if necessary, could play a role in US and Australian navy operations and enable the permanent military presence of these two countries (“APEC: US to aid redevelopment of PNG’s Lombrum naval base”, 2018). Due to its vital geographical location, the island has played an important role in the defence strategies of the US and Australia since World War II (Fazio, 2018), so it is not surprising that, given China’s growing influence, both countries deem it necessary to involve the base in their efforts to halt the Chinese expansion. Another factor that must have played a role in making this decision was that China supposedly expressed its interest in upgrading another port on Manus Island as well as three other ports in Papua New Guinea (Wallis, 2018).

The projects in Fiji and Papua New Guinea are part of the Defence Cooperation Program of the Australian government, which aims to promote Australia's strategic interests by increasing the defence capacities of the country's international partners (for example, in the area of illegal fishing or the fight against international crime) and establishing close personal relations with regional security partners (Australian Government Department of Defence, 2019). Since the program is beneficial to all stakeholders, its perception in the Pacific is generally positive (Wallis, 2018). Within the program, Australia will provide the region's 13 countries with 21 patrol boats between 2018 and 2023 (Austal, 2019) as well as with staff and maintenance for 30 years (Wallis, 2018).

Another plan, announced at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in November 2018 by Australia, Papua New Guinea, Japan, New Zealand and the US, focuses on infrastructural development in the region, and as part of this, these countries will work together to provide electricity to 70% of Papua New Guinea's population (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019) (the current rate is around 13% [Prime Minister of Australia, 2018]). Australia, Japan and the US also announced at the APEC summit that they had signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together to deliver "principles-based and sustainable" infrastructure development in the Indo-Pacific (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019) – the wording clearly implies criticism of the BRI.

The significance of the Pacific region was further increased by a joint declaration of the Australian Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Defence Minister, issued in November 2018, according to which Australia wishes to place a greater emphasis on its relations with the region and will therefore take new measures to reinforce security, economic, diplomatic and personal relations. The measures include the following:

- Establishing a security college and centre to address gaps in training and information sharing in the Pacific
- Training the region's police leaders in Australia
- Creating a Pacific Mobile Training Team within the Australian Defence Force

- Deploying a dedicated vessel tasked with delivering assistance, for example humanitarian aid in the Pacific
- Creating a fund worth AUD \$2 billion to support infrastructure development in Pacific countries and Timor-Leste
- Delivering an extra AUD \$1 billion in callable capital to Australia's export financing agency
- Strengthening sports relations between Australia and the Pacific region
- Opening five new diplomatic missions to have Australian diplomatic representation in each of the 18 Pacific Islands Forum member states
- Creating a dedicated branch dealing with the Pacific within the Department of Foreign Affairs (Prime Minister of Australia, 2018).

In addition, all citizens of the region's countries will be gradually granted access to the Pacific Labour Scheme, which was launched in mid-2018 to allow certain Pacific states' citizens to work in Australia's rural areas, and the limit on the number of participants will be abolished (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2019).

Soft power is an important field of the rivalry between China and Australia, and the latter, due to its traditional relations with the region, has an advantage over China in this respect, which it can further enhance through a well-developed strategy. Some analysts point out that as part of these efforts, it would be especially important to bring back ABC Radio Australia's service in the Pacific, which was shut down in 2017 – all the more so because the publicly owned China Radio International took over some of the unused frequencies since then (Bainbridge, Graue & Zhou, 2018).

Conclusion

Australia has, for a long time, taken it for granted that the Pacific belongs to its sphere of influence. This situation has fundamentally changed over the past years. China's growing presence in the region has encouraged Australia to take steps towards increasing its own influence. Besides financial support, it wishes to build stronger ties with the region in many other areas (for example, the cooperation of security forces and sport).

It is worth noting that the US is also increasingly concerned about the growing Chinese influence in the Pacific, as demonstrated by a report on the assessment of global threats, issued by US intelligence services in late January 2019. The report says that China is trying to gain the favour of numerous regional countries through bribes, infrastructural and other investments, as well as diplomatic relations (Stewart, 2019). New Zealand, the region's other leading power besides Australia, also shares the concerns of Australia and the US, therefore the New Zealand government announced similar measures to those of Australia in 2018 to counterbalance Chinese influence (Novak, 2018). Australia and New Zealand together stand a good chance of containing China's influence in the region; however, it is too early to state anything since the rivalry in the Pacific Islands might not even have really started yet.

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Neo-Colonialist Efforts in Africa in the Light of EU–African and Chinese – African Relations

Ráhel Czirják

Following the dissolution of the bipolar world order and especially after the turn of the millennium, the geopolitical landscape has greatly diversified: the actors, which were members of either the socialist or the capitalist block until 1990, can now follow their own path, so we can state that we live in a multipolar world today. Africa is a particularly interesting scene of the rise and strengthening of new actors, where – after colonisation and the competition for allegiances in the bipolar world order – a third scramble is currently under way (Economist, 2019). Today, however, unlike during the Cold War, economic opportunities instead of ideologies are the basis of building relations with African states. Nevertheless Africa-policies during the bipolar world order were not entirely devoid of economic approaches as well. The question is how beneficial these opportunities are to the “dark continent”. It is no coincidence that Africa’s recolonization – primarily in the wake of China’s spectacular economic growth and its economic activities with Africa in this context – is a question often addressed in the media, too. Joining this current topic, the present study intends to form an opinion about this question on the basis of the theory of neo-colonialism. To this end, this article first briefly reviews the economic aspects of colonisation – as this is essential for understanding the concept of neo-colonialism –, and then presents the theory of neo-colonialism, itself, relying primarily on the work of Kwame Nkrumah, the creator of the theory. Finally, it examines EU–African and Chinese–African relations and seeks an answer as to whether we can speak of characteristics of neo-colonialism in these relations. As a result of neo-colonialism, an economic asymmetry is created, similar to that of the colonial era, which recreates Africa’s subjected status, and thus its dependency on external actors. Thus, this chapter does not address the functioning of the means of neo-colonialism (such as aids, foreign direct investments, related political conditions, etc.) – as this would considerably exceed its confines –, but looks to the presence of economic asymmetry, and thus dependency, created as a result of neo-

colonialism, based on the trade relations between the areas under examination as this is a traditional research instrument which reflects dependent relations. The hypothesis states that Africa's subjection has not come to an end with decolonisation. Its role created as a result of colonisation has not changed after it became politically independent, therefore, there still exist asymmetric economic relations typical of neo-colonialism in the continent's relations with both the European Union and China. And although the two actors use very different rhetoric regarding their relations with Africa, the result is the same: the economic subjection of the dark continent and, as a result, the hindrance of its economic and social development.

Colonisation

Africa's conquest by external powers fundamentally changed the internal social, economic, political, and environmental development trends in the continent. Moreover, the consequences of intervention are long-term; thus, even after its independence from colonial rule, Africa is following essentially the same (development) path that colonial powers designated for it. In this chapter, we will briefly review the economic consequences of colonisation as the theory and practice of neo-colonialism are rooted in these contexts.

The goal of European colonisation was basically two-fold. On the level of political discourse, the major economic powers of the old world spoke of Africa's "civilisation" as a moral, ethical argument justifying their conquest. The other and the true goal was the economic exploitation of the continent "for the benefit of an industrial economy instituted and managed by western Europeans and their allies" (Fage, Tordoff, 2004, p. 392). This meant on the one hand the exploitation of raw material, and on the other hand, the channelling of the local population as a colonial market into Europe's external trade.

This latter objective was already reached by colonial powers in the period before decolonisation, and it was not threatened by the political independence of the continent's countries as they were intended to occupy the same role in the future as well (Geda, 2003). In other words, Africa's economic subjection was created with colonisation and is still present today.

Colonisation radically changed the former economic status of the dark continent and economic trends of the region. In the centuries before colonisation, Africa had been characterised by an appropriately independent economic system in terms of its relations with other parts of the world: the continent produced processed goods which were also exported in addition to serving the domestic demand. And the products imported from Europe were not targeted to cover basic needs. There existed autonomous economic relationships between the continent's both neighbouring and more remote political entities (Austen, 1987; Leys 1996; Alemayehu 2002).

The situation began to change from the turn of the 17th century on, when Africa's economy began to be adjusted to European interests and its autonomy was gradually being reduced (Amin, 1972; Rodney, 1972; Munro, 1976). There were political and economic-technical reasons behind this. By political reasons, we basically mean how the internal political processes of individual countries influenced their foreign policies related to Africa and to what extent this foreign political activity was of a conquering nature and how great impact it had on Africa in the light of the countries' economic and political capacities. By economic-technical reasons, we mean the industrial revolution, that resulted the dramatical increase in the differences of economic and technological development between Europe and Africa, and thus the "old continent" had tools and methods which enabled it to conquer Africa.

As a result of these processes, the dark continent gradually lost its economic and political autonomy from Europe, and its economic trends were increasingly targeted at satisfying European needs. This process stopped the African economy in shifting from producing primary products to the processing industry. The continent joined the world trade dominated by Europeans primarily as a source of raw material and food as well as a market outlet of the European processing industry (Geda, 2003).

By the period of high colonialism, the external trade of African states was entirely dominated by the parent countries, which entailed, at the same time, an almost complete termination of intracontinental trade. Capital investments in the colonies could also be realised under their control only, serving the interests of the colonisers, and thus they were primarily related to export activities (Konczacki, 1977).

Africa's economic subjection resulted in the continent lagging behind in the long-term and being dependent of external financial resources. As although the export of raw material provides some revenue to a given national economy, most of the profit from basic material is realised in developed economies – where added value is created through processing –, and which subsequently export their manufactured goods to Africa, among others.

In other words, from an African perspective, not only revenues are lower, but expenses are also higher for the continent's states compared to if they had their own processing industry, which could meet domestic demand on the one hand, and, on the other hand, produce not raw material for the world market but semi-finished or finished products, which entail greater revenues.

After a brief description of the basic economic relations of colonisation, the next chapter deals with the theory of neo-colonialism through presenting the examination framework of case studies.

The Theory of Neo-Colonialism

Under neo-colonialism, we generally mean external elements' intrusion into nation-states, and thus the violation of national sovereignty (Langan, 2018). The creator of the theory is Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana, – which became independent in 1957 –, who presented his concept in detail in his work entitled *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* and published in 1965. The analysis primarily relies on his work but other important writings related to the theory are Fanon (1961), Sartre (1964), Touré (1962), Nkrumah (1963), and Woddis (1967).

As Nkrumah puts it, neo-colonialism is the continuation of external control over Africa's territory through newer and more sophisticated means than those used during the period of colonisation (Nkrumah, 1965). As a result of this, the intervention into legally independent African states reaches an extent, after which they are no longer capable of self-governance. Political leadership is determined by foreign actors rather than the necessities of local citizens as the African elite participating in the neo-colonial system of networks govern along the interests of foreign beneficiaries, betraying their own people and

preventing any major social or economic development. “The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system, and thus its political policy is directed from outside.” (Nkrumah, 1965, p. ix).

Nkrumah basically distinguished two instruments of neo-colonialism: aids by foreign governments on the one hand, and capital investments and economic activities of foreign companies in the continent on the other hand (Langan, 2018).

The former President of Ghana saw aids as a means used by foreign powers – the US and former European colonisers – to secure African elite groups, rather than a generous effort to help African societies (Nkrumah, 1965).

In his book examining neo-colonialism (*Neo-colonialism and the poverty of 'development' in Africa*), Mark Langan (2018) provides several specific examples, where donors have prevented an economic political decision by the government that was undesirable to them or bribed the elite through aids or threatened them by revoking aids.

Another form of and tool for gaining influence by foreign powers are the activities carried out by foreign companies in the continent inasmuch as they exploit the local workforce and natural resources without appropriately contributing to state revenues, job creation, or industrialisation (Nkrumah, 1965). This practically is the process whereby foreign companies can establish themselves in an African country with considerable state concessions and operate without the strict labour and environmental standards of the parent country – this often leads to inhumane work environments and processes harming the environment. The profit produced by companies leaves the investment country, and thus it does not have a wider positive effect on the social and economic environment. Although the affected African state realises some revenue from the transaction through taxes or concession fees, the amount of these is insignificant compared to the value of natural and human resources drained from the national economy and the resulting environmental externalities.

Regarding the activities of foreign companies, Nkrumah also points out that these enterprises sometimes support corrupt African

governments and/or finance alternative political elites if they can no longer sufficiently control those in power (Nkrumah, 1965).¹

External actors alone cannot conserve the asymmetric economic, and thus political situation. In order to maintain the neo-colonial system, a two-directional relation is necessary between external and internal forces, that is foreign colonisers and representatives of the African elite (Nkrumah, 1965).

Frantz Fanon – a philosopher, Marxist writer, psychiatrist, and former Algerian ambassador to Ghana, who had a great influence on African thinkers (Encyclopedia Britannica) – also pointed out that members of the African elite often collaborate with (former) colonial powers, which maintain the asymmetric aid and trade networks with the (former) parent country at the expense of their own sovereignty. He forecast that these political and economic compromises would keep African countries in a subordinate status, which cannot properly operate, and thus catch up with Europe or the US (Fanon, 1961).

In the next sub-chapters, we will examine Africa's economic and, more precisely, trade relations with the European Union and China, based on Nkrumah's concept. A study of all the segments of the economy would exceed the length limit of this paper. Trade relations, however, appropriately reflect the economic balance – or asymmetry – between regions, based on which we can establish whether there is an economic subjection typical of neo-colonialism in EU–African and the Chinese–African relations.

¹ Nevertheless, it is important to note that Nkrumah did not argue for a complete refusal of FDI from developed countries; on the contrary, he openly stated that investments from Western powers are welcome if they are directed into appropriate segments of industrialisation and if African countries, being *de facto* sovereign, can regulate them in order to increase added value, and thus create larger economic profit, which could reduce the economic imbalance between the North and the South. (Nkrumah, 1965) In other words, foreign companies' economic activities can even be beneficial to the development of African national economies if they are regulated by a *de facto* sovereign government which is independent from outside powers and which governs along the interests of the local society (Langan, 2018).

EU-African Relations in the Light of Trade

Africa's trade relation with Europe and the EU within the old continent has been institutionalised at a supranational level since the very beginning of the EU's establishment through various trade agreements – which has also given rise to concerns of neo-colonialism as the theory itself was (partly) a criticism of former European colonisers' foreign political activities following decolonisation. Julius Nyerere and Sekou Touré, the first Presidents of Tanzania and Guinea, respectively agreed with Kwame Nkrumah that European powers will strive to maintain their economic, and thus political influence over African countries (Nyerere, 1978; Touré, 1962).

Provisions on contact with former colonies as well as colonies not yet liberated has already been contained in the Treaty of Rome of 1957. Afterwards, the economic and trade relations between the EU and Africa have been governed by the Yaoundé Conventions, the Lomé Conventions, and then the Cotonou Agreement.² This sub-chapter focuses on the results of these, that is, the current status of the relations between Africa and the European Union.

Based on the total value of trade flow, Africa's largest trading partner is the European Union. After the turn of the millennium, in 2007, its total trade with the dark continent was worth more than 400 billion USD, however, the economic crisis caused a massive setback. The recession resulted in a decline in demand for African products, and the two continent's trade flow decreased by almost 100 billion USD. After 2008–2009, there was a moderate growth and by 2011, pre-crisis levels in trade flow were reached again and by 2012, the trade flow exceeded previous peaks and increased to nearly 430 billion USD (African Development Bank, et. al, 2016, p. 79). A similar recession to the 2008 crisis took place in 2014-2015 due to the drastic fall of the global price of oil, however, the EU still clearly stands out from Africa's other trade

²Although the content of the trade agreements will be analysed in another study, it is important to note that the hierarchical relation of colonisation was still present in the wording of these agreements even after decolonisation as it presented Africa as a continent in need of help. This rhetoric has been refined over the past decades and the Cotonou Agreement effective today already mentions the Dark Continent as a partner.

partners. In 2017, their trade flow was again worth more than 300 billion USD (Eurostat, 2018).

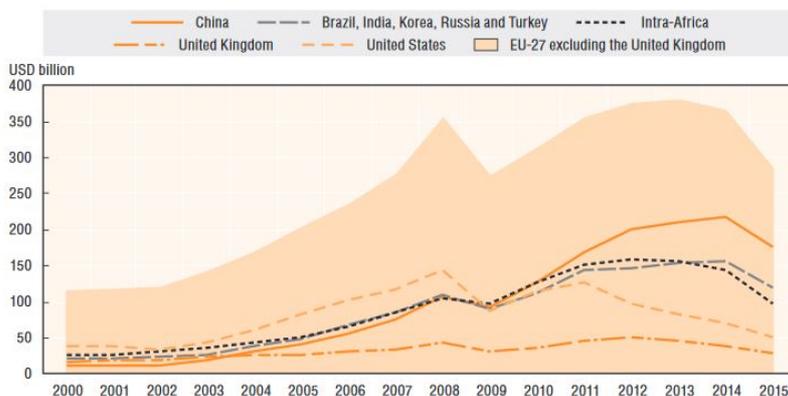


Figure 1: Africa’s total trade flows with selected partners and intra-African, 2000-2015. Source: African Development Bank & OECD Development Centre & UNDP (2017). Source: African Economic Outlook 2017. p. 86

However, if we consider trade relations from the EU’s perspective, we can conclude that Africa’s role is by far not that significant. It has less than 10% share of both the exports and imports of the EU’s Member States. Exports amounted to 8%, while imports represented 7% in 2017 (Eurostat, 2019). Contrary to this, the EU’s trade with Asia or the non-EU-28 countries of the old continent are much more significant, as also shown in Figure 2.

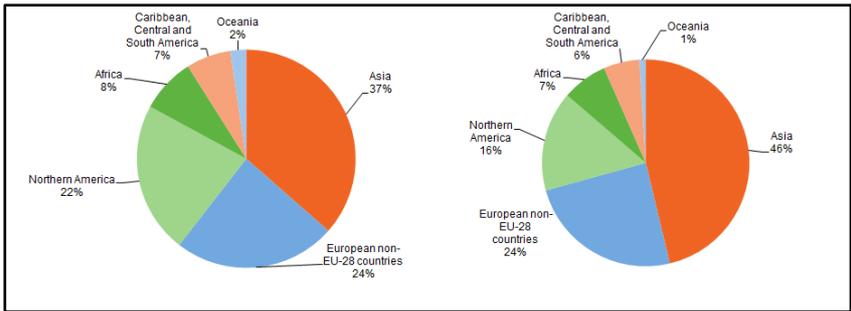


Figure 2: EU-28 international trade by partner region, value, 2017.
 Source: Eurostat (2019): EU-28 international trade by partner region, value, 2017 (%).

In addition to trade flow data, the product structure is also worth analysing: while African states primarily export raw material and agricultural products, the dark continent imports mostly manufactured products from Europe.

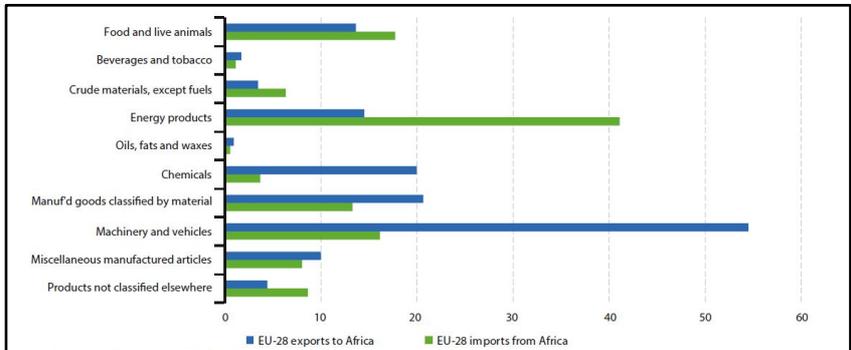


Figure 3: EU-28 trade in goods with Africa, by product group, 2016 (billion EUR). Source: Eurostat (2018): Africa-EU – key statistical indicators. p. 19.

Based on the latest data available, Europe exports machines and transportations means to Africa in the largest volume (37,9%) (Eurostat & AU Commission Statistics Division, 2018). Besides this, the share of manufactured products (14,4%) and chemicals (13,5%) is also significant within Africa’s import from the EU (Eurostat & AU Commission Statistics

Division, 2018). The largest share of Africa's export to the EU-28 countries are energy products (35,3%), and thus Africa is the EU's second most important source of crude oil after Russia (Eurostat & AU Commission Statistics Division, 2018). The second most important product group is food and live animals (15.2%), while the third is machinery and vehicles (13.8%) (Eurostat & AU Commission Statistics Division, 2018).

Considering all of the above, we can conclude that Africa's role created as a result of colonisation continues to exist nearly half a century after decolonisation. Such subjection of the continent fundamentally hampers any kind of major economic, and thus social development in terms of the improvement of people's life standards. In other words, we can observe economic asymmetry and the subjection of the dark continent in terms of EU–African relations.

Chinese–African Relations in the Light of Trade

Contact between China and Africa was already established in the 15th century when Zheng He's ships reached the eastern coast of the continent, however, official relations were put on a regular basis only after 1949, following the foundation of the People's Republic of China. The 20-21st-century history of Chinese - African relations can be characterised by a distinct shift from their beginning based on ideological foundations to pragmatic economic interests (Czirják & Polyák & Simigh, 2015).

In the first decades of the Cold War, China's main goal was to win allies in order to be officially recognised vis-à-vis Taiwan and become a permanent member of the UN and take its seat in the Security Council. In this period, the key aspect was the number of supporting African countries, rather than the economic potential they could offer, for instance, through natural resources. When China reached its goal in 1971, new factors of motivation emerged in its foreign political activities, however, after the boost in the early 1970s – for instance in the area of aids provided to the dark continent – Africa's role became less significant as a result of the Reform and Opening policy announced in 1978 because the Asian country focused its resources on its domestic development and growth. This resulted in a stagnation and decrease in

the aids provided to Africa in the 1980s (Czirják & Polyák & Simigh, 2015).

The relations gained more significance in the late '80s and early '90s as a result of the events of 1989 on Tiananmen square, on the one hand, – which threatened to internationally isolate China again –, and the dissolution of the bipolar world order and the visible successes of the Chinese economic model in the '90s, on the other hand. The latter made China an attractive partner to Africa, and with a stable economic background, the country was again able to invest energy into its foreign relations (Czirják & Polyák & Simigh, 2015).

The period after the turn of the millennium has been dominated by business relations, and the main organisation in this respect is the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which is a ministerial meeting organised every three years between China and African countries and which has been joined by almost all of the states in the dark continent. The Forum is held alternately in Beijing and in one of the African capitals. The last Forum was organised in September 2018 in China. The participating parties define the trends and related budget of their cooperation for the next three years (Czirják & Zoltai, 2018).

China's rhetoric about its Africa policy differs greatly from that of Europe, which has a colonial past. The guiding principles of Chinese – African relations date back to as far as 1955, a conference held in Bandung, Indonesia, where representative of 23 Asian and 6 Africa states met to answer the question: "What role does the third world occupy in the Cold War?". The parties determined the basic principles of the relations between them, including the principle of political self-determination and non-interference into each other's domestic policies (Kende, 1973).

Regarding the latter principle, China is often criticised by the West because in their opinion *"Beijing would still not make a distinction between regimes, it is willing to do business with anyone and even support dictatorships and shows indifference to human rights issues. Beijing would readily sell arms to any of the African leaders at a much lower price than that offered by Westerners. It does not interfere in the internal political (and often ethnic) disputes of states, either."* (Engelberth, 2010, p. 11).

Another important element of Chinese rhetoric, often emphasised during building diplomatic relations with Africa, is that China has never acted as a colonising power on the Dark Continent, moreover, it was also subject to oppression (Edoho, 2011). Furthermore, the country provided considerable support to African states so that they could become independent after World War II (Shelton & Paruk, 2008).

The third important element of China’s rhetoric is that it considers itself a developing country, and thus African states are actually equal partners, with which it strives to have mutually beneficial relations.

The limits of this chapter do not allow us to examine how much of its rhetoric is actually realised so we can only conclude that its business and economic relations with Africa are successful, as confirmed by the following statistical data.

After 2000, Chinese–African relations intensified spectacularly. Between 2000 and 2005, Africa’s export to China rose by 48%, which meant a 2.5 and 4 times larger growth rate compared to the export into the US and the EU, respectively (Broadman, 2008). The Asian country increased its trade flow with Africa by more than 20 times in almost one and a half decade: while the trade flow was worth less than 10 billion USD in 2000 (African Development Bank, et. al, 2015), it has reached 215 billion USD by 2014 (China-Africa Research Initiative). In this period, China’s share of Africa’s total exports was 27%, which was mostly made up of raw material (83%) (Pigato & Tang, 2015).

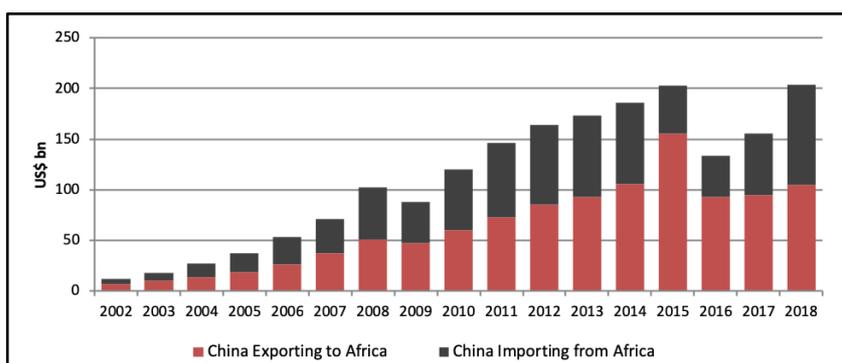


Figure 4: China-Africa trade, 2002-2018, billion USD. Source: China-Africa Research Initiative: Data: China-Africa Trade.

Afterwards, there was a sharp drop in their trade flow, due to the decrease of the world market prices of raw material on the one hand, and the slow-down of China's economic growth on the other hand. However, by 2018, the total value of trade flow between the two regions almost reached the level of 2015 again, while the share of export and import changed: Africa's export to China increased compared to 2015 (China-Africa Research Initiative).

And if we do not count the trade flow of the European Union as one amount, China has become Africa's largest trading partner based on the total value of trade flow.

Based on the goods in the trade flow, we can determine that Africa is primarily a source of raw material for China. The latest available data show that nearly three-quarters (70%) of the African export to China are made up of raw material, and a little bit more than one-quarter (27%) is semi-finished products, while the share of finished products is almost negligible (2%) (World Bank, 2019). Within raw materials, primarily fuels (45%), minerals (18%), and stone and glass (17,8%) are imported to China, but the share of metals (11%) is also considerable (World Bank, 2019).

As a comparison, the dark continent imports from China mainly consumer goods (45%), capital goods (30%), and semi-finished products (25%), while the share of raw material is under 1% (World Bank, 2019). As for consumer goods, China exports mostly technical goods and electronics (25%), as well as textiles and clothing (19%), but the share of metals (11%) is also considerable (World Bank, 2019).

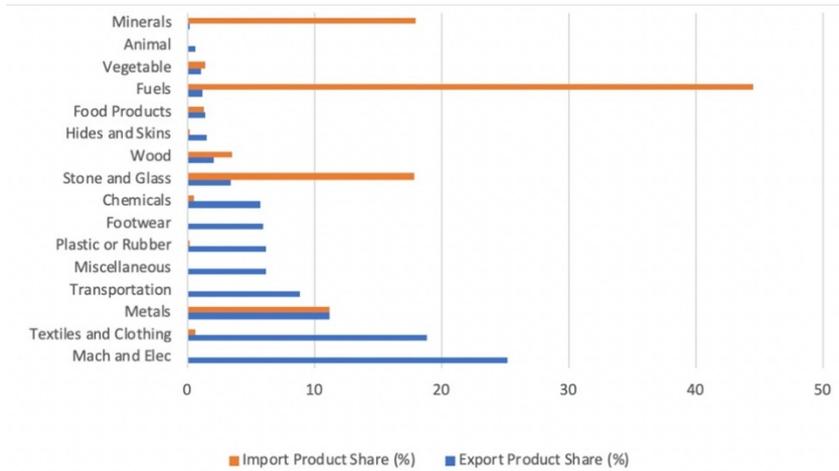


Figure 5: China’s product exports and imports from Sub-Saharan Africa, 2017, (%). Source of data: World Bank (2019). China Product exports and imports from Sub-Saharan Africa 2017.

Based on the above information, we get a very similar picture as in the case of the EU–African trade structure. In other words, Africa has the same economically subjected relation with China as with Europe, even though, in line with the basic principles of Chinese foreign policy, the Asian country does not wish to exert direct political influence on the African party in its business dealings, it does not expect it to democratise in return for the transaction, etc. The commercial asymmetry is unfavourable to Africa in the long term, although it does generate some revenue for the dark continent. Since, with its role as a source of raw material and market outlet, its underdeveloped economic status is conserved, which prevents it from making major progress. On the basis of the above, we can observe an economic asymmetry typical of neo-colonialism in Chinese–African relations, which makes further study of the concept relevant.

Conclusion

Starting from the economic consequences of colonisation on Africa, the study addressed the question as to actually how beneficial the opportunities offered by the diversity of actors are to Africa today in the

multipolar geopolitical space. Regarding the European Union comprising traditional colonisers and China, which is a relatively new player in the dark continent, the paper wished to answer whether their relations with Africa have an economic asymmetry typical of neo-colonialism in the light of trade partnerships.

By neo-colonialism, we mean the situation, based on Kwame Nkrumah's definition, in which one or more external powers exerts such a great influence on the economy of a *de jure* independent state that it is unable to *de facto* operate as a sovereign political entity because leaders of the national economy govern along the economic interests of outside actor(s) rather than those of the local population. And as a result of neo-colonialism, the same economic asymmetry is created or maintained after decolonisation, which was observed during colonisation.

The study found that both the EU–African relations with a longer history and the younger but more intensive Chinese-African relations basically lead to the continuation and sustained existence of the economic role created by the dark continent's colonisation. And although the two actors' rhetoric are different due to their distinct historical backgrounds, the result of these relationships is the same for Africa.

The dark continent primarily exports raw material (energy products, precious metals, and agricultural products) into these regions, while its import is dominated by manufactured and consumer goods. This situation prevents the processing industry from developing and strengthening in the continent, makes Africa vulnerable to the world market price volatility of raw material, and preserves over the long term its underdeveloped economic status compared to more developed regions as the profit created during processing is not realised here but the continent has to pay for it through importing manufactured goods from more developed economies. This economic subjection poses a barrier to any major economic, and thus social progress.

Based on all of the above, the hypothesis seems to be confirmed. However, it is also important to note the limited nature of the study as it is not suitable for establishing the actual existence of neo-colonialism. In order to do so, one would have to examine how its instruments, such as international aid and international capital investments, work with

respect to individual countries. The study, however, provides a basis for such further research as it has proved that neo-colonialism is still a valid framework of interpretation in terms of Africa's relations with external actors.

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Geographical Complexities of Turkey in the Post-Cold War Era

Murat Deregözü

From the time the Ottoman Empire met modern diplomacy until the collapse of the empire, three different ideologies prevailed: Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism. Turkism as an ideology was effective in the last period of the Ottoman Empire and the very first years of the Republic of Turkey (Heper, 2000, pp. 63-82). After the collapse of the bipolar system, Turkish foreign policy, which has a long institutional history, pursued a pragmatic, rational, and realistic course instead of an ideological one. The last period of Ottoman foreign policy was based on the status quo and the return to the West (Westernization), both technologically and militarily. These two principles continued to be effective in the Republic of Turkey's foreign policy, however, neither the status quo nor westernization were principles that were blindly followed by the Ottoman Empire and the period of the Republic. The collapse of the bipolar system, of which USSR was a pole, prompted regional conflicts in the Caucasus, the Balkans, and Central Asia. All of these conflicts closely concerned Turkey; that is why the most vivid proofs of Turkish involvement, interfering in one way or the other in the crisis are; Chechnya, Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo.

The acceleration of the globalisation process pushes countries to pursue a more open and more dynamic foreign policy. Especially, Turkey's 8th President, Turgut Özal, who first served as Prime Minister of Turkey between 1983-89 and subsequently as President between 1989-93 as a President, pursued a "multidimensional foreign policy" (Çınar, 2011). In this way, Turkish foreign policy has become a balanced policy between the West, Eurasia and the Middle East. Turkey has recently recognised the importance of the re-establishment of integration in the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and the Black Sea region in terms of its foreign policy interests and maintains a major effort to ensure stability in all of these areas. It was not possible to pursue an active foreign policy in these regions when the bipolar system was dominant. After the collapse of the bipolar system, Turkish foreign

policy faced the challenge of taking initiatives in different areas (Daban, 2017). Since Turkey is geographically part of the region and the great waves of immigration in previous centuries created demographic and cultural ties with the regions mentioned, Turkey had to pay more attention to these areas.

Following the end of the Cold War, Turkish foreign policy had to act and develop original policies that are suitable for a new turn. This originality was mentioned in the book, entitled *Strategic Depth*, by Dr Ahmet Davutoğlu's, former Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey. According to Davutoğlu's vision, in the intimate areas of the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, Turkey should develop trustful relations with countries (Davutoğlu, 2008) and, thus, Turkey will strengthen its position in the international system. Turkey must be aware of its strategic importance in the world, particularly, of its proximity to the Middle East, which is one of the world's most troubled areas, but the most important reason is that Turkey could reassert its influence on the international system. When it comes to the Middle East, Davutoğlu's "Zero Problems with Neighbours" policy and Turkey's "soft power" approach increased Turkish influence in the region and Turkey's importance in the international system.

However, the "Zero Problems with Neighbours" lasted only for a very short period of time, after which Turkey found itself in a political and diplomatic mess in the Middle East due to the competition of superpowers. Subsequently, Turkey started to use its proxies in Syria, and the military involvement of Turkey in the northern part of Syria was inevitable. Additionally, the impact of domestic policy is limited compared to that of foreign policy because, in the foreign-domestic policy interaction, foreign policy is always decisive for medium-sized countries of the international system, such as Turkey. Therefore, if Turkey wants to be a strong and stable country in its domestic policies and in the international arena, Turkey should be dynamic, an initiator and should take responsibility to be an effective actor in the world and its region.

Turkey and Its Neighbours

The geography of a country depicts the general framework of the country's applied foreign policies. For example, the United States and Britain produce policies with the advantages of the oceans and seas, which distinguish them from the strong continental countries of Europe. These advantages allow them to maintain long-term foreign policies. For Turkey, which is surrounded by different foreign policy cultures, it is not easy to define a typical foreign policy profile as other states do (Erdağ, 2013). Turkey, in a region surrounded by different strategic cultures, must conduct its relations with neighbouring countries which have different perceptions and approaches to foreign policy (Erdağ & Kardaş, 2012). For instance, it cannot be said that the strategic cultures that govern the foreign policies of countries in Europe and the Middle East are the same. On the one hand, in the West, international relations/foreign policy are based on the legal and institutional framework, however, in other regions which surround Turkey, relations between countries are depending on Realpolitik principles and take the form of power competition. On the one hand, in the West, the group of countries use common rules and take into account social norms to interact with each other; on the other hand, in the Middle East, there are countries that reject and question the common and general principles accepted by the international community. In Europe, the integration on the basis of economy, law, and cooperation are at the forefront, while in the Middle East, concerns over security and fragmentation are decisive in developing the countries' foreign policies. While the neighbouring countries of Turkey make such complex policies in the region, the difficulties of establishing a coherent foreign policy towards these neighbours are clear.

Turkish foreign policy has been carried out since its foundation in the context of the principle of "peace at home, peace in the world", by M. Kemal Atatürk and the principle of having and maintaining good relations with neighbours and not interfering in their internal affairs. Indeed, Turkey has also made great efforts to implement this policy. However, throughout history, if we look at Turkey's neighbours and their relations, there was not a single country where relations run smoothly, and they faced several troubles. The 1991 Gulf Crisis, Imia

crisis, the Aegean Sea issues, Cyprus and Western Thrace with Greece, the PKK and Abdullah Ocalan problems with Syria, which resulted in the expulsion of Ocalan from Syria, the crisis of the resolution on the Second Gulf War with the United States, and Turkey's candidacy situation crisis with the European Union (EU) are only a few examples.

It has been a very long story of membership of Turkey in the European Union which Turkey is not part of yet. There are several milestones of relations between Turkey and the EU. In 1963, Turkey signed a partnership agreement with the European Economic Community, and three decades later, the Customs Union Agreement with the EU followed with full membership negotiations in 2005. However, there have always been obstacles to further relations and Turkey's eventual membership. Cyprus is already a member. However, there is another dimension which makes ties tighter: the competition over the Western Balkans.

The Balkan Peninsula, as an Ottoman heritage, has been an important region for every sort of Turkish governments. Turkey supports Western Balkans countries' aspirations to become EU and NATO members (Aydıntaşbaş, 2019). However, with the rise of Erdoğan's AKP, Turkey has initiated stronger ties with its emotional hinterland. Turkey not only invests economically in the region but also encourages local people to learn Turkish, establishing schools and promoting educational activities, renovating cultural centres and mosques by using its soft power tools, such as the Yunus Emre Institute and TİKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency), Diyanet (Religious Affairs), and several other means. Since the EU puts enlargement on hold, Turkey, Russia, and China have started to take advantages in the Balkan region. This situation once again underlines the competition of the two rivals, Russia and Turkey, over the Balkan region. Throughout history, Russians and Turks made considerable efforts to control the Balkans. Even though the region's countries prefer to be a member of the EU and NATO, clearly, there is still a race between Russia and Turkey to influence the region countries' governments and their citizens. The author argues that the internal problems of the EU and the complex political, ethnic, and religious issues of Western Balkan countries slow down the process of their EU membership.

Instead of indifference and traditionalism, Turkey has adopted a new and effective approach, the “multi-dimensional foreign policy”. Ahmet Davutoğlu, the originator of this new foreign policy, put forward a new political vision which is regarded as a very appealing approach both inside and outside the country. This new policy discourse called “Zero Problems with Neighbours” (Sandıklı, 2015) emerged when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) took power in 2002. In this context, the discourse of “Zero Problems with Neighbours” is a slogan summarising Turkey’s expectations with regards to its relations with neighbouring countries; moreover, Turkey wants to eliminate all the problems from its relations with neighbours or at least minimise them as much as possible (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). After adopting its new policy/vision towards neighbours, the Turkish government signed a number of fruitful initiatives, such as resolving the Cyprus problem, ending hostility with Syria, and normalising relations with Armenia. However, after some years, Davutoğlu’s “Zero Problem” policy turned into zero neighbours. Briefly, Turkey’s relations with its neighbours always fluctuate and yet the issues remain unsolved. In addition, new problems have emerged in the region as a result of the Arab Spring.

Turkey and the Middle East

The Middle East has various geographic definitions; however, it is appropriate to identify the Middle East region in a narrow sense, a region between the Mediterranean Sea and Afghanistan, which includes the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt (Öztek, 2009). Due to the existing historical, cultural, and social proximity with people of the Middle East, both direct and indirect effects of developments in the Middle East is closely related to Turkey (Sander, 1998, pp. 26-52). A strong social and cultural tie with the Middle Eastern countries, which improved throughout history, allowed Turkey to enhance its relations with all the countries, without excluding any of them. In the region, Turkey claims to have mutual respect and respect for the principles of non-interference in neighbouring countries internal affairs. Turkey’s fundamental aim towards the region is to have bilateral and multilateral co-operation in order to boost relations, create a peaceful atmosphere, and contribute to the establishment of stability in the entire region.

There are many elements that are effective in Turkey's Middle East policy (İnat, 2017). History, geography, foreign policy preferences of political elites as well as social factors and the geopolitical structure are the main factors that have an impact on Turkey's regional policy. There is another component to add to all these factors: the close relations between the West and Turkey (TASAM, 2011). This connection with the West has had both positive and negative effects for a long time on shaping their relations with the Middle East. However, this process has begun to reverse in the last two decades. Even though there have been several disputes and diplomatic tensions between Turkey and its allies, and the West, Turkey started to develop its own policies regarding the Middle East.

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, it is widely accepted that Turkey largely distanced itself from the Middle East. Turkey's different national identity and the emerging new political identity were the most important factors and reasons why Turkey distanced itself from the Middle East and the Arab world. Turkey gave priority to restructuring the internal structure of the country, and with the Atatürk's leadership, a modern and secular nation-state was built. In this context, Turkey's secularisation and Westernization process inevitably distanced Turkey from the Middle East. The new priority of Turkey's foreign policy was to guarantee Turkey's continuity. Thus, Turkey abdicated all claims in the Ottoman geographical sway or cultural heritage and has adopted the status quo approach to foreign policy. So, the definition of Turkey's "national interest" remained limited to its own territory, and consequently Turkey stood idly by the Arabic world's problems. In this period, the very first decade of the Republic, the most important element of Turkish foreign policy has been the activities to solve border problems (border determination and border security). The existence of the border issues with Middle Eastern neighbours has been an obstacle for Turkey to develop close relations with countries in the region. Another reason why Turkey remained unresponsive in the Middle East after World War I is that it took a long time for Middle Eastern nations to gain independence (Sinkaya, 2011). Therefore, Turkey was obliged to conduct its relations with the region via Western countries. However, it is not possible to say that Turkey has completely stopped relations with the Middle East. In this regard, close

relations were developed with Iran, the only independent Middle Eastern country during this period. After Iraq formed an independent state, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan signed the Saadabad Pact in 1937 in order to secure the region.

After World War II, both the international system and the geopolitical structure of the Middle East region were reshaped. In this period, the countries of the region have gained independence, but in a short span of time, the Cold War began to affect the region. The Soviet Union emerged as a power which threatened Turkey's security; that is why Turkey entered into a political alliance with the West. Finally, Turkey joined NATO in 1952 and Turkey-West relations evolved into a military alliance. Thus, Turkey started to strengthen its alliance with the West in order to benefit from the power and opportunities; Turkey tried to align its interests to the West's own security and regional interests. Turkey's pro-Western policy in the region included developing good relations with Israel (Balci, 2011, pp. 117-136). Turkey was the first country to recognise Israel in the region. This recognition has triggered opposition from Arab nationalists, who see it as a stab in the back of the Arab world. For this reason, the relationship with Israel and parallelly the western link adversely affected the course of relations with the Middle Eastern countries for a long time. During this period, i.e. 1950-1960, due to rising Arab nationalism in the Arab world, the Ottoman heritage, and Turkey's Western-oriented policies, Turkey was excluded from the Middle East. In the 1960s, Turkey's foreign policy interests began to diverge from those of the West from time to time. In particular, its Western allies did not support Turkey's arguments on the issue of Cyprus. Therefore, Turkey's foreign policy entered a new period, diversifying its foreign policy relations with countries which it neglected before in order to find support and new partners. Thus, a multidimensional politics began to emphasize the development of relations with Third World and Arab states in Turkish foreign policy. The first reflection of Turkey's multi-dimensional foreign policy in the Middle East was seen in the Turkey-Israel relations, which negatively affected Turkey's relations with the Arab Middle East. When a war broke out in 1967 between Israel and the Arabs, Turkey announced blocking its bases in the country to prevent the US from aiding Israel against the Arabs. After the 1973 Oil Crisis in the Middle Eastern

countries, Turkey came a little closer to the region. Despite striving for multidimensional foreign policy, in this period, the Western link maintained its central place in Turkish foreign policy. The centrality of the protection of Turkey's foreign and security policy, alliance with the West, the continuing influence of nationalism in the Arab world limited the influence of Turkey's Middle East "initiative" in the region.

In the 1980s, two important developments occurred, and Turkey's Middle East policy was affected by two different events. During this period, the fighting against separatist "PKK", terrorism became one of the most important issues of Turkish politics. Additionally, the fact that Syria and Iraq aided the PKK in Turkey added a new problem to the relations with these countries alongside water sharing issues. On the other hand, Turkey's new overseas economic expansion and export-based economic growth strategy made it necessary for the country to establish good relations with countries in the region. In this period, Iraq and Iran became important trading partners of Turkey. In order to boost trade within the region and development of economic relations, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan established the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). However, Turkey could not achieve the expected results from actively supporting the Gulf War policy. The war and embargo entailed high costs for the Turkish economy, and new security issues also emerged. Turkey's Middle East policy during the 1990s was shaped by security concerns due to terrorism, which threatened the territorial integrity of Turkey. Middle Eastern neighbours supported the PKK, and even the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was sheltered in Syria for many years; as a result, relations with Syria became rather tense. However, increasing diplomatic and political pressure by Turkey on Syria in 1998 yielded favourable results, and Syria expelled Öcalan, the leader of the PKK terrorist organisation from its territory. Subsequently, when the Adana Memorandum of Understanding was signed in October 1998 between Syria and Turkey, the relations with both Syria and the Middle East became cooperative, replacing the former security-oriented policy and the highly tense atmosphere.

Still, the mandate of March 1 for military action led to mounting US political pressure, and Turkey started to improve its relations with Syria and Iran, which made the countries of the region adopt a more positive approach towards Turkey and change their perspectives. Then Turkey

was no longer seen as the West's outpost in the region, and the Middle East countries were convinced that it followed an independent policy regarding the region, although it had a partnership with the US. The "revision" of Turkish foreign policy continued to gain momentum in the 2000s, and with the new government, the Justice and Development Party/AKP, Turkish foreign diplomacy was based on a concrete vision. This vision sets out that due to Turkey's historical, geopolitical, demographic, and economic state structure, the country should have a central role in the international system (Davutoğlu, 2008). Ensuring regional security and economic integration are the most important aspects of Turkish foreign policy and the new vision regarding the Middle East. The most important element of Turkey's Middle East policy is to ensure peace and stability in the region. The second step of the Visionary Middle East policy is that the separate bilateral relations between countries in the region must be converted to multilateral cooperation agreements with Turkey. In addition to this, Turkish leaders believe that a political transformation is necessary for the Middle East as well. However, instead of imposing this change from the outside, they suggest that each country should take its own decisions based on its own internal dynamics.

Turkey, Central Asia, and the Caucasus

On March 16, 1921, Turkey signed the Friendship and Brotherhood Agreement with Soviet Russia. In fact, with this agreement, Turkey perceived Central Asia as an internal affair of the Soviet Union. For this reason, Turkey conducted its relations with the region through Moscow until the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, Turkey's membership in NATO in 1952 increased tensions between the parties (Evedenci, 2013). In 1985, with Mikhail Gorbachev's policies, such as the glasnost and perestroika, the Soviet Union began to moderate future Soviet policies and Turkey started to establish limited relations with Central Asia.

In 1991, the Soviet Union's disintegration created a shock effect in the whole global community; however, the greatest impact was felt in Turkey. Turkey's foreign policy did not have an answer to the question "what if the Soviet Union collapses?". Therefore, Turkey was caught

totally unprepared for this situation. At the end of 1991, 15 new states emerged in the region, and Turkey pledged a promise of international support to these states and it was the first country to recognise them. After recognition, establishment of diplomatic relations, especially with the Turkic Republics, grew rapidly. Based on religious, linguistic, and cultural ties with Turkey, five countries caught the attention of Turkey more than others; these are Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Azerbaijan (Evedenci, 2013)



Figure 1. The Turkic Republics. Source: The Interpreter, “Turkey - Turkic Republics and Groups”

In the next period, Turkey tried to gain political influence in the region and be a role model, particularly for the Turkic Republics. But soon it was noticed that Turkey, without taking into consideration Russian influence in the region, could not develop any cooperation with Central Asian countries (Denizhan, 2010, p. 18). Due to the economic and military dependence on the Soviet Union, Russia was able to maintain its position as the most important actor in the region. In the process of gaining their independence, Turkey was not able to better analyse the developments in these countries. First of all, the formation of Russian minorities in every country in the region, constituting 41% of Kazakhstan’s population, for example, led to a tendency to harmonise the foreign policy to be followed by the regional countries with Russian

foreign policy (Denizhan, 2010, p. 20). Also, the new republics realised that Turkey had limited economic resources and they soon understood that Turkey could not be a model to them, either economically, or politically and cannot guarantee the promises given in the process of development of bilateral relations. Gaining political influence over Turkey's Caucasus-Central Asia plan failed so Turkey changed its policy regarding the region and presented itself as a soft power based on giving priority to economic cooperation. Behind this necessity, there was a need for essential cheap energy, particularly oil and gas, for the economic development model to increase Turkey's exports.

With the AKP, i. e. Justice and Development Party government, Turkey intensified its relations with the Caucasus and Central Asia again. Since 1995, the US has supported the transportation of oil and natural gas through Turkey to international markets and this is consistent with the interests of Turkey. Moreover, as a member of NATO, Turkey supported the USA's argument regarding Akbazzhya and South Ossetia and Turkey did not recognise them as independent countries.

Turkey, South and East Asia

South Asia

The South Asian region, in the centre of the world's focus and with its surface area, cultural accumulation, economic potential, human resources that make up about four-quarters of the world's population, and with the importance of the evolution of the international system together, is unique and gaining importance in the global strategic equation. The region is becoming one of the geostrategic and geo-economic centres of the world. The dynamic developments in South Asian countries and the position between global centres play a critical role for the future of the world (Tüzyüsoğlu, 2012). Turkey has always had strong historical and cultural relations with South Asian countries.

India gained its independence on August 15, 1947, and Turkey immediately recognised India and established diplomatic relations. Due to certain historical and religious-cultural reasons, which should not be ignored, the trend of relations between India and Turkey has been stagnant. However, Turkey's support in the issue of the separation of

Pakistan and Kashmir had a negative effect on the relation between Turkey and India. However, it can be seen that relations between India and Turkey and the intensification of linkages between the parties gained momentum towards the end of the 20th century and the very first years of 21st century. Pakistan was founded as an independent state on August 14, 1947, and it was formed on the basis of close friendship and brotherhood with Turkey. Many agreements have been signed between the two countries, both at military and economic levels. Both countries are members of the D-8 (Developing Eight), a common market association, and Turkey also continuously supports Pakistan in international issues. Turkish foreign policy regarding South Asia is very optimistic and Turkey is eager to act as a mediator and solve the issue of Kashmir between India and Pakistan.

Asia has always maintained its importance in Turkish foreign policy, but their distance and the internal problems of Turkey and the issues in its neighbouring states made it impossible to pursue an active policy in South Asia in the favour of Turkey. In particular, it can be established that four years had no momentum and were lost in Turkish foreign policy between 1998 and 2002, but there are exceptions. However, Davutoğlu, the main character of the AK Party government's foreign policy, clearly expressed the importance of Asia to Turkey in his strategic depth book, which was published in 2001. Accordingly, Davutoğlu defines Asia as a geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-cultural basin and Turkey is seeking to enter the basin in these three axes because the new emerging centres of power are located in its passage and intersection. The AK Party, taking into account these features, redefined Turkey's Asian policies based on the continent. In this sense, Turkey applied to sign the ASEAN friendship and cooperation agreement in 2008, in order to specify foreign policy strategic priorities in Asia and its interests on continental scale. According to it, following the economic interests based primarily on Asia policy, aimed to improve the trade relations between Turkey and countries in the region. Turkey seems to follow the foreign policy strategy based on economy in Asia (Ekşi, 2009).

East Asia

In recent years, the People's Republic of China, which has become the second largest economy in the world, is increasingly concentrating on high-tech and value-added production areas. As an emerging economy, Turkey is seeking to boost diplomatic and economic relations with China. What makes the last decade of the new Chinese global role interesting from Turkey's perspective is that Turkey aims to benefit greatly from the recent Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which was unveiled by Xi Jinping in late 2013. The initiative should be considered as a tool for both parties to seize the opportunity of enhancing relations. However, the BRI is not the only way that Turkey and China can cooperate or trade with each other and it does not mean that two countries did not have any ties before the announcement of the BRI.

Turkey is seen as a hub of geopolitics where Turkish geopolitics can be classified as peripheral/semi-peripheral. Therefore, Turkey appears to hold a pivotal position in the context of China's BRI project and is situated along China's route of access to European markets. One of the Turkish' government's targets is to become a hub in the global supply chains that connect the Chinese and European markets with each other. (Turkey as a crossroad country, between Asia and Europe, aims to become the hub, link China and Europe, where China can deliver its goods to Europe. And this beneficial both for Turkey and China).

Turkish Foreign Policy Intentions

After the 2002 elections, Turkey's foreign policy was undergoing major changes and increased dynamism (Türkmen, 2012). Both Turkey's sense of unity and solidarity and its soft power abroad grew rapidly (Tüysüzöğlü, 2012). Turkey as a regional power in the global system is changing day by day and is increasing its economic and political weight to diversify its foreign policy. Turkey is seeking new countries to cooperate in political and economic fields in regions outside of Europe and North America.

One of the issues discussed and elaborated on in this paper is that Turkish foreign policy has been changing its character in the recent period. Turkey, due to the Cold War ideological presuppositions and

systemic-oriented nature and safety, had to pursue a one-dimensional foreign policy paradigm for many years. And as an inherent consequence, it has been isolated geographically, adapting a new dynamic foreign policy, which is not welcomed by the international system. However, the most important point that the Turkish intelligentsia, the public, and international world should understand is that the Cold War is over, and the globalising world brings with it different values and policies. This is called the multipolar world. From that aspect, the new Turkish policy aims to use its soft power in its region and utilize the Ottoman heritage in neighbouring regions, such as the Balkans and the Caucasus (Aras, 2011, p. 26). In order to maintain a multidimensional foreign policy, Turkey should be an effective actor in the priority neighbourhoods, and it has been making efforts towards this goal for more than a decade now (Tüysüzoğlu, 2012).

Severely affected by the global and regional developments, Turkey has launched a comprehensive program of change and transformation of foreign policy to guard national security and economic development and to stabilise domestic politics (Keyman, 2010). Turkey is trying to pursue a foreign policy decided in Ankara, without harming relations with the West; it is approaching the East, preferring a multifaceted and balanced foreign policy tendency as a Muslim state, without leaving its Western identity and values. Turkey displays both realistic and moral elements in its political discourse in order to ensure the national interests, namely that Turkey's arguments in the international system should be carry more weight and that the system should be more collaborative. In the new era of foreign policy pursued by Turkey, it is possible to explain its new policies through a few basic principles. First, fighting against terrorism, which is a threat to Turkey's national security, has a top priority based on adopting a realist foreign policy (SETA, 2012). Second, Turkey gives priority to economic development and growth, which directly contributes to the promotion of an effective foreign policy and resistance to threats against the country. Thirdly, it promotes humanitarian diplomacy and humanitarian aid and adopts a value and morals-based foreign policy (Ataman, 2017). Finally, due to the rise of extreme nationalism and racism in Western and Central Europe, Turkey may redefine its traditional Western relations. Rising xenophobia towards foreigners and European hostility towards the

Islam and Erdogan have undermined the traditional alliance between the West and Turkey. As a result of this political marginalisation from Western countries and the problems over the last few years arising from the economic crisis, which the European Union Member States are facing, Turkey's full EU membership is in the middle of the target. Therefore, it is inevitable for Turkey to develop alternative relations. (From Turkey's point of view, the internal problems of EU, mostly economic, and Turkey's membership to the club are not related to each other but it is clear that EU won't accept Turkey as a member and that's why it is inevitable for Turkey to have partners as much as she can) As a result, Turkey's perspective in this regard is not to be ignored by Western European powers.

Turkey is the only country, which is a member of the Council of Europe, NATO, the OECD, the G-20, and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference at the same time (Kısacık, 2010). Turkey, with its strength and soft power in neighbouring regions, economic growth, commitment to the fight against terrorism, maintaining energy security both for itself and Europe, and stopping immigration flows to Europe, is set to become an unchangeable partner for Europe (Küçükkeleş, 2012). The point here is that Turkey's interests are also the interests of European states. Now, Europe's security depends on Turkey's security as a result of being neighbours. The outbreak of the civil war in Syria and the immigration problem once again showed how close Europe is to conflict zones. Through Turkey's influence in its own region and also in the Balkans, North Africa, and South Asia and etc., it expects to establish close diplomatic, economic, military, and political ties. In this regard, Turkey's expectation is to reduce tensions with European partners and achieve more reconciliation and cooperation. However, European countries' recent actions, especially, the fact that they tried to interfere in the internal affairs of Turkey, and in particular, the efforts to be part of Turkey's election campaigns, clearly indicate that European states' elites and political leaders could not understand the importance of Turkey. Despite all these, the Readmission and migration agreement between Turkey and the EU, the already existing economic relations with several Western countries, the customs union with the European Union, and the EU membership negotiations are positive signals.

Conclusion

The Republic of Turkey has a geographical location in the world with unique features. Modern Turkey forms a land bridge that connects Asia to Southeastern Europe. During the Cold War, due to its geographical position, in close proximity to the Soviet Union, Turkey was a strong ally of NATO. However, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall, some assumed that Turkey's role in the region waned. In contrast, Turkey is a crossroad where energy-rich eastern neighbours transfer raw-material through Turkey to large European energy markets. However, challenges are remaining. After the bipolar world system collapsed, Turkey's foreign policy, which was stuck between a great power competition changed, in particular, the 2002 elections brought a new perspective in terms of foreign policy in Turkey. The "Zero Problems with Neighbours" policy was effective for a while, and yet a short time later, due to the Arab Spring, Turkey found itself in such a condition that made Turkey intervene in conflicts in the Middle East, particularly the Syrian civil war for security reasons. We must mention that Turkey, throughout history, has always had problems with its neighbouring countries. However, a strong Turkey, especially in economic and military terms, can solve problems with its neighbours with a new vision of foreign policy. Ibn Khaldun once said that "Geography is destiny" and Turkey's destiny is to overcome the geopolitical complexities in its region by using both soft and hard power.

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Romania: A Pragmatic Buffer State Between East and West

Zoltán Megyesi & Éva Beáta Corey

Romania is a relatively young country, and it has a unique cultural tradition with a mixture of many European cultural elements. In terms of language, Romanians lean towards Mediterranean countries (their language descends from a Vulgar Latin dialect), and in terms of religion, they lean towards the “Orthodox commonwealth” (a legacy of the Byzantine Empire and Slavic neighbours). Moreover, Romanian history is essentially a history of three separate lands, which were, at various points in time, under the control of other states (Pavlenko et al., 2014).

The modern Romanian state is classified as a medium-sized and moderately populous country in Europe but in the context of “In-between Europe”³, it is a vast country, second only to Poland and Ukraine. Its area covers 238 397 km², but its population has fallen below 20 million people according to recent years’ statistics. The country is covered by 28% mountainous area, 42% hills and plateaus, and 30% plains, while the three most characteristic natural geographical units are the Carpathians, the Danube, and the Black Sea. The Carpathians are a highly fragmented mountain range with relatively low altitude and a host of valleys and intra-mountainous depressions. However, the mountain range is not densely populated and has a lower urbanisation rate and unfavourable agricultural conditions. The Romanian literature refers to it as “a place of origin”, where the first Romanian state formation emerged (Săgeată, 2015). So, in this content, the Carpathians occupy a central place not only in geographical terms, but they represent a symbolic idea as well: the cradle of the Romanian nation and identity. Moreover, in the Romanian geopolitical and geographical mindset, the Carpathian Mountains are not an obstacle but a uniting feature. The Danube is Europe’s second largest river (2842 km); the river that is connecting countries, nations, languages, religions, and cultures from Germany to Moldova. In the case of Romania, the Danube

³ The phrase refers to the group of countries situated from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. First used to refer to the buffer zone between Germany and Soviet Union between the two World Wars.

represents a connection with Europe, linking the port of Constanța (Black Sea) to the port of Rotterdam (the North Sea) through the Danube-Main-Rhine and Danube-Black Sea canals, on the one hand, and creates a strict borderline separating the Balkans from the rest of greater Europe, on the other hand. For Romania, the Black Sea is the main gateway to the world's waterways, providing the country with flexibility in trade. However, it is a critical strategic point not only for Romania but for the global power balance as well.

The three historical regions of Romania are linked to three different areas of Europe: Wallachia to the Balkans, Moldavia to Eastern Europe, and Transylvania to Central Europe. This situation has created a constant "pull force" to three different directions, which are still present to this day (Csüllög – Gulyás, 2012). Because of this, the country's macro-regional classification is not easy to define, although Romanian authors define Romania as a Central European country (Săgeată, 2015). This axiomatic location influences the geopolitical characteristics and position of Romania: The country is located at a European crossroad and lies at the confluence of different regions and areas of great powers.

The Birth of Modern Romania and the Great Powers

The 19th-century classical geopolitical trend introduced the so-called buffer state concept for those countries which are at the forefront of the interest of several major powers (Bernek, 2015). Romania is an excellent example of this concept. Its territory has long been the buffer zone of the neighbouring great powers. In antiquity, it was a border region of the Roman and Eastern Roman Empire, in the Middle Ages a contiguous region between Byzantium, the Kingdom of Hungary, the nomadic Turkish and Mongol, and Russian territories. During the 15–19th century, these lands became a frontier area under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire. This dependency lasted for decades, and the country became a buffer state on the borders of the Habsburg, Ottoman, and Russian empires. Thus, – not surprisingly – the existence of historical Romanian principalities was dependent on great powers. The pragmatic foreign policy of the principalities, and then of the modern Romanian state – although heavily dependent in many ways –

was able to make good use of the declining powers of the empires or their conflicts with each other; in particular, it was able to influence the significant power decisions of the late 19th and 20th centuries (Csüllög – Gulyás, 2012).

In 1859, the two historical Romanian principalities were united. Three years later, the United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia took the name of Romania. In 1878, as a result of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, sanctified by the decision of the Berlin Congress, the state, complemented by North Dobruja, gained independence after centuries of Turkish dependence. Great power's geopolitical considerations have played a significant role in achieving independence: Romania became the buffer zone between the "sick man of Europe", i. e. the weakening Ottoman Empire and Russian expansionist efforts focused on acquiring the Turkish Straits (the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles) and gaining more influence on the Balkan Peninsula. Due to the geographical location of the emerging Kingdom of Romania, embedded between three great powers: Austria-Hungary, the Russian Empire, and the Ottoman Empire, the state found itself in a complicated geopolitical situation. Although Austria-Hungary and the Russian Empire were potential enemies of the Romanian irredentist movement, the leaders of the Romanian Kingdom decided to take an Austrian orientation. Behind this decision, there was a need for the support of the Dual Monarchy against Russian threat (Gulyás – Csüllög, 2013). Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of the Romanian irredentist movement was to unite all the Romanian people in one single state. Alexandru Papiu Ilarian⁴ elaborated this geopolitical concept and concretised the territories of Greater Romania: Wallachia, Moldavia, Bessarabia, Bukovina, Transylvania, Banat, Bihar, Maramureş, and Dobruja, while later Romanian geographers also defined the new county's natural boundaries from the Tisza river to the Dniester and the Black Sea (Gulyás – Csüllög, 2016).

World War I brought about the fulfilment of Romanian ambitions. Romania was officially an ally of Austria-Hungary from the outset, and Charles I, the first king of Romania, also promoted entering the war on

⁴ A Transylvanian Romanian revolutionary, lawyer and historian (27 September 1827 – 23 October 1877)

the side of the Central Powers. However, after the country remained neutral until 1916, Romania entered the war on the side of the Entente. Although it suffered a military defeat, it still ended the war on the winning side. The Peace Treaties of Paris awarded Transylvania, Southern Maramures, Eastern Banat, a part of Eastern Hungary and Bukovina to Romania. Bessarabia was also, by chance, gained from the former ally of Romania, i. e. Russia, as the victorious powers readily acknowledged the territorial occupation of the Romanians due to the hostile Bolshevik takeover of Russia. With all these new territories, the country's area and population doubled.

With the peace treaties of WWI, the reorganisation of Central and Eastern Europe took place in the spirit of the French geopolitical concept of *cordon sanitaire*. It created a string of "nation-states" in the place of the former empires, and these new nation states were intended to curb and prevent German and Russian (Bolshevik) expansion. Francophile Romania was a valuable player among these nation-states. However, the concept failed; hence, often rivalling small states first became a part of the sphere of interest of Nazi Germany and, after World War II, that of the Soviet Union. (During World War II, Romania committed itself finally to the Axis powers, and in addition to its large number of auxiliary troops, the Ploiești oil fields played a vital strategic and economic role in the implementation of German military goals.) As a defeated state after World War II, Romania had to disclaim Bessarabia and North Bukovina to the Soviet Union and South Dobruja to Bulgaria, but Northern Transylvania (regained by Hungary in 1940) was returned following a decision based on the interests of Soviet foreign policy. With these, the border of present Romania was formed, and the country successfully kept the ring of the strategic importance of the Eastern Carpathians (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Territorial changes of Romania between 1859 and 1945.

Source: Elemér Illyés (1982). National Minorities in Romania

During the Cold War, the country belonged to the Soviet sphere of interest and was a member of the Warsaw Pact, but was relatively loosely tied to the Soviet Union and, with its often-stand-alone foreign policy within the socialist bloc, gained particular popularity among and good relations with Western countries. Romania did not participate in the military invasion of Czechoslovakia after the Prague Spring in 1968; Richard Nixon, President of the United States, visited Romania in 1969; Romania participated in the Los Angeles Olympics (1984), boycotted by the rest of the socialist bloc. Also, it was the only country in Eastern Europe that, by introducing strict austerity programs, repaid all its external debt by 1988 (at the cost of the living standards and citizens' well-being). As a result, the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu was one of the few politicians in the socialist bloc who were classified as

“good communists” in the West. However, as Western criticism of Romania’s human rights record was mounting in the 1980s, Romania became more and more isolated on the international stage (Micu, 2010).

Romania’s Steadfast Movement Towards the West

The changes after 1989 forced Romania to determine its place in the new Europe. One of the ideas was to regain Bessarabia/Moldova and by this action the country would be able to restore stability, ensure its development and gain secondary power status. After Moldova declared its independence in 1991, the Romanian and Moldovan governments sought to unite the two countries for some time, but Russian and Ukrainian minorities in Transnistria strongly opposed the expansion of the influence of Bucharest. Also, Russia formulated strong opposition to the accession of Moldova to Romania. In such circumstances, the possibility of reunification lost its attractiveness to both sides, Romanians and Moldavians alike for a short period (Varga, 2009).

Afterwards, Romania, in order to avoid international isolation, started to demonstrate an apparent political openness towards Western integration. The country participated in several initiatives and regional projects in the Balkans and the Black Sea region (e.g. CEFTA, BSEC) and also took individual initiatives in the political and diplomatic spheres to achieve EU and NATO membership. However, the road leading to it proved to be one full of difficulties: The positive image of the Revolution quickly faded into a negative one in the West, the image of a poor country full of internal issues. Reform processes were progressing slowly, corruption and organised crime dramatically increased, and images of ethnic and social violence (such as the inter-ethnic clash in Târgu Mureş⁵ or the so-called “Mineriads”⁶) severely

⁵ Also called Black March, referring to a violent incident between the Romanian and Hungarian ethnic groups in Transylvania. In March 1990, brief but violent clashes occurred between the two ethnic groups in Târgu Mureş. The clashes left 5 people dead and 300 injured.

⁶ The mineriads were a series of violent demonstrations by Jiu Valley miners in Bucharest during the 1990s. The movements were started for political and later

damaged the image of the country (Lakatos, 2015). Among other things, these factors prevented Romania from joining NATO at the same time with Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in 1999. Moreover, apart from internal political considerations, NATO did not want to increase the concern of the Russian Federation by pushing its borders to the East so quickly (Kozma, 2018).

Romania's situation changed drastically after September 11, 2001. The new conditions favoured the geopolitical situation of the country, in which Romania became an important ally for the USA in Europe. Romania shared certain security elements with the US security policy, especially those that coincided with its ideas concerning the Black Sea region and the countries belonging to the former Soviet sphere of interest. The country's NATO accession in 2004, in addition to the country's achievements so far, can be primarily attributed to the new geopolitical needs and considerations of the US after September 11, 2001: that is, Romania's proximity to the front and its willingness to support the US by all means (Varga, 2009).

This unconditional Romanian support towards US policy created severe doubt for the European Union: European leaders believed that Romania had gone too far in seeking America's friendship, and once it became a member of the Union, it would act as a representative of American interests. In other words, Romania's EU accession, complementing the strict Atlanticist policies of the Polish and British governments, threatened the progress and goals of European integration. Although many other Central European countries followed this strict Atlanticist policy, Poland and Romania are two major ones, having more weight within the EU. The accession of Romania in 2007 can be partly seen as the EU's fears that further delay in the integration of the country will render Romania's American orientation irreversible, which may weaken the EU's Eastern Partnership policy (Varga, 2009).

Finally, the country's accession to NATO (2004) and then the EU (2007) was the result of the political efforts made by the Romanians to "return to Europe" and the importance of Romania's strategic position. In particular, the efforts of the EU and NATO are important to "get their

economic reasons. According to official data, the six mineriads had a total of 9 dead and approx. 1250 wounded, while 605 persons were arrested.

feet” into the Black Sea region, from where they can monitor and limit Russia’s “traditional” sphere of influence and be part of the region’s energy programs (Varga, 2009).

The Highly Valuable Strategic Location of Romania

Romania’s role in regional security and its strategic geographical position has been appreciated over the past decades in terms of ensuring security in the Euro-Atlantic area. The country, situated in the direct neighbourhood of the Balkan Peninsula and the Post-Soviet region, with an exit to the Black Sea, provides a route for the Caucasian countries, Central Asia, and the Middle East. These regions are subject to almost constant conflicts. The Yugoslav Wars (1991–1995) was the worst armed conflict on the continent since World War II, followed by the break-up of Kosovo by Serbia (1999), which is still a potential source of conflict. The Republic of Moldova is in a frozen conflict due to the break-up of Transnistrian territories (1992), not to mention the recent events in Ukraine. The Caucasus is also a hot spot with a lot of frozen conflicts ⁷ with fragile peace: Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and separatism in North Caucasus. From the 2000s onwards, the turbulent Middle Eastern events have made Romania more important for neighbouring western states.

Besides, Eastern Europe has become a conflict zone between NATO and the Russian Federation in recent years. Such tension, which had not been experienced since the Cold War, re-emerged between Russia and the United States following the Russian occupation of Crimea in 2014. From the point of view of Russia, some parts of Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region belong to its sphere of interest. Although the Black Sea (as an inland sea) is far from the world’s oceans, its regional significance

⁷ The term “frozen conflict” is used to describe conditions on territories where active armed conflict may have ended, but no peace treaty or political resolution has resolved the tensions to the satisfaction of the different sides. In the separatist territories that have become frozen conflict zones, internal sovereignty is often achieved in the breakaway territory at the expense of “external sovereignty” or recognition in the international system (Grigas, 2016).

is still high. It is a sensitive region that could be the scene of a geographic outbreak from Moscow and for the maritime world power (formerly for the British, today for the Americans), it means the possibility of encirclement and isolation (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Political and power situation in the Black Sea region.
 Source: Toucas (2017). Russia’s Design in The Black Sea: Extending the Buffer Zone

The two most influential powers of the Black Sea region are considered to be Russia and Turkey, but the region is not indifferent to the United States, either. However, since the US cannot be present with a permanent force according to the Montreal Convention (1936), the role of its local allies is significant. The importance of Turkey among the NATO member states of the region has been evident since the Cold War, but the unstable Turkish domestic political situation, the tensions and disputes with the Western countries (including the US), and improving Turkish–Russian relations of recent years has given Romania an increasing role. Moreover, from a US perspective the geopolitical importance of Romania, together with Poland, is the fundamental pillar of the defence zone against a possible Russian expansion, stretching

from the Baltics through the Visegrad countries to the Adriatic and the Balkans (Hegedűs, 2016).

This role of Romania from a US perspective is growing in importance, and it seems not to be a short-term obsession. Besides the involvement in the Middle East and interfering with direct Russian expansion and threat, the US has economic reasons for such activity, too. Both the United States (in terms of geopolitical security) and the European Union (mainly for economic reasons) have tried to encourage the supply diversification of European countries to reduce dependence on Russian gas (Papatulica, 2015). The process once called the “Great Game” is now being reloaded again, with the only difference that instead of two actors – which were the British Empire and Tsarist Russia in the old days –, much more players are involved nowadays. Russia has a geopolitical advantage, but the US, the EU, China, and even some Central Asian powers – such as Iran or Turkey – want their shares from Central Asia and the Caucasus region’s “wealth”, and this race has high stakes (Lakatos, 2015). In order to be a proficient competitor, the West needs its own regional outposts, and Romania can play a crucial role in obtaining them. Due to its geographical position in the neighbourhood of vast proven reserves of natural gas and crude oil, Romania has a triple geostrategic and geo-economic dimension (Fig. 3): as a direct source of energy (with the newly discovered significant natural gas field in the continental shelf of the Black Sea), a major transport corridor for Eurasian energy resources to EU consumers, and a significant factor of energy security for the EU (Papatulica, 2015).



Figure 3. Caspian oil and gas transport to Western Europe.
 Source: Săgeată (2015). Romania. A Geopolitical Outline

As a result of the highly appreciated strategic location and close cooperation with the United States, Romania has been upgrading some military bases in recent years. According to this military aspiration, there renovations have been taking place at the Constanta Air Base, where the US is deploying military equipment in Romania. NATO's Missile Defence Complex in Deveselu is also a remarkable investment. By 2020, several military equipment will have been replaced or purchased. Among other things, the Romanian Air Force and Navy are being modernised, and Patriot Air Defence Missiles are being purchased to increase operational capabilities. Romania is the first European state, which acquires HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System) and GMLRS (Guided Multiple Launch Rocket Systems) systems from the United States. The increasing American military presence and technology in the country has a positive impact on the regional role of Romania (Kozma, 2018).

The two traditional major powers in the region – Turkey and Russia – naturally oppose this special friendship with the US. Turkey resents the growing importance of Romania because it is weakening the essential role of Turkey in NATO. Russia has also been critical of

Romania's strong American commitment because Romania is operating as an American "fortification" in a region that has been traditionally inaccessible to the United States. Russia is concerned not only over the possible intrusion from the US, but the appearance and strengthening of energy transport projects. In 2017, Vladimir Putin condemned Romania as a growing threat, but there is a concern on both sides. Romania is also troubled by the Russian troops stationed in Transnistria, which is *de jure* part of the Republic of Moldova. The confrontations in the Eastern region of Ukraine and the occupation of Crimea represent another threat to Romania. These issues have significantly reduced the physical distance between Russia and Romania: mainly through the appearance of the Russian's warships at the port of Sevastopol and the missile systems deployed in the Crimea (Kozma, 2018).

In recent years, a third great power has appeared on the horizon of Romania's external relations. Romanian – Chinese relations were intense during the two countries' communist periods due to the fact that both kept a certain distance from the Soviet Union. After the collapse of the socialist bloc, the relationship remained unchanged but shifting, but from the mid-2000s, under the chairmanship of Traian Băsescu, it turned to very modest (Popescu – Brînză, 2018). Presently, however, they have become more active through the "16+1" relationship. The 16+1 format is a mechanism of dialogue and cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. It is meant to improve trade and investments, develop infrastructure and the energy sector, and strengthen people-to-people relations. The 16+1 forum takes place every year in one of the CEE countries or China. The forum took place for the first time in 2012 in Poland; after that Romania hosted the summit in 2013, a moment that became a landmark for its bilateral relations with China. During the summit, Romania signed with China more than ten memorandums of understanding, which proposed projects valued at 8.5 billion euros and focus on strategic energy investments such as the Tarnița-Lăpuștești Hydropower Plant, the Rovinari Thermal Power, or the Cernavodă Nuclear Plant. However, more than six years after the summit, some of them are still under negotiation due to the internal political instability of Romania and the changes of governments. For China, which has a stable and long-lasting government, the Romanian political fluctuations

contributed to somewhat stagnant bilateral relations. While problems and delays have plagued all these projects, Romanian politicians and officials remain interested in attracting Chinese investments (Popescu – Brînză, 2018). In May 2019, Romania finally signed a preliminary agreement on the expansion of the Cernavodă nuclear power plant by the China Nuclear Power Corporation (Nuclear Engineering International, 2019).

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) also creates new opportunities for the Romania-China relationship. Romania's interest in getting involved in the BRI is present, and there is a legal framework for it in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2015. Although Romania, considering itself one of the first European countries that signed such an agreement with China, has not attracted any investment or project as part of the BRI so far. Although many projects listed above are labelled as BRI investments, in fact, these had been proposed before the initiative was launched (Popescu – Brînză, 2018). The unstable Romanian government might be the reason why the development of closer cooperation and relations under the BRI have not progressed in recent years.

Besides the direct relations with great powers, Romania is strengthening its relationships with other European countries by participating in regional cooperation and forums. The most recent and the most interesting is the Three Seas Initiative. This forum has twelve member states along a north-south axis from the Baltic Sea to the Adriatic Sea and the Black Sea. The members met for their first summit in 2016 in Dubrovnik, where they announced the framework of this collaboration: the main goal of the initiative is to create a "north-south" energy and infrastructure corridor in the region. The Trump administration has been vocal in its support for the Three Seas Initiative as an opportunity to lessen the region's dependence on Russian energy imports, and openly expressing criticism against the EU and western European leaders. The EU formulated some scepticism as the heavy political support from the US could be used to undermine the EU's authority or standing in the region (Atlantic Council, 2019).

Challenges for the Future

The most critical elements of Romania's foreign policy program are security and stability. In the National Defence Strategy of Romania (2015-2019) and the Military Strategy of Romania (2016), the country appears as an active participant in conflict prevention and containment. Romania would like to maintain regional cooperation within the South (Balkans) and Eastern countries (Republic of Moldova, Ukraine) and supports Western integration. Although, in recent decades, the development of Romania's external relations and its role in regional and world politics can be considered positive, there are unresolved objectives and problems in the country. According to the National Security Strategy of Romania and the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there are three crucial areas for the eastern vector of Romanian foreign policy: the Black Sea region, the Western Balkans, and the Republic of Moldova. The most important argument for this security policy is the geographical position of the country, and thus its essential role in NATO (Tóth, 2009).

Over the last decade, Romania's aspiration of (re-)unification with Moldova has been more and more open; the "Union discourse" has become widespread and almost universal on the agenda of the Romanian political elite.⁸ Today, Moldova has become one of the frontrunners in the geopolitical struggle of Eastern Europe: Western-oriented and pro-Russian political groups have been adding to the tensions in the region. In the past decade, Russia's foreign policy has aimed to support a federal independent Moldovan system that includes Transnistria. In this context, the Romanian and Romanian-friendly Moldavian parties are concerned over a federal Moldova that would have more influence from Moscow. Romania supports Moldova's Euro-Atlantic integration to achieve its unionist goals, even if it further undermines Romanian-Russian relations and risks increasing the number of Russian troops in Transnistria (Barabás, 2015).

⁸ For example, Traian Băsescu and Victor Ponta have been arguing for the union, and there are some emerging organisations such as Action 2012 or Union friends (Prietenii Unirii).

The Black Sea is an area of geostrategic and geopolitical importance. From a US point of view, Romania's enhanced military presence in the Black Sea assists the containment of Russia and represents a backup of the ever-unstable alliance with Turkey. For that reason, Romania necessitates regional stability and close Euro-Atlantic cooperation, also calls for a democratic and prosperous agreement on the broader area of the Black Sea. However, on the Black Sea, Romania must also reckon with Turkey. As a result of the recent turn towards cooperation in Russian–Turkish relations, Turkey can return to its earlier vision of the Black Sea as a Russian–Turkish condominium (Hegedűs, 2016). The Western Balkans also plays a critical geopolitical role. Romania, as a NATO and European Union member state, supports these countries joining NATO and the EU and encourages stability. Romania has especially good relations with Serbia: nowadays, Romania belongs to one of the few NATO and EU member countries which do not recognise Kosovo's independence (because of its own Hungarian minorities who aspire for autonomy) and stand out for Serbia's territorial integrity (Micu, 2010).

However, Romania's relationship with its other neighbours is not quite harmonious. There is a significant concern over the Romanian minority situation in Ukraine, and Romania is involved in disputes over the maritime borders as well as the affiliation of the Danube Delta and the Snake Island (Pavlenko et al., 2014). With its southern neighbour, Bulgaria, the relationship cannot be considered hostile, nor cooperative. Bulgarian foreign policy follows a quite different political perspective than Romania. When Romania's accession to the EU at the same time as Bulgaria seemed impracticable, Bulgaria requested separate handling of the accession intention from Brussels (Micu, 2010). A few years ago, the Russian–Turkish conflict opened up a chance to improve the NATO's maritime positions in the Black Sea, and even Turkey supported the Romanian initiative to create a joint NATO naval force in the Black Sea; however, Bulgaria firmly rejected any anti-Russian organisation, and with this, Romania resigned from the initiative. Regarding Hungary, the affairs of the 1.2 million Hungarian minority people in Transylvania sometimes cause significant friction between the two EU and NATO member states. The permanent issues of Szekler autonomy, Hungarian secondary and tertiary education,

incidents of using Hungarian and Szekler flags (The Economist, 2019) have led to a severe interstate dispute.

In addition to foreign policy and geopolitical challenges, Romania must also consider its severe domestic problems. Although macroeconomic indicators show significant improvement and economic growth in the last few years,⁹ the domestic conditions of the country are not considered to be positive. Based on recent events, Romanian domestic politics is characterised by instability and significant differences of interest (5 Prime Ministers in 5 years), aggravated by corruption. Society is experiencing crisis phenomena; the standard of living is still far below the EU average.¹⁰ In addition to the generally unfavourable demographic situation, the population has dropped dramatically since, after the accession to the European Union, masses migrated temporarily or permanently to Western Europe,¹¹ which is already threatening the Romanian economy with severe labour force shortages. All these internal problems create a significant challenge and obstacle for the Romanian government.

Conclusion

The geostrategic position of Romania represents a real buffer zone between the East and the West. In this position, the tradition of “equilibrium politics” made Romania flexible and efficient and, often generating much better results than what the country’s actual capabilities would allow (Lakatos, 2015). The Romanian state, with the peace treaties that ended World War I, was placed in an essential geopolitical position with excellent power support: it “rounded off” and became militarily well protected, and the presence of the Black Sea was crucial to any anti-Russian effort. After the collapse of the USSR, this endeavour became obsolete at first glance, but geopolitical conflicts of interest proved to be much deeper than the ideological ones. The

⁹ The GDP growth rate is above 3-4% since 2013 (it was 7% in 2017).

¹⁰ E.g. The annual equivalised net income is just 3,000 € (which is the lowest in the EU) compared to the EU average of 17,000 € or the life expectancy at birth is 5 years lower than the EU average.

¹¹ There are more than 3 million Romanian citizens who are residents in the rest of the EU (2018). This value is the highest among the EU Member States.

enlargement of NATO and the EU was an excellent opportunity for Romania. Naturally, after the change of regime, Romania took a position in favour of the integration of the country into Western institutional systems. It pursued its foreign policy in such a way that it has never lost sight of its national interests. As a result of domestic and foreign policy efforts, as of January 1, 2007, the country's integration objectives were achieved.

Romania's geopolitical situation continues to be very favourable and increasingly appreciated. As a result of the deterioration of Turkish–Euro-Atlantic relations and the appreciation of the country's regional role, it can gradually reach a similarly important role as that of Turkey in the Black Sea region. Moreover, Romania may be an important transit country of hydrocarbons from the Caspian Sea region. However, the future of the country can be undermined by internal social and political problems, and the fact that should an actual armed conflict between NATO and Russia occur, Romania will undoubtedly be among the first countries to respond to armed conflict.

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Geopolitics and Environmental Consequences of Water Scarcity in the Peripheries of China and India

Ádám Róma

Southwest China and Northern India meet along their contested borders in one of the most unique geographical regions on Earth. The Hindu Kush Himalayan Region can be considered worthy of study from multiple viewpoints, due to its environmental importance and the severe threat it faces from climate change (the region itself is often referred to as the “Third Pole”) and the numerous interstate conflicts hitting the area, also affecting the various ethnic groups living on these peripheral and inhospitable territories. Besides commercial exploitation and the rapid growth of tourism, the political-military reality of the region and its environmental impacts are rarely mentioned. The region hosts a number of border disputes and political problems: the India-Pakistan Wars and dispute over Kashmir, the China-India border conflict and War of 1962 in Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh, and the India-Bangladesh dispute over the management of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers’ flows (Ives, 1987). Owing to these conflicts, the region has become heavily militarised through troops, roads, airports, barracks, and hospitals. This has placed great pressure on the ecosystem, resulting in deforestation, landslides, glacial retreat, clashes with wildlife, and the displacement of local ethnic groups. However, from an ethnographic perspective, the sub-Himalayan area is not only a barrier between the riverine communities of India and China but also a contact zone between the peripheral civilizations of Inner Asia (Zou & Kumar, 2011, p. 141).

In the last twenty years, the degradation has further increased against the backdrop of politically motivated large-scale mine and hydro-electric dam construction, as the Chinese and Indian central governments are aiming to further solidify state control and integrate these fringe areas into their national economies, through encouraging immigration and upgrading the transport network and infrastructure. In this process, the various local ethnic groups living on the peripheries of the two largest Asian countries are sidelined despite the fact that these groups are the worst affected by the geopolitical conflicts and the

increasingly precarious environmental degradation. While the China-India military standoff on the Doklam plateau in 2017 drew attention to the possibility of war between the two nuclear powers, the China-India competition on the Himalayan border and other conflicts are more likely to end in a slow-moving environmental catastrophe than in a quick nuclear disaster (Gamble, 2018).

Regarding the Chinese and Indian dam building activities and the key considerations in political decision-making on the water resources found here, the narrative is dominated by a geopolitical perspective: *the Himalayan “dam rush” is underlined by a potential resource conflict between China and India against the backdrop of their territorial sovereignty issues, irrespective of the environmental degradation this causes* (Vidal, 2013; Sudha, 2015; Tenzin, 2015; Pak, 2016; Rahman, 2016; Lovelle, 2016; Liu, 2015; Chellaney, 2015, 2018; Gamble, 2018). This geopolitical narrative is based on the recent re-evaluation of the importance of water, brought about by soaring demand for water following the surge of global population, putting water supplies under stress from this demand and by the consequences of climate change. With the arrival of the Anthropocene¹², Earth’s freshwater supplies are one of the most affected by human activity. The growing water scarcity led to such names for water as the “oil of the 21st century”, symbolising the newfound potential of water resources to reorder international relations, and that its scarcity could cause international and domestic conflicts (Engelke, 2015). The two-fold aim of this paper is firstly to examine the basis of this perspective and either confirm it or challenge it, through an analysis of the context and effect of their extensive dam building activities on the peripheral areas of Tibet and Northeast India on three levels, and secondly, to shed light on the interplay of these levels of analysis, markedly affecting the livelihood of locals.

Through these three levels – supranational, international, and sub-national –, we explore distinct approaches to this phenomenon, examining the basis of the abovementioned narrative and also the effects of the two states’ considerations and the severe environmental degradation on the local ethnic groups. The supranational level – if we

¹² Recognising the primacy of human activity in changing the Earth’s core processes (e.g. sediment flows or nitrogen cycle), starting from the familiar workings of the Holocene.

consider that climate change and the environmental consequences of human activities transcend national boundaries or interests¹³ – in this context denotes the Hindu Kush Himalayan region’s environmental role, effects, and the causes of its degradation, setting the geographical and environmental background for subsequent studies. The international level corresponds to the geopolitical perspective, including the background of China’s and India’s contention in the region, the related dam building process, and its political implications. The sub-national level deals with the numerous ethnicities living here from a critical perspective, focusing on their experience, as well as their possibilities and limitations in expressing their opinions on these issues. It must be noted that the slight imbalance in discussing some parts of the paper in favour of Indian developments is due to the difference in available sources relating to Chinese accounts of the topics considered.¹⁴

The “Supranational”: Hindu Kush Himalayan Region

The Hindu Kush Himalayan region extends over more than 3,500 km covering areas of eight countries – Afghanistan,¹⁵ Bangladesh and its Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bhutan, South and Southwest China,¹⁶ West Bengal and the eleven mountain states of India, states of Myanmar, Nepal, and parts of Pakistan¹⁷ – and it is the source of ten major Asian river systems: the Amu Darya, Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsangpo, 雅鲁藏布江), Irrawaddy, Salween (*Nùjiāng*, 怒江), Mekong (*Láncāng*, 澜沧), Yangtze (*Chángjiāng*, 长江), Yellow River (*Huánghé*, 黄河) and Tarim (*Tǎlǐmù*, 塔里木) (ICIMOD). The mountainous HKH region

¹³ According to the Merriam-Webster definition of “supranational”.

¹⁴ This is true even if we consider Chinese language sources, inasmuch as various search queries with Baidu (百度) resulted in few relevant writings, using the following keywords in various combinations: Xízàng, 西藏 (Tibet), Huánjìng èhuà, 环境恶化 (environmental degradation), Zàngzú zhǒngzú, 藏族种族 (Tibetan ethnicities), Shuǐdiànzhàn dà bà, 水电站大坝 (hydroelectric dam).

¹⁵ Except the provinces of Kandahar, Helmand, Nimroz, Farah, and Herat.

¹⁶ Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu, Xinjiang, Tibet Autonomous Region, Qinghai.

¹⁷ North Western Frontier Province, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Northern Areas, Baluchistan, Ajad Jammu and Kashmir.

with steep elevation possesses a diverse ecosystem, from high-altitude alluvial grasslands through subtropical broad-leaf forests and conifer forests to alpine meadows. The Himalayas drive Asia's hydrological cycle, the diverse weather and climate patterns as well as trigger the summer monsoons. In winter, the region serves as the second largest heat sink in the world, while in summer, it draws the monsoon currents to the Asian hinterland. The 18,000 high-altitude glaciers in these mountains are considered one of the biggest freshwater reserves on the globe (Chellaney, 2018).

The HKH region contains 488 protected areas across the eight countries with highly diverse and rich gene pools; out of the 34 global hotspots of biodiversity, four are located here (Sandhu & Sandhu, 2014, p. 297). This region also plays a crucial role in influencing the Northern Hemisphere's atmospheric circulation system, through transporting warm air currents from the Equator to the North and South Poles (Chellaney, 2018). The region is aptly called the "Third Pole" as the largest contiguous layer of ice outside the Arctic and Antarctic is located here (Qiu, 2014, p. 240).

However, due to climate change and other local human activities, the Himalayan region faces accelerated glacial thaw, coupled with climatic instability and biodiversity loss. Five out of the world's ten most endangered rivers originate from here: Yangtze, Indus, Mekong, Salween, and Ganges. Besides climate change, various local human activities are accountable for the constant increase of the annual average temperature, which is three times more than the global average (Chellaney, 2018). Deforestation and the exploitation of natural resources, inter-river and inter-basin water transfer, the growing market of glacial water for the bottled water industry, pollution related to mining and dam construction, among others, all contribute to the environmental degradation of the HKH region.

The environmental threats facing the Himalayan region have been in the focus of attention of researchers, conservationists and the writers of development policies since the second half of the 20th century (Blaikie & Muldavin, 2004, p. 521). Initially, the so-called "Theory of Himalayan Environmental Degradation" (THED) was the dominant narrative, which outlined an eight-point scenario leading to the environmental and socioeconomic collapse of the region by the millennium. Upon closer

scrutiny, the Theory, which made the local farmers scapegoats for environmental degradation, proved to be an oversimplified myth (Ives, 1987), to the point that since the post-structural paradigm change, the former scapegoats – the local farmers – are, in fact, often considered a major part of the solution to the problem (Blaikie & Muldavin, 2004, p. 522). However, despite the shortcomings of the THED, the environmental crisis threatening the Hindu Kush Himalayan region is a real consequence of human interference and activity. The region experiences declined precipitation, drought, deforestation, decreased farmland productivity, and natural calamities worse than the global mean (Tan, Zuo, Hugo, 2013, p. 83-84). The importance and the severity of the issue is further underlined by the crucial role of the Himalayas, which is responsible for generating the monsoons and the seasonal ice melting feeding the rivers in the region, which directly affects the livelihood of half of the world's population and 20 percent of the global economy (Gamble, 2018).

According to a comprehensive environmental assessment by the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the region has been getting hotter, wetter and more polluted. Precipitation in the region has increased by 12 percent compared to 1960, with an average of 0.4°C growth of average temperature every decade. Due to rising temperatures, the glaciers are shrinking, and one-tenth of the permafrost cover is already gone. The thawing is also responsible for the 14-percent growth in the number of lakes since 1970, and for the expansion of these lakes' surfaces by 86 percent. These changes affect not only the ice cover, but also the vegetation cover. The different surfaces, such as snow, grassland, or desert, absorb different amounts of solar radiation, thus determining the temperature of the air above the various surfaces. The changes in the coverage affect the onset and strength of the monsoons, consequently endangering downstream river communities with increasingly devastating floods. Based on current trends, the more optimistic estimates project a 1.7°C growth in average temperature by 2100, while according to the worst-case scenario, this growth could be as high as 4.6°C. The already mentioned increase in human activities is tied to growing population: e.g. in 2012, 8.8 million people lived on the Tibetan Plateau alone, a three-fold increase compared to the population levels in 1951. The growing population is closely tied to

urbanisation, which also results in the growing amount of human waste produced, accompanied with waste produced by mining. It must be noted, that besides the local sources of environmental degradation, the dust, black carbon, and heavy metals blown in from Africa, Europe, and Asia all negatively contribute to the environmental damages of the Tibetan Plateau and the wider HKH region (Qiu, 2014).

Water Resources

The consequences of large scale hydro-electric dam building on the region's environment are also far reaching as the stream flow reduction caused by these results in declining biodiversity, and at the same time, leaves less water available for irrigation, decreasing crop yield in the process (Sandhu & Sandhu, 2014, p. 301). Despite these considerations, India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Pakistan are all considering building hydro-dams, and the four hundred planned dams in total are expected to produce more than 160,000 MW of electricity. Meanwhile in China, there are plans for over a hundred dams on major rivers originating in Tibet, with 60 more under planning on the Mekong. Beijing is also financing dams in Pakistan, Laos, and Burma to supply domestic energy demand (Vidal, 2013). Out of the region's countries, China and India are responsible for most of the dam projects, suffering from severe resource and groundwater shortages (Bawa et al., 2010).

The growing problem of water scarcity in part results from the populations of the two countries: although China's population (1.39 billion) exceeds that of India's (1.33 billion), in the coming decades, the latter is to become the most populous country overtaking China. These large populations result in growing environmental exploitation and water consumption. Despite the heavy rainfalls of the Indian monsoon season, the lack of ability to store this water caused considerable problems, while most of the water supply – around 90% – is consumed by the agricultural sector. Thus, the effects of climate change – e.g. deterioration in monsoon intensity and frequency leading to unstable agricultural production and food security – further exacerbate the consequences of poor surface water storage capacity.

On the other hand, China's capacity is more than ten times that of India's. However, the uneven distribution of China's water sources

(glaciers, ground waters, and surface waters) results in serious water scarcity issues in certain regions; for example, North China only receives 20% of the total rainfall and ice melting. Similarly, in India, Chinese agriculture also utilizes most of the available waters (around 70%), while another one-fifth is consumed by the coal industry. The considerable subsidies allocated for water also result in its undervaluation and overuse, disincentivising water-saving (Lovelle, 2016, pp. 3-4). In this context, the Brahmaputra river's potential in hydro-power generation becomes crucial as the possible subject of a Chinese - Indian resource conflict.

The International Level: Geopolitics of Sino-Indian Relations

The two Asian giants, the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China have gone through profound changes and developments since their respective foundations in 1947 and 1949. Due to the economic reform process – starting from the end of the 1970s in China¹⁸ and the beginning of the 1990s in India – both countries, although at different paces, started on the path of economic development with their integration into the US-led international liberal economic system. As a result, the two countries' economies surged, coming closer to their historically significant sizes and roles of the precolonial world, with China ranking at the first and India at the third place. Besides the results of the economic reforms, as mentioned earlier, the two most populated countries' citizens constitute more than one-third that of the entire globe (World Bank, 2017a, b). The two countries' relations are remarkable not only owing to the sizes of their economies and populations but also because of their proximity. This was underlined by Li Keqiang's remarks during his visit to India, when he described the two countries' relation as the “*defining partnership of the 21st century*” (Pandit & Parashar, 2012).

However, successful developments and cooperation in bilateral issues and in multilateral organisations, such as the BRICS or the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), are hampered by several issues. One of these issues is the disputed nature of their shared border

¹⁸ Called the “reform and opening” (gǎigé kāifàng, 改革开放).

overshadowing their relations since the China-India War of 1962, according to the traditional narratives, caused by Chinese irredentism and betrayal from the Indian perspective, while China blamed Nehru's Forward Policy and the manifestation of its "imperialist tendencies" inherited from the British (according to the official narrative, reflected on Baike 百科). Other problems are the Chinese concerns on the Dalai Lama's and the Tibetan government-in-exile's presence in the Indian city of Dharamshala, while India looks at the unbalanced bilateral trade and the recent growth of China's presence and influence in South Asia warily.

The cause of the War of 1962 between India and China was their differing perceptions of the two newly emerged countries' borders after a chaotic civil war and independence accompanied by the scars left by the partition of the subcontinent. While Mao wanted to restore the borders of the Qing dynasty, Nehru pushed to consolidate the territories of the late British Raj (Muratbekova, 2017). The shared China-India border is usually separated into three sections. The first is the Eastern Sector, "delimited" by the infamous McMahon Line (*Màikè mǎhóng xiàn*, 麦克马洪线), where India controls the area as the state of Arunachal Pradesh spread over 90,000 km², but this area is disputed by China, which claims the area under the name "South Tibet". This Sector is followed by the Central Sector, where mostly smaller areas and passes are the subject of dispute, covering 2000 km². In the third Western Sector, the dispute is over the Chinese-controlled Aksai Chin, as India regards the 33,500 km² desolate area a part of India's Jammu and Kashmir (Zhang & Li, 2013).

The presence of the two central governments started with the region's militarisation during the build-up to the war and was consolidated with establishing the line of actual control (LAC), signalling the *status quo* between them (Gamble, 2019, p. 45). Since the war, there have been several border incidents along the dreary Himalayan borders, continuing until today despite the historical 1988 Summit between Rajiv Gandhi and Deng Xiaoping. Although steps have been taken to solve the border dispute and normalise their relations through various confidence-building measures against the backdrop of growing bilateral trade, the effect of these are questionable at best, demonstrated by border incidents even in the 21st century. The latest

incident, resulting in military mobilisation from both sides, was the military standoff on the Doklam plateau, near the Bhutan-India-China trijunction point. A Chinese attempt to build a road on disputed territory led to an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation lasting two and a half months in the summer of 2017 (Róma, 2018).

China and India: Water Sharing or Water Conflict?

As China and India consolidated their control in the Himalayas, they continued the tradition of hydraulic manipulation of their imperial predecessors, heavily investing into technologies aiming to regulate rivers and water flows, maintaining the inherited infrastructures and building new dams with the help of the two superpowers, the U.S. and the Soviet Union. This process outlasted the dam failures (caused by the low-quality construction of these dams) and the international change in attitudes towards large scale hydro-electric dams, with their respective dam building activity finally reaching the upper Brahmaputra basin by the millennium (Gamble, 2019, p. 45). The Brahmaputra is a trans-boundary river, originating in Tibet, China, where it is called Yarlung Tsangpo. The river enters Arunachal Pradesh in the Northeast of India as the Brahmaputra, then under the name Jamuna, enters the Bay of Bengal through Bangladesh (Tenzin, 2015). The river's total length is 2880 km long, with a drainage area of nearly six hundred thousand km² (Rahman, 2016). But the river is also ill-suited to dam building, due to its trans-boundary nature, crossing four countries, each dependent on its waters, coupled with the river basin's seismic instability and heavy rainfalls with high seasonal variations (Gamble, 2019, p. 43).

Despite dam collapses and subsequent casualties suffered both by China and India in the '60s and '70s, the dam building has continued. The Chinese economic system, "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (*Zhōngguó tèsè de shèhuìzhǔyì*, 中国特色的社会主义), where political and financial actors closely cooperate in key sectors (e.g. energy sector), resembling state-managed capitalism, is extremely effective in swiftly carrying out these projects, underlined by a centralised and strategic considerations. In India, while the state supports dam building through favourable policies and financial support (Nehru famously called large dams the "temples of resurgent India"), due to the decentralised nature

of its political system, which requires the participation of state governments in these projects, the outcomes are more diverse. The hydro-power sectors in both countries received further support with their inclusion in the international Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), which subsidises dam building as a carbon alternative, disregarding the methane emission from the reserves, the disruption of the ecosystem, and biodiversity loss. The work and resources carried out and used by both governments are well-demonstrated by immense projects such as the Chinese Three Gorges Dam (*SānxiáDàbà*, 三峡大坝) opened in 2004, or the Indian Narmada-River Dam, operational since 2017 (Gamble, 2019, p. 56-57).

The fear of a China-India resource conflict has been present since 2000, when a natural dam burst in Tibet resulted in 30 deaths and severe infrastructure damages in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. Although it was suggested that the dam burst was intentional, satellite imagery showed natural causes. Nevertheless, in 2002, the two sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the share of hydrological information during monsoon season, which has been discontinued since the 1962 Sino-Indian War (it must be noted that during the Doklam crisis, it was temporarily suspended again). In 2008, the Chinese government announced the Zangmu (藏木) hydro-electric dam, raising fears of a major water diversion project, which could potentially dry up the Brahmaputra. These fears were further fuelled by the Chinese refusal to share information on the project. For these reasons, the topic became the priority in bilateral exchanges. By the time the dam became operational in 2015, the issue died down due to repeated Chinese reassurances, and a more extensive data sharing process was implemented. Nonetheless, New Delhi is suspicious of Chinese dam building projects and its Western Water Diversion plan, which supposedly aims to deliver water from the South to the more arid North. The extensive Chinese dam system would, in theory, allow the upstream China to “turn off the tap” on more than 30 percent of India’s water resource, however, it has been confirmed that the Chinese dams are so-called run-of-the-river dams, which do not require the storage of water, and the water diversion plan has been abandoned by Beijing due to the costs and environmental damages involved. Furthermore, any control over the Yarlung Tsangpo would be limited, as 70 percent of the

Brahmaputra's water originates in India (but as this rainfall is concentrated in the monsoon seasons, the stability of the Brahmaputra's river flows would still be affected by changes made in the upstream China) (Zhao & Su, 2015; Tenzin, 2015).

Indian plans for large scale dam construction in the northeastern region are, in part, motivated by the abovementioned fears of a "water war" with China, and, at the same, India uses these plans to further consolidate state control in a region also claimed as "South Tibet". Furthermore, Indian strategists argue that as India builds more dams, the water demand for these projects would be recognised under international law, thus preventing China from building more dams (Gamble, 2018). In India, there are agreements and memorandums of understanding on 168 large projects (with a 63,000 MW capacity) (Chowdhury, 2013, p. 196), but the completion of these projects are questionable, due to reasons presented in the following part. Meanwhile, China is also continuing its projects, with a proposed additional 60,000 MW hydropower development in Southwest China, according to the latest Five-Year Plan (中华人民共和国国民经济和社会发展第十三个五年规划, 2016-2020).

The Sub-National Level: The Context and Effects of Dam Building on the Peripheries

The peripheral nature of the Brahmaputra basin was reflected in both Nehru's and Mao's approaches to this region, consequently the two nations' attitude toward the numerous ethnic groups in this region were similarly characterised by paternalistic tendencies, containing both anti-imperialist narratives and colonial practices, categorising the locals as "backward" ethnic groups in need of development (Gamble, 2019). This "regional discursive formation" still overwhelms national-popular imagination, with the labels of "resource rich" and "backward" permanently attached to the regions, where the role of megadam projects also doubles as a homogenising "development machine". The development policies largely disregard the local people, ethnicity, culture, and geography, resulting in manifold problems (Chowdhury, 2013, p. 199). The environmental change and degradation in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, besides natural phenomena, such as pollution,

flooding, and earthquakes, also leads to state intervention in the form of environment-related resettlement of people. One reason of displacement is the development of hydro-electric dams, disproportionately affecting already marginalised populations both in India and China, while failures to re-establish the livelihood of the displaced also causes discontent (Tan, 2013: 80; Dukpa, 2018; Chowdhury, 2013: 196).

The Tibetan Plateau is predominantly inhabited by Tibetans, followed by Hans and other non-Han minorities, such as Lisus, Naxis, Bais, Yis, or Huis (Hillman, 2010). In China, local protests against the dams has been long muted; nevertheless, the fact that dams have been added to the list of prohibited topics reflects existing tensions regarding the issue (Gamble, 2019, p. 46). According to anecdotal evidence, while locals on the Tibetan Plateau are supportive of housing and income improvements, large scale development projects (such as hydro-electric dams) are mostly rejected. In the adjoining areas of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), such as Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu, and Qinghai, locals organised protests against dam constructions on the Yangtze, Mekong, and Salween rivers, however, similar actions against planned projects on the upper Brahmaputra (or Yarlung Tsangpo) are not possible due to the strict security and control measures introduced in Tibet following the 2008 uprising (Gamble, 2019, p. 60).

The Northeast of India comprises the eight “sisters” of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Sikkim, hosting approximately 220 ethnic communities and even more dialects, resulting from continuous migration flows throughout history (Jain, 2016, p. 275). The region is host to numerous conflicts as well, from armed oppositions or insurgencies with separatist undertones to violence against migrants and various protests. In this environment, the Armed Powers Special Powers Act (AFSPA), in effect since 1958, also provides a context to overreaching political activities in some parts of the Northeast. The Act does not only provide a legal framework of impunity to armed forces acting here, but also sustains a state of exception, allowing democracy to be permanently suspended in the so-called „disturbed regions“. This label is unilaterally decided by the central government, without any legal means to challenge it,

establishing *de facto* martial law in selected parts of the subcontinent (McDuie-Ra, 2009, p. 255).

However, the various hydro-electric dams planned in the Northeast face setback regardless of governmental support and clearance, as private companies involved in the projects are losing interest. By 2009, there were 153 memorandums of understanding signed by Arunachal Pradesh with private companies, but work is yet to start, and the very same private actors are now asking the public sector to take over or set up joint ventures with them, questioning the future and smooth execution of the projects. This change of mind can be attributed to the lack of roads and power lines, the frequent outbreak of protests, constant delays, false community impact assessments, and most importantly, declining demand and falling price of electricity, making these projects less cost-effective and attractive (Rahman, A. P., 2016).

Local Action in the Northeast of India – An Example

The first dam building projects were envisaged by the Brahmaputra Flood Control Commission in 1955, aiming to provide irrigation and flood moderation in the region. The Brahmaputra Board then transferred the project to the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPS) in 2000 (Sharma, 2012). However, due to the lack of impact studies and assessments, the lack of an environmental compliance system and carrying capacity studies (Vidal, 2013), local uncertainty regarding the project's social and ecological impact grew, and the All Assam Students Union (AASU) started to campaign against the megadams in 2002. As a result, a tripartite meeting was held in 2006 between the AASU, the Assam Government, and the NHPS, which ended with the foundation of a scientific expert committee, tasked with the investigation of the project. Nevertheless, the NHPC started constructions without waiting for the downstream impact study by the scientific committee, which, in 2010, reported that the selected site for the project is “not appropriate” as the region is geologically and seismologically sensitive (Sharma, 2012).

Due to the case of the Chinese Three Gorges dam and the Indian Sardar Sarovar dam on the Narmada river displacing tens of millions of people (Vidal, 2013), the heavy flood engulfing the habitat of 300,000

people in 2008 after the load waters were released from the dam in Ranganadi, and the burial of farmland on thousands of hectares by the changing course of the Gai river, protests continued in 2012 (Sharma, 2012). Despite these developments, a 1750 MW project on the river Lohit has received clearance by the Committee of National Board of Wildlife. The 124-meter-high dam is opposed by conservationists on the grounds that it is extremely close to a Hindu pilgrimage site called the Parshuram Kund, and threatens numerous internationally recognised conservation and wildlife areas (Karmakar, 2018).

Conclusion

In our paper, we have looked at the context of Chinese and Indian hydro-electric dam building from three separate perspectives to examine the basis of the dominating narrative, depicting this process as a geopolitical competition over water resources without wider environmental considerations, motivated by its scarcity, and also taking into account the experience of the locals on the sub-national level, who are the ones ultimately affected by developments identified in the other two levels of analysis.

Regarding the supranational level of our enquiry, we have established the importance of the wider environment of the Hindu Kush Himalaya region, where the dams are being built. The environmental degradation here poses a vital challenge, affecting not just locals but the entire globe. If the current trends continue, thawing glaciers, changing vegetation covers, and pollution would increase average temperatures by nearly five degrees by the end of the century, however, the devastating effects of floods, earthquakes, and erosion could result in irreversible consequences well before that time. The international level looked at the underlying geopolitical tensions between China and India, where water has become another question of contention. Periodical border incidents show the relevance of this viewpoint, which has also contributed to Indian fears of water conflicts as China is using waterflow data sharing mechanisms and possible diversion projects to put pressure on India. Expanding to the sub-national level, we have found some similarities, especially in terms of the conceptualisation of and discourse over these regions by the central

authorities, where hegemonic attitudes are still present in their respective development policies. While there is a marked difference between Indian and Chinese locals' ability to voice their concerns, there are constraining political-security factors on both sides, and the more visible rejection of these projects rarely brings positive results from the protesters' point of view.

As we can see, even if there are relevant considerations and significant effects identified on the supranational and sub-national levels, signalling the need for cooperation to solve these issues, political conflicts hinder the possibility of developing joint solutions. Decision-makers prioritise security-related factors, trying to establish the presence of the central government on these fringe areas, concurrently aiming to strengthen their territorial claims and possessions. This view is also apparent when Indian strategists advocate the development of hydro-electric projects to secure recognition under international law, even though China has been known to disagree with rulings made by the International Court of Justice and suspended its water flow data sharing practices before to gain political leverage (Gamble, 2018). Due to the clear priority of sovereignty issues and power politics among the relevant actors equipped with adequate tools and resources to shape local and international developments, the use of a geopolitical perspective is undeniably relevant.

However, there are multiple factors that prevent countries from engaging in warfare and interstate conflicts despite the geopolitical focus of most researchers of water conflicts, such as significant bilateral trade, the possibility of outside intervention or diplomatic pressure, making conflict less attractive (Moore & Walker, 2018). Consequently, joint action and cooperation in mutually important – and preferably depoliticised – issues could help to build trust between the parties, while increased transparency could further contribute to avoid "phantom problems" stemming from distrust and misunderstanding, which could derail constructive dialogues, escalate conflicts, and cause distractions (Tenzin, 2015). Furthermore, also on the level within governments, many actors play a role in formulating new environmental policies and use narratives about environmental damage and protection for their own purposes to reach goals unrelated to the environment. This is also practiced by the government to consolidate

power (Baranovich, 2016, p. 182). The locals, whose livelihood depends on the environment, are not only passive subjects of environmental change and state-led activities, (although taking actions against dam projects deemed detrimental to their situation), but they have also demonstrated an understanding of the ongoing climate change and shown a degree of adaptation towards the changed circumstances (Li, Tang, Luo, Di, Zhang, 2013). Encompassing all three levels of analysis, dam constructions should be heavily scrutinised before approval to avoid unnecessary environmental stress as well as mutual suspicion and misunderstanding feeding into narratives of regional competition and the inevitability of a Sino-Indian collision course, while at the same time, the actors involved in the planning of dam constructions should break away from the top-down planning of the “paternalistic state”, which, as Chowdhury (2013) put it, preliminarily decides on the necessity of exploiting a region’s “excessive” resources hastily, without proper assessments beforehand.

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Stuck Between Great Powers: The Myitsone Dilemma and the Challenge of the NLD Government

Hnin Mya Thida

Myanmar has occupied a geostrategic location between South Asia and Southeast Asia, and it has been exercising influence over abundant natural as well as human resources. It has been suggested that the country has the potential to be a major Southeast Asian player (MALIK, 1997). It used to be a “sandwich state” between the two great powers of China and India, which engage in strategic rivalry in the region. The country’s geostrategic location represents a competitive ground for great powers to become a dominant in the region. Because of domestic instability as a result of a long-standing authoritarian regime, the development of the country has lagged behind other regional countries. Under the sanctions of the West introduced by the United States, it was the only way for Myanmar to extract its natural resources and China has been the main consumer of these exploited resources. The West has strongly condemned the military junta’s suppression of the democratisation movement and placed pressure on the regime by imposing economic sanctions. Consequently, China has become the only supporter and protector of the military junta in the international community. In 2011, the political picture of Myanmar changed when the military government turned over power to a civil government (semi-civil government led by former military General Thein Sein). Following this process, immense policy changes have been taking place both in domestic and foreign policy alignment.

The Political Picture of Myanmar in its External Relations

Myanmar domestic affairs have also reflected its external relations, especially with the great powers of India, China, and the United States. Historically, Myanmar and China have shared a long history of relations. Myanmar is the first non-Communist country which recognised the People’s Republic of China in 1949 (Han, 2017). The long-running civil war between ethnic armed groups and the Army has created a competitive ground between the United States and China.

Myanmar's dependence on China was heightening for decades and reached a peak between the 1990s and 2000s as international sanctions were intensified and China was the only one remaining partner of the military regime. The situation of the two countries were similar at that time when both were excoriated by the international community for their brutal suppression of their own people during the Tiananmen Square incident in China in 1989 and the 1988 student uprising in Myanmar (Han, 2017). India, which has firm relations with Myanmar, but seriously condemned the military junta's reaction to the democratisation movement, was the first and only Asian country to criticise the junta for its brutal suppression to the 1988 student uprising movement (Engh, 2016). From that time on, bilateral relations between India and Myanmar were rather strange until 1991. Politically, there was a longstanding regional rivalry between China and India for taking the leading role in the Asia-Pacific region. That situation pushed Myanmar closer to China and it strongly relied on China both for economic development and diplomatic protection, regarding which the military junta faced serious criticism and pressure by the West to have a more inclusive political process (Haacke, 2010).

For China, Myanmar is the only country that could enable it to gain access to the Indian Ocean and it provides a possible solution to the so-called Malacca dilemma (Mark & Zhang, 2017). In this case, Myanmar is also a transit state that can transfer the energy and natural resources from the Middle East and Africa and China's exports to Europe. Moreover, Myanmar is an important market for poor-quality Chinese products and the outlet for China's less developed Yunnan province (Myoe, 2015). Its abundance in natural resources has attracted China to satisfy its basic raw material needs required for its development. Chinese efforts to influence Myanmar heightened after the "Two Ocean Strategy" of China started to be implemented in 2005 with the aim of influencing both the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, and when China started the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013.

Myanmar has adhered to and applied the "independence, active and non-aligned foreign policy" for decades. The country firmly maintained its non-aligned foreign policy during the Cold War era. The government tries to keep close relations not only with China but also with other regional and global powers. In 2011, the Union Solidarity and

Development Party won the elections and Thein Sein, former Army General, became President. The remarkable year 2011 can be recognised as the “Myanmar Spring” with the peaceful democratic transition from military rule to the first new civil government. The USDP government continued that foreign policy as well. Under the USDP government, three significant reforms – political reform, economic reform, and social reform – were planned and awaited implementation (Than, 2014). The elected government implemented both the domestic policy reforms and foreign policy realignment with the aim of reducing preponderant dependence on China and by initiating rapprochement with the West (Myoe, 2015). With the successful democratic reform, Myanmar’s foreign relations have profoundly changed with the rapprochement with the West. At the same time, the Obama Administration of the United States laid down the “Pivot to Asia” strategy with the purpose of containing the emergence of China by making closer ties with Asia–Pacific countries. Although the United States was dissatisfied with the outcome of the 2010 election, which was neither free, nor fair and failed to meet the international accepted standards associated with legitimate elections, the Obama administration continued to use its dual-track strategy of engagement and sanctions vis-à-vis Myanmar (Kipgen, 2013). Hillary R. Clinton, Secretary of State of the US, visited Myanmar in December 2011 and President Obama also visited Myanmar after 11 months of her visit and again in 2014 (Han, 2017). The Obama administration lifted a ban on humanitarian assistances to Myanmar and American investments in Myanmar as well (Hlaing, 2012). The United States introduced its new policy, a pragmatic engagement with the Myanmar government. The pragmatic policy of the United States caused serious concern in China as the Asian giant has suspected that US rapprochement with Myanmar means a political and security threat. On the other hand, China also hoped that US support to Myanmar would reduce the international condemnation of China for protecting the Myanmar military regime. For Myanmar, the USDP government wanted to reduce Chinese influence in its internal affairs both politically and economically and the government worried about the country becoming a pawn in the Sino–Indian competition (Clapp, 2010). It was a clear

evidence of the fact that both countries viewed Myanmar as their strategically important state.

As for the United States, Myanmar is the strategic location from where it can watch the two major powers of Asia, that is India, and China. The United States' policy shift and Myanmar's foreign policy realignment met, and as a result, US-Myanmar relations were progressing at that time. The United States' aim was to reinstate its power in the Asia-Pacific region and its positive engagement with Myanmar was not only targeted at containing the rise of China but also at establishing firm relations with the ASEAN. There are growing issues between some of the ASEAN countries and China concerning the South China Sea dispute. Therefore, the US's return to Southeast Asia has seriously affected Chinese influence in the region. As ASEAN member countries they are not willing to take either sides as the perception is that the Sino-US rivalry maintains the balance of power in the region as well as it can contain assertive Chinese acts in the South China Sea. They want to maintain good relationships with both powers in order to continue trade with China, and at the same time, to be covered by the US military umbrella (Zhao, 2017).

The United States' Role in the Asia-Pacific Region and Sino-US cooperation in Myanmar's Peace Process

In 2009, the Obama Administration initiated the "Pivot to Asia" or "Rebalancing to Asia" concept in order to contain China's emergence as the regional and global power moving its alignment away from the Middle East and Europe (Fly, 2018). The United States emphasized the stronger economic and political relations with regional countries as well as military cooperation by taking joint military exercises. Following this strategy, bilateral relations between the United States and Myanmar experienced a major shift from the sanctions regime to constructive re-engagement. In 2010, bilateral relations were further strengthened after Myanmar had released the pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi (now State Counsellor and Foreign Minister of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar). Some economic sanctions were lifted as part of establishing better relations between the two countries and the US government allowed its business interests to invest in Myanmar. As for

Myanmar, the military leaders were willing to dwindle Chinese influence in internal affairs and over-dependence on China. In 2011, the first elected government led by President Thein Sein tried to re-approach the West, especially the United States with the aim of reducing their dependency on China.

Under President Hu Jintao's government, Chinese foreign policy focused on building up China's comprehensive national strength, which included three components: no conflict or confrontation, mutual respect for every country, and win-win cooperation (Zhao, 2015). Meanwhile, the United States' strategy in Asia was to build its network alliances and partnerships with many of China's neighbouring countries (Zhao, 2015). On January 22, 2014, the United States and China announced their cooperation in several areas in the 5th US-China-Asia Pacific Consultation. According to this cooperation, the two countries agreed to engage in future cooperation regarding Myanmar's stability and development. Since 2011, US-China relations in Myanmar – based on their implications – are seen as competitive rather than cooperative. The United States mainly has focused on the promoting of democratic reforms and human rights, while China has been focusing on its economic benefits in its relations with Myanmar.

Chinese fundamental interests in its relations with Myanmar are based on three factors, namely border stability, economic cooperation, and an energy transportation route (Sun, 2012). The great powers also had interest in the civil war in Myanmar which broke out between ethnic armed organisations (EAOs) and the state Army. Both the United States and China was willing to act as mediators in the armed conflicts of Myanmar not for the sake of self-determination or to the benefit of the EAOs or the Army but for their own geopolitical advantages and national interests. China has played the role of the key mediator between the EAOs and the central government of Myanmar. Some powerful armed groups in the Eastern and Northern parts of the country has close ties with China in economic matters, especially border trade. They are located along the Myanmar-Chinese border which is why they cause great concern for China as a border security issue. Moreover, border trade between China and Myanmar is an important aspect for both countries, and thus it also became a factor of China's involvement in this issue.

Myitsone Dam Project, U-turn Change in Myanmar, and the Challenge for the NLD Government

The Ayeyarwady Myitsone Dam project is the largest dam construction in Myanmar, which is built on the confluence where the Mali Hka River and the N'Mai Hka River meet to become Ayeyarwady River. It is situated in Kachin State at the northern part of Myanmar. Myanmar people regard the Ayeyarwady River as the heart of the country, and it is the lifeline of the people of Myanmar. It is also the most useful river in the country, which originates in the snowy mountains of northern Myanmar and flows into the Andaman Sea. The project is a joint venture of the China Power Investment Corporation, Myanmar's Ministry of Electric Power 1 (MOEP 1), and the domestic conglomerate of Asia World. The cost of the project is USD 3.6 billion, and it is the largest (6 GW) out of the seven dams to be built on the Mali, the N'Mai, and the Ayeyarwady rivers. It was started in 2009 and suspended under President Thein Sein's administration due to the nationwide opposition in September 2011 (Chan, 2017).

The year 2011 can be regarded as the period of the Myanmar Spring, in which the over fifty-year-long military rule was ended, and the peaceful democratic transaction was implemented. Thein Sein, former military General, became the first democratically elected president and 80% of the cabinet was occupied by Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) members. It became the first government that paid attention to the voice of the people because the environmental and social impacts on the local people has been the main factor against the project. The unfair distribution of benefits (electrical power), moreover, was another cause why many people opposed the construction. In the distribution of electrical power, 90% is transferred to China and only the remaining 10% can be utilised by Myanmar. There are several anti-Myitsone dam movements led by environmentalists and activists. The "Save the Ayeyarwady Campaign" was the main movement to block the project.

The Myitsone Dam project came to an end with the 17-year-long ceasefire agreement between the Myanmar Army and the KIO (Kachin Independence Organisation)-controlled armed group in 2001 (Chan,

2017). To maintain domestic stability and, at the same time, to draw in Western interests into Myanmar's democratisation movement, the Thein Sein government announced the suspension of Myitsone Dam project without notifying China beforehand. Naypyidaw's unilateral decision of repudiation of the project caused a serious shock in Beijing. It was the first step of Myanmar's government towards reducing the overdependence on China by signalling Myanmar's willingness to embark on a rapprochement with the United States. The unexpected U-turn of Naypyidaw has also created dramatic political and diplomatic changes both in the internal and external relations of the country. Internally, societal actors were significantly strengthened to mobilise the people who showed eagerness to abrogate the Dam construction. People had the chance to stage peaceful demonstrations against the dam construction. On the other hand, strong opposition against ethnic armed groups in Kachin State raised the pressure on the government to suspend the project. Some argue that the Thein Sein government had no choice but to halt the dam building in order to avoid the more complex civil war that had begun after gaining independence in 1948.

Lately, China has used the dam construction company as a tool of implementing its political aim, which can be labelled as the "Dam Diplomacy or Hydro Diplomacy" (Freeman, 2017). We can argue that China uses the "resilience network" meaning that the difficulties in one area do not weaken the whole structure of the bilateral relations (Lanteigne, 2017). On the one hand, the Chinese government did not want Myanmar to establish closer ties with the United States by forcing the country implement the dam project. China's other motivation is that it will end up as a winner whether or not the project continues because, if it is cancelled, China receives compensation for it or it can claim to start a new project in its place. Recently, in April 2019, prominent academic politicians, civil society leaders, and environmentalists announced the "One Dollar" campaign, in which panel discussions were aimed at representing the collective opinion of the Myanmar people, according to which they are ready to offer the necessary compensation by collecting one dollar from each citizen. The panellists then plan to send an open letter to President Xi Jinping ("Anti-Myitsone Campaign to Ask Citizens to Pay \$1 Each to Compensate China", 2019). The panel discussion was held in Yangon four days before the State Counsellor's

scheduled departure to Beijing to attend the 2nd Belt and Road Forum. Although there have been a number of controversial issues about the campaign as the panellists did not mention exactly how they would collect the contributions from the public, it is clear that the panellists only suppose what the Myanmar people want. With regard to the cancellation of the Dam project, anti-Chinese sentiment has appeared in Myanmar. The government is in a struggle satisfying the will of its own people to repeal the project and, at the same time, the demand of the Chinese government to restart it.

The current National League for Democracy (NLD) government led by Aung San Suu Kyi has not yet made any remarks on the issue as to whether the project should be resumed or terminated. The foreign policy of the NLD government is different from the previous USDP government but not completely new (Myoe, 2017). The government continues to apply the “independent, active, and non-aligned policy” which has been used for a long time. The obvious fact in the new government’s policy is that it focuses on people-to-people contacts as a diplomatic tool in foreign relations. The government is fully aware of the maintenance of friendly relations with all countries, particularly with China and of the avoidance of confrontation in any issue. In this situation, the people’s anxiety and criticism have increased as they feel dissatisfied with how the government addresses the issue.

Under the NLD government, there were two reports proposed by a 20-member commission concerning the Myitsone Project. The government did not publicly disclose the content of these reports. Moreover, the NLD government has been silent over the issue for a long time and has not yet reached an agreement with the Chinese government. In April 2019, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi attended the 2nd Belt and Road Forum in China and signed the two memorandums of understanding (MOU) and an agreement on the China–Myanmar Economic Corridor. However, there were no announcements made regarding discussion on the Myitsone issue, as it was expected by the people. The NLD government pursues silent diplomacy over the issue and it does not live up to the people’s hope. According to the present situation, we can suppose that the government might not have detailed or specific plans on how to solve the most controversial case. As for China, the failure of the Myitsone Dam project has seriously disrupted

China's "Going out" investment strategy (Kiik, 2016). Besides, the unsettled dam dispute has also pointed out the collapse of China's dam diplomacy used in small countries.

Although the USDP government could explicitly decide on the suspension of the Dam construction as soon as the people claimed the cancellation to the project, the Chinese government did not force Myanmar to start the project. It was the USDP government at that time that could expect strong support by the United States to rebalance its foreign policy alignment. It could be said that Myanmar could manage its international relations, balancing between major powers and even creating a counterbalance to China against Chinese long-time hegemony. Myanmar was the centre of the power struggle of these major powers at that time. However, there were converse changes when President Donald Trump took in office in 2017 and US-Myanmar relations have been reduced since then. Under the Trump administration, American foreign policy has changed much in the wake of his campaign promise of "Make America Great Again". Donald Trump tried to introduce American isolationism and strong nationalism, focusing on fighting against Chinese interests in the United States. Under the partisan issue and difference between the Democrats and Republicans, Myanmar has played a less important role in the US's new foreign policy model, which totally changed with the Obama administration, and China is again the main player in Myanmar domestic politics without any disturbance. As a result, China has recently forced the incumbent NLD government of Myanmar to start the Myitsone Dam construction again.

Conclusion

Although both the United States and China try to enhance their influence over Myanmar, their main purposes are not completely the same: the US's priority is to promote and export its human rights and democratic norms to the so-called Chinese client state (the Myanmar government has always rejected this label), while China has mainly focused on its economic interest. However, it is undeniable that both have strategic interests in Myanmar as part of the clashes between democracy and communism. It can be clearly seen that Myanmar

cannot manage the domestic instability by itself as it also depends on and is linked to strategic and economic interests of great powers, such as the United States and China. On the other hand, the long-standing civil war between the ethnic minorities and the army also allows the external powers to have a much chance of influencing Myanmar internal affairs. It is a critical issue for the Myanmar government to choose a possible strategy with respect to its relations with great powers. These strategies could either be a hedging strategy, balancing or bandwagoning, alliance, or neutralism. The NLD government has still not solved the Myitsone dilemma over half of its term and it is still a controversial and challenging issue for the government. The Myitsone Dam issue will be a sensitive case for the incumbent government, which is a key factor in whether or not it will be re-elected for the next term. To conclude, Myanmar might unfortunately and inevitably fall under the sphere of influence by China again.

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The Fundamental Principle of Singapore's Foreign Policy: The Balance of Power

Renxin Wang

The concept of the Balance of Power was originally established back in 17th-century Europe as an outcome of the Thirty Years' War. When the House of Habsburg was defeated, a series of treaties were signed by the states that were involved, which is known as the Peace of Westphalia or the Treaties of Osnabruck and the Treaty of Munster. The Treaties of Westphalia have had an essential impact on the following global order, even up until now. The Treaties of Westphalia not only influenced the establishment of several nation-states in Europe, but also contributed to the creation of an important diplomatic strategy of the international relations, which became known as the Balance of Power. (Hassan, 2006) Since then, the Balance of Power has always been an integral part of the European political landscape. (Holsti, 2009) If we take a look at the two World Wars, the Cold War, and other significant political or military confrontations, the main reasons or causes of these conflicts are the vicious competition raised or proposed by the great powers of the world at the time. Regardless of whether it was a war, a conflict, a dispute, or even peace, the main push factor was the concept of the Balance of Power. The Balance of Power aims to prevent a state from playing a dominating role upon other states. This immediate power-balancing process limits great powers competitive advantage used to threaten other states in terms of national security, economy, capacities. The strategy of the Balance of Power is an approach of diplomacy that small countries usually choose to implement in the international order. Geographically peripheral countries such as Mongolia, Vietnam, and Singapore all choose the Balance of Power diplomacy in order to strive to maintain stability. For peripheral countries themselves, choosing the Balance of Power strategy allows their voices to be heard by great powers and also helps them to integrate into global affairs.

As the author mentioned before, the Balance of Power is one of the most important concepts or implementations of the contemporary realist International Relations school, which can be considered as a very

practical foreign policy in the implementation of a realist foreign policy for many countries. Teles motioned in his own critical review on *Wight, Martin's Power Politics* that *the original meaning of the balance of power takes the idea of an equal distribution of power, in a context where no power is so dominant as to pose others risk.* (Wight, 2002) *The balance of power would be in full operation every time a dominant power strives to dominate international society and momentary means, disrupting this balance.* (Teles, 2015) This means that the Balance of Power is more like a status where all the powers can equally compete with each other regardless of their state capacity in the fields of military, finance, and politics. In general, the Balance of Power is usually used to explain or describe the distribution of political powers or a particular approach of foreign policy as Hans Morgenthau concluded in his book *Politics Among Nations* about the Balance of Power, it is a policy aimed at seeking a special status that has an equal distribution of power status any type of approach of power distribution. (Morgenthau, 1990)

In general, Singapore is a classic example of the implementation of the Balance of Power. The essence of the Balance of Power usually refers to a status or a relationship of balance and stability between states. The status of stability is usually initiated peacefully (Sun, 2014). This kind of status or relationship has been pursued by many countries or international communities throughout history, which is directly or indirectly reflected in their foreign policy and diplomacy. For example, the two World Wars were initially started with military competition between countries because if a country's neighbors are much stronger, then the smaller state usually feels threatened. The imbalance of the regional order will initially cause competition or even confrontation in order to maintain the regional power balance. Since the Balance of Power is indeed a sort of competition in international affairs, it will always take the form of a circle of balance and imbalance with instant shift between these two statuses. Regardless of which approach or type of foreign policy a country pursues, the goal and outcome they pursue often results in the establishment of this Balance of Power system. Superpowers achieve this Balance of Power via the implementation of their global vision and dominance. But only few countries can implement this global strategy due to the lack of state competitiveness; such as Russia, China, and the United States, which all play a vital role

in global affairs to ensure their global leadership and dominance. For example, to mention the most recent example, China and the US always try to achieve a balance on the Korean Peninsula. If small and weak countries want to achieve their goals and protect their interests, they must maintain a certain stable relation with big powers. (Scalapino, 1974)

The Context of Singapore's Power Balancing Strategy

From the perspective of regional security and geopolitics, Southeast Asia has always been the region where the great power interests met. In the late '60s, the British Government decided to withdraw their military deployment in Singapore (Marsita & Chan, 2009), and one year later, US President Nixon made a speech on the Vietnam War, which was considered as a new "Nixon Doctrine" (Editors, 2009), which made the security situation of Singapore very unfavourable. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union proposed an Asian collective security policy, which was intended to change Southeast Asian security affairs. (MEDIANSKY & COURT, 1984). When Singapore was founded, the country had to face severe problems both internationally and domestically, which made Singapore's government very cautious in dealing with issues at that time. Internationally, due to the cultural and other ties between Singapore and Mainland China, the neighbouring countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia were traditionally afraid that their neighbour could become a new state which could potentially speak for China's Communist Party. Domestically, before achieving independence, the majority of Singapore's population were ethnic Chinese who were heavily influenced by their Chinese ancestry in terms of language and culture. But due to political reasons¹⁹, the majority of the Chinese had to live in a society dominated by Malay culture, and this caused many problems between Singapore and Malaysia before their separation. Meanwhile, Singapore still had a high unemployment rate after independence, and

¹⁹ Before their independence, Singapore and Malaysia were British colonies. After Malaysia gained independence, Singapore became independent but only together with Malaysia. Because its cultural link with China, Singapore with its Chinese culture was not welcomed by the Malaysian government.

economically, Singapore was a region that heavily relied on Malaysia in areas in which it could not effectively operate as a state.

The domestic and international atmosphere that Singapore was facing upon achieving independence determined the importance of the diplomacy of the Balance of Power. In 1965, Singapore was unwillingly separated²⁰ from Malaysia, and had only 1.3 million inhabitants²¹ and only 580 square kilometres of territory. As soon as they gained independence, the survival of this new nation was seriously questioned. "Some countries were already independent, some countries fought for it, and Singapore's independence was imposed on it." (Lee, 1998) As Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first Prime Minister wrote about his experience in many of his books, it never occurred to him in life that he would once be responsible for the lives of 2 million people and lead the country for decades afterwards. (Lee, *From Third World to First: The Singapore Story: 1965-2000*, 2000). Because of the population and size of the territory, Singapore was considered a small country after gaining independence. Small countries of the world often find it challenging to maintain their sovereignty and protect their interests without foreign support or influence. (Maass, 2009) If they cannot manage the situation well, a national tragedy might ensue. Singapore faces a similar problem, but it may be even worse. The geographical location of Singapore is situated in the Pacific. It is also an important commercial and transportation terminal in the Straits of Malacca and the Indian Ocean. This made Singapore a commercial, cultural, and geopolitical hub in the region. Therefore, for hundreds of years, many colonists attempted to either occupy or take advantage of Singapore to gain more benefits from the country. Thus, Singapore was not be able to avoid being involved in confrontation between the big powers.

The instability and uncertainty of the foreign policies of Great Powers raised the tension between Singapore and Great Powers. In March 1973, Lee Kuan Yew addressed his concern about the Soviet expansion in Southeast Asia at a meeting by unruing that major powers in the West should provide support by military means and protect the freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean. This speech mainly targeted

²⁰ Singapore was not able to establish a country based on its economical capacity without Malaysia, it was only considered as a port for Malaysia.

²¹ Singapore Population Growth, World Population Review

the Soviet Union. Lee Kuan Yew made another speech later that year in the United States, pointing out that the Soviet Union's presence is strengthening so Singapore would like to see an increased US presence in the region. (Singapore, 1973) The way how Lee Kuan Yew made his speeches and the strategies he implemented made a clear statement to inviting big powers to compete in Southeast Asia in order to let Singapore benefit the most between the big powers' competition in the region. This could be totally seeing as a perfect implementation of Lee Kuan Yew's Balancing Strategy, by involving more competitors, Lee put the pressures both on Soviet Union and the U.S, so they may compete with each other to get Singapore's support with its choke point location. This makes it possible for Singapore to combine all the powers in the region together, and this can put Singapore at a superior strategic position since all the big powers want to align with it, and to realize their strategic or security goals can be accomplished only if they cooperate with Singapore. Based on this, both Singapore and the U.S chose each other as the pillar of their diplomacy for the Balance of Power.

However, the model of diplomacy that Singapore established, met a lot of common interests of small countries, which obviously challenged the stereotypes in traditional diplomacy for the small states. The Chinese international relations experts have a famous saying, which is "Weak countries have no diplomacy" (弱国无外交). It simply means that the small states can only choose to have objective diplomacy rather than a self-designed and subjective diplomacy when they are dealing with Great Powers. Singapore was one of the smallest countries in the world with nearly no natural resource reserves, even including water need to be imported from other countries. (Cai, 2000) Due to special ethnic relations, political, and historical background, Singapore was encircled by countries with which it had conflicts. As a result, Singapore faced huge pressure to survive and ensure its own security. Facing all these problems, Lee Kuan Yew made the fundamental diplomacy guideline, the Balance of Power diplomacy.

The Balance of Power and Non-Aligned Movement

The idea of Non-Aligned Movements was promoted by some countries such as India, Egypt, and Indonesia after the World War 2. In the late 1960s, US President Nixon changed the U.S foreign policy towards the Soviet Union; a move which amplified direct dialogue between the United States and the Soviet Union. The two great powers decided to ease their military and political confrontation. This directly provided a choice for the newly independent states and small states after the Second World War. Because the small states can be gathered together by not pledged to any Great Powers but supported by other small states. This third options after U.S and Soviet Union became really popular, some small countries considered this is the best way to avoid being forced into the confrontation between the great powers is to choose a neutral and non-aligned policy which is also their only option.

Singapore believed that adopting a non-aligned approach is the only way to protect their interests for the emerging independent countries for their national security. This would not only ensure that small countries are not involved in a military confrontation between great powers, but they would also not be labelled as a member of any polar group, which is ideally suitable for Singapore. (Qie, 2005)The implementation of the non-alignment policy was not only conducive to avoiding the conflicts of great powers but also to achieving the goal of reducing the number of enemies and making a policy, which is based more on the friendly relations of developing countries. Good relations with neighbouring countries also contribute to the harmony of internal ethnic groups in Singapore. Therefore, shortly after Singapore achieved independence, the island nation announced its non-alignment policy and expressed its willingness to develop friendly relations with the vast majority of countries in the world. But at the same time, Lee Kuan Yew believed that non-alignment was not the perfect system the country needed. Singapore was a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, declared its non-aligned stance since gaining independence, but Singapore had its own idea about the movement. "The content of the Non-Aligned Movement must now be reconsidered," (Singapore N. A., 1973) Lee said at a national banquet in 1973 to welcome the President of Yugoslavia. "The question for small countries is no longer how to

avoid being drawn into the poles of the great powers, but how to make them aware of their interests when they compromise with each other.” (Singapore N. A., 1973) In 1970, Singapore participated in the Third Summit of the Non-Aligned Government in Lusaka. After Singapore gained independence, Lee Kuan Yew realised that it was almost impossible to maintain a neutral position for Southeast Asia if great powers were excluded because no other country in the world had such an ability and power to ensure security in the region. He believed that after the retreat of the British Army, the order of Southeast Asia would be influenced mainly by the competition between the United States, the Soviet Union, and China. (Qie, 2005)

The Big Power Balancing Strategy and its Continuity

During the last years of the Cold War, the majority of small countries chose to remain neutral and adopted for non-aligned diplomacy in order to avoid getting involved in the confrontation between the two poles – an idea that greatly inspired Lee Kuan Yew. He argued that, in order to survive in the complexities in geopolitical changes in South East Asia, small countries like Singapore has to make the Great Powers has to neutralize the South East Asia and prevent smaller countries as a tool for gaining their national interests. He hoped that Singapore would adopt a neutral status in the international order similarly to Switzerland, making it a neutral center, like the “Geneva” of Asia but not a protectorate of any other great power. (Qie, 2005)

Back to 90s, the Bipolar System was collapsed because the Soviet Union collapsed. The international system and international order were decentralised later on and it was no longer controlled by one or two major powers because of the rise of other competitors on the global stage such as China. Although the United States lost some of its national capacity during the competition with the Soviet Union, but it undoubtedly survived as the only superpower in the world after the Cold War. In Southeast Asia, the US still dominated the region. But the regional order was still affected by countries like Russia and India; after experiencing decades of dysfunction, the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) was greatly improved in terms of organisational scale and organisational capacity. After the Cold War,

these major countries outside the region continued to hold major interests in Southeast Asia. Singapore, which is economically developed, politically stable, and geographically advantageous, has become an important partner to great powers to integrate into Southeast Asian issues, which gave Singapore an important role in the balancing of great powers. (Fu, 2016)

Although the Founding Father Lee Kuan Yew resigned in 1990 and Gok Chok Tong became Prime Minister for a short while to maintain the sustainability of the previous policy, and right after Gok Chok Tong, his eldest son, Lee Hsien Loong came to power eventually, contemporary Singaporean Foreign Policy, in fact, remained mostly unchanged not only because Lee Kuan Yew had kept his political influence within the government for a while but also because Lee Hsien Loong drew many of his ideas from his father's legacy.

The Implementation of Great Power Balancing Strategy

Balancing with the U.S

After the Second World War, the United States kept its superpower status and a dominating role in global affairs. The United States was still the "indispensable nation". Lee Kuan Yew argued that the United States was the key to maintain the balance of power in the Asia-Pacific region, and only the presence of the United States in Southeast Asia could maintain peace in the region because other powers which have the ability to interfere in regional issues would always hesitate before they move. Therefore, Singapore should consider aligning very closely with United States both politically and militarily, since the US will be the stability factor in the Pacific region, and it is also the main partner for Singapore's economic development. Before the US, Singapore's national security was originally secured by Britain since the island nation had been one of the British colonies. However, when Britain announced that it would withdraw its military from Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew was appalled and devastated because Singapore clearly had no ability to develop a military on its own. (Omar & Chan, 2009) Singapore immediately started to welcome US military presence in the Southeast Asia. Likewise, Singapore and the United States signed a series of

military cooperation agreements to keep American troops in Southeast Asia and Singapore. In 1990, Singapore signed a memorandum of understanding with the United States to allow the US military to use Singapore's military facilities. (Boon, 2015) After several years of cooperation, Singapore first participated in the US–Thailand Cobra Military Exercise in 2000. (Ministry of Defense, 2000) After 9/11, the political, military, and economic relations between the two states were further strengthened. Singapore strongly supports the anti-terrorism activities of the United States and the war of Iraq. Economically, Singapore also needs the US to counterbalance Japan's growing influence. As for the United States, although Singapore has a population of only 3 million people, it has been playing a significant role in the exports to the United States, with bilateral trade worth billions of dollars every year. Singapore is an ideal market for US products and services. Singapore also hopes to promote its own prosperity through US investment and trade.

Since the Obama Administration officially announced its policy of "Pivot to Asia", the strategic focus of the US has shifted to the Asia-Pacific region, similarly to the Trump administration's policy. No matter if it is the Asia-Pacific or the Indo-Pacific, Singapore is the key to success. The differences and conflicts between China and the United States increased enormously in the 21st century. The United States views China as a global competitor and considers China's diplomatic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region to be a move to break the regional power balance, which means that the US also intended to keep its military presence in Southeast Asia. In the military field, with Singapore's active cooperation in keeping the Chinese Military out of Southeast Asia, the US military welcomed the fact that Singapore was buying US weapons and equipment. Regardless of whether it is Obama's or Trump's administration, we can see that the stability of the two countries' foreign policies towards each other has never changed because they need each other both economically and militarily.

Balancing with China.

Lee Kuan Yew once said: "The stronger China is, the more balanced US–Soviet relations will be, and the more secure Singapore will be".

(Koh, 2017) Lee Kuan Yew argued that China would be successful in developing its economy and advocated to establish a good relationship with Southeast Asian countries eventually. But at that time, Indonesia and China was in confrontation. By considering the influence of the relations with its neighbours, Lee decided to wait until Malaysia and Indonesia both established diplomatic relations with China and Singapore would do so only after them. (Min, 2015) As a result, during the Cold War period, although there were no formal diplomatic relations between China and Singapore, they maintained good informal exchanges, and, of course, this mainly concerned trade. In the meantime, Lee Kuan Yew started to visit China frequently with a series of agreement were signed regarding economic cooperations. (Min, 2015) By the end of the Cold War, Singapore became the fourth largest foreign investor in China and the fifth largest trade partner, and also one of the most important sources of foreign exchange reserve for China, since China's economic development and Singapore played an important role in promoting the Chinese Reform and Opening up Policy. (Qie, 2005)

In Singapore's perspective of the situation in the Asia-Pacific region, China has been a factor contributing to the balancing strategy of Singapore. From 1965 to 1974, the basic principle of Singapore's policy regarding China was the separation of diplomatic relations and trade relations. Economically, Singapore actively engages in trade with China. Compared to other Southeast Asian countries, Singapore's trade with China was considered to be continuously stable. Singapore actively trades with China mainly because it was an important way for Singapore to survive economically, and Singaporeans are mainly ethnic Chinese who have played an important role in promoting trade with China. China was also willing to develop trade with Singapore as well. Politically, on the one hand, the Singaporean government recognises the People's Republic of China and supported the restoration of China's lawful status in the United Nations. On the other hand, it does not engage in political contact with China, not even establishing diplomatic relations with China because Singapore fears that Malaysia and Indonesia would not welcome Singapore having too close ties with China. Then Singapore's policy towards China gradually developed with the, establishment of important political relations. After that, in

October 1990, Singapore's policy towards China aimed at establishing formal diplomatic relations with China because most of the Southeast Asian countries had already recognised Communist China. (WANG Linjing JIANG Lan, 2008)

Involvement in the ASEAN

The ASEAN is one of the most remarkable organisations that Southeast Asia has ever had: it was created in order to maintain national independence in the international order, where the United States and the Soviet Union compete for regional hegemony and to reduce the interference by the great powers in Southeast Asian countries. In 1967, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines jointly issued the ASEAN Declaration during the official foundation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Bangkok, Thailand, declaring the formal establishment of a new regional alliance group. (ASEAN, 2016)

To some extent, the establishment of the ASEAN has united the strength of Southeast Asian countries, making them a single unit, rather than individual small countries. During the Cold War, the ASEAN mainly stood on the side of the western countries led by the United States to confront the communist activities in Southeast Asia. At the same time, the establishment of the ASEAN cooled down the tensions between Singapore and its neighbours. In the 1970s, the Soviet Union started to interfere in other countries' internal affairs in Southeast Asia. Under this context, Singapore somehow pushed for the politicisation of the ASEAN. One example for this is when the Soviet Union supported the invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam, but Singapore condemned the Soviet Union and Vietnam in the United Nations and other platforms, representing the ASEAN, calling on the international community to respect the sovereignty of small states. After this, Singapore achieved its goal to raise its voice in the ASEAN and also made the ASEAN's voice heard by other great powers.

Currently, Singapore plays a vital role among ASEAN member states in terms of military capacity and state competitiveness. With considerable military power in Southeast Asia, Singapore's power balancing strategy started to work not only regionally but also globally.

Conclusion

Implementing the Balance of Power made Singapore a successful model for small states. With tremendous economic achievements that Singapore has made in the past decades, the Balance of Power surely was the key to all these successes. The Singaporean leader Lee Kuan Yew's analyse of the global affairs and context was significantly correct. There is no doubt that Singapore's adjustment based different period and situations were mostly successful. This approach has made Singapore to avoid objective disasters that might have come alone under the Great Power dominate system.

The world got used to a western power led international order. Small countries' competitiveness was mostly depending on their economy, economy and foreign policy. As we have seen in the past few years, the request and needs of the small states were. Mostly neglected because the Great powers will serve their national interests first. But apparently, Singapore is not the best example for this. By transforming the country itself.

Most of the small countries do not have the capacity to play a significant role in international affairs; rather, they can either obey or suffer the consequences. Fifty years ago, Singapore, a small and poor island was forced to become independent in the middle of the Pacific. Singapore developed from a small country into a big country in global affairs. At the diplomatic level, Singapore perfectly combined its own interests and those of great powers. Economically, through the establishment of close economic ties with western developed countries, such as the United States, Singapore quickly joined the club of developed countries. Singapore's economic success has also driven regional economic and trade development in Southeast Asia. Militarily, Singapore strengthened military cooperation with the United States after the Cold War and used American power to ensure its national security. Politically, Singapore stands together with China to promote the Asian values against Western values of democracy. Singapore is a pragmatic country which always treats its national interests as a priority. For decades, Singapore has maintained good diplomatic

relations with the United States, Japan, China, and other major countries despite occasional diplomatic misunderstandings.

Singapore's strategy of great power balancing originates in the theory of balance of power. Obviously, Singapore cannot manipulate or influence the behaviour of a great power. What it can do is only to divide the influence of a great power in the region with the help of the international system and international organisations. At the same time, it asserts its interests with major countries and builds close bilateral relations with the great powers, which can be considered a quasi-alliance. Singapore has promoted the idea of great power balancing in the ASEAN, making it a strategy for the ASEAN to handle relations with other great powers.

However, Singapore's great power balancing strategy also faces many challenges and uncertainty. On the one hand, Singapore's power balancing strategy now relies more and more on the ASEAN. On December 31, 2015, the ASEAN announced the community declaration, which is another historic leap forward in the development of ASEAN integration. However, learning from the EU, the ASEAN is still a loose union, and the national sovereignty and independence of each country within the organisation are far less powerful than in the EU. On the other hand, Singapore's strategy of balancing great powers is based on the balance of regional powers. As the balance of power between major countries changes, the trend of the future world may upset the balance of power. Once the foundation of great power balance disappears, the strategy of power balancing will not exist anymore.

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Stuck Between Great Powers: The Geopolitics of the Peripheries

In recent years there are clear signs of the re-emergence of geopolitics and the rise of great power rivalry as a result of the multi-polarisation of the international order. This volume is focusing on the less visible actors and regions of the international arenas, the global peripheries, and smaller countries. The ambition of the present collection of studies is to introduce the reader to some of the special geopolitical characteristics of these regions and countries. Even though the topics are intentionally varied, with a wide regional focus, the reader can recognise similar patterns within the chapters.

The authors of the studies are representing a new generation of young researchers connected to the Department of Geography, Geoeconomy, and Sustainable Development at Corvinus University of Budapest.