EURÁZSIA
SZEMLE Volume IV
Issue 3

**EURASIA
CENTER**

EURÁZSIA SZEMLE
Outside-in Perspectives on Eurasia

Volume IV, Issue 3, 2024/3

NLV Neumann Publishing and Communication Ltd.

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Editor's Foreword

In the first third of the twenty-first century, the emergence of a new multipolar world order based on the rivalry and changing relations between the United States of America, the People's Republic of China, the European Union and the Russian Federation began and accelerated.

As detailed in a brand-new book on the transforming world order edited by Zoltán Vörös and István Tarróssy,[1] Russia has emerged as the representative of neo-Eurasianism, with the aim of regaining imperial status. The outlines of a multipolar and interdependent international order had already emerged a decade ago. The significance of the Eurasian heartland grew in the emerging new international system. The establishment of a multipolar and multilateral international system based on the Eurasianist approach stands at the centre of the foreign policy strategy and geopolitical trend hallmarked by the name of President Putin.[2] Despite the structural weakness of its economy, due to its accession to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (1998), the foundation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (2001), and participation in other international integrations, as well as through the foundation of the Eurasian Economic Union (2014), Russia has become a structure-establishing great power in the system of international relations while remaining only peripheral from the perspective of the world economy in terms of its economic development and weight.[3] Be that as it may, its ambitions are influenced and limited by several factors.

On the one hand, Russia is limited by the superpower status and position of the United States of America; on the other hand, it is constrained by China's growing role as a global superpower in the Eurasian region. Beijing has not only extended and increased its influence in the Eurasian region through the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, but since 2013 the Chinese leadership has been increasingly consistent and assertive in implementing the Belt and Road Initiative. The Silk Road Economic Belt component of the Belt and Road Initiative, which geopolitically, geographically and economically also covers Central and Eastern Europe, includes land and maritime routes, complemented by a tested route around the Arctic Circle.

The New Silk Road project has established a direct link between China and Europe, involving sixty countries from Southeast Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East. This historically ambitious project has represented and mobilised 75% of the world's known energy reserves, 70% of its population and 55% of global GDP. The establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank network for regional investment is also an important element and instrument of the Belt and Road Initiative.

The BRICS countries – originally comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and the Republic of South Africa – have also become important players in the emerging multipolar and interdependent international system. In 2024, the alliance enlarged to include Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia and Iran.[4] In this altered international context, the European Union needs to define its room for manoeuvre and represent its interests.

Conflict-induced transformations have led to an escalation of tensions between the emerging powers (China and Russia) and the United States, still the dominant power today, and the European Union, which is part of its alliance system.

These transformations and developments have led to a revival of the question of the inevitability of armed confrontation between the competing powers and renewed debate among scholars.[5]

In the case of Russia, the debate is about how to avoid the Kindleberger Trap,[6] and in the case of China, it is about evading Thucydides's Trap. In his international bestseller, now in its fifth edition, Graham Allison asks the burning question of the day: Can America and China escape Thucydides's Trap, or is the world destined for war?[7] Will the conflict between the rising powers and the dominant power that wishes to maintain its position, influence and role in economics, politics, military power and ideology inevitably lead to armed confrontation? In light of the Russian–Ukrainian War, a sound scientific answer to this question is very difficult to give.

Nevertheless, historical experience shows that competing powers and centres of power have always sought – and continue to seek – new spheres of influence and allies. This is why it is crucial for experts and those interested in the evolution of these processes to follow the events unfolding before our eyes from an external perspective and point of view, and why research on Eurasia is becoming increasingly relevant and important. The articles and book reviews published in this third issue of *Eurázsia Szemle* Volume IV will help to disseminate knowledge about Eurasia, promote academic discourse and influence further research and policy directions.

In today's emerging and evolving multipolar world order and multilateral international system, there is a greater need than ever for such analytical examination of the trends, challenges and opportunities faced by Eurasia and the international system of the twenty-first century.

Professor István Szilágyi, PhD
Head of the Advisory Board

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1   Vörös, Z., & Tarróssy, I. (Eds.). (2024). *Átalakuló világrend: Az unipoláris pillanat vége?* [*The World in Transition: The End of the Unipolar Moment?*]. Ludovika Egyetemi Kiadó.

2   Dugin, A. (2021). *The Theory of a Multipolar World*. Arktos.

3   Szilágyi, I. (2021). Russia: The Greater Eurasian Partnership and the Eurasian Union. In G. Salamin, & P. Klemensits (Eds), *Towards the Rise of Eurasia: Competing Geopolitical Narratives and Responses*. Corvinus University of Budapest.

4   Since the composition of this Foreword, Indonesia also joined BRICS – in January 2025. Saudi Arabia, which was in a position to join in 2024, reconsidered and is currently not a member of the organisation. [Ed.]

5   Dugin, A. (2015). *Last War of the World-island: The Geopolitics of Contemporary Russia*. Arktos.

6   Bahi, R. (2021). The geopolitics of COVID-19: US–China rivalry and the imminent Kindleberger Trap. *Review of Economics and Political Sciences*, 6(1), 76–94.

7   Allison, G. (2020). *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thycydides's Trap?* Houghton Miffin Harcourt Publishing Company.
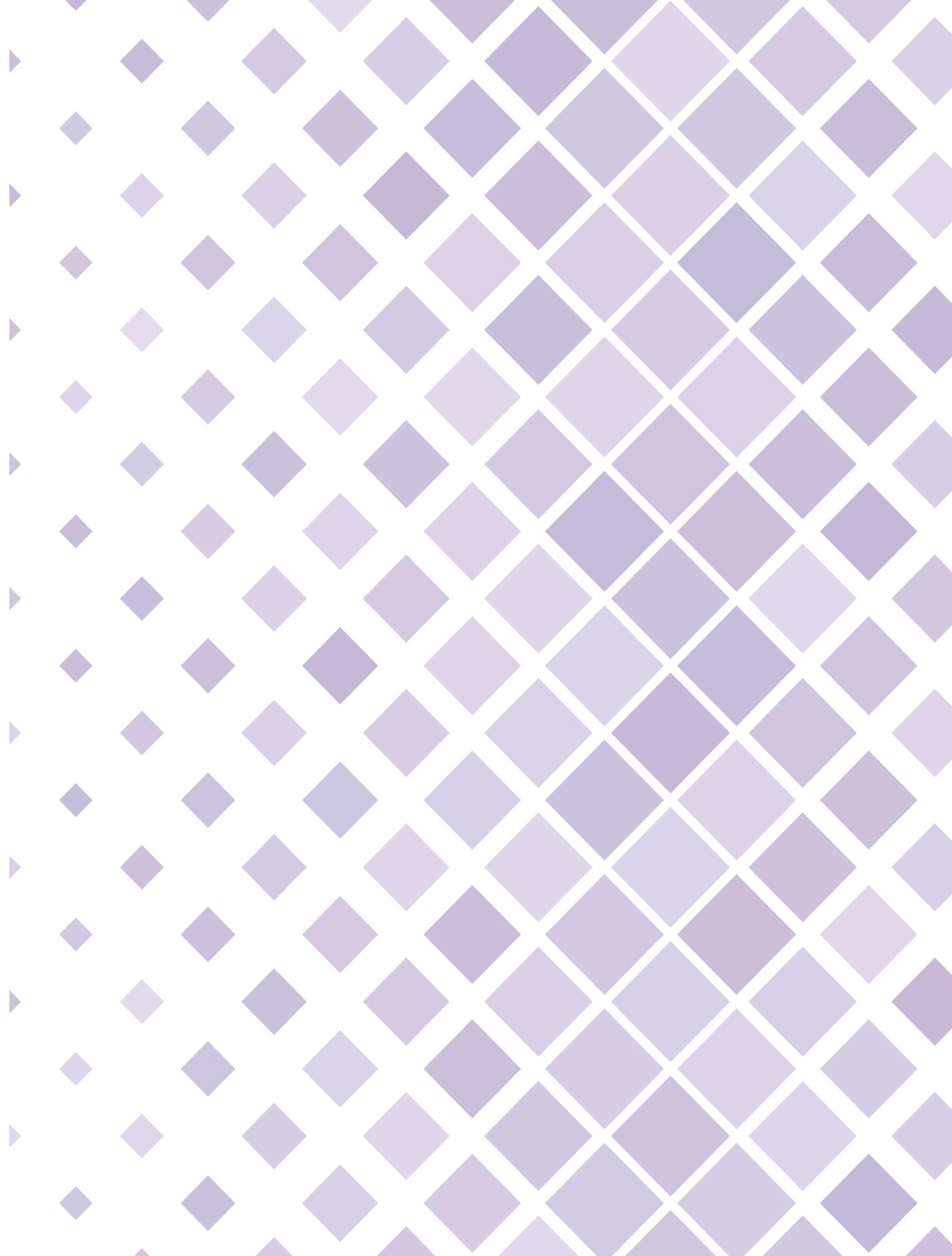
I

OUTSIDER'S VIEW
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Axiological Determinants in the Formation
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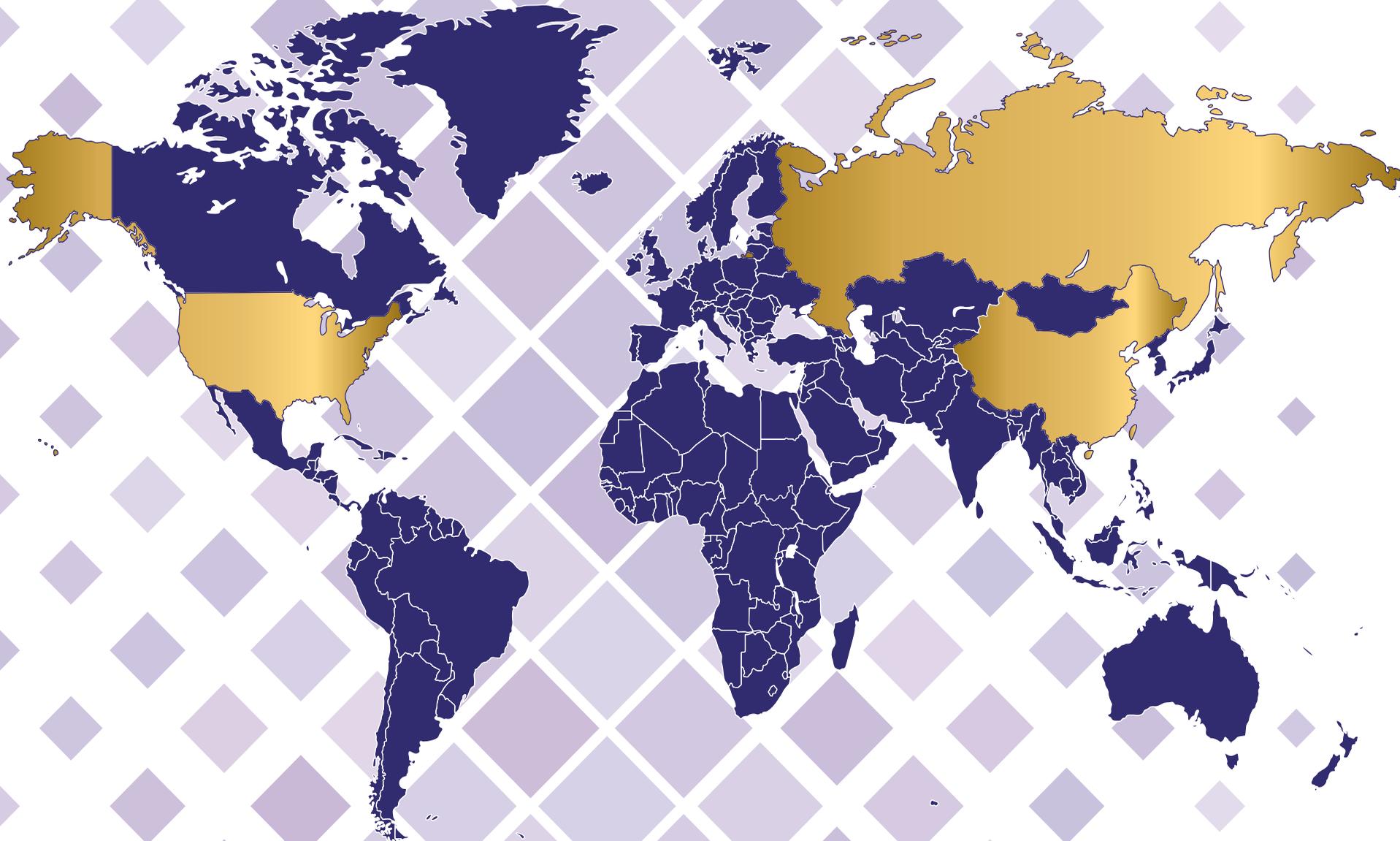
AXIOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS IN THE FORMATION OF A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

Gracjan Cimek[1]

Abstract

A multipolar order is a system in which several influential actors operate and there is relative parity of power between at least three states. In the middle of the third decade of the twenty-first century, it can be assumed, following John Mearsheimer, that the emerging multipolar world order is based on three centres of power: the United States of America, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation. In research we cannot limit ourselves to the military and economic factors emphasised by realist, neo-realist, neo-liberal and Marxist theories. In this article, I focus on the cultural core that characterises axiological attributes and rejects the instrumentalism embodied in the category of soft power. The highest ideas and values of the USA, China and Russia are thus the subject of consideration. Their analysis and comparison are intended to prove that the multipolar world is conducive to the implementation of the values and ideas of the Eurasian powers and to the negation of those underpinning unipolarity. The results of the research are particularly relevant for the future geostrategic choices of the world's states.

Keywords: Multipolar world, culture, civilisation, values, China, Russia, USA

1. Introduction

International relations encompass 'that most important side of human coexistence, which is the coexistence of all mankind, the coexistence of nations' (Erlich, 1947, p. 2). As outlined by Karpinski (2020), the process of research involves four dimensions: (a) diachronic, which concerns the past, present and future of actors, revealing the process of their becoming over time; (b) synchronic, determined by the content of the continuation and negation of a given actor in the sphere of transformations of the economy, the political system, ideology, the military sphere and technology; (c) the field of coexistence revealing the determinants of bilateral ties, the influence of the regional structure and the international order; (d) the values of the "other side", which take the formal and logical form of abstractions (e.g. freedom, justice, God, peace, etc.), which the actor concretises in action. Attempts to implement these formal and logical abstractions describe theoretical–objective values. The "other side" thus emphasises the actor's uniqueness and at the same time the absolute character of the axiological justifications of actions. It defines who the actor is, what they identify with, and what they are ultimately fighting for. 'The identity of the participants in international relations manifests itself in their external activity, in the discovery of themselves against others and in entering into more or less permanent relationships and dependencies with others' (Bieleń, 2015, p. 157).

A multipolar order is a system in which several influential actors operate and there is relative parity of power between at least three states (Mingst, 2006). In the diachronic dimension, in the middle of the third decade of the twenty-first century, it can be assumed, following John Mearsheimer, that a multipolar world based on three centres of power has emerged: the USA, the PRC and Russia. The first of these defends its hegemony; the other two constitute the main counter-hegemonic forces. At present, we are seeing a struggle between the Eurasian vector and the Euro-Atlantic vector. The former includes the Sino–Russian alliance, BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation; the latter includes the USA, NATO, the European Union, AUKUS and the G7.

In the synchronic dimension, on the one hand the world is a mosaic of civilisations. On the other hand, the universal trend is the restructuring of the world economy, defined by a qualitative technological change (including the introduction of artificial intelligence, as well as the latest ICT and energy solutions, nanotechnology and biological technologies).

In turn, the field of coexistence is defined by the multidimensional interdependence of the world's states as a result of globalisation driven by transnational corporations. This process has revealed a number of crises. There is an ecological crisis resulting from the burdening of the planet with the legacy of capitalism. The labour crisis results from the increasing robotisation and implementation of artificial intelligence. The economic crisis is related to the alienation of the financial sphere, while the crisis in health is the aftershock of the Covid-19 pandemic. There is also a crisis of rational thinking, which is the result of the information hypertrophy of the post-truth society.

This article focuses on the dimension revealing the values of the "other side" of the three powers, i.e. the cultural core that characterises axiological attributes and rejects the instrumentalism embodied in the soft power category.[2] Its subject is therefore the highest ideas and values of the USA, China and Russia. In order to analyse and compare them, the research hypothesis is that the multipolar world is conducive to the implementation of the values and ideas of the Eurasian powers and to the

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1   Professor Gracjan Cimek, PhD habil., AMW, Chair of International Relations, Polish Naval Academy in Gdynia, Institute of International Relations. ORCID: 0000-0002-2139-3953

2   This is a utilitarian view of culture inherent in neoliberal and neorealist studies of international relations which treats ideational factors instrumentally, that is, from the point of view of their usefulness to actors maximising their own material interest. It thus fits in with the justifications for the activity of the dominant, capitalist Western powers (Nye, 2007).

negation of those underpinning unipolarity. The results of the research are particularly relevant to the future geostrategic choices of the world's states.

Following this introduction, the structure of this article features a discussion of rationality as an important hermeneutic category and an attempt to reconstruct the values of the "other side" of the three actors both genetically and behaviourally, i.e. those actualised in the twenty-first century. In my conclusion, I demonstrate why the attributes of the Eurasian powers favour the construction of a multipolar world.

2. Rationality and Axiology

In international politics, "rationality" is about making some sense of the world – that is, discovering how the world works, and why – in order to be able to decide on a method to achieve certain goals. It has both an individual and a collective dimension. Rational actors are guided by theory; being *homo theoreticus*, they rely on explanations of how the international system works based on realistic claims and supported by substantial evidence – which they use to understand their situation and determine the best way to deal with it (Mearsheimer & Rosato, 2023). However, it is important to distinguish between material rationality and formal rationality, indicating that in the former the selection of targets is based on value–rational activities that define their own criteria to justify what is rational based on different models of ethics. In contrast, formal rationality makes the basis for target–rational activities understood as the technical matching of possible means to reach given goals (Weber, 2002) and it is wrongly identified with rationality itself. In fact, the moral preferences for the concept of a good life are the basis for potential conflict not only within a given political system, but also in international relations. Political theory based on the assumption that we will ever be able to go beyond this kind of conflict is an unrealistic utopia. As far as uniformity is possible, it can be achieved only by brutal oppression (Sapir, 2009). As Mandle (2009) comments, 'social justice is a virtue that appears in response to the possible emergence of a conflict between rationally justified values' (p. 30).

The mechanism and reductionism embodied in the theories of realism and neorealism therefore must be corrected. Such an attempt has been made by constructivism, which shows the cultural context as the basis for the formation of the identity of the international relations actor. Its shortcoming, however, is that it reduces international relations to the formation of intersubjective meanings based on ideas and norms. Therefore, one cannot agree that 'identities are the basis of interests' (Wendt, 1992, p. 398), which are shaped by normative and ideological structures. Indeed, interests are determined by the balance of power in a given international context. The values of the "other side" may be rhetorically marginalised, for instance in the case of a client state or protectorate, but they lie in the "underground" of the collective consciousness of the actor concerned. The existence of a fluid identity must therefore be rejected. The ability to actualise the values of the "other side" is ultimately evidenced by material potential. Therefore, it is the greatest powers that have the capacity

to "be themselves", as evidenced by the reconstruction of the three powers that are the subject of this analysis. In the developed geopolitics of critical realism, the factors determining the functioning of centres of power, the interactions between them and the effects on global, regional and local space are conducted from the point of view of the development of meta-idea win-win relations, thereby subjecting the existing processes, methods and systems operating in international relations to criticism. The geopolitics of critical realism thus has a normative dimension that relates to the research presented here (Cimek, 2017).

3. The Cultural Basis of US Expansion

The essence of the culture that underpins policy is based on two ideas. One is American exceptionalism based on the belief that, compared to other nations, the United States is distinctive, unique or exemplary. The other is the myth of individual wealth (Lipset 2012; Longley, 2002). Both ideas are related to the fact that the spiritual roots of Western civilisation go back to Protestantism, according to which, wealth and success in business are proof of God's blessing, while failure is proof of God's lack of grace towards man. The Protestant ethic determined the content of the concept of entrepreneurship, being one of the phenomena leading to an increase in the rationalisation of social life in a multifaceted way characteristic of Western civilisation, combined with the development of capitalism. The effect of the Reformation was the so-called "disenchantment" of the world, demythologisation and secularisation (Weber, 1994). The concretisation and development of Protestant, Faustian culture is the American dream, based on the belief that 'the pursuit of personal wealth is the strongest social impulse and the basis of the American myth', being 'the vehicle of a cultural enchantment that overflows, saturates, absorbs and changes the external behaviour and ultimately the internal life of an increasing proportion of humanity' (Brzeziński, 2004, p. 203). Successful people are most often regarded as role models worthy of emulation. For this reason, social stigma is more prevalent in relation to poor people, who are burdened by reproaches of inadequacy and laziness.

The foundations of the American creed at the level of formal–logical values considered as manifestations of American exceptionalism include freedom, egalitarianism, individualism, populism and laissez-faire (Huntington, 1997). However, in the theoretical–objective sphere, the so-called "American dilemma" is revealed – showing the USA's divergence from theoretical–objective values, as evidenced by historical or persisting inequality, shortcomings regarding civil rights, discrimination, segregation, slavery, and the manipulation of consciousness by politicians and advertising undermining the belief in the autonomy of the free individual (Myrdal, 1962). Anglo-Saxon dualism is, on the one hand, the embodiment of an extreme universalism taking the form of a state built by immigrants from all European countries and, on the other hand, of particularism, since in history there is always the "other", the stranger, condemned to discrimination. In the past, the strangers were initially the Native Americans and the Blacks. Later they were the Irish and the Italians. Nowadays, they are mainly Latinos (Todd, 2003). Defenders of the USA point out, however,

that 'American culture contains glitz, sex, violence, sterility and materialism, but this is not the whole truth about it. It also represents American values such as openness, mobility, individualism, opposition to the establishment, pluralism, freedom' (Nye, 2007, p. 79). It is worth adding that this is a negative vision of freedom and security. For here, "freedom" means individual autonomy, which is achieved through material wealth. The key to obtaining it is ownership. Once ownership and wealth have been achieved, a person can be secure as an autonomous individual. Therefore, the American dream is based on the recognition of the necessity of economic growth, wealth and individual autonomy; it recognises the work ethic as an end in itself, while at the same time it rests upon a religious faith based on the sense of mission of the chosen people. According to Rifkin (2005), Americans are so self-centred that they use military means to convince others of their views without the least compunction.

The American system of government is based on a religious foundation, assuming the existence of a divine being. For example, the Declaration of Independence appeals to the Creator and divine providence, while religious elements and allusions are a feature of all public ceremonies, and important occasions are opened with a preamble delivered by a clergyman. Americans have gone from being a multi-faith nation to being a nation with the soul of the Church. Hence their conviction concerning their destiny and their credo that they have been chosen to fulfil a mission (Huntington, 2007). "Americanism" is, in fact, a secular version of the Zionism of the nation's Puritan founders, who saw themselves as the new children of Israel, creating a new Jerusalem in a new world. Their faith-based ideals of freedom, equality and democratic government had more influence on those with the power to shape America than the Enlightenment did. It was Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson who led the process of secularising the American Zionist idea into the form we now know as Americanism. If America is a religion, it is a religion without a god and it is a global religion. People who believe in America live all over the world (Gelernter, 2007). Supporting such a conclusion is the fact that religious organisations often resemble profit-oriented businesses. Religious affiliation is driven more by democratic conformism than by spiritual need. The fact that faith is more social than religious is evidenced by the ease with which believers switch their church affiliation when they move to a different neighbourhood, or change spouse or social class. One in three Americans changes religious community at least once in their lifetime (Fath, 2007; Sorman, 2004). The prevalence of belief in the idol of the market is indicative of the progressive de-Christianisation of the American people in the twenty-first century. This has happened 'thanks to tyranny and surprisingly little resistance from a people whose ancestors rank among the fiercest enemies of non-democratic rule in history' (Buchanan, 2005, p. 211). However, as early as 1961, the historian Daniel J. Boorstin stated that there was a pretence in the American idea: 'As the first people in history, we have dared to create illusions so vivid, so convincing, so "real" that we can exist in them. We are the nation that has managed to create the world's greatest fiction. But we are unable to dare to dispel our illusions because they create the environment in which we live; our illusions are our news, our heroes [...] our whole experience' (Boorstin, 1961, pp. 240–241).

The collapse of the USSR created a global vacuum that America – which had already been in crisis since 1980 – found itself sucked into. A paradoxical movement was then unleashed: the global expansion of the West was accompanied by the crisis of its cultural core. In the twenty-first century, we are witnessing the moral decline of the United States. The disappearance of Protestantism gradually led America from neoliberalism to nihilism. The new American ruling class, newly ethnically diverse, feels no particular attachment to the population and has essentially disconnected itself from the American people (Todd, 2024). Hence the unprecedented concentration of power and wealth in the 1% of citizens leading to the cancellation of the American Dream (Chomsky, 2018), the result of the greatest class war in US history. The Pulitzer Prize-winning American journalist, war correspondent and author Chris Hedges (2023) has this to say on the matter: 'Social inequality has reached its most extreme level in over 200 years, surpassing the predatory greed of the robber baron era [...] The ruling oligarchs hold us, not to mention the natural world, in a death grip. They have mobilized state security organs, militarized the police, built the largest prison system in the world and deformed the courts to criminalize poverty. We are the most spied on, watched, photographed and monitored population in the history of mankind, and I have dealt with the Stasi state in East Germany. When the corporate state is watching you 24 hours a day, you cannot use the word freedom. It is a relationship between master and slave'.

The aforementioned manifestations of the core of American culture also shaped the USA's international politics as a special case of imperialism without nationalism on the basis of messianism, which entered global politics during the First World War. The war revealed an imperial drive in which economic interest was the main premise of international politics. The USA was a state without a nation and without a multifaceted culture, devoid of either a philosophical concept or political ethics. Some kind of substitute for a US political ideology were the declarations of President Woodrow Wilson, but they provided a cover for American economic expansion (Wesolowska, 1994). Shortly before entering the war, Wilson openly pointed out that it was 'American rules' and 'American principles' which were 'the rules of all mankind', adding that 'they must prevail' (Carr, 2021, p. 112). Anglo-American dualism in international politics has been characterised by the eminent scholar of realism, Edward H. Carr (2021), who writes that 'the English-speaking nations are masters of the art of concealing selfish national interests under the cloak of the general good, and this kind of hypocrisy is a special and characteristic feature of the Anglo-Saxon soul' (pp. 112–113). In contrast, a positive picture of this civilisation has been described by another realist, Henry Kissinger (1996). He stresses that from the beginning, the United States developed in the belief of its own uniqueness and its role as a messiah of nations and a moral beacon for the rest of humanity, single-handedly acting as a crusader. Meanwhile, the dualism of value and fact is well illustrated by the example of the bombing of Vietnam as being the consequence of the supposed altruism of American elites. Kissinger writes bluntly that it was through this that global equilibrium, and thus world peace, was maintained.

The essence of American culture has revealed global relevance in the twenty-first century. As Kagan (2003) asserts, the ideologues of neo-conservatism openly point out that Americans 'have always been internationalists, but their internationalism has always been a by-product of nationalism' (p. 102);

'they believe in force, and they also believe that it must be an instrument for realizing the principles of liberal civilization and the liberal order of life' (p 51). Therefore, it is reasoned that 'the United States acts like an international sheriff' (p. 51) who kills those it terms enemies of the "free world", building a "New American Century". The universalist aspirations of the American idea materialise in the belief that only 'when all people have already been turned into Americans will Americans be able to live safely without borders' (Beck, 2005, p. 362). Unsurprisingly, the new National Security Strategy of December 2017 signed by President Trump makes the pursuit of "peace through strength" the preferred method of action, legitimising unilateral action in response to the threat to hegemony by China and Russia (*National Strategy of the United States of America*, 2017). What's more, in March 2022 President Biden also declared his desire to shape the new world order under US leadership (*Remarks by President Biden*, 2023), with a new justification distinguishing between a "good" democratic bloc and a "bad" autocratic bloc, reflecting a religious, black-and-white view of reality. This duality is also evident in the new geo-strategic credo: 'There is only one god – Poseidon – the god of the sea; there is only one legitimate church professing this god – it is the US Navy reigning on the waves of the World Ocean; and Alfred T. Mahan is the true prophet of this god and this church' (Bartosiak & Friedman, 2021, p. 51). The battleground of good versus evil has been designated as the Suez–Shanghai sea route linking the Indian and Pacific Oceans into one strategic theatre of competition. It is the Indo-Pacific that is to be the site of conflict between continental and maritime powers. Despite the real processes of the twilight of American hegemony, the still-prevailing messianic spirit reveals what can be called a liberal delusion (Mearsheimer, 2021).

4. Russia – Between Self-identity and Occidentalism

The essence of the culture underpinning the policy of the Russian Federation is a dilemma: to recognise one's own civilisational peculiarities as the basis of the mission or to tarry, meaning subordination to Western civilisation.

Russian civilisation is distinguished from the Western version by its association with Byzantine civilisation, its religious difference, its two hundred years of Tartar rule, its bureaucratic despotism and its limited contact with the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment. We can also point to the limited influence of cultural values generated by ancient Mediterranean culture, the French Revolution, social democracy and positivism (Cimek, 2011). Russia's identity is based on the Slavic ethno-cultural nucleus belonging to the eastern faction of European Christian civilisation. The characteristics of this cultural nucleus allowed the formation of a cultural-political union of Slavic, Finno-Ugric and Turkic peoples in the Eurasian geographical space, enabling the coexistence of different civilisations based on religious and ethnic diversity. Spatial distribution meant that Russian civilisation had to function alongside many others, including the cultures of Islam, China, Japan and the West. Over centuries of coexistence, Russia has competed and fought but has also learnt the way to coevolve, allowing for development.

It is a characteristic feature of Russian culture that various turbulent historical phenomena (the Tartar occupation, the actions of Ivan the Terrible, the Smuta period, the religious reforms of Patriarch Nikon, the peasant uprisings, the reforms of Peter I, etc.) did not allow traditionalism to assert itself; its roots were ploughed through and cut off, fostering the demolition of a perpetuating culture. Ontologically "bad" social reality triggered visions of a new "good" reality (Yegorov, 1993). The pendulum of Russian history swung from Occidentalist aspirations to self-identity. Russians borrowed values from other civilisations, while striving to maintain civilisational distinctiveness. Latinists from Italy, Pietists from Germany, Voltaireans from France and railway builders from England all tried to westernise Russia. Interaction with the West played a crucial role, but only in as far as it dominated the world due to its "external activity" in the spheres of trade, the military, expansion and technological progress. At the time, the attitude towards Western civilisation became the basis for considering the future of Russia, and the mainstream domestic worldviews took Europe as a point of reference in their deliberations. In line with the thinking of Fyodor Dostoevsky, it was considered that Russia should adopt positive ideas developed in (Western) Europe and reject negative ones (Cimek, 2011). In the nineteenth century, both Occidentalists and Slavophiles revealed aspirations to change social reality for the sake of a better future. However, as Lev Nikolaevich Gumilev (2004) comments, the 'mechanical implantation into Russian conditions of Western European traditions of behaviour has not brought much good – and there is nothing peculiar in this. The Russian "superethnos" appeared five hundred years later than in Europe.' He continues, 'To learn from their experiences is possible and necessary, but it is also necessary to remember that these are foreign experiences' (p. 275).

The civilisational specificity of Russia based on Orthodoxy is a contradiction to Protestantism, the religion characteristic of the West, in defining the so-called "spirit of capitalism". The basic concept showing the civilisational specificity of Russia is sobornity, which denies individualism as a basis for the construction of either religious, philosophical or socio-political models. The Russians see themselves as one great, indivisible organism, in which the individual members of society are regarded merely as constituent parts of the whole body. A distinction is made between "inner" and "outer" truths. The inner truth is proper to the spirituality of human life filled by values. It consists of the values that are characteristic of the typical Russian: justice, honesty, fraternity, compassion and social love. The "inner truth", characteristic of Western civilisation, is based on the dominance of the *ratio* factor abstracted from spirituality, the rationality that serves the economic side of social life, in fact. The Russian idea of truth as an integral experience is based on sobornity. The emphasis on social interests, the domination of society over the individual and the holistic approach are the features that differentiate Russian civilisation from Western civilisation.

The values of the "other side" do not contain the scepticism and rational criticism characteristic of Western civilisation. It is easy to succumb to the shift from one extreme to the other, taken as a whole, orthodoxy. Hence Marxism, as an ideology of Western provenance, changed in line with Russian values, moving closer to Russian Slavophilism, echoing Dostoevsky's call of *ex oriente lux*. From Moscow, light was to emanate to the whole world, also illuminating the bourgeois darkness

of the West (Berdyaev, 2005). Bourgeois rationalism leading to social atomisation was negated. At the same time, collectivism rooted in the spiritual type of orthodoxy valorised the peculiar type of individuality so well described by Dostoevsky (Berdyaev, 1999). This is why we can recognise in 'the class consciousness of the Russian communists a continuation of the principle already known to us as *sobornoye nachało* [sobornity], to recognise in the messianism of the Third International the old idea of Moscow's mission as the Third Rome, and finally in the ideology of the Bolshevik state which does not recognise the difference between community and state – to see the contemporary form of the principle glorified by the Slavophiles of the statelessness and super-statelessness of the Russian nation' (Jasinowski, 1933/2002, p.135). As Toynbee (1915) asserted, the Russian Orthodox, the Russian Slavophile and the Russian Marxist are the logical stages of the development of the Russian spirit, whose axiological foundation is the Holy Rus'. And scientific socialism can be regarded as a new myth legitimising the state, because real socialism was in fact a variant of Slavophilism (Andrusiewicz, 1994). The defining feature of Russian civilisation, therefore, was its immersion in the sacred from Holy Rus' to Bolshevism. Hence, instead of the real dictatorship of the proletariat, its myth could reign. This is why atheism – which was an Enlightenment echo in the ideology of communism – receded when political existence was threatened following German aggression against the USSR, when Stalin appealed to Alexander Nevsky and patriotism, and sought the support of the Orthodox Church. It is no coincidence that the ideal of the "new man" resembled in its construction the eschatological vision of an Orthodox transformation of the world (*metanoia*) filled with secular values.

In the twenty-first century, there has been a gradual shift away from the Occidentalist pattern begun during Gorbachev's *perestroika*. In 2020, Nikolai Patrushev, Secretary of the Security Council of Russia, pointed out that it is 'traditional Russian values' that constitute the 'spiritual and moral basis' of society. Unlike the West, Russia actually offers a new civilisational choice, the content of which includes equality, justice, non-interference in internal affairs, the lack of a mentoring approach towards weaker states, and all the conditions for mutually beneficial cooperation between states. In this narrative, the establishment of national sovereignty, including cultural and spiritual–moral sovereignty, is considered the highest value and the foundation for the construction of human civilisation. Shortly following this, the Russian president signed a decree approving that the basis of state policy would preserve and strengthen these traditional spiritual and moral values, including life, dignity, human rights and freedoms, patriotism, citizenship, service to the Motherland and responsibility for its fate, high moral ideals, a strong family, creative work, the priority of the spiritual over the material, humanism, mercy, justice, collectivism, mutual help and respect, historical memory and the continuity of generations, and the unity of the peoples of Russia. The values of the "other side" are the result of the influence of the traditional religions of Russia, which are Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism. Orthodoxy, of course, has played a special role. Threats to the implementation of these values are seen to be the activities of extremist and terrorist organisations, private mass media, the actions of the USA and other unfriendly countries, foreign non-governmental organisations, and certain organisations and individuals within Russia (*Указ*, 2022).

The concept of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values is also enshrined in the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation. In turn, in the document Strategy for the Development of Education in the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2025, the main values highlighted are philanthropy, justice, honour, conscience, human will, personal dignity, belief in goodness, and the desire to fulfil one's moral duty to oneself, one's family and the Motherland. The educational and methodological university course named Foundations and Principles of Russian Statehood is to be based on the concept of *pentabasis*, defined as: 'creativity – for the individual; love – for the family; unity – for society; order – for the state; and mission – for the country'. It is based on the values of the "other side": a 'special way of development'; 'messianism based in super-purpose'; 'super-adaptation'; and 'communitarianism as the antithesis of individualism' (*Студентам*, 2023).

The return to self-identity is evident in Russia's new foreign policy concept of 2023, in which the country adopts the identity of a unique civilisational state, a vast Eurasian and Euro-Pacific power and a sovereign centre of world development pursuing the historically unique mission of maintaining the global balance of power and building a multipolar international system that provides the conditions for peaceful, progressive human development on the basis of a unifying and constructive agenda (President of Russia, 2023). In doing so, it accelerates the revolutionary nature of change resulting from the Eurasian and Euro-Atlantic vector rivalry. The doctrine emphasises the need to neutralise attempts to impose post-humanist, neo-liberal ideological guidelines that lead to the loss of humanity's traditional spiritual and moral principles. It is worth highlighting that during an interview with Tucker Carlson (2024), when comparing the axiology of the three powers, President Putin pointed out that Russia is characterised by idealism, the dream of eternity and mystical human solidarity, China by a philosophy of harmonious cooperation, and the United States by pragmatism.

5. Axiology in the Global Aspirations of the People's Republic of China

The essence of the culture underpinning China's policy is the identity of the Middle Kingdom, which, by pursuing the "Chinese Dream" through its own achievements, seeks to be a leader in the formation of a global civilisation based on peaceful cooperation.

Modern Chinese civilisation can draw upon the experience of five thousand years, including empire-building based on the principles of Confucianism. Confucianism has fostered the persistence of both civilisation and state, e.g. China since the beginning of the Shang Dynasty in 1766 BC. As a building block of identity, it allowed the country to successfully repel attempts at conquest. China was politically subjugated by the Mongols (1280–1367) and the Manchus (1644–1911), but it was the invaders who succumbed to Sinification as a superior culture. Confucianism became the official state ideology in 136 BC and remained in force until 1911. It has thus been the philosophy of eighty generations of Chinese. The holistic consciousness of Chinese thinking differs from that of Westerners (Nisbett, 2015), which is analytical and divides spirituality into individual elements that

are separate from the whole, e.g. politics, economy, ethics, religion, etc. The Chinese categories of *dao* (way), *jiao* (doctrine, tradition) and *li* (principles or laws) can simultaneously refer to philosophy, political ideals, ethical norms and religious practices. According to this view, Confucianism refers to sages and wisdom derived from ancestral experience, so its essence lies in philosophical and scientific rather than symbolic–religious thinking. Among the most important elements of Confucianism are the following assumptions and values: man as a social being, loyalty to parents, obedience to authority, tradition, self-organisation, and pragmatism. Equally important are elements such as the paternalistic organisation of society and the state, collectivism, the rational justification of state power, a social hierarchy based on integrity and competence, conformity, the scientific interpretation of reality, syncretism, and eclecticism. Confucianism can be described as a 'religion of harmony' in which 'heaven and man are one' (*tianren heyi*) and its foundation is a 'humanism that is open to religious values' (Yao, 2009, pp. 42–46). To express its essence in another light, Confucianism is an idealistic philosophy from which certain features of religious doctrine, such as ancestor worship, arose (Wiktor, 2020).

The present international identity of the Middle Kingdom – understood as a conscious emphasis on its own distinctiveness – follows the guidance of Marxism, aiming to base efforts on Chinese culture, and at the same time to take into account the realities of contemporary China and the conditions of the new era (*XIX National Congress of the Communist Party of China*, 2017). The core values of the Chinese Dream include peace, cooperation, prosperity, mutual benefit, security, equality, partnership, harmonious (balanced) development, rehumanisation (concern for human well-being), multipolarity, and resolving disputes through dialogue rather than force. Confucian values have fostered the construction of a strategy recognising that confrontation and war are not necessary for the Chinese people to achieve the outlined goals (Xi, 2018). Referring to the prominent role of education and training as a method of bridging differences for the common good, it is emphasised that 'the construction of the Silk Road civilisation is inclusive, as it includes Chinese, Arabs, Muslims, Persians, Indians and Christians. It builds a new era of the globalisation of mutual learning'. It is therefore about a 'new type of international relations' – basing relations on the principle of mutual benefit, meaning a negation of the hegemonism, domination and neo-colonialism that defined five hundred years of rule by the Western powers. Therefore, the Sea Belt breaks with the Western model based on expansion, confrontation and colonisation in favour of a new type of oceanic civilisation based on harmonious coexistence and sustainable development (Yiwei, 2016, pp. 218–219). Socialism with Chinese characteristics should also stimulate the construction of a society with a unified future for mankind based on a peaceful approach and harmonious cooperation.

Having achieved successful economic and technological development, in 2023 China proposed its new Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), announced by President Xi Jinping in his 15 March speech. Alongside the previously formulated Global Development Initiative (GDI) and Global Security Initiative (GSI), the GCI completed this triumvirate of complementary concepts, with the "Community of Common Destiny" being promoted by Beijing as an alternative to the Western-dominated so-called "rule-based international order".

The Global Development Initiative is very much in line with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and resonates in particular with the aspirations of countries in the Global South. Emphasising the need for common, comprehensive and indivisible security for the world, the GCI calls on every country to respect the diversity of all civilisations, fostering the facilitation of exchange and mutual learning between them. All three of China's recently introduced initiatives refer to the proposal for building a global community with a shared future in the areas of partnerships, the security environment, development, inter-civilisation exchanges, and the ecosystem. In this narrative, the new world order should:

(a) Build partnerships in which countries treat each other as equals, engage in extensive consultation and enhance mutual understanding;

(b) create a security environment featuring fairness, justice, joint efforts and common interests;

(c) promote open, innovative and inclusive development that benefits all – development being meaningful only when it is inclusive and sustainable;

(d) increase inter-civilisation exchanges to promote harmony, inclusiveness and respect for differences – the PRC argues that we live in a world with more than two hundred countries and regions, over 2,500 ethnic groups and a vast number of religions, and it is this cultural diversity that makes the world colourful;

(e) build an ecosystem that puts Mother Nature and green development first.

On these assumptions, China proposes to implement theoretical–objective values, i.e. goals for the world:

(a) To build a world of lasting peace through dialogue and consultation – which means beating the swords of war into the ploughshares of peace;

(b) to build a world of common security for all through joint efforts – which means turning absolute security for one into common security for all;

(c) to build a world of common prosperity through win-win cooperation;

(d) to build an open and inclusive world through exchanges and mutual learning, which means bidding farewell to the mindset that one civilisation is superior to another and starting to appreciate the strengths of other civilisations;

(e) to make our world clean and beautiful by pursuing green and low-carbon objectives (Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Edinburgh, 2023).

The new paradigm of international relations proposed in China's initiatives is thus a continuation of the values of the "other side" created in the centuries-long development of Chinese civilisation.

6. Conclusions

The substantive rationality of any actor in international relations is a manifestation of their cultural conditions, based on the values of the "other side". Therefore, these values cannot be overlooked in the study of formal rationality, determining the application of the means of their theoretical–subjective implementation in international politics. Let us therefore make a synthetic comparison involving the three powers analysed.

The USA places the freedom of the individual in the sphere of values of the "other side", while China and Russia emphasise the good of the community. America stresses the dominance of market relations with a religious approval that can be genetically linked to Protestantism. Russian Orthodoxy, on the other hand, is the antithesis of economic values, which on the one hand hampers economic development by legitimising strong power, but on the other hand allows for the preservation of a multidimensional spirituality that also favours progressive ideas. Chinese Confucianism is based on rationalism and meritocracy – although it does not explicitly promote material values, it favours the organisation of powerful forms of state that can ensure development in this area as well. For several decades it has been creating a synthesis with Marxism as the basis for building a specifically Chinese form of socialism.

American values reveal a contradiction because, despite proclaiming freedom, equality and democracy, they are implemented within a system of economic and racial inequalities, the rule of elites and the manipulation of the masses. This Anglo-Saxon dualism in international politics is evident in the instrumentalisation of values to serve a hegemony based on a messianic belief in one's own uniqueness supported by violence and militarism. Chinese values, however, refer to harmony, the resolution of problems through negotiation and prosperity for all; in international relations – instead of hegemony and primacy – they emphasise the principles of dialogue, peace, win-win and the mutual learning of civilisations. The latest confirmation of this difference comes from a comparison between the words of the Chinese and US foreign ministers. While Wang Yi (2024) has stated that 'lose-lose is not a rational choice, as the future of humanity belongs to win-win relationships', at the Munich Security Conference, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken openly declared that 'if you are not at the table in the international system, you will be on the menu' (Al Mayadeen English, 2024). This issue is different in Russia as the country has historically been caught up in the influence of Western values and dilemmas concerning self-identity. Paradoxically, the adoption of Western values led to the construction of an empire (during the reign of Peter I and in the early USSR) that wanted to rule over others, if necessary, by force. In the twenty-first century, however, Russia is moving closer to the Chinese vision of a new paradigm for international relations while emphasising its own catalogue of spiritual values. At the same time, facilitated by further military successes in Ukraine, an update featuring imperial content cannot be ruled out.

The values of the Eurasian powers are now the antithesis of those of the USA, which encompass the promotion of postmodernism, posthumanism and class egoism, pervading a neoliberal globalisation dominated by private transnational corporations. Russian and, even more explicitly, Chinese values propose the subordination of the economy to social interests, of private forces to state strategy, and of capitalist profits to common prosperity. In addition, they recommend the abandonment of militarism serving the selfishness of the powerful in favour of the interpersonal, intergenerational and intercivilisational solidarity necessary to solve objective global problems (ecological, technological, health and security issues). The emerging multipolar world with all its challenges favours the values of the Eurasian powers, which offer hope for the containment of the crises that are a manifestation of the US-led dominance of Western civilisation.

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Eurasian National Population Censuses:
Tools for Nation Building and Minority Policies
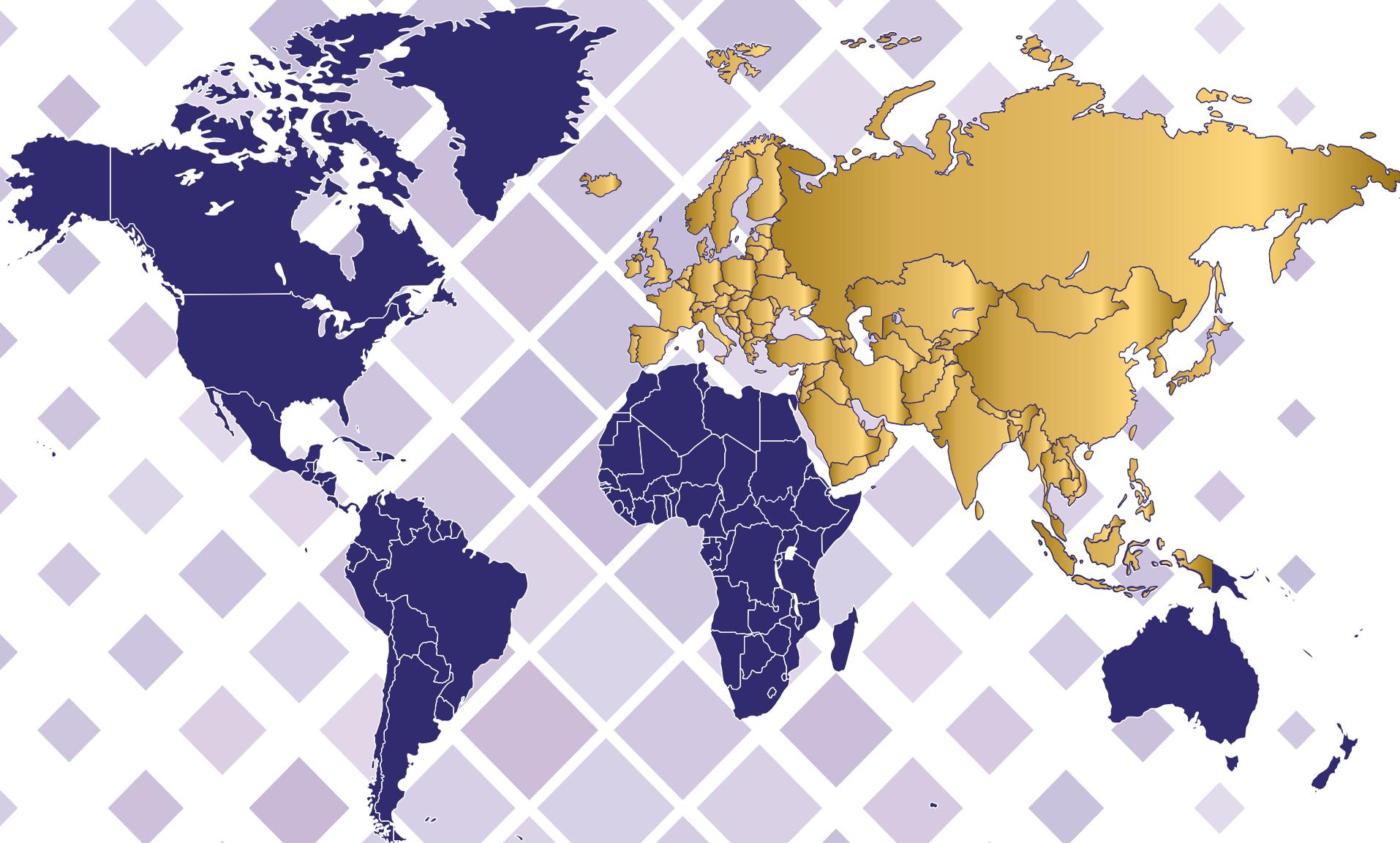
EURASIAN NATIONAL POPULATION CENSUSES: TOOLS FOR NATION BUILDING AND MINORITY POLICIES

Gyöngyvér Hervainé Szabó[1]

Abstract

During the first decades of the twenty-first century, population censuses were crucial for fulfilling UN development goals. The role of the UN was important to help population censuses with standardisation, technical guidance and expertise, especially for building in indicators concerning race or ethnicity. This study focuses on exploring the national approaches behind population census concepts, contemporary trends and future directions. The methodology of the research is comparative and historical. In the years 2000 to 2002, all countries of the former Soviet Union organised population censuses according to UN standards and incorporated ethnicity questions with Soviet-like traditions. All of these countries except for Ukraine conducted censuses in the early 2010s and 2020s. This was also the case in China and Iran, but not in India. In Iran, Pakistan and India there are difficulties in incorporating race or nationality into censuses because of the religious and social complexity of these countries. Only China connected the results of its census with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The path-dependent policy concerning minorities originated in both former and recent rigid theories of Soviet-era Marxist anthropology and the legacy of British imperial caste-based minority policies. The last twenty to thirty years of China's anthropology with local characteristics have social innovation results (in theories of national integration), but have no impact on state policies (an open Chinese system of ethnicity similar to the US census with the possibility of belonging to more than one identity category). Similarly to the European Union, all countries have

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turned towards the citizenship/nationality model, trying to remove the burden of the ethnicity or caste-based approach, and are in search of a political nation model.

Keywords: Population census, ethnic groups, caste, national minorities

1. Introduction

Censuses were Eurasian inventions, and the first population census during China's Han Dynasty is one of the most valuable sources of historical data (57.7 million people were living in 12.4 million households). The census was crucial for tribute-collecting empires, so the Mongols' census covered the Chinese, Russian and Asian territories. It was important in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for deciding the taxes of colonies. In India, the British rulers introduced the caste-based census. From 1920, the US population census aimed at the establishment of immigration quotas. In 1958, the UN Statistical Commission introduced the first standard for its World Population and Housing Census Programme.

The geopolitical importance of censuses is evident for great powers. After the end of the Cold War, the first census in the reunified Germany was held in 1990. The Soviet Union organised its last census in 1989, and the censuses of 2001 were of fundamental importance for the newly-independent CIS states (*Milestones and Moments in Global Census History*, n.d.). Comparative research on censuses explores the shift in Anglo-Saxon countries in the definition of minorities – the use of race was replaced by foreign origins for people from Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, and ethnic origin became a person's country of origin (nation), with, in the case of the white population, citizenship and foreign origin becoming the main distinction. In Australia, whites became European or Asian whites, and for the first time Jewish people were counted as coming from the MENA region, with Jews from Western countries counting as Europeans. In the USA, the detailed census counting the Indigenous population began to cover the Indian nations' original names, those who lived on reservations, and those who identified themselves as a member of a particular nation. The result was the enlargement of the number of Indigenous populations and a structured data set of the ethnic diversity of the population. In contrast to this, in Western and Northern Europe the diversity of Indigenous, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities cannot be counted because of the sensitivity of the data, while those who are foreign-born or have foreign-born parents are listed as people of diverse ethnic and cultural origins, but not as minorities.

The aim of this study is to explore the colonial and communist heritage of calculating the ethnic diversity of the population in Russia, China, the CIS states, Central Asia, India, Iran and Pakistan. Among crucial resources are the UN 2020 Programme for Population and Housing Censuses because of the fulfilment of UN SDGs (SDG 10). Minorities are central to SDGs, as evinced by the phrase "Leaving No One Behind". Analysing national context and the problems of censuses, this article explores the impact of political crises and international conflicts on national experiences. The research focuses more on the definition of minorities, census reports and census policies and

standards, and less on Western or Eurasian theories of minorities and geopolitical studies. The UN emphasises census standards and the self-definition of minorities, as well as the autonomy of censuses and innovations in census taking. Analysis of the results will determine whether there is a civilisational census model, evaluate the impact of former communist or colonial practices on recent debate and discuss the consequences of census taking for multipolar governance.

2. The Politics of Demography in Eurasian Censuses

2.1. Regional Approaches in Censuses

The end of the Cold War defined the new European order with individual human rights and collective human rights governed by the Council of Europe and the OSCE. In international law, the 1992 UN framework conventions of national and ethnic minorities, Indigenous minorities and the global impact of migration became universal normative documents. From the beginning of the new millennium, we can see the rise of large region-based states or new geopolitical powers claiming different treatment in the world. They are all multiethnic states with special civilisational and religious traditions; they cannot become nation-states, but are new political entities with fragmented diaspora communities or territories (Naumkin, 2021).

The developed world is focused on trans-urbanist demographical trends

The development of the theory of trans-urbanism by the UN's experts in demography strongly influenced the policies of the USA, Canada, Western European countries, Russia and Japan. It became the official policy of the enlarged European Union from 2004. Population demography connected to the theory of trans-urbanism focuses on urbanisation, the rate of urban population growth and the population capacity of a given region. In 2001, the UN published a forecast for population size in larger countries and developed the theory of population replacement with migration in the case of population shrinkage, decline and ageing. The massive enlargement policy of the EU made intra-European migration more secure and controlled in comparison to migration from third countries.

The European Union also developed a population forecast based on the principle of population replacement with migration. EU census taking practices fostered censuses typical to political nations not accounting for autochthonous minorities.

Most countries of the European Union follow the EU's guidelines concerning nationalities and ethnicities and except for the new Member States, only citizenship and first or second generation migrant status are examined. The Nordic countries of the EU avoid censuses because of new registration systems and do not count autochthonous or Indigenous communities.

Inclusive censuses in Anglo-Saxon, Euro-Atlantic and Asia-Pacific countries

Anglo-Saxon censuses became particularly good and inclusive censuses, replacing the former category of race with macro-regional origin and using different techniques for grouping people. The Australian census is remarkably interesting, with categories covering the entire world; the Canadian census includes the possibility for exploring vulnerable groups; the UK census features the category "non-British white".

It seems that Eurasian states are far from censuses like those of the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the UK, which could be called really inclusive censuses and explore population data for public policy aims such as the definition of equal policies for voting constituencies, welfare and positive discrimination programmes, and the development of strategies for eliminating racism. In censuses in the 2020s, political interference is common because of migration policy debates and voting constituencies. The United States census is unique among world censuses in that it reports on an exclusive subset of the population – some 1,350 ethnic groups. The biggest shortcoming of most censuses is their lack of evaluation of the results and the possibility to make special reports on diverse groups, as in the USA (United States Census Bureau, n.d.).

The practices of so-called civilisational states

The civilisational states (Acharya, 2020) see their minorities as parts of the core nation who have inhabited territories for centuries or even millennia and who together with civilisational majorities define the boundaries of civilisation and borders with foreign states. This entitles them to "collect" new lands – such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao in the case of China, or Ukraine in the case of Russia – seeing these areas as their lifeworld (e.g. the Indian subcontinent as the place of Indian Civilisation). These states have to decide which people it is important to include in their censuses and who they wish to exclude.

Thus, the practices of Eurasia are different from Anglo-Saxon models and European mainstream methodology, being influenced by the Soviet ethnos model or British colonial approaches. The Russian practice is a civilisational state practice, because it uses the CIS framework for measuring population and practicing "Russian World" interventions. This practice is different from the inner colonisation censuses of the Russian imperial era; it more closely resembles the British model – influencing CIS countries as separate entities but using in all the ethnos model for population registration. The Russian model matches UN directions, and is formally used for SDG aims.

2.2. The Global Governance of Census Taking

Minorities and census taking: How are the UN criteria for ethnic minorities applicable in Eurasia?

Eurasia is a geopolitical term encompassing different civilisational traditions and different state structures; vast parts of it were once under colonial rule or remained outside the modern world order. In the case of minorities, the political thinking concerning the new politics of colonies influenced

neocolonial movements with a European understanding of nations and ethnic groups. European continental anthropology and ethnography concerning cultural nations and the Marxist theory of nations (nation level as a development level with the right of self-determination) and the Russian ethnology theory of ethnos/super-ethnos/"ethnicos" all influenced Northern and Eastern Eurasia. In areas formerly under classical colonial rule, British and American anthropology is decisive. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, all states except for Russia decided to turn to the political nation definition; nevertheless CIS countries have remained under Russia's influence and count ethnic groups according to Soviet census traditions. This tradition reinforced Russia in the counting of compatriots, in its influence in the diaspora (the so-called "Russian World"), in population exchanges and in designating volunteer battalions in the case of Indigenous communities. China's national policy adopted the Soviet model and later replaced it with the Soviet ethnos model, resulting in more unregistered ethnic communities. In 2021, Ukraine turned to the political nation model, declaring only the Indigenous community as people with special collective rights. In Russia, the political nation turn cannot be a solution because of the federal system and titular ethnicity model, but the newly degraded power of the republics has turned it towards a more unitary system. China's new ethnic policy is turning into regional policies for backward regions and the economic development of Western Asia (the Belt and Road Initiative). In Afghanistan, Iran, India and other states, the term "ethnicity" cannot be a census category because of the primary role of religion in social differentiation. In India, the lower-status castes and tribes have begun to be defined as "ethnic communities", but India has no traditions in this policy.

Groups of exclusion; discrimination in censuses

The 1926 Soviet census model with fixed categories of people is still apparent one hundred years later. Russia's state bureaucracy decides on the list of peoples and national categories, and state policy determines how the number of ethnic groups are increased or reduced. The government has ignored experts in anthropology and made ethnic categories mandatory and rigid, not allowing for the expression of multiple identities. The results of censuses are rarely summarised and interpreted; analysis is performed by the state apparatus, but its credibility is questioned by the main scientific communities and regional politicians themselves. The Chinese model reflects the Soviet era practices; it is more rigid regarding ethnic categories, but it is also planning the introduction of the political nation model, the abolition of Soviet-type ethnic policy in favour of the Western European model, and a regional policy for disadvantaged regions. In India, the political debates concerning the census on castes in 2011–13 needs more elaborated conceptions, but the (opposition) parties of the INDIA alliance are demanding a new census for 2024 as a caste-based one.

Eurasian states: the legacy of empires in censuses

In political debates in Russia, China, India, Türkiye, Iran and Israel, the civilisational states discourse emerged. In the case of Israel, it is essential to view Israelis as citizens of the state of Jewish civilisation. Israel's census taking is sporadic and exclusionist. In China, India, Türkiye and Iran, a new discourse on civilisational states targeted their new role in foreign policy, challenging

the Western universal model of international relations. The civilisational state is a discourse for party politics with an emphasis on the core civilisational nation and policy towards the building of nation-states accentuating religious and cultural practices. In light of this, censuses became the issue of political debate concerning how to define ethnic and minority policies. Only in the case of Russia can we state the importance of the census for "state-civilisation" policies, with the census being used for Russian nation building (population exchange between CIS countries for building unified nations), the results of censuses in CIS countries being used for regulating migration, and census data being used for military recruitment for waging war in the "Russian World".

National population censuses with strategic planning (SDG aims)

The UN programme on 2020 censuses planned to help national policies to end poverty and malnutrition, and to assist in the implementation of the other fifteen SDG goals at country level. Although the Covid-19 pandemic caused delays, there were three aims: to count ethnic minorities, to organise censuses according to professional methods without the interference of governments, and to use innovations in new electronic systems, platforms and solutions. In all analysed countries (except for Ukraine) the censuses were organised by the respective governments, with compulsory census committees, and mostly with the interference of ministries or other executive actors. All the censuses used modern technological solutions, and exceptionally advanced ones were those employed by China and Pakistan.

2.3. Competing Political and Academic Trends in Censuses

Over the last thirty years, census taking became a normal practice of nation-states and state building. The UN developed strong guidelines for the collection of regional statistical data, aiming at the collection of the statistics of different minorities, the development of a strong independent culture of professional census management and autonomy, and the utilisation of the latest information technology, including mobile devices for data collection, data integration and data analysis. In Europe and Eurasia, the European Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States respectively developed special guidelines for the statistical practices of their members.

Census taking connected to theories of political nations

The so-called political nations in Western Europe – such as France, Germany, Italy and Spain – follow the practice of not counting traditional ethnic minorities or Indigenous populations. The countries subscribing to the principle of political nations do not include questions on race, religion and ethnicity. This is also a main political line for the European Union, giving statistical data determined by counting only people of foreign origin, and counting only people with foreign-born origin or the foreign origin of one or both parents and omitting autochthonous communities.

Census taking connected to human rights and collective human rights

In 1990, the Paris Charter listed the collective human rights of minorities as a main feature of the New European Order. The Council of Europe took the liberal approach (as did the UN), not defining minorities internationally, although this is still in the power of the nation-states. Normative UN and Council of Europe documents about minority policies treat the census as a basic element for determining and calculating minorities in countries. This practice is mostly characteristic of Central and Eastern European countries, who joined the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in the early 1990s. During the last thirty years, the autochthonous national, ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern Europe became the people with high external migration, population decline and population ageing.

Inclusive census taking practices

These practices are well-developed – in accordance with UN guidelines – in the United Kingdom and Ireland. These models count country origin, race and ethnic cultural minorities, including old and new minorities.

Modern countries with well-developed vital statistics and no censuses

Northern European and Baltic Countries – with strong guidance from UN offices – decided upon using vital registration statistics for censuses. In these cases, the main problem is in the place of registration in the case of countries where the separation of Church and state has not occurred (birth being registered at main church offices). This type of data does not give detailed information on cultural or other statistics.

Census taking connected to theories of ethnicity

These are theoretical approaches in population censuses connected to demography, population growth, demographic transition and population ecology, while censuses on minorities are connected to modernisation and nation-state development. In Europe, Herder's approach to the cultural nation was decisive, in contrast to the political nation approach, Western anthropology approaches to colonial race and ethnicity, and the Soviet approaches to ethnicity, the three main directions of the latter being Marr's religious and language theories, Leninist-Stalinist theories of the core nation and national minorities, and Bromley's theory of ethnos (superethnos, ethnicos – the part of the ethnos living in diaspora).

Census taking connected to Marxist or Soviet ethnicity theories

In Central and Eastern Europe, the Marxist political theory censuses counted those ethnic groups who reached the maturity level of political nations or cultural nations as national minorities, and ethnic groups were those who lagged behind modernisation. Accordingly, Gipsy or Romani people counted as an "ethnic minority". The census policy of the Soviet Union was an academic ethnographic theory of ethnicity and was reflected in the structure of ethnic federal states with nominal (the main

ethnic group of the population) ethnic nations. This fragmented the main national groups. After the collapse of the USSR, Bromley's ethnicity approach remained in Ukraine, Georgia and a few Central Asian countries. This Soviet type of ethnic census taking also influenced China, which modified it.

Census practice influenced by a colonial past

The British Empire influenced the censuses of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. This type of influence was practiced by the USA in Afghanistan.

Census taking connected to SDGs

Without minorities being liberated from poverty, the success of SDGs is questionable. The UN decided to assist the population census programmes of the early 2010s and 2020s, and made suggestions regarding the inclusion of the categories of ethnicity and race. Because of political interference, the criteria of autonomous censuses became important. During the past twenty years, the vital registration of population and electronic governance has become common, and a new topic is the replacement of censuses with vital statistical data, that data being transferred to population censuses, as is the case in Nordic countries.

3. The Dynamics of Census Taking in Eurasia: Autonomy, Content Policy, Innovative Data Collection

3.1. Failed or Exclusive Censuses

The delay or failure of census taking has different causes. In the case of Ukraine, the main factor behind its delay was the contradiction between political identity, policy and controversial past practices. In the case of Iraq and Afghanistan, the global war on terror caused a thirty-year delay. For India, Kazakhstan and Iran, the main factor was internal political polarisation. All of these nations needed to seek new models and solutions because of Covid policies, prohibitions and resource extraction from censuses.

Ukraine's failure between Western and Soviet practices

The 2002 censuses of the CIS countries were organised by the CIS, with a strong contribution from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other Western agencies. In 2001, Ukraine was a member of the CIS. In the case of Ukraine, the population's alienation from censuses was due to Soviet practices, and the 2001 population census was the last one of this kind. In 2001, the population of Ukraine was recorded as being 48.457 million with the most populous region being the Donetsk Oblast. The population figure was half that of 1913 within present-day borders. In 1993, the population of Ukraine was 52.2 million, indicating a sharp decline during the country's

first decade of independence. The most urbanised regions, at between 83% and 90%, were those of Lugansk, Donetsk and Dnepropetrovsk – regions under Russia's governance today. The 2001 census treated Ukraine as a polyethnic country with 130 nationalities and ethnic groups, among which there were 37.5 million Ukrainians, 8.3 million Russians and sixteen nationalities of between 30,000 and 300,000 people (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, n.d.). The number of Russian inhabitants during this decade decreased by a quarter. In four regions (Sevastopol, Crimea, Donetsk and Lugansk), the majority of people spoke Russian; in Zaporozhe, Odessa and Kharkov the figure was 50%. Hungarians and Romanians lived in monoethnic villages and spoke neither Russian nor Ukrainian (Stelmakh, 2002). The 1992 Law on National Minorities was replaced by a new Law on Indigenous Peoples. The 2017 Law on the Ukrainian language and the new Law on Indigenous Peoples replaced previous laws and deleted ethnic communities from Ukrainian lists of autochthonous minorities. This means that Ukraine has become a nation-state with a national language, with the exception of the Crimean Tatar, Krymchak and Karaite communities.

With the above legislation, Ukraine broke international laws (the UN's Minority Rights Framework and the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities). The Law on Indigenous Peoples does not refer to all national minorities traditionally residing in the territory of modern Ukraine, but only to autochthonous ethnic communities formed in the territory of Ukraine possessing a distinctive language and culture, having traditional, social, cultural or representative bodies, recognising themselves as an Indigenous people of Ukraine, constituting an ethnic minority within the larger population and not having an own state entity outside of Ukraine (Law of Ukraine of July 1, 2021).

With this change, Ukraine is diverging from Council of Europe monitoring practices. It signifies that Ukraine is turning into a political nation with its official language as Ukrainian, the language of everyday use being a direct copy of the minority policies of a continental nation-state. The situation has caused problems regarding Ukraine's accession to the EU, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe regarding it as a violation of human rights. Removing Russians from autochthonous communities brought severe criticism from the Russian government, and President Putin referred to the act as a Holocaust against Russian ethnicity. The Hungarian government's criticism was connected to the EU's 2004 enlargement criteria. The Venice Commission made an artful suggestion: with the restoration of the languages of the minority communities of EU Member States in Ukraine, EU membership is still possible – the implication being that the violation of the rights of all other communities does not matter. This change does not resolve the restoration of the rights of speaking native languages at home and in private, or media language questions and the consequences of local government reforms (enlarging the size of local authority territories so that the 15% criteria for native language schools cannot be met in the new districts) (Tárnok, 2023).

Afghanistan: the Human Terrain System introduced by the USA

In Afghanistan, the first and last population census was organised in 1979 with the help of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), during the period of Soviet control (1979–89). The total

population was recorded at 15.5 million. After the collapse of the Soviet regime, 5 million people left the country. Recently, the population of Afghanistan has been estimated at around 35 million, with 24.6 million living in rural areas, 8.9 million in urban areas, and 1.5 million being nomads. 47.7% of the population are under the age of 15; 2,7% are over 65. An estimated 40 million Afghans are living abroad (National Statistics and Information Authority, 2024). Since 2021, the number of refugees and internally displaced persons has been given as 6.4 million (*Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries*, 2024). Population growth is expected to reach a figure of 80 million. Population censuses are lacking due to Russia's failure in Afghanistan. The fall of the Taliban in 2001 marked a new era, as the Bonn Agreement of 2001 suggested census taking before the registration of voters prior to elections. The Russia-oriented government planned to conduct a census in 2008 with help of UNFPA, however war-related security issues postponed this.

The Human Terrain System (HTS) was developed for the US Army by civilian experts during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. After the mismanagement of US military operations in these countries, with deficiencies being recognised in US military cultural understanding, in the interests of special intelligence activities the Pentagon developed special units of anthropologists to define "human terrain" – the population as characterised by sociocultural, anthropological and ethnographic data. In 2007, five and three teams respectively were deployed in the countries in question, with the US Army planning to increase the total number to twenty-six. Teams worked in Afghanistan until 2014. They counted widows living in poverty and developed job training programmes for them. During the US Special Operation in Afghanistan, the local people and terrorists killed these team workers because the US troops used them for negotiating. HTS teams were responsible for providing a constantly updated, user-friendly ethnographic and sociocultural database of the area of operations for the planning, preparation, execution and assessment of military operations. The HTS analysis team was part of the command level. At the highest level were the Theater Coordination Elements personnel (four or five people), joined by the Theater Support Office. The object of the research was to collect information about local leaders, tribes, social groups, political disputes, economic issues and social problems. American anthropologists rejected the programme, considering it to represent the weaponisation of anthropology (Human Terrain System, 2011).

An estimated 35-50 million people currently live in Afghanistan, with 3 million Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries. International organisations and the national population office are constantly at odds over a more exact population figure.

Iran and demosology problems

From 1956, Iran organised eight censuses, the last one being in 2016. In 1956, the population was 18.95 million, and in 2016 it was 79.926 million. The fertility rate had fallen from 7.3 to 1.7. The last census was electronic; more than 50% filled in the questionnaire. The census did not have a rubric for minorities; 97.2% of the respondents were Iranian citizens, and 2.2% were from neighbouring countries. All other data was estimated by US bodies (CIA, 2024). In the case of Iran, the definition of ethnic groups is problematic. During the Reza Pahlavi era, demosology (people studies) was

official; Western anthropologists researched pastoral nomads; and recently the tribal name and subbranches of ethnic groups have been listed on different official documents. The main groups of ethnicities are not located in clearly definable areas, being state-forming groups that are in constant movement (Shahshahani, 2022).

The Pakistani census with a hidden caste system

The Pakistani census, as in the case of Iran, asked about language, religion and foreign nationality. In 2017, it was organised with the support of the armed forces. The census committee fulfilled its tasks, and after the sixth session adopted a resolution on the results. All political parties questioned the results and the government had to organise another census in 2023 before the new elections. The results of the 2023 census listed 241,499,431 people, excluding the inhabitants of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, as well as religious minorities such as Christians, Hindus, Ahmadis, Scheduled Castes and others. In Pakistan, Muslims make up 96.35% of the population, Hindus 2.17% and Christians 1.37% (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

In Pakistan, the colonial administration used the caste and tribe system in their records, while the postcolonial anthropology of Western scholars treated Pakistan as part of the Middle East, and research focused on the clan system. Pakistani anthropology has placed emphasis on villages with castes, and ethnic thinking is missing from governmental and academic discourses (Ewing, 2010). Pakistan is officially a Muslim country and it does not operate the caste system, but in the 2017 census, among religions, people in Scheduled Castes numbered 850,000, and the number of people belonging to the Dalit community was underestimated.

India's failed and reintroduced caste-based census

India has a long history of censuses – the first census found in Rig Veda was conducted around 800 to 600 BC. In the third century BC, the Arthashastra prescribed the collection of population statistics as a measure of state policy for taxation, and the same was true in the Mughal Empire (King Akbar in the sixteenth century). From 1824, the British Empire started the census of cities (Allahabad, Dacca); from 1850 it was compulsory for local governments. From 1881, censuses were organised every ten years. From that year, in British India, the census covered Burma, Kashmir and Sikkim; from 1901 new territories were involved, such as Punjab and Baluchistan. The population growth resulted in India's famines (in 1640, 42,438 villages disappeared in floods; in 1770, the Great Bengal Famine claimed close to 10 million lives; between 1850 and 1899, 15 million people died in twenty-four major famines as part of the Late Victorian Holocaust). The Bengal famine of 1943–45 was the last catastrophic famine in India (with 3.8 million deaths). Threats of famine in 1984, 1988 and 1988 were averted by the democratic system of governance (Dyson, 2018).

India's census system was introduced as a colonial census system. The British colonial administration introduced the hierarchical caste system as the main and rigid model for the administration of society. This was modified in the early years of the twentieth century, but the new constitution approved

tribes and castes as social categories of people. Colonial and, later, postcolonial anthropology, and more recently, Indian anthropology is more oriented towards ethnology and culture, and sees castes and tribes as special communities and sociological and cultural units. Others sees this as a unique type of racism. The UN sees these people as forming special vulnerable groups – numbering some 260 million people – with discrimination based on occupation and caste. The 1921 census indicated a population decline of 0.31% (the 1918 Spanish Flu cost 12 million lives). The 1961 census was the first to be conducted after independence. The last census was organised in 2011, and 1.21 billion inhabitants made India the world's second most populous country (after China, with 1.3 billion). In 1950, India's population was 68% of that of China; more recently the figure is 1,442,553,042 compared to China's 1,425,178,782 people. Yearly population growth is 18 million.

The 2011 census on population related to data on castes. The main problem was that there is no consensus on the definition of caste. What is caste? Is it race? Is it tribe? Is it a village? According to Indian anthropology, India's caste system is a defining feature of Indian culture. It is a hierarchically ranked society, an endogamous, closed community with ascribed membership; there is restriction of contact between castes and mobility is impossible.

Most Indians belong to lower caste categories: Scheduled Caste (SC) or Dalit, Scheduled Tribe (ST – Adivasi/Indigenous People, Vanvasi/People of the Forest), or Other Backward Class (OBC – poor peasantry, village service-providers, artisanal producers, people without skills). These categories are the most disadvantaged groups of Indian society, and the Constitution of 1950 lists 1,108 castes in twenty-eight states and 744 tribes in twenty-two states. For these groups (25.5%) "reservation status" guarantees political representation, a quota in universities and banking services with positive discrimination. During British rule they belonged to the depressed classes. Not all religions recognise the caste system, but 98% of all Indians identify as a member of a caste. The results of the Socio Economic and Caste Census was 4,673,034 castes, tribes, communities and clans, and it was stated that 98.87% of data on individuals was error free. The special census on castes is used for analysing positive discrimination programmes with the aim of eliminating them, but it is not the source for India's SDGs. The elimination of caste-based discrimination against Dalits and Adivasi is a special UN programme, concerning five states in South Asia (Starr & Sahgal, 2021).

3.2. Censuses in the Commonwealth of Independent States

The CIS countries started to synchronise population and housing censuses covering all major topics. Common features included the harmonised measurement of migration and labour force, with exact questions and methodology table layouts for publishing results. Data was collected on people's location at the time of the census and duration of residence. Censuses were organised in ten countries. A total of 212 million people (80% of residents) were enumerated. The Internet was used for 10% to 40% of self-completed censuses. In Kyrgyzstan, the World Bank developed special personal enumerator tablets and mobile applications (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, n.d.).

**The CIS model of census taking:
the Kyrgyzstan census assisted by the World Bank**

According to national population censuses, in 1926 Kyrgyzstan had 993,004 inhabitants; in 1989 this figure was 4,257,755; in 2022 it was 6,936,156. The number of ethnic Kyrgyz people grew from 661,171 in 1926 to 5,379,020 in 2022, with there being an increase of more than 3 million inhabitants since independence. The second largest group is Uzbeks, the figure of 986,881 representing a nearly 50% growth. The number of Russians decreased from 916,558 to 282,652 after independence. Other groups included the Dungan people (66,525); Tajiks (59,895), Uyghurs (31,559), Kazaks (28,244), Turks (22,074), and Azeris, Tatars, Kurds and Koreans (less than 10,000). Volga Germans left the area, only 2,831 inhabitants remaining from the earlier population of 100,000. From 137,000 Ukrainians, close to 4,000 remained; 25,000 Chechens left Kyrgyzstan, as did 9,000 Belarussians. From 1979 onwards, close to 8,000 Jews left the country. Accordingly, the country's population growth without emigration could have been more than one million people. The Kyrgyz state organised the census with the help of the World Bank; for the first time it was an electronic census and was conducted by an independent census committee.

Kyrgyzstan's 2022 population census resulted in a specific report in 2024 giving detailed data on the country's absent population and whether people were absent only temporally, absent for the long term, or absent because of permanent emigration. Financed by Swiss agencies and the EU, the survey shows detailed data concerning migration in the given context and something similar would be remarkably interesting for other countries as well.

Kazakhstan's delayed census

Kazakhstan is the territory of the Golden Horde, the former Kazakh Khanate, where the Turks and Mongols lived, and after the colonisation of the Russian Empire it became a settled territory for Russian peasants. During the Tsarist era, Kazakh people constituted 82.9% of the population, with 11.1% being Russians. The famines of 1920–22 and 1933–34 (the Kazakh Holocaust) both resulted in the deaths of close on 2 million ethnic Kazakhs. As a consequence of this, as well as of planned and forced migration and deportation to the Kazakh Republic, the country became a European one with a Russian majority (42.8%), 900,000 deported Ukrainians and 900,000 ethnic Germans. Nowadays Kazakhstan's population is 71% Kazakh and close to 15% ethnic Russian. A third of Russians and Ukrainians and most Germans left the country after independence.

Kazakhstan held a census in 2021. The government published some of the data in 2023, and a second part became public in 2024. The Kazakh population data covers all aspects of national, linguistic and religious minorities, and it is an especially important source for researching the impact of Stalinist forced migration, resettlement policies and deportation from Central Europe for forced labour. The 2021 census counted 103 ethnic groups. For analysis, Kazakhstan adopted a total statistical reform policy, with large-scale and breakthrough IT modernisation.

3.3. The Highly Contested Model of the Russian Federation's Statistical Practices

From the 1850s, so-called "revision lists" were used in the Russian Empire for the registration of taxpayers and the compilation of military recruitment lists. The first census was organised on 28 January 1897 after twenty years of reluctance. The unit of survey was the household; questions concerned religion and native language. It was the property owners (factory owners, landlords) who completed it; in villages a clerk conducted interviews and filled in the documents. The process was finished only in 1905, and the results were published in eighty-nine volumes (Dunai, 2008). Census taking was a central part of ethnic policy. In the USSR, the main principle was the equality of all people and the equality of languages. The 1920 census was organised during the Civil War, and large territories of Crimea, Transcaucasia, Ukraine, the Byelorussian area, the East-Asian region, Siberia and Central Asia were not under Soviet control. The 1923 population census accounted for the inhabitants of cities. The first full Soviet census took place in 1926, its target being the collection of ethnographic information for the transformation of the imperial system of power into a new state system of Soviet society aimed at creating and organising new nations and regions. The ethnographers made a list of people living in the Bolshevik State. The Georgian and Ukrainian experts suggested the use of the term *nationalnost* (nationality: a developed community of people with rights regarding self-determination and the forming of autonomous republics) instead of *narodnost* (the community of an ethnic group, people living with a lower level of political rights), because it was better suited to developed nations and the taking of data on native languages. On the list, there were 190 ethnicities who totalled 147,027,915 people. In six republics, the number of Russians was 77,791,124, and 3.5 million lived in the diaspora. Ukrainians numbered 31,194,976 – two-thirds of them living in Ukraine, with close to 8 million being resident in the Russian Federative Republic. The census made it clear that the republics were relatively homogenous, and only after 1939 did the population policy of mixing different ethnic elements begin.

The Census Commission destroyed the findings of the 1937 census data and expunged it from the census history of the Soviet Union. The official policy expected a 3 to 4 million population growth after the 1926 census, but the result showed only 162 million people instead of 180 million. The Party removed those responsible from their offices and they became the victims of terror. However, new research into the census has revealed vital data. The number of people according to normal counting was close to 157 million; the number of those incarcerated was 2.66 million, including those in Gulags; 270,000 were counted as NKVD personnel; the number of people living in border areas was counted by the NKO border authority at around 2 million. This makes a total of 162,039,470 people. The archives have served as valuable resource for counting the number of victims of Holodomors and slave labour (Andreev et al., 1993). Close to 100 million people indicated religious affiliation, with 55.3 million indicating that they were religious.

In the 1939 census, the experts seemed to follow the politically correct line – and the results were falsified. After Stalin's death, the 1959 census counted 208,826,650 people, which, due to territorial expansions, was 40 million more than in 1939. From 33%, the urban population grew to 49%.

Calculating ethnic diversity was problematic: in 1939 there were ninety-seven ethnic groups (in contrast to 190 in 1926); in 1959 there were 126 national groups. The population figures of Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus increased due to territorial expansions. In 1970, the population grew to 241 million people: a 15% increase. Ethnic Russians (125 million people) accounted for 59% of the population. The Muslim population grew by 52%. The 1979 census counted 241.72 million people; 62% of them lived in urban areas. The 1989 census counted 286.73 million people, making the USSR the world's third most populous country after China and India. Latterly, the population of the CIS area has increased to 300,000 million. During the years of the dissolution of the USSR, ethnic Russians made up 50.8% of the population.

The UN forecast in 2000 predicted a dramatic drop in the population of Russia. This census followed the Yeltsin-era liberal view of nation, understanding Russia as a country of Russians, with civic citizenship for different ethnic groups (among them Russians and other ethnicities). In the case of the last censuses – 2002, 2010, 2021 – this situation did not change, the statistical bureau providing a fixed list from which citizens could choose an ethnicity.

In 2002, the new census in Russia was organised according to international norms and UN suggestions. A UN study by Nikitina (2000) predicted a 2020 population for Russia of 145.6 million. The forecast for 2050 is 101.5 million, and the projected figure for 2200 is 86.7 million. This suggests that Russia must rethink its population policy with population replacement (Abramov & Mirodeyov, 2002). The 2002 census explored the depopulation of Russia; the population decreasing by one million people annually, and the only solution was said to be planned migration, i.e. the immigration of one million people per year (Iontsev, 2002). The census taking was problematic in Russia's non-European areas, because of illegal housing arrangements and the informal rental of apartments by students, who preferred census station enumerations.

The Russian state has included over 190 ethnic minority communities in its censuses. The 2001 census was criticised by the Russian Academy of Sciences due to the absence from the census committee of members of the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography. This was also the case in 2010 and 2021. The 2021 census was organised during the Covid-19 pandemic, and it was severely criticised by the Academy, Western experts, demographers and the leaders of the republics alike. The data collection rights were given to federative level interviewers affiliated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, whose behaviour was bureaucratic and caused fear. Instead of security personnel, the state sent federal post office employees to transport data. All criticism questioned the genuine fulfilment of the census, and treated the results as falsification, with members of the state apparatus transferring data from other vital statistics. In the republics, the dissatisfaction concerned the titular ethnic groups being divided into smaller subgroups, thus leading to the reduction of the size of large ethnic nations. In the Far East, the Northern Territories, Tatarstan and Bashkiria, the populations of the main ethnic groups nations have all "decreased" as a result of census tactics. A growth in population was witnessed in the Caucasus and Transcaucasian territories; the whole census gave information on the shrinking of the Eastern Slavic people. The speed of the census taking was related to the new "special operation" in Ukraine and served the recruitment of ethnic minorities to fight in Ukraine.

In the 1990s, the Westerner scholars in the Russian scientific community decided to replace the ethnos theory with an anthropological view of ethnicity and race, as in the Canadian and United States models. The Patriotic element of the Russian scientific community, the Eurasianist opposition and the mainstream strictly use ethnos as a special category; according to this, the Russian ethnos created the state, while other categories of ethnos are not entitled to this title (e.g. the Kievan Rus'). The Eurasians made a "most-wanted" list of Westerner scholars who spoke of Russia as a political nation, demanding prison sentences for them of ten or twenty years. Since 2012, the turn from *Rossisskij* to *Russkij* – Russia as a Russian state – has been the hallmark of the nationalist turn in this policy.

Despite their compulsory military service being forbidden by law, members of Indigenous communities are being drafted for Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine. The Russian war in Ukraine resulted in a special population census: while in absolute terms ethnic Russians compromise the majority of military personnel, Russia's non-Slavic minorities and Indigenous peoples are overrepresented (Buryats, Tuvans, Kalmyks, Chukchi, Nenets – and the situation is the same for the regions: the Republic of Tuva, Buryatia, Nenets district, the Republic of Altai, Zabaykalye, Sakhalin, Magadan, Pskov, Khakassia, Komi, Karelia, Arkhangelsk and Bryansk) (Latypova, 2024).

The Russian Academy of Sciences suggested changing the ethnos-based model of collective rights into the European continental model of political nations and replacing the model of federation based on ethnic republic, districts and counties with a single federation of Russian territorial states. Because of secessionist movements, this model was unacceptable to President Putin. The myth of democratic legitimacy without ethnic rights could be fatal for the Russian state. The "Russian World" rhetoric and patriotism had its impact differently on minorities. All Indigenous nations are free from compulsory recruitment, but in the case of war, the president can give orders for the formation of ethnic battalions. Putin ordered the formation of two battalions in Tatarstan, while the republic's new drone industry became the main focus of Ukrainian attacks. Because of international sanctions, Tatarstan's leaders became persona non grata in international bodies and world Tatar organisations alike. Russia's turn to cooperation with China caused confrontation with the republics because of the PRC's Uyghur and Islamic policies.

All of the countries that were formerly part of the USSR used the unitary state model except for Russia, and the Russian Federation incorporates twenty-one autonomous republics on ethnic principles with titular ethnic groups. The question is: Is Russia a nation-state or an empire? All political actors agree that it is impossible to build a nation-state without a civic nation – and because of the high degree of autonomy of regional political actors, Russia is not even a genuine federation. Between the nation-state and empire, the transition phase is civilisation, with strong Russian cultural elements and tolerance towards other cultures (Kara-Murza et al., 2017).

In 1991, Russia introduced state languages for the federation after all the republics had declared state languages according to the main nationalities. In 2020, the Duma amended the constitution with the historical role of the Russian language and Russians as state-founding people. In a new

paragraph, the 2020 constitution states that the Russian nation also includes compatriots living abroad. In the case of federal programmes, Russia stopped the autonomy of republics concerning the self-determination of republics, changed the term "president" to "head of republic", and adopted a single federal legal approach in healthcare, education and lifelong learning. The last amendment to the constitution regarding ethnic issues recognised the historically constructed state unity. This fundamental turn towards the civilisational state was reflected in debates over the last census (Laine & Zamyatin, 2021).

The UN's new global census policy aims to explore ethnic minorities. In the case of the 2021 census, 16.5 million people in Russia decided not to report their ethnicity (out of fear or because they found the concept inapt). The census taking was not independent, being too centralised and conducted by a governmental ministry. The census taking was highly digitalised and connected with a family QR code system.

Russia's history of census taking reflects its earlier state model: the fiscal military state, with extensive bureaucracy and a rigid list of ethnicities (there are 800 ethnic communities) which is not about ethnic identity but rather ethnic and territorial categories. The monitoring reports of the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography criticised the last three censuses on account of their bureaucracy, the power given to federal officials and the corrupt and unprofessional nature of central administration activities.

3.4. China's Census Taking with IT Control and SDG Aims

Chinese census practices derive from ethnic policy with Chinese characteristics: Chinese theories and approaches, Chinese solutions and Chinese models of realisation. In 1912, in the Sun Yat-sen era, there were five state-founding peoples: the Han, the Manchu, the Mongols, the Tibetans and the Hui (Zheng, 2019). During the Great Leap Forward, the Communist Party of China accepted the self-determination principle and allowed the formation of independent states. In 1949, under the influence of Stalin, China started an ethnic classification project, and by 1979 the number of ethnicities had reached fifty-six groups recognised by China as minorities. Minorities that migrated from Central Asia to China, such as Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Tajiks have the title "recognised minorities", but several minorities are absent. According to the 2020 census, over 1.28 billion Han people (91.11%) and 125.47 million (8.89%) members of ethnic minorities live in China. From 2010 figures, the growth among Han people was 4.49%; among the minorities, it was 10.26%. Close to twenty ethnicities – probably comprising 700,000 people – are unrecognised minorities. In Hong Kong, there is no classification of ethnicities; there are two minority groups: Europeans and South Asians. In the case of Taiwan, the PRC officially treats non-Chinese people as belonging to Indigenous communities. The Chinese policy on ethnic category is controversial, and the Communist Party of China is planning to remove ethnic census criteria for second and third-generation ethnic minorities and majorities, and to explore only the category of Chinese nationals.

In China, two theories were crucial for developing ethnic policy. The 1911 revolution resulted in the birth of modern China as the "Union of Five Ethnic Groups Under One Republic". The concept of the Nation of China and the Chinese nation of Liang Qichao is a nation-state building programme involving the integration of all ethnic groups to form a Chinese political nation. Recently, the most recognised approach has been the "Plurality and Unity in the Configuration of the Chinese Nationality" as espoused by Fei Xiaotong. In 1939, during a major debate, the nation and nationality were distinguished from ethnic group or ethnicity in order to inhibit the latter's political rights to national self-determination. Theories of the so-called "ethnic frontier" incorporated all borderline ethnic groups into the nation. Frontier politics was a combination of ethnology and anthropology, and the politics and administration of ethnic groups in border areas. Frontier politics with a promise of regional autonomy was a good model for unifying China against Japanese aggression. In the 1950s, Mao Zedong replaced the Marxist theory and ethnic policy of the Communist Party of China (Stalin's definition of ethnicity, Marx's Social Formation theory, the ethnos theory of the Soviet School of Ethnology, Bromley). The ethnic theory with Chinese characteristics was a dogmatic view of China's ethnic policy; from the 1980s, experts replaced it with Ethnic Relations Theory and political ethnology, and from the 1990s, ethnologists called it "ethnic politics". Groundbreaking studies brought discourse closer to the Western political nation, creating distance from Russian-type ethnos concepts. Chinese experts designate the anthropology traditions of America, the United Kingdom, France and Germany as Western, but they make a difference between classical Marxist ethnic theory, the Soviet school of ethnology and former Chinese experience and theory (ethnic frontier studies), and from these four elements they derive the new model of Chinese anthropology: the fifth way in the world (Zheng & Wu, 2023). The extremely rich Chinese literature has developed different micro-theories: the localisation, modernisation and internationalisation of anthropology.

Localisation: Exploring China's historical past, definitions and theories – the Loess culture, the formation of Chinese civilisation with merging ethnic groups (three mergers); the Tibetan Yi Corridor (research of genomic data of 248 minority individuals for the reconstruction of the pattern of population movement and differentiation between diverse Asian populations, and subregional area research) (Zhang et al., 2022).

Modernisation: Research into cultural transition; the pluralistic integration of the Chinese nation (multiethnic and multilevel); the community of the Chinese Nation; the community of a shared future for humankind (Zhao & Zhu, 2022).

Internationalisation: The Belt and Road Initiative and the construction of cultural identity; historical ethnic corridors along the Belt and Road; regional perspectives for understanding China; Chinese frontier governance with ethnic corridors; research on world ethno-national corridors; intangible cultural heritage research.

The *Lin-Ge* model describes the primary role of religious syncretism, economic interactions, warfare exchanges, trade practices and intermarriages in the complex dynamic of ethnic integration through 'exchanges, communication and integration' forming a special regional community. It means that

behind the 'Chinese national community' there are regional social and cultural communities and the existence of ethnic groups (Guo et al., 2024).

These new theoretical and practice-oriented approaches of anthropology endorse the new line of ethnic and national policy thinking, foregrounding merging and integration, and placing a new emphasis on cultural transition, with a new concept of Chinese community – a factual and intellectual break from Marxist and Soviet traditions. The international model focuses on a global turn of international cultural policy with the aim of developing new discourses important for international politics, such as ethnic corridors and ethnic frontier management in global-scale economic areas (Shigang, 2021).

In 2018, China's new constitution made statements about the national political identity of China and multiethnic China. Nowadays, the ethnic policy theory has three approaches: politics, ethnology and local ethnic theory with an emphasis on the ethnic political life of multiethnic China (Zhou, 2022).

From 2014, the Communist Party of China started to renew ethnic policies with the targets of innovation and development. The main emphasis was on renewing the system of governance in the framework of a unified, multiethnic country: the framework of the regional ethnic autonomy system. In the political thinking of President Xi Jinping, the true ethnic policy is to improve livelihoods, employment, education and ecological protection, and to alleviate poverty, with the development of border areas and a focus on infrastructure. In his view, Chinese culture and ethnic culture are not mutually exclusive (Wang, 2024). The main tool for integration is urbanisation, with the migration of considerable numbers of ethnic minorities from rural areas. The construction of the Belt and Road is a tool for transforming border regions, for using foreign policy to resolve issues concerning internal affairs, for tackling the underdevelopment of backward ethnic regions, and for developing international business opportunities for the border regions of Central and Western Asia (Hao, 2018).

In China, the Communist Party Central Committee and the State Council decides on delivering the census. The one in 2020 was the seventh since 1953, and 7 million staff worked on it. It was organised during the Covid-19 pandemic. The vital statistics of identity data were correlated to questionnaires by scanning a QR Code by mobile phone. In this way, the census could be strict and secure thanks to a control system. In the case of all citizens, parental ethnicity was the official ethnicity. Those belonging to diverse groups could choose, while in the case of adopted children, the ethnicity of the adoptive parents was valid. Census taking was fully digitalised, using big data and cloud technologies. As the UN Census Programme recommends, China is using the information that was collected for the achievement of SDGs. Close to 100 million people, 832 counties and 128,000 villages have been rescued from poverty. Roads totalling 1.21 million kilometres and 35,000 kilometres of railway have been built since 2015, and 99% of villages have recently paved roads and access to electricity, radio, television and the Internet (*China's Progress Report*, 2023).

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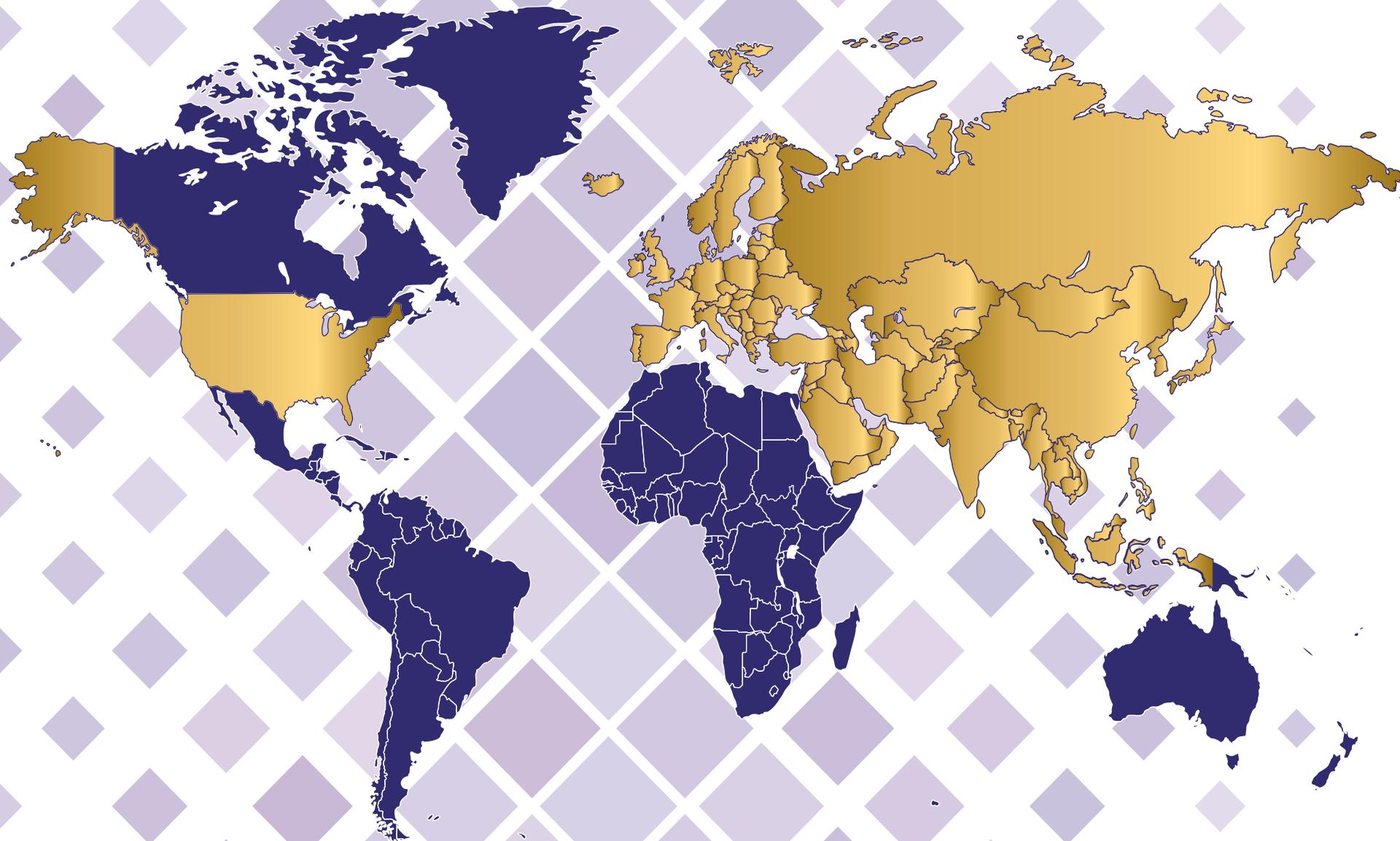
AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY THINKING AND EURASIA

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Abstract

Charting America's relationship with the world has recently become more difficult. The renewal of geopolitics has raised familiar challenges in Eurasia, yet those in Washington do not operate with the terms of American geopolitics (such as "Heartland" or "SLOCs"), rather subscribing to various ideologies and foreign policy concepts that each form a specific and separate worldview. This analysis connects historical concepts in geopolitics with contemporary views on foreign policy. Firstly, it highlights key ideas in American geopolitics from Halford Mackinder, Nicholas Spykman and Alfred Thayer Mahan, along with the relevant theories in Russian and Chinese thinking. Secondly, it reviews US foreign policy options, namely liberal internationalism and its conservative and progressive alternatives. Finally, it examines and assesses the American alternatives in light of their likely prescriptions and challenges vis-à-vis Eurasia.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Heartland, rimland, Eurasianism, sea lines of communication

1. Introduction

In the era of renewed great power competition, historical concepts in geopolitics are experiencing a renaissance. The major hotspots in international security are at the focal points of conflicting American, Russian and Chinese geopolitical thinking on Eurasia: the war in Ukraine reveals a US–Russian showdown over what Mackinder called the Heartland of Eurasia, while at stake in the US–Chinese tensions in East Asia is control over key chokepoints in sea lines of communication (SLOCs), as highlighted by Mahan. Be that as it may, Washington does not operate with terms such as "Heartland" or "SLOCs", instead subscribing to various foreign policy concepts that each form a specific and separate worldview. Thus, the aim of this paper is twofold: to provide an overview of

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key concepts in US foreign policy (historical ideas in geopolitics and current branches of American internationalism), and to apprehend their connections (how the former are approached by the latter).

The analysis consists of three parts. First it highlights key ideas from Mackinder, Spykman and Mahan, along with the relevant theories in Russian and Chinese geopolitical thinking. It then reviews US liberal internationalism along with its conservative and progressive alternatives. Finally, it examines America's options regarding their likely prescriptions and challenges vis-à-vis Eurasia. The research methodology relies on the qualitative analysis of theoretical literature: the article processes writings by key authors in American geopolitical thinking (and experts on Russian and Chinese geopolitics), and works by scholars of American liberal, conservative and progressive internationalism. The latter views are formulated *a priori*, thus their prescriptions on the challenges concerning Eurasia are consequently limited.

2. Key Geopolitical Concepts

Geopolitics as an analytical framework highlights the relationship between geography, politics and strategy (Gray & Sloan, 1999), covering variants of geography (political, economic, military, cultural) in connection with power. Although in the post-bipolar world, classical geopolitics ostensibly lost a certain amount of significance (Mackubin, 1999), the revival of great power competition in the emerging post-hegemonic world has placed geopolitical thinking in the spotlight once again. Great power considerations echo earlier geopolitical concepts on Eurasia where American, Russian and Chinese geopolitical thinking intersect in at least two regions: Eastern Europe and the coast of East Asia. While both can be potential 'gateway' regions, the former is prone to be a 'shatterbelt', while the latter has a tendency to be a buffer zone (Cohen, 2015, pp. 450–454).

2.1. American Geopolitics: The Heartland and the SLOCs

Anglo-Saxon geopolitics was defined by Halford J. Mackinder, who in 1904 highlighted a 'pivot region of the world's politics that [is a] vast area of Euro-Asia which is inaccessible to ships' (p. 434). He named this area 'Heartland' (Mackinder, 1943, p. 596) and claimed that 'Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland: Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island: Who rules the World-Island commands the World' (Mackinder, 1962, p. 150). Mackinder later altered the geographical scope of the Heartland, taking the emphasis away from Eastern Europe and raising the idea of other areas of geopolitical significance (in the North and South Atlantic, in monsoonal Asia) which could balance one another (Cohen, 1957). This theory was rethought by Nicholas J. Spykman, who in 1944 confirmed the importance of sea power and dominance in Eurasia. Spykman placed the emphasis on the 'intermediate region, situated as it is between the heartland and the marginal seas' (p. 41). He called for changing the 'slogan for the power politics of the Old World', stating that henceforth 'it must be "Who controls the rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world"' (p. 43).

The geopolitics of water has more relevance in US statecraft – in the 1960s, deindustrialisation altered the country's geopolitical map, moving the emphasis from its interior to its maritime ring that provides access to the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Gulf of Mexico and the Great Lakes (Cohen, 2016). Both Spykman and Mackinder knew the importance of sea power, citing Alfred Thayer Mahan (Cohen, 1957), who stressed that oceans do not isolate but connect through trade. In 1890, Mahan stated that the sea is 'a great highway [...] over which men may pass in all directions, but on which some well-worn paths show that controlling reasons have led them to choose certain lines of travel', adding that safe voyages require secure ports and stations of defence (p. 25). Indeed, it is a fundamental interest of the USA to ensure access to the global commons (or deny it for adversaries) along sea lines of communication and chokepoints in key maritime transit regions, of which the most important are the Southeast Asian Sea, the South China Sea and the Straits of Malacca (Peele, 1997), where territorial disputes among regional actors attract US attention.

2.2. Russian Geopolitics: Eurasianism and Strategic Depth

Russian geopolitical thinking emerged in the nineteenth century but it was later discouraged as a product of Western imperialism. Post-Cold War concepts were based on ideologies (Solovyev, 2004) and influenced by ethnic tensions, economic disputes, illegal migration and weak governance across the post-Soviet space. The "Westerners" supported Russian withdrawal from Eurasia, as highlighted by the work of Dmitri Trenin, while the "Eurasianists" called for engagement via geoeconomics, political stability, civilisational independence and expansion (Tsyganov, 2003). The latter stance is represented by Alexander Dugin, who takes his inspiration from Nikolai S. Trubetskoy. In 1920, Trubetskoy argued that civilisation was exclusively associated with Europeans, and he envisioned a global revolt against Europe, with his followers attributing a "first among equals" position to Russia (Riasanovsky, 1964). Dugin has updated anti-Western notions by setting a maritime power against a continental power (Clover, 1999) where Atlanticism lies at the centre of the globalisation that threatens traditional values (Dugin, 2014).

History also suggests a mission for Russia in Eurasia. Expansion has been a feature of Russian foreign policy since the sixteenth century, aimed at access to the seas and spheres of influence (Ruhala, 1998). Westward focus was a given, most of the population, farmlands and main rivers and railways being West of the Urals. Three out of four of Russia's main fleets are stationed near the Western end at chokepoints, making their access to the oceans limited. The three major incursions from the West between 1707 and 1941 all contributed to the fear of invasion (Kotkin, 2016), while from the East a different idea was incentivised – as for some, Russia's low economic growth and declining population call for integration efforts in Eurasia. This foregrounds trade and economic development (Kolosov et al., 2022) and raises the question of how Russian–Chinese relations come into play in Eurasia. On the one hand, Beijing may be helpful in Moscow's hedging against Washington; on the other hand, Beijing's economic interdependence with Washington could leave Moscow as a junior partner (Baev et al., 2023).

2.3. Chinese Geopolitics: Unity and Trade

In Chinese geopolitical thought, territorial expansion has always been important (Eva, 2003), but it is also driven by necessity. The nineteenth century brought China's submission to foreigners and internal division, and the 'century of national humiliation' contributed to the call for a prestigious power position (Agnew, 2012, p. 307). Beijing's primary geopolitical goal is the restoration and preservation of territorial and political unity. Historically, Beijing has never had expansionist desires beyond the country's strategic buffers (Stratfor, 2017), however, after the country's opening up, Central Asia witnessed increased Chinese commercial and economic activity. In Mackinder's view, Beijing was not just a potential stakeholder in the Heartland – if allied with Tokyo, it also constituted a threat. He additionally warned about the infrastructural developments that form an important part of Chinese activity in Central Asia. The region's resources and Beijing's involvement raises the possibility that power over the Heartland is less of a Russian and more of a Chinese challenge (Harper, 2019) with the latter's role and nature (engagement in a global power game) still being subject to debate (Harper, 2017).

In the past, Beijing was not compelled to establish a strong navy, as it did not depend on maritime commerce. However, as the country opened up in the twentieth century, trade via the sea became a pillar of the economy. Today, Beijing is not only interested in strengthening its coastline, but also in securing trade routes (Stratfor, 2017). While the country's geopolitical characteristics continue to be that of a land power, investments in naval and air power have led to access-denial capabilities which – although they may be insufficient for a victory on sea – can be effective as a deterrent (Ross, 2009). At the crux of China's maritime security challenges is Taiwan. The island is associated with a latent (if symbolic) political and military threat, as it provides a home to an alternative Chinese government near the mainland (Agnew, 2012). In a broader context, the Indo-Pacific is the region where Beijing is challenging Washington's hegemony (Erskine, 2023), and several countries in the region have already begun to make security preparations accordingly. Since the region features SLOCs that play crucial roles in world trade, the power value of controlling them cannot be overstated. Hence, a face-off in the Indo-Pacific is linked to the idea of a competition over the nature of the international order (Faulkner, 2019).

3. The Concepts of American Foreign Policy

Although the focus of geopolitics is the relationship between geography and strategy, in which political, economic, technological and demographic factors play essential roles, ideology is also an important aspect. America's Cold War strategy of containment was built on Spykman's Rimland Theory, but it was also tied to ideas originating in liberalism (Mayer, 2008). Today, geopolitics is ubiquitous in political discourse, but its implications are interpreted differently by different lines of foreign policy thinking.

3.1. Liberal Internationalism: Optimism and Interdependencies

Liberal internationalists do not deny the existence of geopolitical competition but believe that the ideological and procedural pillars of the liberal international order can overwrite the dominance of *Realpolitik* among foreign policy decision-makers (Ikenberry, 2014). These pillars are liberal democracy, international institutions and free trade. They all support peace, as democratically elected governments transparently pursue trade and other forms of cooperation for which they create organisations, that in turn foster the liberalisation of politics and trade, which also incentivises the increase of political openness and alignment with international norms (Russett & Oneal, 2001). Liberal internationalists see the West as being an institutionalised network of these pillars that is built around a transatlantic core enlarged after the Cold War (Ikenberry, 2018). Due to the success of these enlargements, they have an optimistic view of the future of the world order. Francis Fukuyama's 'end of history' means that liberal democracy with free market capitalism has remained the only viable option for a country's development (Fukuyama, 1989).

Liberal internationalists emphasise global challenges (such as climate change and global health) and believe that these can be common denominators in security, bringing reluctant powers into cooperation. The order is guaranteed by US hegemony, and while this includes cutting-edge military capabilities, liberal internationalists support the use of armed force only as a last resort. They do not exclude hard power from the foreign policy toolbox, but they believe that international political and economic ties have a profound capacity to change the behaviour of non-democratic governments (Russett, 2013). Hard power mainly comes into play in the form of sanctions, and if armed force is used, it should be based on the appropriate international mandate. This is important, as advocates of liberal internationalism assume that others will ultimately follow international rules and norms. Instead of zero-sum power equations and relative gains in international security, they tend to think in terms of win-win solutions and absolute gains.

3.2. Conservative Internationalism: Balance-tilting and Hard Power

Conservative internationalists are more attuned to geopolitical thinking due to their intellectual background of realism, nationalism and liberal internationalism. This results in a foreign policy that supports the liberal idea of spreading freedom but with the realist commitment to using force and with the nationalist commitment to national sovereignty (Nau, 2013). Conservative internationalism is not about the denial of the liberal international order but rather the rejection of realist restraint. Washington is interested in keeping and extending a world of liberal political culture (Miller, 2016). Conservative internationalists can see the liberal order as a cooperation defined by culture – this order rests on Western 'beliefs, ideas, and ideology […] whether or not they are formally captured in intergovernmental agreements and institutions' (Miller, 2016, p. 154). They believe that advancing freedom should not be primarily realised through institutions but rather by the establishment of a balance of power between democratic and non-democratic countries that tilts towards the former.

The essence of conservative internationalism is armed diplomacy, in which force is a constantly available backup to political efforts. These efforts can be contributed to by international institutions, but they can also be abused by non-democratic powers. Conservative internationalism shares the liberal faith in freedom in politics and trade; however, it also considers cultural and national factors, and therefore does not impose democracy on countries with no appropriate cultural background and does not believe that free markets will automatically bring democracy to them. Instead of having a universal mission, conservatives pursue democratisation in accordance with their geographic priorities, preferring the promotion of democracy on the borders of free countries (Nau, 2013). Moreover, these priorities also reflect geopolitical realities – priority can be granted to countries that are powerful, thus a liberal turn in their political system would have a greater impact on other nations (Miller, 2016).

3.3. Progressive Internationalism: Human Security and Restraint

Progressive internationalism is a left-wing solution to foreign policy dilemmas. It criticises liberals and conservatives for neglecting or worsening the security conditions in society. It does not deny the reality of geopolitics or the liberal international order; however, it calls for their radical rethinking. Left-wing internationalism has no firm tradition in US foreign policy, but progressive internationalism does, and their shared conviction is that the realm of foreign and domestic policies should be connected, since the components of human security (such as welfare and social justice) can only be understood universally. Hence, progressive internationalists are just as critical of neoliberal free trade and US hegemony as they are of militarism and authoritarianism (Ettinger, 2020). Both progressive internationalists and left-wing internationalists disapprove of elites and business interest groups whom they view as beneficiaries of the decision-making of the 'national security establishment' (Rana, 2022, p. 15). In this view, the West is associated with wealthy state and non-state actors (the Global North) who subjugate politically and economically disadvantaged actors (the Global South) through institutions and practices of liberal internationalism.

The key themes of progressive internationalism are economic equality, peaceful anti-authoritarianism and democratic solidarity, which are interlinked and associated with the broad and indivisible security of society and the environment. As it is associated with short-sighted security interests, geopolitical competition does not fit into this narrative. Progressives can follow three grand strategies. "Progressive pragmatism" calls for less military engagement; it limits the use of force to the defence of democratic allies, rejects efforts aiming at power imbalances in any region and addresses authoritarian regimes by targeting their oligarchs and clients with anti-corruption and anti-kleptocracy measures. "Anti-hegemonism" seeks to tackle authoritarianism domestically, focusing on the stakeholders in the military-industrial complex and calling for restraint in (or withdrawal from) various regions even if this is to the benefit of other great powers. "Peacemaking" similarly disavows armed force and opts for cooperative security among great powers and transnational cooperations across civil societies. These three strategies establish a triangle comprised of quality, democracy and peace, but with different emphases (Jackson, 2022).

4. The Implications of US Policy for Eurasia

Unlike the defining works of American geopolitics, the various options for American internationalism formulate ideas on Eurasia *a priori*. Although liberals, conservatives and progressives may not offer a detailed strategy for specific hotspots, their respective principles can provide guidance in grasping their relationship to these regions. The main challenge comes from the fact that the viewpoints are conceived in ideological dynamics, making the formulation of a coherent US policy towards Eurasia more difficult.

4.1. Liberal Internationalism and Eurasia

The liberal tradition does not ignore geopolitics in Eurasia, but rather downplays it. Liberal strategies highlight the initiatives of Western political and economic engagement, specifically democratic institutions and free trade. In the case of Moscow, the enlargement of NATO and the EU in Central and Eastern Europe was not meant as the continuation of the containment inspired by Spykman, but it did presume that this would lead to Russian acquiescence in the face of Western unity. In the case of Beijing, the approach placed the emphasis on trade rather than on ideology (Brzezinski, 2012), as – in accordance with Mahan's call for securing SLOCs – it relied on the liberal tradition of opening markets in East Asia under American hegemony (de Graaf & van Apeldoorn, 2018). At the same time, the optimism of liberal internationalists suggests that Mackinder's warning about a unified Eurasian power is not a problem that will occur any time soon.

They are not wary for two reasons. Firstly, Washington's rivals cannot form a durable allegiance – Moscow and Beijing do not trust each other, especially when it comes to geopolitics in Eurasia. Secondly, as their models are neither sufficiently popular nor sufficiently comprehensive, America's competitors are not 'revisionists' posing fundamental threats to the US-led order, but only 'spoilers' abusing it (Ikenberry, 2014, p. 80). All the same, debates over the order do signify a challenge for liberal internationalists. Competitors were included in the liberal order with the assumption that economic and technological modernisation would lead to political liberalisation in their countries and regions, yet this has not happened. Furthermore, until the mid-2010s, liberal internationalists believed that emerging powers (the BRICS countries) would become responsible participants in global governance which, again, did not materialise in accordance with Western expectations (Lieber, 2016).

Meanwhile, globalisation trends have created complex interdependencies. These refer to transnational ties that lead to sensitivities and vulnerabilities, along with the possible downgrading of military power in the pursuit of interests (Keohane & Nye, 1987). In practice, Western economic interactions with Russian and Chinese actors have created mutual dependence in trade and finances. Import–export imbalances and mineral dependencies have made the taking of a harder line against Moscow and Beijing difficult. In fact, liberal internationalism is under assault in America due to the social consequences of deindustrialisation and the outsourcing of production to other countries. Faltering domestic support for international engagement presents a challenge: presence in the rimlands of Eurasia comes in the form of regional organisations and alliances, but the US leadership has been questioned in both spheres – as the fate of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the debates over NATO have shown.

Liberal faith in American soft power is strong, though it is subject to debates regarding its potentially counterproductive effects at the focal points of geopolitical competition, be that its engagement towards Ukraine (McFaul, 2014), or its friendshoring efforts in Southeast Asia (United States Department of the Treasury, 2022). As the geopolitical contest over the rimlands intensifies, liberal internationalists face the ultimate challenge of using hard power. The introduction of sanctions against Russian actors for the invasion of Ukraine has been unprecedented in scope and Washington has been a committed supplier of arms for Kyiv – although in both 2014 and 2022, liberal internationalists failed to deter aggression in the first place. Overall, these issues have enhanced the internal and external pressures on liberal internationalism.

4.2. Conservative Internationalism and Eurasia

Similarly to their liberal counterparts, proponents of conservative internationalism do not envision Mackinder's warning becoming a reality. The nineteenth and twentieth-century British and American geopolitical thinking on Eurasia encapsulated the geographical distribution of power and resources at the time, but the global diffusion of political, economic and military power (most notably, nuclear weapons) has overwritten predictions of a unified Eurasian power. Moreover, since such a hegemonic power could only rise through territorial conquest, considering the great power interests on the continent, its formation is unlikely. Conservatives, however, do not exclude the possibility of a Chinese–Russian alliance. In fact, the main threat they envisage is that of the increasing influence of non-democratic great powers and an assault on the liberal international order (Miller, 2016). Moscow and Beijing are willing to challenge Washington across the rimlands (in Ukraine and in the South China Sea) through diplomatic and military means, seeking more influence or new norms at America's expense (Singh, 2021).

In light of the above, conservative internationalism's call for spreading democracy along the borders of the free world and through strategically important countries translates into a more dedicated US presence in geopolitical conflict zones. A perfect example of this can be found in Central and Eastern Europe towards the end of the Cold War, when conservative internationalists were no longer thinking in terms of containment but rather extending freedom in the region which historically had more ties to the West than to the East (Nau, 2013). Today, Central and Eastern Europe remains important in terms of political engagement and military presence. The former endeavour addresses democratic institutions among allies, which enjoys close attention among conservative internationalists, whereas the latter comes in the form of arming frontier allies, and although this is the quintessential component of conservative internationalist foreign policy, geopolitical prioritisation between Ukraine and Taiwan remains an issue (Miller, 2016).

The main challenges for conservative internationalists are internal ones. The fact that this line of foreign policy thinking consists of realist, nationalist and liberal internationalist features means that any deviation from their appropriate mix leads to domestic debates over foreign policy. American conservatives are divided, and they suffer from the evergreen conflict between advocates of liberal ideas (internationalists) and proponents of realist thinking (nationalists). The former call for a higher defence budget and more military aid for Kyiv in its fight against Moscow, as well as new free trade agreements with countries hedging against Beijing (Schake, 2024). The latter accuse conservative internationalists of replicating the neoconservative policies of the early 2000s and call for a realist foreign policy avoiding the potential escalation of military conflicts (Sempa, 2023). The realist critique is embodied in the prioritisation dilemma regarding Ukraine and Taiwan, viewing the latter entity as the primary challenge of American foreign policy. What conservative internationalists all agree on is the idea that military support for Ukraine should primarily be the task of its European allies.

In spite of the foregoing, this potential solution is overshadowed by the fact that the nationalist undertones in conservative American foreign policy have already placed allies' responsibility in the spotlight and have caused friction with governments and international organisations alike (Singh, 2021). And what makes conservative internationalists most uneasy are the nationalist tendencies of conservative voters and leaders (Schake, 2024). Not only does this lack of enthusiasm for foreign affairs cause a political problem, it can also turn into a geopolitical challenge, given that nativist and neo-isolationist voices (often unwillingly) advance narratives of competing great powers (like the Russian concept of a Eurasian civilisation defending traditional values or the Chinese alternative regarding the norms of international engagement). All of this means that the main challenge for conservative internationalism concerns gaining the high ground in foreign policy arguments on the right wing of the American body politic.

4.3. Progressive Internationalism and Eurasia

Progressive internationalists do not have a comprehensive standpoint on Eurasian geopolitics. The progressive pragmatists' understanding of power balancing can mean two things regarding the Russian threat in Europe and the Chinese challenge in East Asia. Firstly, their take on realism results in enhanced alliances with democratic states – like liberal internationalists, they support both Ukraine and Taiwan; however, unlike conservative internationalists, they do not wish to tilt the balance towards the West. Secondly, they believe that the source of conflict is not necessarily colliding geopolitical concepts but rather corrupt elites, thus they endorse sanctions against Russian and Chinese oligarchs. Such efforts carry geopolitical consequences too – progressive pragmatists argue that if the movement of the capital of authoritarian elites is constrained, the home countries might receive more money in the form of domestic investments. Similarly, efforts to fight climate change can also help to shrink the economic leeway of non-democratic governments that rely on hydrocarbon exports (Jackson, 2022).

Other progressive strategies, however, do not get drawn into geopolitical competition in Eurasia. According to anti-hegemonists, tensions on the rimlands of Eurasia are fuelled by American presence, thus great power competitors can be assuaged by gestures in geopolitical conflict zones (such as reducing the number of US troops in Europe, closing NATO's doors or ending US involvement in Taiwan's defence). This does not mean that anti-hegemonists completely abandon these regions, only that they opt for offshore balancing (achieved through allies). In the meantime, they call for the termination of the hegemony of the US dollar, which has been a key pillar of international sanctions, particularly against Russian individuals and industries involved in the war against Ukraine. Proponents of peacemaking go further; denouncing the whole idea of power balancing, they opt for cooperative security and support disarmament initiatives. Accordingly, US involvement in conflicts like the war in Ukraine should come in the form of non-military aid programmes (Jackson, 2022).

The various forms of progressive internationalism encounter different challenges in geopolitics regarding Eurasia, but the main issue comes from the nature of geopolitical competition itself. Progressives call for a shift of emphasis from military to human security, which means that in the place of arms they would use other (political, economic, ideological) instruments of statecraft. Geopolitical competition can occur in the realm of ideas where authoritarian actors are wary of the spread of liberal values. All the same, the imbalanced application of the foreign policy toolbox can unwillingly provoke aggression (Wright, 2019). A radical rethinking of geopolitics can lead to the same zero-sum games between great powers in Eurasia. A progressive stance also makes course correction difficult, as a return to either arms or alliances can become the subject of disputes over coherence (Wertheim, 2022). In keeping itself strictly to ideological tenets, the American left-wing runs into contradictory foreign policy positions (Walzer, 2014).

Progressive pragmatists stand the closest to the idea of geopolitical competition, yet their policy prescriptions may also be prone to inconsistencies. A major left-wing change in the workings of global trade and economy can lead to instabilities, while an enhanced US sanctions policy requires a large national security apparatus, which makes the original critique of liberal and conservative internationalism hypocritical. Meanwhile, anti-hegemonist and peacemaking strategies harbour the possibility of appeasement and abandonment respectively. Whether it is done out of realist considerations or idealist goodwill, the acceptance or disregard of spheres of influence in the rimlands of Eurasia is self-defeating for America (Jackson, 2022), as both open the doors to Russian and Chinese geopolitical narratives on Eurasia.

5. Conclusions

Although the competing alternatives for American internationalism offer differing solutions in addressing geopolitics, all three face the overarching dilemma of how to find a middle ground between realist and idealist (liberal) endpoints in foreign policy. Liberal, conservative and progressive internationalism all have ideological foundations, but each relies on realist principles, albeit with

varying emphasis and to a varying extent. Despite their distinct characteristics, these variants of internationalism all agree on key US interests in Eurasia. Liberals, conservatives and progressives alike look for strong and preferably like-minded political and military allies in Central and Eastern Europe and East Asia. The three camps disagree on the channels of US political and economic power and the role of military power in foreign policy, but they endorse policies that are mostly in line with the prescriptions of Mackinder, Spykman or Mahan.

Both Ukraine and Taiwan can expect support from proponents of any kind of American internationalism. However, while the liberal approach calls for engaging these friends and partners by enlarging international organisations under the existing international order, conservatives and progressives are more selective in terms of forums and countries respectively. Both the conservative and the progressive option are alternatives to the liberal tendencies of overstretching US security commitments, as they look for a more efficient alliance network; while a conservative roadmap relies on US hard power, progressives are prone to retrenchment. Thus, while liberals would maintain a full-spectrum support to both Ukraine and Taiwan, conservatives would limit this to political and military aid (rebalancing the latter to Taiwan), whereas a progressive approach would emphasise economic aid to Ukraine and sanctions against Russia. Due to such ideological differences among (and within) these branches of internationalism, forming a coherent US strategy on Eurasia is becoming increasingly difficult.

Moreover, schisms within the alternatives in internationalism can exacerbate external challenges. Liberal, conservative and progressive visions of overall US foreign policy clash with Russian and Chinese geopolitical ideas, but divisions within the former three concepts can give ground to certain narratives from the latter two. Liberals find it difficult to contain China's rise and its claim for more control over security and trade in the South China Sea, as the application of various tools of Washington's economic power (such as sanctions or export limitations) can be characterised by Beijing as being hypocritical. The more hawkish conservatives and more dovish progressives face a different problem. Both camps include critics of the cultural and economic developments advanced by the liberal international order, and anti-Western ideologies (such as Eurasianist views on traditional values or sovereignty) may garner sympathy from nationalist and anti-hegemonist groups, who thereby weaken Western soft power. Thus, today's debates over US foreign policy are also a field for competition between all aspects of geopolitics.

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ÁDÁM TENCZER

Anglo-Saxon Interests in the Indo-Pacific
Region and the Implications of AUKUS
– An English School Perspective
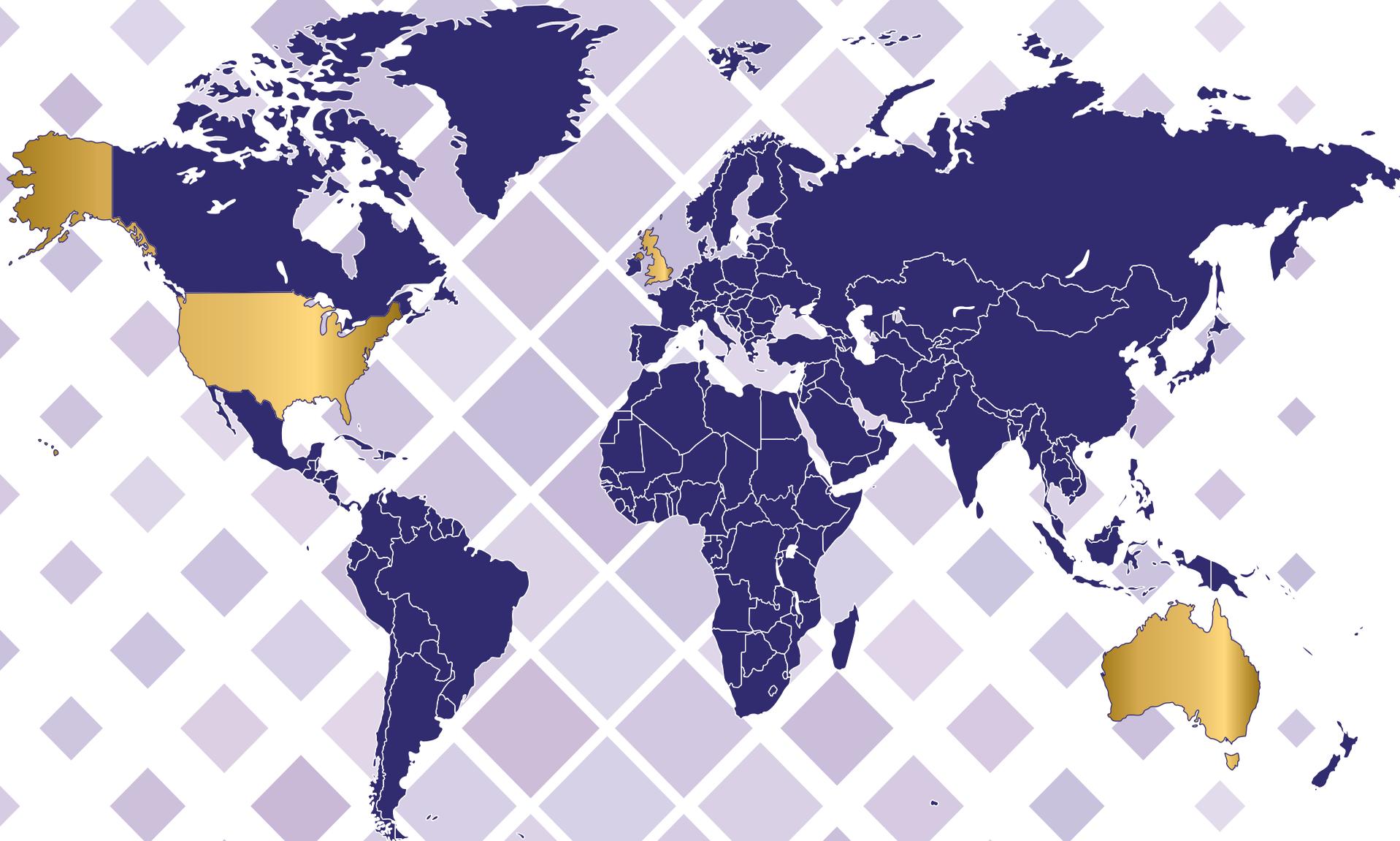
ANGLO-SAXON INTERESTS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF AUKUS – AN ENGLISH SCHOOL PERSPECTIVE

ÁDÁM TENCZER[1]

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to reveal the normative driving forces of the AUKUS trilateral military cooperation announced in 2021. In this examination, I highlight the significance of the re-emerging cooperation between the Anglo-Saxon core states, based on their shared values (e.g. democracy, civil liberties, etc) as it applies in the Indo-Pacific region. The paper concludes that the American intention to hinder China's efforts to take leadership over the Far East is a hazardous business and offers limited options to defend US strategic positions. Despite this, challenging China in a new theatre in the Pacific with the AUKUS agreement may still be an effective tool to divide Beijing's attention. The research relies equally on primary and secondary sources, applying emergent research design given the fact that many of the latest official documents, statements and statistics are already available, allowing the formulation of cautious predictions on the possible developments. The secondary sources are indispensable to correct framing, where emergent qualitative methods may aid an understanding of why the AUKUS agreement came into existence and a definition of its exact nature at present. Turning away from the mainstream branches of IR theories, I am convinced that the English School, with its specific approach to primary institutions, might be a helpful instrument to rationalise the nature of value-driven cooperations like AUKUS. In my belief, the 2010s brought the Anglo-Saxon core states together again, and with the leadership of the USA, there is an explicit value-based intention to curb China's emergence.

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1. The Changing Power Structure in the Indo-Pacific Region

This paper focuses on the American presence in the Indo-Pacific region, aiming to reveal the underlying factors driving the AUKUS alliance. The study aligns with forecasts that underscore the potential for a transformative geopolitical shift within the region. While numerous articles have emerged since the announcement of the AUKUS treaty, most explore the political and military dimensions of the shifting power dynamics. Such discussions are undoubtedly vital for thinking about the region's future; nevertheless, there is a notable dearth of normative perspectives. The Indo-Pacific holds significance as a pivotal threshold within China's security sphere, where Washington's ambitions have steadily grown in the last decade. By asserting control over the South China Sea, the United States seeks to fortify its position within the first island chain, with the explicit backing of the Philippines, Taiwan and Hong Kong. This strategy aims to obstruct China's access to the Pacific Ocean. The multifaceted nature of this military buildup encompasses various elements, and although it is not the only pact, AUKUS stands out as a prominent alliance. The Quadrilateral Dialogue (Quad), the Australia–New Zealand–USA (ANZUS) collaboration, and bilateral agreements all play essential roles in this evolving landscape. However, a robust normative background which builds around value-based inquiries exists within this power shift. Regrettably, these aspects appear to receive less attention than they deserve. While military assets undoubtedly wield substantial influence in the competition between China and the USA, it is ultimately values and norms that will determine how those military assets are used.

In the first part of this article, I present the direct political effects of AUKUS, devoting special attention to Australia and its role in the Indo-Pacific security architecture. This aspect is the already well-researched though constantly changing element of AUKUS, yet familiarity with it is still essential for an understanding of the structure and goals of the cooperation. This practice-oriented part of the paper aims to point out the clash of interests within the Western alliance system, which increases the likelihood of fragmentation among the future goals of the Western allies. The second part of this study focuses on the ideas and norms behind AUKUS (which I believe to be the value-added part of the research) and it highlights the meaning of "rule-based international order" (RBO) from the viewpoint of Anglo-Saxon countries.

In order to discover the value-driven factors behind the AUKUS treaty, there is a need to make some basic assumptions. First of all, we have to accept that there are normative forces in international relations that eventually determine materialistic considerations. Agreeing with this statement puts realism in the background and provides a broader space for the English School (ES) theory of international relations. Secondly, we also need to consider the importance of the cultural, linguistic

and historical proximity of the states in question, which played a decisive role in the creation of AUKUS. This would imply an approach that treats security interests and identity policies as being mutually constitutive parts of the same whole. Henceforth, this research hypotheses that "AUKUS is a liberal, culture-based Anglo-Saxon military alliance to cement American interests in the Indo-Pacific and hinder China's emergence".

It is crucial to mention that this study follows an emergent design, meaning that its primary aim is understanding. Emergent designs are capable of delving into phenomena such as the perceptions of the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This does not mean, however, that the primary aim of this inquiry is to explore the mindset of a certain group of people via interviews. Understanding the nature of the trilateral cooperation between Australia, the UK and the USA requires a qualitative method-based approach, enabling us to gain an overview of broader timescales and to apprehend national identities (Lamont & Boduszynski, 2020). By examining the AUKUS agreement, we may perceive both the main driving forces of the Anglo-American special relationship and the broader connection between Anglo-Saxon countries. Considering that we are examining perceptions of reality, and given that we are talking about values, this paper seeks to be cautious in formulating fixed conclusions, rather intending to point out probabilities. Instead of providing closed-ended answers, this inquiry prefers open-ended questions and wishes to initiate discussion – primarily on the normative nature of AUKUS, and in broader terms on the role of values in international relations. Measuring norms and their impact on international relations is a challenging task and quantitative methods may offer us only a limited possibility to seize their meaning. Therefore, this investigation seeks to utilise the suggestions of the English School in terms of primary institutions and the differentiation of normative communities, meaning that the methodological focus is on interpretative explanation (Buzan, 2004, 2014; Linklater & Suganami, 2006; Navari, 2021). As the foundations of its argumentation, this inquiry has two main empirical sources. Firstly, official information such as government declarations serve as the starting point of any research – after all, forging something requires raw material. Secondly, public broadcasting news represents the interpretation of events by the state media, giving us an idea of how governments wish their citizens to perceive reality. This is presented with relevant articles, papers and conference transcriptions mainly focusing on the function of norms and primary institutions in the international society.

2. The Political Motives of AUKUS

On 15 September 2021, the governments of Australia, the UK and the USA made a joint statement that surprised their European allies and the international community in equal measure. The three countries announced that they were about to sign a new submarine development contract to help Canberra acquire high-tech navy assets (The White House, 2021a). This came as a surprise since all the negotiations were conducted behind closed doors, excluding other allied countries. While it was an unexpected or – at worst – an unpleasant move for most of the international community, France was subdued and felt humiliated. Six years before the AUKUS agreement, Paris and Canberra had

agreed to expand the Australian navy with new diesel-propulsion submarines (Fejérdy, 2021; Staunton & Day, 2023). With the establishment of AUKUS there was no question that Australia would quit the agreement, depriving France of a USD 65-billion investment (Hall, 2022). The French foreign minister talked about the betrayal of trust and a 'stab in the back', while many European countries also expressed their displeasure with the manner in which the AUKUS treaty had been forged (Chrisafis & Boffey, 2021). The very establishment of AUKUS caused disgruntlement among the Western alliance, which lasted for years after the announcement. Some countries accused Canberra and Washington of violating non-proliferation treaties and thereby paving the way for an arms race in the region (BBC News, 2021a; Liptak & Diamond, 2023). Although certain countries – such as South Korea, Japan and Indonesia – were supportive of the initiative, many ASEAN members (including the US-allied Philippines) remained sceptical. AUKUS was undoubtedly a divisive project from the very beginning. To understand its normative impacts, we need to look at its main elements and goals.

Put simply, AUKUS is a technology-sharing contract between three countries, with the primary aim being to help one of the signatory states (Australia) acquire nuclear-propulsion submarines by the end of the 2030s (Girardi & Van Hooft, 2021). Put less simply, it is a much more complicated extension of an already existing cooperation network among Anglo-Saxon states with an anti-China focus (Carr, 2021). All the same, we should distinguish the "actions" of the participants from their "intentions". In their joint statement, the three countries declared that the agreement was based on their 'enduring ideals and shared commitment to the international rule-based order' and that it represented their resolution to 'deepen diplomatic, security, and defense cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, including by working with partners, to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century' (The White House, 2021a). As we can see in this official statement, the emphasis was not on the technology-sharing procedure, but rather on value-based goals, mainly concerning the defence of the so-called "rule-based international order".

At this point, we must remind ourselves that political desires and strategic realities do not necessarily coincide, and that AUKUS was initially evidence of Washington's wishes as to how politics should work. This might imply two major undeclared goals. Firstly, that as the current international order (established and upheld by the Western powers) is a just, equal and sustainable system where the rules are known and they bind every member of international society regardless of their size, power, political or identical affiliations, it is worth preserving (at least from the viewpoint of the signatory states). Secondly, it implies that there are states in the region which do not accept this international order and are inclined to break the rules, this factor ultimately justifying the creation of AUKUS. Needless to say, in this view, the main "rule-breaker" is China. It is interesting to see how the signatory states differentiate between international laws and rule-based international order. At first glance, one might think that rules come from laws, indicating that international laws and rule-based international order are interchangeable expressions to describe the same thing – but that is not the case. The USA tends to use the term "RBO" to refer not only to international laws, but also to values

(or rather principles and fundamental norms of appropriate behaviour). This is where the English School of IR might help us to grasp the meaning of the constitutive elements of international rules.

It is interesting to note how Shoebridge (2021) summarised in five points what we should *not* identify AUKUS with, because it also tells a lot about the American perception of RBO. Shoebridge advised us not to refer to this alliance as a mere technology-sharing community – after all, it extends to many other fields as well. On 17 December 2021, the participants made it clear that the alliance would be structured in the spirit of 'interoperability' (The White House, 2021b). This means joint work on critical capabilities and technologies, like in the fields of artificial intelligence, and cyber and quantum technologies, or even in additional undersea developments. It would also be misleading to call AUKUS a traditional "military alliance", where the signatory states come to each other's aid in times of crisis. This is inaccurate because AUKUS does not stipulate military obligations; nevertheless it is likely that the parties would defend each other if necessary. Treating AUKUS as a simple annex or expansion of other cooperations (like the Quad or ANZUS) would also blur the picture, although the USA does aim to establish a regional alliance network. Shoebridge highlights the fact that AUKUS is neither an Australian experiment to break out of its existing economic relations with Southeast Asia nor an attempt to find a way back to the historically more prominent American and British connections. And it is certainly not a way to simply expand the institutional assets of the Five Eyes cooperation, where, assisting the AUKUS signatory states, New Zealand and Canada are mutually engaged in intelligence data exchange. This is a point where Shoebridge fails to see that an already existing, joint intelligence network is a crucial asset of cooperation, facilitating information exchange among the parties. New Zealand and Canada are a part of such a cooperation, which makes it likely that Wellington and Ottawa were informed about AUKUS well before its announcement.

Instead of taking each of the aforementioned descriptions of AUKUS individually and separately, this paper suggests handling them together. All of them contain a piece of the truth, meaning that AUKUS can only be understood with a mixed, political-historical approach. After all, the signatories also talked about the importance of an 'integrated view' of the Indo-Pacific region, where economic, military and political stability should be present simultaneously (The White House, 2022). To put it another way, it can be claimed that AUKUS is a partnership of three Anglo-Saxon countries aimed at defending one another's interests in the Indo-Pacific and denying further advantage to regional competitors.

AUKUS has a specific plan proposing the main milestones and goals of the joint work, which necessitates the clarification of certain definitions concerning the cooperation. The first is the question of "nuclear submarines". A common misunderstanding of nuclear-powered submarines regards their purpose (BBC News, 2021). Many mistakenly view them as assets to carry nuclear missiles. Nuclear-powered submarines (SSNs) are only nuclear in terms of propulsion (Nair, 2022). Their engines are suitable for longer undersea missions and they are capable of swift recon objectives as well. They are not, however, armed with nuclear weapons. Of course, this does not mean that, with modifications, they could not be equipped with such weapons. Even though the main purpose

of SSNs is to boost undersea interoperability, their nuclear propulsion prompts fear. After all, if a country was able to develop nuclear submarines, what would stop it from producing nuclear warheads? In fact, many factors can prevent a country from building nuclear weapons. With prudent planning and transparent technology transfer (overseen by the UN), AUKUS could avoid such accusations. In contrast to conventional submarines, SSNs do not require regular refuelling, which makes them exceptionally effective in espionage objectives. Their propulsion provides them with noiseless and rapid movement and a wide action radius, meaning that they only need to return to their base in the case of a shortage of supplies.

According to the plans, Australia will acquire nine such submarines by the end of the 2030s (Alper, 2021). Additionally, it is expected that within this timeframe the current Astute class nuclear submarines of the UK's Royal Navy will be decommissioned and replaced with more modern submarines (Rathbone et al., 2023). The navies of the United Kingdom and Australia have already set up a joint working team to carry out the planning of the new SSN-AUKUS type nuclear submarines, where the design process would be carried out with the active participation of the UK-based Rolls-Royce.

AUKUS is considered to be unparalleled for many reasons. First, with the end of the Cold War, the world avoided an open nuclear conflict. This was only possible because of the intention of the superpowers to limit the proliferation of nuclear weapons. AUKUS, however, might represent a turning point. The "technology transfer" to Australia will surely be seen as a violation of non-proliferation (Liptak & Diamond, 2023). This will be the first occasion where a non-nuclear country receives core fission-based technology from a third party. Be that as it may, it would be more accurate to talk about "technology purchase" rather than "transfer" since the deal was originally to sell Australia three Virginia class (nuclear) submarines before 2030 (Needham, 2023). That does not change the fact that this move was unprecedented since the fall of the Soviet Union. Even with the supervision and control of international organisations like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), AUKUS could raise serious concerns about nuclear technology proliferation. After all, the enrichment of uranium-235 requires capabilities that could also be utilised in other ways. Although there is little chance of Australia developing a nuclear weapon, the anxiety over the mere possibility is understandable. The sale of three Virginia class submarines to Australia (which is the first practical step of AUKUS) would, however, significantly diminish the comparative undersea capabilities of the US Navy if it did not receive proper replacements for its own, less advanced, submarines. This part of the plan has already caused an outcry among many US senators. The whole project to transfer nuclear technology resulted in serious international protest; not only did America's rivals, like China and North Korea, indicate their displeasure with the plan, many ASEAN member states followed suit. If Canberra really does obtain the proposed submarine system, Australia will become the seventh country in the world with nuclear submarine capabilities (alongside the UK, the USA, Russia, India, China and France). Even without any geopolitical analysis, it is easy to see how significant this development would be.

The AUKUS plan was accepted by the Scott Morrison-led liberal Australian government in 2021, but after the federal elections of 2022, the Anthony Albanese-led labour party formed a new cabinet. Albanese and the Foreign Ministry calculated a minimum AUD 268-billion budget to complete the project (Hurst & Borger, 2023). This estimate was nonetheless heavily influenced by the contribution of the partner states and it should be understood as an absolute value for two decades of development. The sum of AUD 268 billion (USD 180 billion) is an enormous amount of money even for the United States. The plan provides for the preparation of four-year budgets based on the current demand of the development phase. The highest estimate calculates an extra expense of USD 100 billion, which would significantly burden Australia's finances. This naval investment is already the Australian military's largest ever project.

2.1. The Role of Norms in the AUKUS Cooperation

The expansion of its navy and the deployment of modern submarines has long been on Australia's military agenda. Besides the proper funding and expense coverage, a plan like submarine development inevitably involves external sources and trustworthy partners. Carrying out a possibly decade-long development gives crucial importance to political confidence and cultural ties between the parties, which indicates that states like Australia or other liberal democracies are expected to be more inclined to look for each other's help (O'Connor et al., 2023). This is a question of the political trust and practical confidence of like-minded governments. The basic assumption is that politically identical administrations (such as liberal ones) will be more reliable in relation to one other, and their future behaviour will be more predictable in long-term planning. Trust among authoritarian regimes, however, is less common because of the lack of transparency and intrastate dependencies, indicating that democracies (at least theoretically) are more inclined to trust one another. Despite this, the case of the Australian–French submarine contract seemingly proves the opposite (Fejérdy, 2021; Staunton & Day, 2023). In theory, two liberal democracies should respect agreements, at least in terms of transparent cancellation. Having seen what happened following the announcement of the AUKUS cooperation, we could easily conclude that democracies do not respect their joint agreements any better than other countries. The way the USA, the UK and Australia conducted their negotiations behind France's back might also prove that a democratic system in itself is insufficient for us to state that liberal democracies have a greater chance of mutual trust. In their justification of why this cooperation was established, the AUKUS participants rely heavily on such concepts as "rule-based international order", "openness" and "freedom"; this would imply that democratic governance (or, ultimately, liberalism) is still an important factor, which is contradicted in practice (Baranyi, 2021; Barnes & Makinda, 2022). Furthermore, the declared aim of AUKUS does promote these ideas in the interest of securing regional stability. The contradiction between the official aims of AUKUS and the deception of a theoretically close ally is obvious. After all, what kind of "rule-based order" does AUKUS wish to preserve when the basics of interstate cooperation are violated? To answer this rhetorical question, we may have two possible options.

Firstly, we can approach the question from a realist (or materialist) perspective, where liberal values are only instruments of the power projection of the USA. In this case, freedom of trade, human rights or trust among allies are important only if they serve the economic or political interests of a country. This means that if a country provided humanitarian aid and promoted civil rights in international politics, it would be reasonable only if it was related to financial gain, otherwise being a waste of resources. This conclusion would surely be misleading even if there are cases where US foreign policy seems to be more transactional than normative. This answer would query the whole basis of a value-based international society and imply that – if they exist at all – principles are subordinated to power interests. In the debate concerning the relationship between power and norms, the English School follows the path of common sense. Normative principles and interests are mutually constitutive elements of being a state, and it would be an oversimplification to say that values are mere instruments serving self-interest (Freedman, 2021; Ikenberry, 2009). Without values, it is difficult to reasonably argue that humanitarian actions are necessary, that war crimes are reprehensible and that human life is worth protecting. Not all state activities are motivated by self-interest. The right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to employment and education are all value-based variables at the level of international politics with no direct state interests. If we were to claim that there are no values in international relations but only power interests, we would also have to deny the existence (or at least the significance) of humans as the shapers of politics. Claiming that international politics is value-free has crucial implications for our very concept of what it is to be human. It would lead us to the conclusion that human decision-makers have no responsibility in interstate and intrastate conflicts and that this sphere of politics is driven by realist "variables". Accepting this ethics-denial approach would lead us to a more dangerous, inhuman world where – whatever it takes – "the end justifies the means".

To gain a second answer to our rhetorical question, however, we might assume that liberal-democratic values are indeed important, even if they are not important always and everywhere, or not equally important with respect to everyone. Here again, the English School might help us to find answers. There are times and occasions when liberal, value-based cooperations still operate but in an alternative way. Without democratic liberal values, the AUKUS cooperation could surely not have been formed, yet we nonetheless see that these values were somehow overwritten in the case of the Australian–French agreement. This allows us to assume that there are cases where merely being ideologically identical is insufficient to preserve cooperation. In the case of AUKUS, morals and values are context-dependent. Some values matter more than others, like the values of kinship and historical self-identity. The Anglo-American special relationship is a good example of such a trust-based affiliation, where the parties share a common cultural background, language and historical memory. A possible condition under which states choose to abandon an already signed treaty in favour of cooperating with other countries is the common culture. Or viewing it from a different angle, shared and identical self-determination might have a stronger impact on decision-making than political affiliations. In simple terms, we can say that culturally identical nations have a better chance of cooperating than governmentally similar ones.

2.2. Cultural Ties in AUKUS

One of the main driving forces of AUKUS is the shared self-identity (O'Connor et al., 2023; Wellings & Ghazarian, 2023). The common history, language and cultural similarities surely contributed to the creation of the alliance which resulted in the abandonment of an already existing treaty. Anglo-Saxon countries (with some exceptions) are inclined to have a good relationship with each other. But even in the broad category of English-speaking countries, there is a closed club of privileged members, who share an unusual level of mutuality. This extraordinary level of trust is embodied by the five Anglo-Saxon core states, the USA, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Their joint intelligence exchange network (the so-called "Five Eyes") enables integrated and swift responses to external threats. The level of interstate cooperation between actors who share a common identity seems to be stronger than political affiliations. This might imply that there are cases when joint political stances and ideologies are overwritten by self-identity or culture. In classical English School theory, the (originally European) international society was weakened first after decolonisation when various (non-Christian and non-European) countries joined. As the case of the European Union shows, being only ideologically similar can be insufficient in cooperation building (Cartmell, 2023). Although it has a civilisational basis, the so-called "ever-closing union" lacks a common cultural basis and, in certain cases, even a common religious basis (it is enough to think about the changing proportion of the Christian population in Germany or France). Without shared linguistic backgrounds, political experiences and identical self-determination, it is extremely difficult to build durable trust among states. And durable trust is essential – after all, it is the secret ingredient that helps allies get through tough times together, as evidenced by the case of Britain and the USA in the Second World War (Sherman, 2019). Durable trust is a tricky expression because it can be both a cause and an effect. It is necessary to keep old alliances alive; and if that happens, trust increases as a result. Durable trust creates more durable trust, which at first glance seems to be a circular reasoning. Yet for it to come into existence, a common language and shared self-determination are essential. In the 1940s, the fact that Britain and the USA became close allies in the fight against the Axis powers was because of this durable trust. If we compare the relationship between the Anglo-Saxon core states to the cooperation between European states from the English School perspective, we can see at least one significant difference: the European countries were not able to establish a joint intelligence network. Information sharing is one of the most confidential elements of interstate cooperation. After all, it allows countries to access classified information, economic data and military files, as well as many crucially important aspects in decision-making. We can see that the Anglo-Saxon core states have such a high-level cooperation, while the EU countries are struggling with more basic trust issues.

The AUKUS cooperation is a next-level initiative of the USA to engage with the Australian and UK governments in information sharing. The new technologies jointly developed by the partners require the kind of level of trust that the EU countries lack. SSN-AUKUS, as a flagship project of the cooperation, will surely lead a more integrated scientific and developmental coordination between the parties that would not be possible without mutual confidence.

2.3. Theorising AUKUS
– Perspectives from the International Society

Norms are based on mutually established and accepted customs, meaning that there are both approved and unacceptable forms of intercourse (Wesley-Smith & Finin, 2021). Thinking about rules in international relations requires us to make some assumptions. Firstly, international norms are not written rules; they are more like custom laws, based on mutuality and the relative consensus of states. A crucial question regards whether this consensus has been achieved by the members of the international society equally or only by the strongest members of the community. In the former case, the majority in a particular community (be it a state community or a neighbourhood of people) accepts the rules and subordinates itself to them, and the order will be a legitimate one. But will that order be defendable if a powerful member of the community rises against it? In the latter instance, the stronger few establish the rules without consulting the other members of the community, in which case the enforcement of rules is surely easier. But it is also an illegitimate order. In an ideal world, the stronger few and the majority are equally able to establish mutually acceptable rules – and in this case the order is both legitimate and defendable. Of course, the real world is far from ideal. In reality, most of the time only the stronger ones need to achieve a consensus in international relations. In the past, the majority of states were oppressed by the stronger ones and were unable to organise any kind of resistance. A second assumption is that the general enforcement of the order is dependent on interstate cooperation, a quite uncommon phenomenon in international relations. This means that when the leading economic and military powers come together to decide on, for example, the fate of a third country, consensus is rare. In the greater part of history, international relations has been the story of an oppressed majority and a hostile, but dominant minority. Neither legitimacy nor consensus played a significant role, and the situation was rather like in an anarchical society, for – just like in every community – interstate interactions required rules of conduct (Albert & Buzan, 2013; Bull, 2012).

From the perspective of the English School, internationally enforced rules have a substantial role. Once a rule has been violated, an international society can respond in various ways as a whole. But what do we mean by the phrase "as a whole"? Talking about an international society is like talking about any other kind of community. Claiming that an international community of states does not exist implies that there are no structural forces in international relations at all. For example, a class of students not only exists at the level of the individual, but also at the level of friendships, groups, and the whole class. A class of students (just like the society of states) does not necessarily require a teacher (or a world government) in order for them to act collectively. Most communities have natural leaders whose actions determine the behaviour of the rest, just like in the case of great powers. Yet the inherent dynamics at the level of a school class are not associated with a single actor. Norms such as respecting one another's property and not stealing somebody else's lunch serve the joint interests of the community, namely asset security. Everyone is better off when refraining from aggression and theft – assuming, of course, that everyone has property. If a violation of this rule still happens, the community can react collectively. The students may exclude the wrongdoer from their community,

everyone may begin to pay closer attention to their own belongings, and they may also directly help their victimised classmate.

This metaphor shows us the basic dynamics of structural forces in social life, and assuming that we live in a world where international relations is a network of socially interrelated states, we can draw several conclusions. History gives us excellent examples of how an international society reacts to rule violations. There are obvious cases when states were undoubtedly aggressors and aimed to overthrow the prevailing order by force like France did in the nineteenth century or Germany did at the end of the 1930s. Their attempts to violently overthrow the order forged the other nations into an alliance defending their joint interests. Both the Anti-French coalitions and the Allies in the Second World War aimed to defend the status quo against a revisionist state (Baylis et al., 2020). However not all rulebreakers are aggressive, and not every rule is equally accepted, meaning that there are also much less obvious cases where the collective reaction of the international society might be uncertain. Multiple scenarios are worthy of consideration.

In the first scenario, the norm might be only partially approved by the members of the international society, meaning that not all of the states wish to punish the rulebreaker. This is a common situation. However, assuming that there is a consensus among the members, which is also a rare phenomenon in international relations, there are two main possibilities for how an international rule can be defended. One option is the imposition of joint sanctions against the aggressor, as in the case of Italy in the 1930s (sanctions can be political or economic). The other option is direct enforcement to keep the rulebreaker in line. Whether through coalitions or individual pressure from a great power, this ultimately means military intervention. These possibilities are relatively infrequent in international relations and only occur in exceptional historical periods, like in the case of the 1991 invasion of Iraq during the Gulf War, where the "consensus" actually only amounted to no members of the NATO Security Council vetoing the action rather than unanimous approval (Brzoska, 2015). It is much more frequent that the violated norms are not considered to be a shared value of the international society. Democracy (including fair elections, rule of law or separation of power) and human rights (like freedom of speech, political participation and other individual liberties) are disputed norms in the international society. Being largely only promoted by Western countries, their violation is not necessarily considered to be an attempt to overthrow the world order. Perhaps the sole universally accepted norm of the international society is sovereignty.

How does all this affect the AUKUS cooperation? AUKUS is surely a norm-based military coordination of three Western liberal democracies with many social patterns. Returning to our metaphor, we might see the following situation. A couple of students claim that a rival (let us call this pupil "China") plans to steal their lunch. Accusing that pupil of aggressive rule-breaking behaviour, the students call for protection against future violations of the rules. It is easy to see that the AUKUS case where the allied countries suggest that China goes against the rule-based international order is a controversial situation. The potential rule-breaker is only planning (or, at least, so it is suspected) to take what is in the possession of another. Such accusations have been denied by China many times, which makes the situation more complex still. Claiming that another party has aggressive

intentions without sufficient proof is a counterproductive strategy, and many states would actually see the accuser as the malicious one. International norms are different from *jus cogens*. *Jus cogens* refers to the known and "accepted" set of international laws which cover issues such as the conduct of war, the right of sovereignty or the settling of disputes in a peaceful way. Norms, however, point out regulations originating from morals and principles. They have more equivocal definitions, implying that their meaning is heavily context-dependent. Thus, it is difficult to tell whether a state has acted against the norms or not.

In the case of the Australian–French submarine contract, the two parties took different positions (BBC News, 2021b). France argued that it had not been informed about the intentions of the Australian government in time (Rathbone et al., 2023). The French foreign minister accused the Morrison administration of dishonesty (Chrisafis & Boffey, 2021). From the French perspective, it was a clear violation of "fidelity to the given word", which is considered to be one of the most important norms in international relations, and without which it would be impossible to build trust. Paris claimed that Canberra's move seriously damaged the reputation of not only Western democratic values, but also the credibility of the rule-based order. The Australian government tried to deny the accusation with less believable explanations. Scott Morrison stated that he and President Macron had exchanged several private messages on the issue, in which Canberra's change of plan was indicated (BBC News, 2021b). However, the Australian government has not got a lot to say in its defence. Similarly, the famously close relationship of France and the USA has been undermined by AUKUS. For the first time in history, Paris recalled its ambassador to the United States in protest against the agreement.

Whether Australia tried to indicate its changing priorities regarding submarine development plans to France or not, the USA and the UK should have been fully aware of the possible consequences of such a miscommunication. With the secret negotiations and the revelation of the AUKUS agreement, the new alliance unquestionably caused damage to the credibility of international norms (Myrick, 2023). Secret negotiations in international relations are only acceptable if they contribute to the success of bargaining and do not intend to deceive the domestic public. Of course many would argue that conducting high-level talks behind the scenes per se may well deceive the public. Yet AUKUS did not try to mislead the Australian public; instead, it excluded the French partners and aimed to establish a new framework for military cooperation.

3. An English School Perspective

We have already seen in this study how the English School of IR theory seeks to analyse phenomena in international politics. To gain a deeper understanding of how it is that the ES explains the driving forces behind AUKUS through the lens of the international society so effectively, we should look at its main theoretical statements. In his famous work *The Anarchical Society*, Hedley Bull described the nature of international relations by its level of cooperation, distinguishing "international systems"

from "international societies" (Bull, 2012). The former term refers to circumstances where interstate relations are sufficiently expanded to influence governments in their decision-making. This integrates separate pieces into parts of the whole. In the last one thousand years, when international systems were common, international relations mostly represented such conditions. There were relatively few occasions in history when international societies could come into existence. When he uses the term international societies, Bull means more than just the occasional encounter of states. He refers to international societies where the states share common values and interests. According to Bull, in such systems states view themselves as members of a community where rules bind everyone. This type of community shares a responsibility to maintain its institutions, which originated from the cultural and civilisational framework of the international society. Based on Bull's explanation, we have an alternative, norm-based approach to understanding the AUKUS cooperation. It is important to highlight that many other ES scholars would interpret Bull's suggestion differently to the way the present study does.

This aforementioned type of interstate cooperation can be recognised in today's international society as well. This international society, however, is highly vulnerable because of its relative heterogeneity (Barnes & Makinda, 2022; Bull & Watson, 1984). In classical English School theory, the period of the European international society (beginning with the Conference of Vienna and ending with outbreak of the First World War) serves as the main example of how such communities function. Compared to the contemporary European Union, the "Concert of Europe" clearly showed a more homogenous community of states. Not only were the governments and societies of Europe relatively similar to one another, owing to the fact that they were all Christian countries, they had a similar cultural framework too. The classical ES theory suggests that the expansion of the international society in the 1960s changed the global landscape once and for all. The relative homogeneity was lost, and the institutional framework was weakened with the accession of dozens of new countries subsequent to decolonisation. The international order moved not only in a culturally more heterogenous direction, where Western civilisation became one among the many, but in a more legitimate direction as well, where the oppressed many regained their former independence.

A culturally and religiously diverse international society like the current one almost inevitably leads to a normatively heterogeneous system in which interstate communication is more difficult than in the European international society. It is worth noting that heterogeneity and homogeneity are never absolutes but are relative to the previous systems. We can see that states share certain values and common interests, including the right to sovereignty, diplomatic immunity and freedom from the use of force; this suggests that the global world order is still closer to an international society than an international system. An international system requires a minimal level of interstate cooperation – which, with the current state of globalisation, is unimaginable. Even AUKUS shows us that states are claiming that there is a rule-based international order with a collectively accepted set of norms (The White House, 2021a).

3.1. The Place of AUKUS

The contemporary international society is undoubtedly a "thin" one, meaning that its institutions, norms and engagement are less effective in comparison to the order of the nineteenth century's Concert of Europe. Although the global international community has "rules" (the international law) and "values" (the right to sovereignty, to mention just one), it still lacks a common cultural or civilisational basis from which a common identity might come into existence. And even if the democratic Western countries were to somehow make the rest of the world accept liberal norms, it would not change anything. The Washington-led hemisphere of the world seems to share a political fellowship that rests more on an opportunistic basis than on value-driven considerations. Instead of global integration, we can identify an increasing tendency towards fragmentation in world politics. This fragmentation occurs in various forms, from the collapse of states all the way to the regionalisation of groups of countries.

In the case of AUKUS, a certain type of tendency towards regionalisation can be ascertained (Buzan & Schouenborg, 2018). However, this regionalisation seems to span continents and extends to wider spheres than just one segment of the globe. Based on Buzan's suggestion, we can claim that there are "regional" and "sub-global" integration processes. A sub-global international society is a community where the participants are merged without a direct land connection. A sub-global international society is the "Western world," while a classical regional international society is the current European Union, which is a geographically interconnected, unified, sea-locked peninsula of the Eurasian world island. As we can see, the EU has an unusually high level of interstate cooperation, making it the most integrated part of the current global international society. Sub-global international society, however, is something else. Sub-global international societies are composed of various scattered territories that are bound by common historical development and values. The Anglo-Saxon core countries also show quite a high degree of cooperation, making them a possible sub-global international society-like integration. This is not just because of the aforementioned Five Eyes intelligence cooperation, but also due to their numerous bilateral agreements. The Anglo-American special relationship or the outstanding friendship between Australia and New Zealand (it is enough to think of the AUSMIN forum), makes Anglo-Saxon cooperation a salient part of the current global international society.

3.2. Primary Institutions and AUKUS

Hedley Bull argues that an international society is held together by certain types of rules or mechanisms, namely primary institutions (Bull, 2012; Bull & Watson, 1984). In his writings, he identifies the main primary institutions of the international society to be diplomacy, war, international law, great power management and the balance of power. According to Bull, these are the instruments that determine the direction of the international society. On the other hand, international societies occur not only on a global level. As we have already seen, there are examples of sub-global international societies as well. They have their primary institutions too. The strong engagement and belief in democratic values, the respect for human rights and the environmentalism of the Anglo-Saxon core states may be the basis of a sub-global integration. If we conceive the cooperation of the AUKUS countries

as an example of Anglo-Saxon engagement, we will receive a reasonable explanation of why the political scandals that erupted following the announcement of the cooperation were so significant. The cultural, normative and value-based integration between Australia, the UK and the USA was simply stronger than the politically established connections with France. At the level of AUKUS (and ultimately at the level of Anglo-Saxon international society) we can see a better and more deeply integrated cooperation network of states than in the culturally diverse Western alliance system. The UK and the USA share a century-long special relationship consisting of economic, diplomatic and military cooperation. The UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office also has a historically bolstered network of cooperation with the former colonies of the British Empire, which tend to be increasingly looking for the friendship of London.

The West undoubtedly has its primary institutions, and as a sub-global entity it has a certain level of civilisational homogeneity as well, yet its cohesion has proved to be vulnerable. Primary institutions and normative factors (such as values, culture, history or language) are equally important to the maintenance of lasting interstate cooperation. The case of the Franco–Australian diplomatic rift gave us just one more example of how a seemingly unified and non-confrontational community like the West is simply too heterogeneous to remain fully integrated. This should give us an idea of how difficult it is to preserve the integrity of an international society on a global level. It no coincidence that Hedley Bull extensively examined the possible development paths of international societies in *The Anarchical Society*. The norms and institutions of the world order are surely in decline – but the main shift in world order will be caused by the transformation of the players in international politics. The states are losing their capacity to effectively influence the events in international politics, and non-state actors have become more important than ever before. Although the neomedieval international society may be far from being realised, the decline of the current international society is happening even as we speak. In its place, a more pluralistic, heterogeneous and conflictual world order is about to come into existence.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be stated that France was not prepared for the decision of the Australian government. After many decades of cooperation, Paris justifiably thought that Canberra treated its European partners as being of equal importance to its American ally, and that common values were sufficient to bridge differences. Apparently, it was wrong – and with the AUKUS treaty we are experiencing a change in course, a growing tendency towards fragmentation in the US-led sub-global international society of the West. The emergence of China threatens not only the primacy of the USA in the world order, but also the advantageous position of the Anglo-Saxon countries. This tendency has resulted in a rapprochement between the Anglo-Saxon core countries. In Canada or New Zealand, nostalgia over the British legacy has already gained ground, strengthening the perception of togetherness while Ottawa and Wellington carefully follow the developments of AUKUS. Post-Brexit conditions have begotten a new era in UK foreign policy as well, reviving the old Anglo-

American ties. Canberra simply views the gathering storms over the Pacific competition between Beijing and Washington as being too close at hand for it to remain passive. The AUKUS agreement ended the decade-long period of Australia's balancing between China and the United States (Carr, 2021; O'Connor et al., 2023). The Albanese government irrevocably decided to engage the country with the USA, which was a gamble considering how uncertain the results might be. London's return to its traditional non-continental foreign policy, with Brexit, highlighted that the UK government desperately needs to rethink its future place in world politics. The concept of a "Global Britain" initiates the revitalisation of the former economic relations with the Commonwealth nations, which would inevitably be based on normative fellowship (BBC News, 2016).

AUKUS is also expected to have geopolitical impacts on the power balance of the Pacific, although not so directly or radically as many might expect (Eichensehr, 2022; Shi, 2022; Upadhyaya, 2022). Considering the aim of AUKUS to equip the Royal Australian Navy with nine high-tech nuclear submarines only by the end of the 2030s, not much will happen soon. In spite of this, AUKUS might raise serious security concerns for Australia – after all, the development budget of the submarine project will surely constrain the military budget, leaving the navy without proper assets for any necessary mobilisation for many years (Denham, 2023). Regarding absolute numbers, AUKUS itself seems to be insufficient to deter China's ambitions in Southeast Asia and the Pacific region. It is enough to consider the number of submarines operating in the Indo-Pacific to see the possible effects on military balance (Fleck, 2023). China already possesses twelve nuclear-powered submarines, and this number will surely increase significantly in the coming years. The USA operates sixty-seven SSNs, while the UK has ten. With such a lengthy timeframe for realisation and with China's continued dynamic growth, it is highly debatable whether AUKUS will ultimately have the desired impact. The military balance of the Indo-Pacific region will surely change over two decades, but it is anticipated that AUKUS will play only a modest role in this. Beijing will likely take countermeasures and the projected nine Australian nuclear submarines will not be enough to deter China. Considering all the above aspects, although the AUKUS agreement was an important milestone in Anglo-Saxon integration, I do not expect it to be an adequate tool to counter Beijing's intentions.

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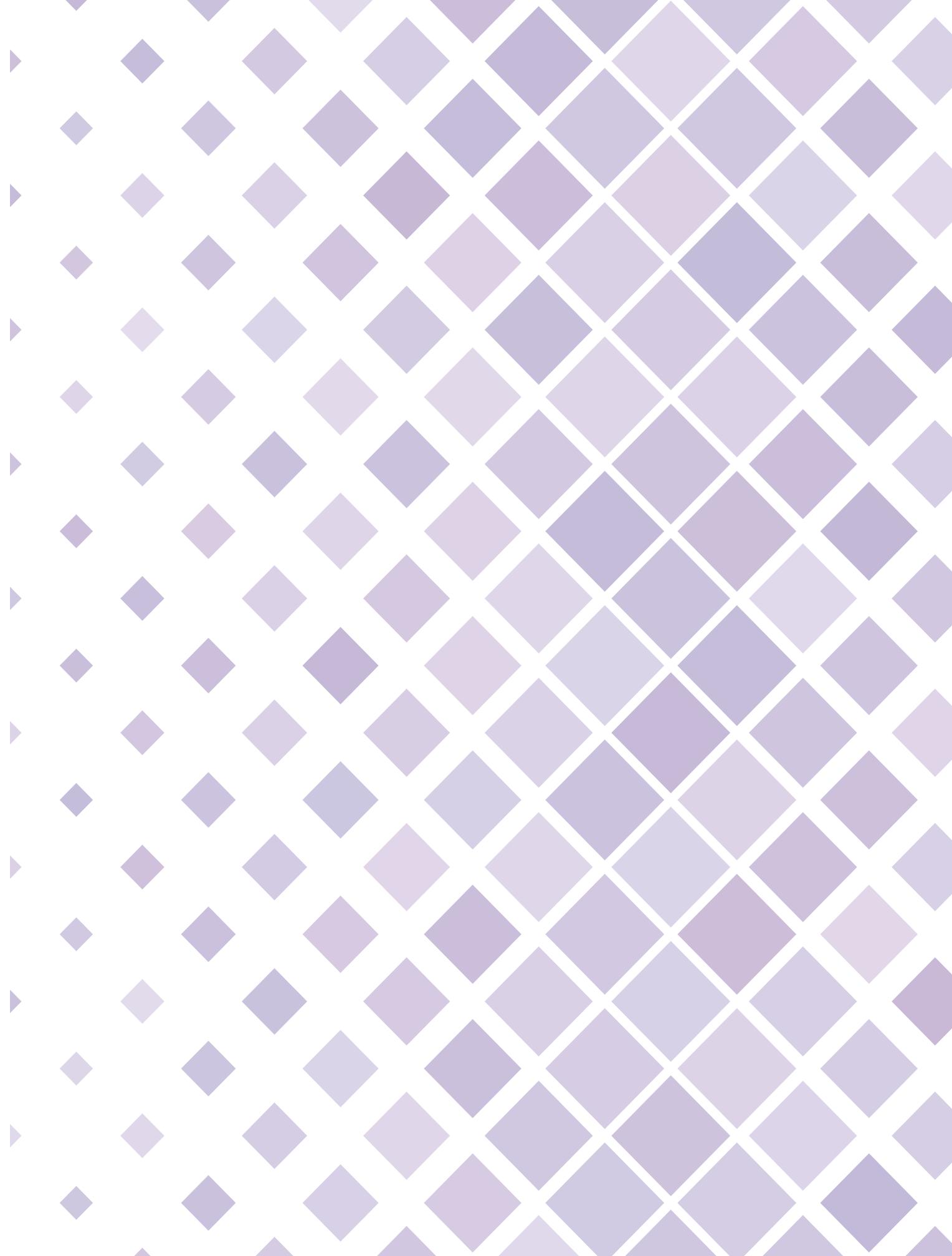
MÓNIKA SZENTE-VARGA – AGUSTÍN SÁNCHEZ ANDRÉS

The Hungarian–Mexican Nexus:
The Reconnection in 1974 and Its Evolution

THE HUNGARIAN–MEXICAN NEXUS: THE RECONNECTION IN 1974 AND ITS EVOLUTION

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Abstract

This article marks the fiftieth anniversary of the re-establishment of diplomatic ties between Hungary and Mexico, which took place in 1974, ending a period of more than thirty years characterised by a lack of an official relationship. The aim of the research is to explore the main external and internal factors that made it possible to normalise the bilateral nexus in the 1970s. One of the innovative features of the investigation is that it has been conducted from both sides, using both Mexican and Hungarian archival and press sources, which makes it possible to compare and reflect upon the foreign policy steps of the respective countries. Following this historical analysis, a brief overview is provided on current relations, with a particular emphasis on public diplomacy and cultural ties.

Keywords: Hungary, Mexico, diplomatic relations, Cold War, satellite/hegemon, foreign policy, public diplomacy

1. Introduction

Following the 1974 re-establishment of diplomatic links between Hungary and Mexico, Pál Losonczi, Chairman of the Presidential Council of the People's Republic of Hungary, paid an official visit to Mexico in 1977. Together with President José Lopez Portillo, he watched a folk-dance performance in one of Mexico City's most emblematic buildings, the Palace of Fine Arts (Dunántúli Napló, 1977). Yet no one present at the event was aware that some of the most spectacular parts of the building – originally constructed with the aim of housing a National Theatre for the centenary celebrations

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of independence – were designed by Hungarian artists, principally Géza Maróti (1874–1941), elaborated in Budapest and then shipped to Mexico in sections at the beginning of the twentieth century (Szente-Varga, 2010, p. 148). These elements include the Art Nouveau stained-glass ceiling of the theatre hall depicting Apollo and the nine Muses, below which the politicians were sitting, the 55-m² Art Nouveau mosaic arc around the stage opening, and the group of statues that decorates the principal dome of the palace. This 1977 visit would have been an excellent opportunity to re-enforce mutual trust and bilateral relations, but it remained unexploited. The episode was rather symptomatic of Hungarian–Mexican connections as a whole: the goals achieved tend to be considerably more modest than what might be possible.

This article marks the fiftieth anniversary of the normalisation of diplomatic relations between Hungary and Mexico in 1974. On one hand, it analyses the reasons during the time span of more than three decades (1941–74) that hindered the improvement and eventual re-establishment of bilateral relations, which were broken off during the Second World War. On the other hand, it scrutinises the factors that made it possible to repair these ties in the 1970s. These connections (and the lack of them) are investigated from both sides of the ocean, by means of archival materials. The principal sources for this analysis were provided, in the case of Mexico, by the Genaro Estrada Diplomatic Historical Archive of the Foreign Affairs Ministry (*Archivo Histórico Diplomático Genaro Estrada de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores*, AHDGE SRE), and, in the case of Hungary, by the Hungarian National Archive (*Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára*, MNL OL). This material was complemented by contemporary newspapers, yearbooks, academic texts and other written sources. The aim was to provide a balanced overview of connections between Hungary and Mexico in which the perceptions, motivations and goals of both sides are examined.

2. The Hiatus in Diplomatic Relations

Shortly after the end of the Second World War, on 3 February 1946, the Hungary–Latin America Association was created in Budapest with the declared aims of improving trade and cultural relations between the two sides and fostering the diplomatic ties between Hungary and Latin American countries.[3] Details of the organisation's membership are unknown, as is its potential influence, but – taking into account the general post-war context – both can be expected to be low. Despite this, it is interesting to note that certain members of the Hungarian cabinet played important roles in the association: its president was István Ries, Minister of Justice, and its honorary president was János Gyöngyössy, Minister of Foreign Affairs. This might imply that the need for normalising and strengthening relations between Hungary and Latin American states had also been raised and discussed in higher political circles and that the association was not merely the isolated initiative of a handful of "Latin America enthusiasts". There were certain factors that made Latin America attractive to Hungary. It was viewed as a huge potential market and a place endowed with an

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3   MNL OL k, Latin-Amerika, 1945-64, 20/a 1946.

abundance of natural resources. Commercial ties could be helped by Hungarian communities living overseas. Hungarian expatriates were present in all Latin American states, though there was a great difference in their numbers, Brazil and Argentina hosting the most numerous Hungarian groups. These communities could function as bridges, connecting the two sides. Finally, Hungary did not have any conflicts with Latin American countries – unlike with its European neighbours.

All the above transformed Latin America into an opportunity for the future, which, however, would remain untapped. Hungarian–Latin American relations were placed in a new context by the Communist takeover in Hungary, the formation of the Socialist bloc, and the advancement of the bipolar global rivalry. Important changes took place with respect to Hungarian foreign policy in general, and the official stance regarding Hungarians living abroad in particular. Regarding the latter, Hungarian groups outside the country were no longer viewed in a positive light by Socialist Hungary or assigned the role of potential interstate go-betweens between their old and new homes. The principal reason for their residence abroad was suspected to be antipathy towards the Hungarian government and, more generally, the Socialist system. Thus, they were typically viewed as people projecting a bad image of Hungary, who not only rejected the new political system, but might even try to undermine it, therefore being dangerous and treacherous. This brought about a severe state of detachment between official Hungary and Hungarian communities abroad.

With the incorporation of Hungary into the Socialist bloc, Hungarian foreign policy was adjusted to the needs of Soviet foreign policy (Borhi, 2005, p. 15). After the Second World War, the USSR needed a shift from its war economy to a more open system, and for this end Moscow planned to use the foreign links (old and current) of its satellites, as these tended to be more diverse than those of the Soviet Union itself. This opening up – also referred to as the "first opening to the West, 1953–1956" (Békés, 2021, p. 19) – became more visible and intensive following the death of Joseph Stalin, but it most probably started earlier. Hungary briefly joined in this trend, but it was soon halted due to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and its violent suppression. The subsequent forced change in government, with the installation of János Kádár as the leader of the country by the Soviet military intervention, resulted in the international isolation of Hungary. Therefore, the Hungarian government was only able to begin to diversify its foreign contacts anew from the early 1960s, which coincided with the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and the official announcement by Fidel Castro that Cuba would take the Socialist path (1 May 1961). The changes in Cuba attracted the attention of the Socialist camp towards the island, and via the island, towards Latin America. Nevertheless, no improvement was reached within the Hungarian–Mexican nexus.

Hungary's leadership had been trying to repair ties with Mexico since the very beginning of the 1950s – but to no effect.[4] In fact, with the objective of normalising relations, a decree by the Presidential Council of the People's Republic of Hungary was expedited in 1956, with another following approximately a decade later, in 1967. In practice, these edicts produced no concrete results. The first decree (3369/56MT) was born in a context when Hungary's relations with Latin

America – broken off during the Second World War – had hardly been restored, and diplomatic ties had only been normalised with a limited number of countries: Ecuador (1946), Argentina (1949), Bolivia (1952) and Uruguay (1956). The latter two cases, however, show how the winds of change from the Soviet Union were beginning to reach Hungary, pointing at an opening in foreign relations. Be that as it may, this process was soon halted by the 1956 Revolution. By the time the second decree (3334/67MT) was issued, a decade had already passed since the Revolution. In the intervening period, the Kádár government had provided partial amnesty for the participants of the revolution and Hungary had been reaccepted by the international community. In the first half of the 1960s, the country normalised its relations with Cuba (1960), Brazil (1961) and Chile (1965), but not with Mexico (Külügyminisztérium, 1973, pp. 223–232). The Hungarian government was keen to re-establish these diplomatic ties before the 1968 Summer Olympic Games in Mexico City. However, due to the Estrada Doctrine,[5] establishing contacts with Kádár's Hungary was not desirable for Mexico. 'As long as János Kádár leads the Hungarian people, Mexico will not establish diplomatic relations with Hungary on the principle that he asked for foreign help, for the support of the Soviet troops',[6] wrote Bolivian Chargé d'Affaires Jenő György, quoting a Mexican diplomat. This attitude was also reflected by the fact that István Szurdi, who had authorisation on behalf of the Hungarian government to negotiate the normalisation of the bilateral nexus (3334/67MT), and who was to lead the Hungarian delegation, did not even receive a visa to travel to Mexico.[7] Hungary had to realise that its desire to normalise bilateral ties was not enough – the desire of the Mexican government was also indispensable. From that time on, instead of actively pushing for the re-establishment of diplomatic relations, Hungary was more on the lookout for opportunities, waiting for a favourable turn to take place in Mexico.

After the Second World War, Mexican foreign policy concentrated on the American continent, focusing on the United States and Latin America. Mexico gradually rebuilt its contacts with Western European countries, but while the reconstruction of the European economy was still ongoing, economic and cultural exchanges remained low key (Ruano, 2013, p. 5–13). Europe was no longer a priority for Mexico. What is more, links with European countries were conditioned by their relationship with the USA. As the Senator Alexandro Carrillo put it, 'although Mexico will never openly admit it, the question of Hungarian–Mexican diplomatic relations depends primarily on the question of the Hungarian–American [or more precisely, Hungarian–US] nexus.[8] In other words, while the relationship between Hungary and the USA remained unfriendly and unresolved, there was no chance of the resumption of diplomatic relations between Hungary and Mexico.

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4   MNL OL j, Latin-Amerika, 1945-64, box 1, 4/b, 1960.

5   The *Doctrina Estrada* was enunciated by Mexico's Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Genaro Estrada, in 1930. It is one of the pillars of post-revolutionary foreign policy, which establishes that governments do not need recognition from other countries to claim sovereignty except in the case of political regimes that emerged from foreign intervention, as was the case with Franco's Spain and the Central and Eastern European countries allied with the Axis and subsequently occupied by the Red Army.

6   MNL OL j, Mexikó, 1968, box 64, 102-1.

7   MNL OL j, Mexikó, 1974, box 76, 102-11.

8   MNL OL j, Mexikó, 1968, box 64, 102-1.

The Hungarian side had been approaching Mexican diplomats working in third countries to try to settle the diplomatic nexus: 'Since 1951, we have made countless unsuccessful attempts to establish diplomatic relations'.[9] In the Americas – in Washington, La Paz and Buenos Aires, and in Europe – in Paris and Prague, Hungarian diplomats raised the issue of normalising bilateral relations with their Mexican counterparts in informal talks. Albeit implicitly, for example in the form of references to a lack of financial resources, there was a general lack of positive feedback (Szente-Varga, 2019b, p. 196). The basic reason, of course, was that such a move could have incurred the disapproval of the United States.

During the Cold War, both Hungary and Mexico aligned their foreign policies with the superpower that was their immediate neighbour. Nonetheless, both Hungary and Mexico had some room for manoeuvre. For security reasons, it was crucial for the USA to keep the American continent on the non-Communist side in the Cold War. Mexico, sharing a border of over 3,000 kilometres to the south, was a key country. The US leadership was familiar with the Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, PRI), as it had been governing Mexico since the end of the 1920s. They were aware of its position close to the political centre and could see it as a guarantee that Mexico would remain on the "safe side" in the Cold War, that is, that there would be no left turn in the country. In light of this, it was the interests of the USA to "freeze" the Mexican political arena and ensure that it remained unchanged, under consecutive PRI presidencies. Allowing PRI governments to enjoy a certain degree of autonomy in their own foreign policy decisions – not necessarily adjusting to US actions, for example in the case of Cuba – was a means to contribute to the domestic support and popularity of these administrations that were thus able to make use of anti-US and nationalistic sentiments (Rodríguez de Ita, 2004, pp. 397–430). Although this kind of freedom covered Latin America, it was not necessarily applied to Europe. Mexico's policy towards Hungary was also conditioned by the position of the Estrada Doctrine. The Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956 reaffirmed this position (Sánchez Andrés & Szente-Varga, 2021, pp. 6–17).

On the other side of the coin, it can be noted that the Soviet Union was also ready to grant its satellites a certain amount of room for manoeuvre, the aim being to bolster the stability of their Communist governments, and hence, maintain its empire. The USSR permitted – and, indeed, encouraged – Socialist countries to foster links with the Third World, today's Global South, because Moscow realised that such connections could both result in extra revenue for the Socialist states and increase their visibility (and thus that of the Socialist world also), contributing to domestic support for the Communist parties. In the case of Hungary, a key legitimising factor of the Kádár government was the relatively high national standard of living.

Satellites were not merely passive agents in the Cold War. Hungary, for example, was keen on building connections with the Third World and was actively engaging with non-European countries. Its objectives in this were manifold, including the aims of obtaining hard currency (to be able to buy the Western technology the country depended on), increasing Hungary's international prestige,

bolstering internal support for the government, and reducing dependence on the Soviet Union (Bódy, 2021, p. 5). Even satellites could find some additional opportunities to exploit within the given coordinates. How much Hungary and Mexico used these possibilities depended on the international context, as well as on the abilities and ambitions of their political leaders.

3. The Change

In the 1970s, during the presidency of Luis Echeverría (1970–76), Mexico's attitude changed due to a complex array of reasons, both national and international. Echeverría pursued a nationalistic foreign and economic policy, which included the goal of trying to make Mexico less dependent on the United States. This entailed a search for new markets, which the country planned to support and guarantee by diversifying diplomatic ties. 'For many decades, Mexico's foreign policy has been characterised by relative isolation. Even in the early 1970s, it only had diplomatic relations with barely fifty countries. The Echeverría government, however, [...] achieved a major diplomatic opening up',[10] wrote the Hungarian side. A favourable international context was provided by a period of reduced Cold War tensions, while domestically there were important economic considerations behind the aforementioned opening up. By the early 1970s, Mexico's spectacular period of economic growth – the so-called "Mexican Miracle"[11] – had faded, and its northern neighbour was also experiencing economic difficulties, making it unlikely that Mexican exports to the USA would significantly increase. This latter factor was particularly worrying for Mexico, because the United States was its primary export destination. A way out of this dilemma was seen to be the diversification of export markets, and in consequence more intensive foreign relations were on the one hand thus closely linked to economic interests.

On the other hand – and to a considerable extent – this expansion of foreign ties was seen as a palliative to Mexico's internal political situation (Grabendorff, 1977, pp. 91–99). Domestic support for Luis Echeverría, who took office in 1970, was rather low, since he had played a key role in the Tlatelolco massacre – the bloody repression of the student movement in 1968 – as Minister of the Interior, and also in the violent repression of the 1971 student movement, this time as President. In order to increase his legitimacy, Echeverría looked for external sources. During his presidency, Mexico established diplomatic relations with over thirty countries, including Albania, Bulgaria, China, the GDR, Romania, Vietnam and Hungary. He visited more than forty countries (including the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia), initiated the creation of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (*Sistema Económico Lationoamericano y del Caribe*, SELA), and in 1975 concluded an agreement with Comecon (Cerda Dueñas, 2018). By the first half of the 1970s, Mexico had

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9   MNL OL j, Latin-Amerika, 1945-64, box 1, 4/b-e.

10   MNL OL j. Mexikó, 1975, box 96, 102-1.

11   A period of sustained economic growth between 1940 and 1970, with an annual GDP growth of more than 6% (Aboites-Aguilar, 2013, p. 281).

become a busy player in international forums, where it acted as an advocate for Latin America and the Third World in general.

Echeverría's Mexico played a bridging role between the Western, Asian and African worlds through its promotion of the New International Economic Order that was promulgated by developing countries in the 1970s. With the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, Mexico attempted to influence the modification of the functioning of global economic governance. The Mexican proposal – which was supported by Hungary and the rest of the Socialist bloc – became a geopolitical platform for meetings between the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Tabled by Echeverría in 1972, it was promoted by Mexico during its 1974–75 presidency of the G77. The Charter was approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 14 December 1974, with the support of the majority of the developing countries and the Socialist bloc. Faced with the conflicting modernisation options presented by capitalism and socialism, this initiative was an example of the political-economic discussions that less developed countries promoted in the context of the Cold War.

In addition to economic, foreign and domestic policy considerations, Echeverría's personal ambitions may also have played a role in Mexico's diplomatic opening up and increased international activities. When his mandate expired at the end of his six-year incumbency, he wished to run for the post of UN Secretary General. In its 1 December 1976 issue, the Hungarian daily *Népszabadság*, the central newspaper of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (*Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt*, MSZMP), reported that the outgoing Mexican president had 'sent a letter to the President-in-Office of the Security Council informing him that he would be running for the post of UN Secretary-General'. Later, however, Echeverría stepped aside in favour of Kurt Waldheim, who was running for his second term.[12]

4. The Normalisation of Diplomatic Relations and the Establishment of Embassies

The normalisation of the diplomatic nexus between Hungary and Mexico was part of a general process initiated by Mexico – "general" because it did not concern individual countries, but rather geographical or political regions, such as Eastern Europe. Diplomatic relations between Hungary and Mexico were re-established on 14 May 1974. The asymmetric nature and different scale of interests in bilateral relations were reflected in the opening of embassies (Szente-Varga & Sánchez Andrés, 2022). For Hungarian foreign policy, having representation in Mexico was a goal that it had been trying to reach for decades. Well aware that the Hungarian–Mexican nexus depended to a great extent on Cold War constellations beyond the control of Budapest, the Hungarian government was keen to open the embassy within a short space of time. The bipolar global rivalry tended to preserve

the status quo and was generally unfavourable to changes. Once the embassy was running, however, it would probably be able to continue functioning even under adverse circumstances. Original plans included sending the first Hungarian ambassador to Mexico within six months, that is, before the end of 1974.[13] Eventually, the process turned out to be a bit slower. Even though the Hungarian Embassy in Mexico City was opened only a few months after the re-establishment of diplomatic ties, in September 1974, it was initially headed by Dr János Király, Chargé d'Affaires Ad Interim. The first ambassador, Zsiva Peják,[14] presented his credentials the following year, on 2 October 1975 (Külügyminisztérium, 1977, p. 47).

Regarding the establishment of an embassy in Hungary, Mexico showed no great urgency. Aside from anything else, this diversification of foreign contacts during a single presidency – including the opening of embassies in various cases – implied logistical and budgetary challenges. Initially a concurrent representation for both Hungary and Austria was organised from Vienna. Ulises Schmill Ordoñez[15] presented his credentials in Budapest on 26 June 1975 but then returned to Austria and worked from there. In 1976, Moisés Torres Serrano was sent to Hungary as Chargé d'Affaires Ad Interim and the embassy was opened on 30 September 1976 at his temporary residence in Budapest's Grand Hotel.[16] The first Mexican ambassador to Budapest was Roberto de Negri Yberri, who arrived in November 1976. Due to difficulties in finding a suitable base, he first worked from the Duna Intercontinental Hotel. Finally, the Mexican embassy was opened at 55 Budakeszi utca on 15 January 1977.[17]

The establishment of relations between Hungary and Mexico coincided with an international context marked by the beginning of a period of détente between the US and Soviet superpowers. The 1970s increased the transition to a more multipolar world, where Europe and Japan began to compete with the United States in the international market and India gained access to the select club of states with nuclear capabilities. The dictatorial regimes of southern Europe (Greece, Portugal and Spain) were replaced by democratic administrations. In Latin America, the opposite happened, with military dictatorships supported by the USA predominating. Nixon's resignation over the Watergate scandal was accompanied by America's withdrawal from Vietnam following the Peace of Paris. The Arab–Israeli conflict and the Yom Kippur War gave rise to the oil crisis, which destabilised the world economy. This forced the USA and the USSR to reach an agreement through the UN that concluded with a ceasefire between the Arab coalition and Israel, and Egypt's rapprochement with the Western world that would later lead to the Camp David Accords.

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12   The first and so-far only Latin American UN Secretary-General was the Peruvian diplomat Javier Pérez de Cuellar, who held this post from 1982 until 1991.

13   MNL OL j, Mexikó, 1974, box 76, 102-113.

14   A Hungarian diplomat of Serbian origin. He later became Hungary's ambassador to Argentina and presented his credentials in Buenos Aires in November 1982. He was awarded the Order of Merit for of Socialist Hungary. He died on 26 January 1996, aged 71.

15   Ulises Schmill Ordoñez (1937–). Diplomat and jurist; President of the Supreme Court of Mexico in the early 1990s.

16   AHDGE SRE, 1976 November, HUN-1-3; De Negri a Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 15 November 1976.

17   AHDGE SRE, 1977, HUN-1-4; De Negri a Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 19 January 1977.

5. Uneven Progress: Connections Between 1974 and 2024

The normalisation of diplomatic relations between Mexico and Hungary was followed by a series of bilateral agreements covering the fields of trade (1975), cultural cooperation (1975) and scientific and technological cooperation (1977). Initial enthusiasm, however, soon began to dwindle. As a member of Comecon, Hungary could be attractive, but its economy alone was too small for Mexico to be very interested, bilateral commerce presenting no prospect of reducing Mexico's dependence on the United States. Due to the differences in size, Mexico represented huge potential for Hungarian exports, yet this remained an untapped opportunity too, despite the fact that 'the foreign policy interests of small countries are by their nature primarily economic' (Kádár, 1988, p. 110). Even though Hungarian foreign policy towards Latin America was traditionally trade-driven and the Mexican market was liberalised in the 1980s, allowing for a spectacular growth in imports, no significant trade flows between the two countries ensued.

After 1990, with the demise of the Cold War, both Mexico and Hungary gained more freedom of action in their foreign policy decisions, but it did not bring them any closer. The July 1992 visit to Hungary of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari provided the opportunity to sign various agreements and would serve to give a certain boost to relations between the countries, also allowing Mexico's image to be relaunched in Hungary, but the expectations of a greater rapprochement did not materialise (Szente-Varga & Sánchez Andrés, 2021, pp. 5–6). Hungary – which was formerly the driver behind strengthening the bilateral ties – lost interest in Latin America. On one hand, one of the government's key priorities became joining the European integration process, implying a focus on its own continent. Coupled with meagre resources, this led to the relegation of Latin America to the margins of interest. Another factor that contributed to the latter phenomenon was the disappearance of Hungary's so-called "double dependence" (Böröcz, 1992). During the Cold War, this had meant a reliance both on the Soviet superpower and the Western world, the former dependence covering mostly political aspects, and the latter mostly economic ones (technology and, later, loans). In order to compensate for their limited contacts with the West and also to obtain the money required to buy Western products and technology, Socialist countries were permitted to reach out to the Global South (Ginelli, 2018; Tomka, 2023), the USSR not only allowing these links, but actually supporting them as a means of increasing the domestic support of Communist governments and the international visibility of the Socialist camp as a whole. Such intensive relations between the Second and Third worlds, however, were largely characteristic of the Cold War period only, and with its end, they vanished. Due to waning interest and financial restraints, the Hungarian government started to close its embassies in Latin America. Thus, from there being more than ten Hungarian embassies in the 1980s, twenty years after the fall of Communism and the country's transition to democracy, only four remained – those in Buenos Aires, Brasília, Havana and Mexico City (Magyar Köztársaság Külügyminisztériuma, 2010, pp. 385–397).

Although, by joining the European Union in 2004, Hungary started to configure a part of its new international connectivities, no growth of interest towards Latin America was noticeable either then or in the immediately ensuing period. In fact, for an ephemeral moment, there seemed to be more interest from the other side of the Atlantic. In May 2004, President Vicente Fox arrived in Budapest in the year of the thirtieth anniversary of the re-establishment of Hungarian–Mexican relations, becoming the first foreign head of state to visit Hungary following its EU accession (Népszava, 2004, p. 2; Ortutay Lovas, 2004, p. 4). Regarding Hungarian foreign policy, it was only a decade later, from the middle of the 2010s, when positive tendencies began to appear, in particular in the framework of "Opening to the South" (MTI, 2015). Hungary re-opened four embassies in Latin America (in Colombia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru) and established a trade office (*Casa Húngara de Comercio*) in Mexico City (SRE, 2015). All of these developments were accompanied by high-level political visits by Hungarian public officials.

Although in recent years, Mexico has been Hungary's number one trade partner in Latin America, overall figures have remained very low. In 2022, Mexico accounted for only 0.86% of all Hungarian exports and 0.17% of imports. Hungarian exports to Mexico represented a total value of USD 1.26 billion and mainly consisted of machinery (combustion and spark-ignition engines and engine parts), as well as items related to transportation (cars and car parts). Imports totalled only USD 257 million, covering, among other things, office machine parts, integrated circuits, computers and broadcasting equipment (OEC, 2022a).

As for Mexico, 0.047% of its exports and 0.24% of its imports were conducted with Hungary (OEC, 2022b). The main source of origin of Mexican exports to Hungary were the states of Jalisco and Nuevo León, followed by Mexico City (DataMéxico, 2024). The most significant Mexican investment in Hungary is that of the Nemak company (Magyarország Nagykövetsége, Mexikóváros, n.d.). Nemak Győr Kft. – located in Hungary's sixth most populous city, Győr – has been manufacturing cylinder heads and automotive parts for petrol and diesel engines since 1993. It has been a strategic partner of the Hungarian government since 2015 and currently employs approximately a thousand people, making it one of its region's biggest employers (Nemak, 2024).

Regarding Hungarian companies in Mexico, the Richter and Graphisoft corporations both have subsidiaries there. In fact, Richter – and the Hungarian pharmaceutical industry in general – has been present in Mexico for a hundred years, its roots going back to the 1920s, when Richter and Chinoin started selling products in Mexico via representatives. Later, in the interwar years, both established filial companies in Mexico, while Hungarian expatriates made important contributions to the foundation and functioning of such firms as Syntex, Laboratorios Hormona and Sanyn (Kovács, 2017, 2023; Szente-Varga, 2019a). Richter is currently present in Mexico as Gedeon Richter Mexico. Despite the outstanding successes of certain companies, commercial exchange and investments remain of little significance. Their low level presents a contrast with recent high-profile political

visits by Hungarian dignitaries, including those of Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó in 2015, 2019 and 2023,[18] as well as that of László Kövér, President of the Hungarian National Assembly, in 2017.

Besides trade and politics, there is a relatively new feature in Hungarian foreign policy towards Mexico: the emphasis on public diplomacy, in particular, cultural ties. During his 2019 visit to Mexico, Péter Szijjártó pledged Hungarian financial support for the restoration of the former Convent of the Nativity in Tepoztlán,[19] including the archaeological collection of the poet Carlos Pellicer, which is located in the building complex, and the Sagrado Corazón de Jesús church in Mexico City – at Calle Roma 14, on the corner of Londres in Colonia Juárez – both of which were damaged by the 2017 earthquakes (Mateos Vega, 2019, p. 6; SRE, 2019). According to the current Hungarian Ambassador to Mexico, Zoltán Németh, Hungary has contributed to restoration works with approximately USD 1.7 million (Cortés, 2022). By 2023, the restoration of the Convent of the Nativity and the Pre-Hispanic Museum had been completed and during his visit to Mexico that January, Péter Szijjártó travelled to Tepoztlán to take part in the corresponding ceremony (Gobierno de México, 2023).

The Sagrado Corazón de Jesús church in Mexico City has a particular link to Hungary, as it was once known as the church of the Hungarian community and is located in the square formerly known as *Plaza Hungría* (Torbágyi, 2004, p. 271). The building has seven stained-glass windows decorated with images of Hungarian saints, accompanied by brief descriptions of their lives. These are St. Martin of Tours,[20] St. Emeric, St. Ladislaus of Hungary, St. Irene of Hungary, St. Margaret, St. Elizabeth[21] and St. Stephen of Hungary (Szente-Varga, 2017, pp. 115–116). The process of the renovation and its results were shown to the Mexican public in an exhibition entitled *Presencia de Hungría en México – Conservación del Patrimonio Artístico: Una alianza de colaboración*,[22] which was organised in July and August 2023 in the Palace of Fine Arts in Mexico City (INBAL, 2023).

In contrast with the 1970s, when the Hungarian connections in the Palace of Fine Arts had not been explored, disseminated or exploited in Hungarian–Mexican relations (see the visit of Pál Losonczi in the Introduction), twenty-first-century Hungarian foreign policy is not only conscious of these past links, but also relies on them to strengthen visibility and build mutual confidence in the present. An

instance of this is the Hungarian financial support given for the restoration of the group of sculptures designed by Géza Maróti that crowns the principal dome of the building (Nigenda, 2023).[23]

Fortunately, the list of Hungarian–Mexican cultural ties and the resulting cultural heritage is far from short. In place of a comprehensive list, let us mention here just two other spectacular examples from the twentieth century. The decorations in Mexico City's Parroquia del Señor de la Resurrección church by the Hungarian–French artist Victor Vasarely[24] are breathtaking. They include the 325-m² fourteen-colour stained-glass-effect plexiglass window of the facade and the gilt bronze altar (Dragon, 2002, p. 33; Musacchio, 1994). Similar ecclesiastical artistic treasures are the copies made of two works by the internationally acclaimed Hungarian painter Mihály Munkácsy.[25] Reproduced in the form of murals, *Christ before Pilate* and *Golgotha* adorn the Iglesia de la Tercera Orden in Mérida (Hammerli, 1978, p. 14; Passuth, 1978, p. 9; Sperlagh, 1978, p. 7). These wall paintings were probably created around 1930, when the church was renovated following damage that occurred during the Mexican Revolution, and they are generally attributed to a Jesuit priest, Manuel Tapia.[26]

6. Conclusions

The Cold War left a significant mark on Hungarian–Mexican relations, both countries adjusting their foreign policies to those of their respective hegemons. In the case of Mexico, this led to a lack of interest towards and distancing from Eastern European Socialist countries, whereas Hungary – starting from the early 1950s and especially in the 1960s – made several efforts to normalise relations, which actually fitted into the general trend of Socialist countries opening up towards the Third World, as supported by the Soviet Union. These Hungarian attempts were doomed to failure until Mexico's attitude changed – a process which took several decades. The improved East–West relations of the 1970s laid the foundations for the normalisation of bilateral ties. The 1974 re-establishment of diplomatic links can be considered as a demonstration by both countries of the room for manoeuvre they enjoyed as satellites. In spite of this, the initial enthusiasm surrounding the normalisation of diplomatic ties was followed by dwindling interest and, later, indifference. Although the intensity of bilateral relations has varied over the past fifty years, in general this period can be characterised as one of untapped opportunities. The basic obstacles in intensifying relations include on the one hand insufficient knowledge of each other, and on the other hand – at least from the Hungarian side – the lack of a comprehensive Latin America strategy.

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[18] During his April 2015 visit, Minister Szijjártó requested observer status for Hungary in the Pacific Alliance (PA). This materialised in the summer of the same year. Three years later, under the Hungarian rotating presidency of the Visegrád Group (V4), a first meeting between the PA and the V4 took place on 5 June 2018 (Magyarország kormánya, 2018).

[19] Antiguo convento de Natividad en Tepoztlán, Morelos; a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

[20] Born in Savaria in the Province of Pannonia (now Szombathely, Hungary) in the fourth century. Originally a Roman soldier, after his conversion to Christianity he became a hermit and later Bishop of Tours. St. Martin is a very popular saint in Europe, especially in Hungary and France. He is kind of an odd one out in the row of seven saints in the church, as his lifetime far preceded not only that of the others, but also the foundation of the Kingdom of Hungary itself, and he is the only saint here not to come from the royal dynasty of the House of Árpád.

[21] Daughter of King Andrew II of Hungary; canonised in 1235. Her half-sister Violant of Hungary married James I of Aragón. Violant and her descendants promoted the cult of Elizabeth in Hispanic lands, from whence it arrived in the Americas. There are various other representations of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary in Mexico. She figures in the Cathedrals of Mexico City and Puebla (in the "Altar of the Kings") and also in several – mostly Franciscan – churches throughout the country.

[22] "Hungary's Presence in Mexico – Conservation of Artistic Heritage: a Collaborative Partnership".

[23] Elaborated in the workshops of Gyula Jungfer and the brothers Ármin and Ferenc Steiner in Budapest, it consists of three principal elements: (1) its pedestal; (2) a quartet of 9-metre-high female figures personifying Music, Song, Tragedy and Dance, which stand on the pedestal; (3) the apex depicting the Aztec legend of the founding of Mexico–Tenochtitlan (Szente-Varga, 2002, pp. 109–110).

[24] Born Győző Vásárhelyi (Pécs, 1906 – Paris, 1997).

[25] Born Mihály Leó Lieb (Munkács, 1844 – Endenlich, 1900).

[26] These paintings form the first two parts of a trilogy; Munkácsy originally created them in 1882 and 1884 respectively, and they were exhibited as far afield as the United States. They became known in Latin America too; see, for example, various related texts by José Martí, published in 1886–87.

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ÁDÁM SASHALMI

Eurafrica Instead of Eurasia? The Concept of the Geopolitical Fusion of Europe and Africa Presented Through Classical Italian Geopolitical Thinking

EURAFRICA INSTEAD OF EURASIA? THE CONCEPT OF THE GEOPOLITICAL FUSION OF EUROPE AND AFRICA PRESENTED THROUGH CLASSICAL ITALIAN GEOPOLITICAL THINKING

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Abstract

At the beginning of the twentieth century, numerous geopolitical thinkers, including Alfred Thayer Mahan, Halford John Mackinder and Karl Ernst Haushofer, emphasised the importance of the Eurasian continental bloc and the significance of a potential fusion of industrialised Europe and the resource-rich Asia by one great power. However, many alternative ideas were also formulated – and the focus of these theories was on Africa. One significant source of these alternative concepts was the classical Italian school of geopolitics. This paper aims to present the "Eurafrica" concept of Fascist Italy, especially through the works of Paolo D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota. According to the theory, Africa could simultaneously provide natural resources for European industry and absorb Europe's surplus population. Due to its central position in the Mediterranean, D'Agostino Orsini ascribed a key role to Italy in the realisation of the fusion of Europe and Africa.

Keywords: Italy, geopolitics, Eurafrica concept, colonialism, Fascism

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1. Introduction

This paper aims to present an alternative to geopolitical literature's "*Eurasia concept*", which is based on the unification of European technology and Asian raw materials. The potential fusion between Europe and Africa was widely published at the beginning of the twentieth century. One of the most important authors was Paolo D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota, an emblematic figure of the classical Italian school of geopolitics. He is credited with the coining of the word "*Eurafrica*" (Antonsich, 1997). This study briefly outlines the visions of the two geopolitical directions – *Eurasia* and *Eurafrica* –and introduces the *Eurafrica concept*. It then describes Italy's geopolitical aspirations in Africa and the vision of Paolo D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota. An important source for this study's elaboration of the ideas connected to the concept of Eurafrica was Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson's *Eurafrica: The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism* (2014). In addition, works by Marco Antonsich (1997, 2009) and Giulio Sinbaldi (2010) were instrumental in presenting both Italian geopolitical ideas concerning Africa and the vision of D'Agostino Orsini. Other academic works on geopolitics, foreign policy and colonialism were also analysed. These sources – in Italian, English and Hungarian – were mainly from the fields of political science, international relations theory and history.

2. Methodology

The research is primarily based on the textual analysis and interpretation of the writings of Paolo D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota. For the comparison of Eurasianism and Eurafricanism, the broader presentation of the concept of Eurafrica, the contextualisation of the Italian vision and the history of Italian colonial policy, the paper relies on secondary sources from the relevant scientific literature.

3. Eurasianism and Eurafricanism

As early as 1897, Friderich Ratzel argued that five states had the necessary size to become a great power: Great Britain, Russia, China, the United States and Brazil (Szilágyi, 2018). By this, Ratzel was indicating that no single country in continental Europe had enough "living space" to become a great power of the future. In 1914, Rudolf Kjellén warned of the dangers of great powers outside Europe, and the aftermath of the First World War further highlighted the problems of Europe's lack of resources and the narrow geographical space of the European powers (Hansen & Jonsson, 2014). In response to this, theories appeared that saw either the unification of Europe and Asia or that of Europe and Africa as the solution to the disadvantageous situation of the European powers. Followers of the first idea include those who went back to the works of earlier geopoliticians such as Alfred Thayer Mahan or Halford John Mackinder. In the works of Mahan and Mackinder, the Eurasian region was seen primarily from the perspective of the power ambitions of the maritime powers (Great

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Britain and the United States). These authors argued that the maritime powers should prevent the unification of this region under the leadership of a continental power (Klemensits, 2021). Mackinder defined three seats of power in the world. The so-called "*pivot area*" was situated in the inner parts of Eurasia, where the ruling power was wholly continental. It had the conditions for continental mobility. Thus, it was historically dominated by nomadic peoples, the Mongolian Empire, and, in Mackinder's time, by the Russian Empire. Mackinder also described an "*inner crescent*" and an "*outer crescent*" around the pivot area. The inner crescent occupied the marginal territories of Europe and Asia with Germany, Austria, Turkey, India and China. This region was partly continental and partly maritime. According to Mackinder, the unification of the pivot and the inner crescent presented a threat to the balance of power, as a "pivot state" could exploit the vast resources of Eurasia to strengthen its military might against the maritime powers. The outer crescent was fully maritime. In the case of the unification of Eurasia, the ring of outer and inner bases of maritime powers against the expansion of the land power would consist of Great Britain, Canada, the United States, South Africa, Australia and Japan (Mackinder, 1904). Thus, in Mackinder's concept, sub-Saharan Africa could be described as a "blocking region" against the expansion of the land power, with the strategic role of South Africa from among the maritime powers. In Germany, Karl Ernst Haushofer was a representative of such thinking (Dövényi & Nagy, 2022). In the 1920s, a Eurasianist movement also appeared in Russia, where the unification of European and Asian territories was advocated. One of the representatives of this movement was Nikolai Trubetzkoy (Botz-Bornstein, 2007). As opposed to Mahan and Mackinder, the goal of Haushofer and Trubetzkoy was the realisation of the unification of the great territories of Europe and Asia. In contrast, the vision of Eurafricanists was based on the already-built colonial systems of European powers (Hansen & Jonsson, 2014).

4. Plans for the Unification of Europe and Africa

When discussing the ideas for the fusion of the continents of Europe and Africa, it is important to mention the name of Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi and the associated Pan-European movement. The movement envisioned a community of interests between nations in Europe, leaving Great Britain out. According to the movement, all participating states would benefit from the advantages of a colonial policy in Africa, ensuring Europe's dominant role in world politics (Hansen & Jonsson, 2014). The political leaders of the Weimar Republic were open to the views of Coudenhove-Kalergi, as they held it important to somehow ensure access to African colonies for Germany. Furthermore, the Pan-European movement also had an indirect impact on the later process of European integration (Hansen & Jonsson, 2014). The work of the aforementioned Karl Ernst Haushofer is also relevant in the case of Germany. Haushofer was also associated with the pan-European movement, and according to John O'Loughlin and Herman van der Wusten (1990), his pan-regional theory was greatly influenced by Coudenhove-Kalergi. However, Zoltán Dövényi and Mihály Nagy (2022) emphasise the role of Mackinder's work in this respect. In his 1931 work *Geopolitik der Pan-ideen* (*The Geopolitics of Pan-ideas*), Haushofer argued that the world's leading power would emerge from

the struggle of the four pan-regional powers. The leading power in the Pan-American region was the United States; in the case of Pan-Europe (Eurafrica), which included Africa as well, it was Germany; in the Pan-Russian region, it was Russia/the Soviet Union; and in Pan-Asia, it was Japan (Klemensits, 2021). However, in the German geopolitical school, there was a constant debate about whether Germany should expand eastwards or towards the reclamation of its former African colonies. Adolf Hitler himself did not favour the reclamation of colonies (Hansen & Jonsson, 2014).

It is also important to highlight the ideas of the French thinker Eugène Guernier. His work is significant because it was a source for Paolo D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota's theory (Antonsich, 1997). In *L'Afrique, champ d'expansion de l'Europe* (*Africa, Europe's Area for Expansion*), Guernier developed a plan to address Europe's problem of demographic pressures by relocating the continent's surplus population to Africa. According to this concept, since no single European state had the requisite financial and organisational resources to set up colonies, European cooperation was necessary. Guernier outlined the implementation of the plan in three steps. Firstly, elected members of the European elite would be sent to Africa to implement development projects on the ground in preparation for the next stage. The second step would bring in law enforcement agencies, engineers, architects, builders and contractors who would continue the development based on the exploitation of local raw materials to improve living conditions. In the final step, settlers would arrive en masse. According to Guernier, the creation of Eurafrica would establish a new world power pole alongside the Americas (led by the USA) and Eurasia (led by the Soviet Union) (Hansen & Jonsson, 2014). French ideas on internationally coordinated population transfer from Europe to African territories were also taken up by Paris's foreign policy and presented in international forums. Furthermore, Eurafrica became a foreign policy doctrine of France (Hansen & Jonsson, 2014).

Rather different to liberal and conservative ideas was the theory of the Russian Marxist Wladimir Woytinski. He envisioned a "United States of Europe" with an internationalised system of colonies and emphasised the importance of the rising European proletariat in the preservation of Europe's global hegemony (Hansen & Jonsson, 2014). Probably the most radical vision of the unification of Europe and Africa was outlined by the German Herman Sörgel. Sörgel's plan was to build a network of dams and hydroelectric power plants at the Strait of Gibraltar and the mouths of the major rivers feeding the Mediterranean Sea (the Nile, Rhône, Po, Tiber and Ebro) and the Black Sea (the Danube and Dnieper), which would lower the sea level and create land bridges between the two continents. The concept of this united area was named *"Atlantropa"* (Hansen & Jonsson, 2014).

Hansen and Jonsson (2014) describe the 1931 Great Colonial Exposition in Paris and the 1932 Volta Congress in Rome as important political manifestations of Eurafricanism. The latter was opened by Benito Mussolini. In 1932, French diplomats also launched an initiative favouring Eurafrica via the League of Nations. However, the political atmosphere in the most powerful European states was changing significantly and the new, nationalist leaderships which came to power did not favour international European cooperation in the case of African colonies. Thus, Eurafricanism lost its political support.

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5. Italy's Colonial Policy in Africa
   Before the Fascist Takeover

Italy's former colonial policy played an inevitable role in the Italian geopolitical vision of Africa. Italian attempts to gain territories in Africa began long before the classical Italian school of geopolitics was born, in fact the first endeavours came even before the unification of Italy. Maxwell H. H. Macartney and Paul Cremona (1938) date the first such attempt to 1857, before the end of the unification process of Italy in 1861, citing a letter to an Italian missionary in Ethiopia written by Cristoforo Negri. A high-ranking official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont, Negri encouraged the missionary to win over local chiefs both politically and economically. However, within a few years these initial attempts were set back by the death of the ambitious prime minister of the Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont and later the unified Kingdom of Italy, Camillo Benso di Cavour. Subsequently, in 1862, Italy began negotiations with Portugal for the possible transfer of coastal territories in Mozambique and Angola. In 1868, Italy also evinced interest in acquiring Cabinda at the mouth of the Congo River. In the same year, the Italian government signed a twenty-eight-year agreement with the Tunisian Bey. Despite this, the foreign policy of Paris kept pushing Italy out of Tunisia, and by 1881 France had succeeded in extending its protectorate over the territory (Pete, 2023). Italian colonial efforts in this period were primarily driven by the need to resettle a large surplus population due to demographic pressures and the placement of large numbers of criminals in remote penal colonies (Macartney & Cremona, 1938). In the case of emigration, a significant role was played by the belief that in the expansion into territories not under Italian sovereignty, the Italian population would lose its original identity (Pete, 2023).

The situation changed significantly after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Italy's trade and shipping interests were highly valued in its colonial policy. As early as the very year of the opening of the canal, the Italian Chamber of Commerce urged the government to set up a trade agency in the Red Sea area to provide food and coal supplies for Italian ships and shelter for travellers to the Far East (Macartney & Cremona, 1938). That same year, Italy's Rubattino shipping company bought the right to use the Bay of Assab from the local chiefs. A decade and a half later, in 1884, Rubattino sold these rights to the Italian government. After that, Italy stationed soldiers in the port of Massawa, which was nominally under Ottoman sovereignty (Pete, 2023). According to Macartney and Cremona, this latter step marked the beginning of the real history of Italian colonialism. Starting from the port of Massawa, Italian soldiers occupied more and more territory until they were defeated by Ethiopia's Emperor Yohannes IV in the battle of Dogali on 26 January 1887 (Pete, 2023).

The revival of Italian colonial attempts is credited to Francesco Crispi. Crispi was prime minister of Italy for two terms – from 1887 to 1891 and from 1893 to 1896. His ambitious vision was to raise Italy to the status of a great power by acquiring colonies. He accelerated Italy's activities in the Horn of Africa and a railway link was constructed between the capital of Italian Eritrea, Asmara, and the port of Massawa. After the death of Emperor Yohannes IV, the Italian-backed Menelik II became the emperor of Ethiopia, and on 2 May 1889 he signed the Treaty of Wuchale, which recognised

Italy's territorial acquisitions and made Ethiopia an Italian protectorate. Italian sovereignty was extended to Somali territories as well. However, Emperor Menelik II soon abrogated the Treaty of Wuchale. The Italian army then repelled the invading tribes from Sudan and occupied the Sudanese town of Kassala, going on to conquer the cities of Adigrat, Adua and Aksum against a larger Ethiopian army. In the meantime, the international situation did not change favourably for Italy. The Franco–Russian alliance (from 1891) foreshadowed the advance of the two powers in Africa; Germany was also expanding in Africa, while Great Britain did not look kindly on the advance of other powers on the continent. Furthermore, the Triple Alliance[2] declared that its terms of mutual assistance did not extend to African territories. Menelik II, meanwhile, managed to unite the Ethiopian warlords and inflict military defeats on the Italian forces. First, on 7 December 1895, near the Amba Alagi mountain, a 30,000-strong Ethiopian army destroyed an Italian contingent of only 2,350 men. Then, on 1 March 1896, Italy suffered a crushing defeat near Auda (about 100,000 Ethiopian soldiers against 17,800 Italians). This also damaged Italy's international image, as no European army had ever before suffered such a heavy defeat in Africa. On 26 October 1896, the parties concluded a peace treaty in Addis Ababa. According to the treaty, Italy was allowed to keep Eritrea but it had to recognise Ethiopia's sovereignty. This humiliating defeat caused a lengthy hiatus in Italian colonial ventures (Pete, 2023).

The next attempt was not made until the second decade of the twentieth century. At this time, approximately one thousand Italian settlers were living in Tripolitania,[3] which was under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire. Although small, the Italian population had become a major player in the local economy, establishing farms, setting up bank branches and controlling the shipping routes. This led economic actors such as Banco di Roma to urge the Italian government to take control of the area. The lobbying was successful, and on 28 September 1911 Italy issued an ultimatum to the Ottomans. The sultan rejected the ultimatum, and a war broke out. The Italian expeditionary force of 80,000 men quickly captured the most important settlements, but the struggle for extensive desert areas continued for another year. The two sides finally concluded a peace treaty on 18 October 1912, which resulted in Italy gaining the territories in exchange for the Ottoman sultan retaining his religious leadership in Libya (Pete, 2023). This successful venture could have given a new impetus to Italy's colonial policy, but less than two years later the development of Italian colonialism was once again stalled – now by the outbreak of the First World War. All the same, the acquisition of Libya was a strategically important gain, as it strengthened Italy's central position in the Mediterranean, which later became a very important factor in Italian geopolitical thinking.

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2   The Triple Alliance was a defensive military alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy.

3   Today this region belongs to Libya.

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6. Italy's Colonial Acquisitions in Africa Under the Fascist Regime

There were no more Italian colonial attempts in Africa until the Fascist political takeover in 1922. The Fascist regime adopted and developed the foreign policy visions of the liberal era[4] (Jean, 1995). Thus, the pre-war notions of African territorial acquisition returned too. Benito Mussolini first strengthened Italy's military presence in the Horn of Africa in the 1920s (Macartney & Cremona, 1938). Italian–Ethiopian relations were kept friendly until the 1930s, when Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie imposed retaliatory measures for fear of excessive Italian influence. The bilateral relations subsequently deteriorated. This created the chance for Mussolini to take a historic revenge for the Italian defeat at Auda. It was fortunate for his plans that French foreign policy wished to favour Italy in exchange for its support against Germany in Central Europe. France therefore handed over territories in Southern Tunisia and Eritrea to Italy. Furthermore, according to László Pete (2023), Paris unofficially indicated that it was not opposed to a potential Italian military intervention in Ethiopia. Italy invaded Ethiopia on 3 October 1935 with 215,000 Italian soldiers marching against an Ethiopian army of 250,000. After barely seven months, on 5 May 1936, the Italian army entered Addis Ababa. Four days later, the Italian king, Victor Emmanuel III, was proclaimed Emperor of Ethiopia. This stabilised Italy's power presence in Ethiopia and the Horn of America thereby became an essential subject of Italian geopolitical analysis.

7. Africa in Classical Italian Geopolitical Theories

Although geopolitical writings had been published earlier, the emergence of classical geopolitical thinking in Italy as a separate field is primarily associated with the founding of the emblematic journal *Geopolitica*[5] in 1939. Giorgio Roletto, a professor at the University of Trieste, and his former student and colleague, Ernesto Massi, an associate professor at the Sacred Heart University of Milan, played a key role in the journal's creation (Perrone, 2016). Published between January 1939 and December 1942, one thousand copies of *Geopolitica* were printed every month. The issues contained various analyses, commentaries, summaries, tables of trade statistics and geopolitical maps. The main editorial office was in Trieste, but there were also offices in Milan and Rome (Antonsich, 2009). The Fascist political leadership and a number of contemporary Italian geographers had shared common ground from the very beginning of the regime and the politicians wished to rely on the support of the science of geography in order to achieve their goals. For example, at the 13th Italian Geographical Congress in 1937, the Minister of National Education, Giuseppe Bottai, spoke about the link between Geography and Fascism. He later became a founder and the chief patron of *Geopolitica*. The editors of the journal often openly expressed their support for the policies of the

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[4]   The scientific literature regularly refers to the period from the foundation of Italy to the Fascist takeover as the "liberal era".

[5]   The full name of this journal was *Geopolitica: Rassegna mensile di geografia politica, economica, sociale, coloniale* (*Geopolitics: Monthly Review of Political, Economic, Social and Colonial Geography*).

Fascist state (Antonsich, 2009; Perrone, 2016). It is therefore not surprising that the columns of *Geopolitica* regularly reflected the geographical orientation of Fascist foreign policy.

For the realisation of Italy's international political ambitions, classical Italian geopolitics and Fascist foreign policy focused on three strategic geographical regions: the Mediterranean, the Danube Basin and the Balkan Peninsula, and Africa (Sinbaldi, 2010). Accordingly, several essays on Italy's geopolitical visions concerning Africa appeared in *Geopolitica* (Závoczki & Sashalmi, 2021). One of the journal's key authors was Bruno Francolini, who is credited with the theoretical definition and delimitation of the discipline of colonial geography in Italy (Francolini, 1939). Primarily concerned with the societies to be established and organised in the colonies, he developed a theoretical model for the practical implementation of colonial society (Francolini, 1940). Giulio Sinbaldi (2010) draws a parallel between the colonial society imagined by Francolini and the subsequent Apartheid system in the Republic of South Africa. Francolini also examined the impact of Italian colonialism in Ethiopia (Francolini, 1941). Daniele Cametti Aspri (1940) examined the development of trade in Ethiopia in light of the Italian takeover and local Italian developments in the journal. In addition to the authors featured in *Geopolitica*, Sinbaldi (2010) also highlights the work of Luigi Filippo De Magistrati, whose book *Noi e l'Africa* (*Us and Africa*, 1942) described the potential full extent of Italy's colonial empire in Africa.

8. The Eurafrica Concept of Paolo D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota

According to Marco Antonsich (1997), the term "Eurafrica" was first used by Paolo D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota in 1930, preceding Haushofer's work of 1931. D'Agostino Orsini explained the origins of the concept he coined in an article in 1942, "Eurafrica" being modelled on the word "Eurasia". However, D'Agostino Orsini also contrasted the two concepts. For him, Eurasia meant the physical union of Europe and Asia. On the other hand, Eurafrica meant the physical *and* economic union of the two continents, which would thus form a real and proper unity similar to that of the Americas and Asia. He emphasised Europe's separation from the Americas by the Atlantic Ocean and from Asia by vast deserts, going on to point out Africa's position on the same "axis" as Europe. Criticising the theories of Eugène Guernier and other French thinkers, he opined that the French ideas were unscientific and politically driven, and in a 1942 article he stated that the French concept of Eurafrica reflected the absence of Italian colonies and Italy's lack of presence on the African continent.

8.1. Addressing Demographic Pressures in Europe

Just like in the work of Guernier and many other authors of the time, the general situation regarding the surplus population of Europe played a significant role in D'Agostino Orsini's theories. In his 1934 book *Eurafrica*, he compared Europe and Africa to two brothers, with the Strait of Gibraltar

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as their common umbilical cord through which blood flowed from the old and sick Europe to the young and virile Africa. According to Hansen and Jonsson (2014), D'Agostino Orsini used this analogy to refer to a solution to Europe's demographic problem. In other words, he was referring to the implementation of the resettlement of Europe's surplus population in Africa. *Eurafrica* also included a map showing the regions of resettlement in Africa. In an article published in 1940, D'Agostino Orsini dealt with the demographic problems of Italy in particular, rather than Europe as a whole. His plan for the resettlement of Italy's surplus population was very similar to the idea presented by Eugène Guernier. This population policy was to be implemented in two important steps. The first phase would be resettlement (transplantation), meaning the transfer of masses of Italian people to African territories, regardless of their gender, age or education, with the aim of spreading the Italian population throughout the colonial territories. The second phase would be social shaping, that is, the resettlement of selected people who would be capable of culturally shaping the local Indigenous population. The two moves could be geographically different. While the Italian masses would be relocated to places with a temperate climate that white Europeans could live in, the social shaping aspect primarily related to tropical zones, such climates being more difficult for white Europeans to bear. In connection with the latter, several articles in *Geopolitica* dealt with the ability of European whites to tolerate the different climatic environments in Africa, studying the territories colonised by other powers (Sinbaldi, 2010).

According to D'Agostino Orsini, the demographic problem could not be solved within Europe itself. He cited the example of Russia, which had sufficient free territory to absorb the European surplus population, but which, in his opinion, was not suited to it because of its economic underdevelopment and political circumstances (D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota, 1941b). He also rejected as a possible solution the emigration to overseas territories, primarily to the Americas, which had begun in an earlier period. D'Agostino Orsini reached the same conclusion as that which had already been a common notion during Crispi's premiership: if a destination was not under Italian jurisdiction, emigrants would lose their original identity. He therefore believed that the only way to preserve cultural belonging was emigration to Africa (D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota, 1942).

Referring to Guernier's work, Hansen and Jonsson (2014) mention an annual nativity surplus of 455,000 in 1930s Italy. As these people could no longer emigrate to territories beyond the Alps or over the Atlantic Ocean, it was said that this surplus of people should be settled in Africa. The Italian leadership also launched programmes to attract families to the African colonies. In 1938, the governor of Libya, Italo Balbo, declared the *Marcia dei Ventimila*[6] programme. The Italian government provided houses with a water supply for such families. In the first year, 1,775 families arrived in Libya (14,633 people). Another 1,453 families (10,802 people) followed in 1939. At the beginning of the 1940s, approximately 110,000 Italians lived in Libya, which was equal to 12% of the African colony's total population. Between 1937 and 1939, 875 families (3,489 people) arrived in Italian East Africa. In total, approximately 80,000 Italians lived in Ethiopia and 96,000 Italians lived in Eritrea and Somalia. However, many people were planning to return to Italy because of the unfavourable climate, public security problems and economic hardships (Pete, 2023).

6   "March of the Twenty Thousand", which referred to the expected annual number of emigrants in the programme.

8.2. The Issue of European Autarchy

The issue of achieving autarchy was also an important element of D'Agostino Orsini's concept. Gaining economic independence from other powers was a central theme in the Italian geopolitical literature of the period (Sashalmi, 2023). According to D'Agostino Orsini, prior to the First World War the global economy was dominated by European economies – due in part to their technological development and the colonies they maintained. After the war, however, Europe lost its primacy, and the European economy was threatened because of the fragmentation of the former unified geo-economic systems. D'Agostino Orsini added that Europe was the world's smallest continent, and that it would become even smaller in the event of Russia's geoeconomic separation.[7] Another problem for Europe was that the continent did not have enough raw materials compared to the Americas and Asia. The European economy therefore needed supplies from other continents. In the case of Africa, like others before him, D'Agostino Orsini emphasised its vast territory, abundant base of agricultural and industrial raw material and enormous, habitable lands. It also had a diverse climate, flora and fauna. Be that as it may, Africa was less developed, with its potential remaining unexploited, while the lack of infrastructure and services was prejudicial to living conditions. In light of this, in contrast to the Americas and Asia, neither Europe nor Africa was capable of autarchy as individual entities. Furthermore, the Americas and Asia were not dependent on Europe, thus they could not be complementary to it. Africa, on the other hand, *was* dependent on Europe. In D'Agostino Orsini's view, all this was manifested in a political (with the exception of Liberia), economic and trade dependency. European autarchy could thus only be achieved through a fusion of the two continents (D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota, 1941b, 1942).

Figure 1: Eurafrica in the world

Source: Illustration by Mario Morandi, D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota (1941b)

7   According to D'Agostino Orsini, Russia had been drifting away from Europe because of its retrograde development, despotic leadership, communist ideology and egocentric worldview. He considered Russia to be an independent continent between Europe and Asia.

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8.3. The Revision of African Territories

What distinguished Paolo D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota's work from that of his contemporaries was the fact that he additionally dealt with the issue of Africa's internal borders. He argued that the internal borders of Africa were not natural, rather having been created according to political advantage. His ideas were also influenced by Italian power interests, which sought to change the status quo in Europe and Africa. His writings welcomed the new borders in Europe following the revision of the post-war peace treaties of Versailles and Trianon. He called the territorial changes in Central Europe, the Mediterranean, the Balkans and Eastern Europe that had already taken place or were underway 'geographical' and 'human' revisions, which he saw as being a restoration of historical and natural borders. He added that this process would be followed by the revision of Western European borders. For D'Agostino Orsini, border changes not only implied a territorial revision, but also an economic one, from which new geo-economic systems would emerge. He repeated the need for the redistribution of economic wealth in Europe, believing, however, that European revision could be only truly fulfilled if the revision of colonial territories (primarily in Africa) followed it. Because the exploitation of Africa's wealth was largely in the hands of Great Britain and France,[8] the rest of Europe had less to gain from the continent's resources. However, he still considered the Eurafrican revision to be the most ideal solution, thus defining the territorial changes of the two continents as a single entity. According to D'Agostino Orsini, the final revision would be achieved if the Axis powers defeated Great Britain – consequently forcing Britain out of Africa. France, on the other hand, could keep its African colonies, albeit with a reduction in its territories (D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota, 1941a, 1941c, 1942).

8.4. The Eurafrica Bloc

The synthesis of D'Agostino Orsini's concept was the creation of a Eurafrica bloc. He stated that there had been several previous Eurafricas, the first being established during the Roman Empire, when Roman provinces were created in African territories (D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota, 1942). He called Eurafrica the system of European colonial powers and African colonies (the *'Eurafrica of yesterday'*). However, the various colonial powers developed differently and therefore 'the Eurafrica of yesterday' became fragmented (D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota, 1941b, p. 95). Under the leadership of the Axis powers, however, he predicted the emergence of a *'New Eurafrica'*. He stressed Italy's role in bringing the bloc into being within the alliance on account of several factors. One was the historical role of the Roman Empire, of which Italy was the heir. In addition, Italy's conquests in Africa (Italian East Africa and Libya) created the strategic, political and economic conditions for the creation of Eurafrica (D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota, 1942). He also reiterated the crucial role in the potential creation of the bloc that would be played by the Italian living space that connected Europe and Africa: the Mediterranean (Sashalmi, 2023). According to D'Agostino Orsini, there were geographical, economic and social similarities between Southern Europe and North Africa, the

countries of Southern Europe and those of North Africa "soldering" Eurafrica together (D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota, 1941b, 1942b).

D'Agostino Orsini declared that the creation of the New Eurafrica led by the Axis powers would also benefit other European states. He highlighted Spain, but added that all European countries would benefit in some way from the bloc's potential. What, he announced, was emerging was a large area with advanced European industry and abundant African resources, which would secure prosperity for the European economy (D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota, 1941a, 1941c). He claimed that a communication axis would be created, starting from Europe and continuing via Italy and Libya to the centre of Africa (the Tripoli–Stanleyville[9] line). If that was achieved and the Suez Canal remained the most important route between Asia and Europe, the Mediterranean region would become the most important geopolitical nexus in the world (D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota, 1941b, 1942).

Figure 2: The American, Eurafrican and Asian fusion

Source: D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota (1942)

9. The Impact of the Work of Paolo D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota

Although Marco Antonsich (1997) argues that the Italian thinkers, including D'Agostino Orsini primarily followed and attempted to justify Italian political interests while barely influencing decision-making, the term "Eurafrica" became a common element in Italian public discourse during

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8   In the words of D'Agostino Orsini, Great Britain and France 'monopolised' the exploitation of African resources. Be that as it may, other European powers – including Italy – also benefited from Africa's wealth.

9   Today the name of this city is Kisangani. It is situated in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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the 1930s and 1940s. The geopolitical idea of Eurafrica was also regularly analysed in *Geopolitica*. The journal's authors wished to help the political leadership in the realisation of this geopolitical concept by presenting ideas, plans and programmes. There are several examples of this. Gofferdo Jaja (1941) examined how the British-dominated southern part of Africa would be linked to Eurafrica. Alfio Biondo (1941) presented the Italian idea of building a trans-African railway to realise Eurafrica. Alessandro Leonori-Cecina (1942) analysed Portugal's geopolitical role in the realisation and maintenance of Eurafrica.
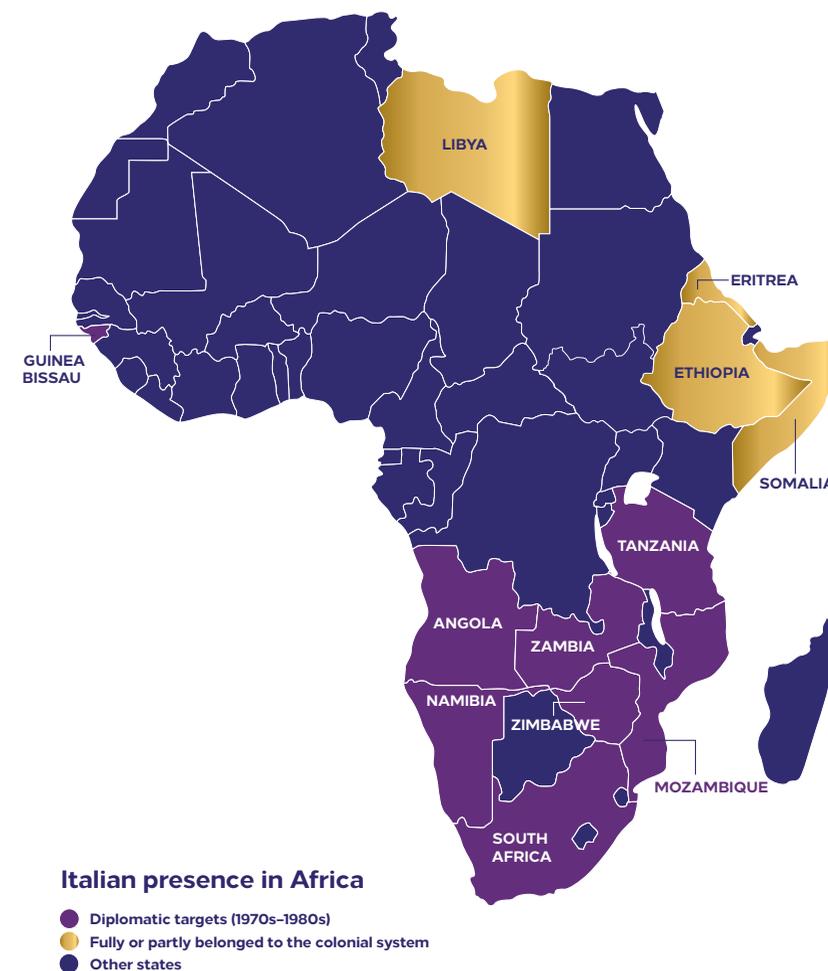
As one of the contemporaries of D'Agostino Orsini, Antonio Pennisi is also worthy of mention. This Italian author defined the eastern boundary of Eurafrica, delineating it as stretching from the Volga River through the Black Sea and the Caucasus to the Persian Gulf. Because of their cultural and economic links with the Mediterranean, Asia Minor and the Arabian Peninsula were also said to be part of Eurafrica. Pennisi divided Eurafrica into three smaller regions: the European area, the Mediterranean area (North Africa, Asia Minor and the Arabian Peninsula) and the African area (essentially sub-Saharan Africa). The European area was linked by "imperial relations" to the Mediterranean area and by "colonial relations" to the African area, the imperial relations being defined by cultural and social ties, and the colonial relations by economic ones. The imperial relations were exemplified by Italy, Germany and Spain; the colonial relations by France and Portugal. Pennisi stressed, however, that Eurafrica should be open to cooperation with all European states except for Great Britain (Antonsich, 1997).

After the end of the Second World War and the fall of the Fascist regime, Italy relinquished its empire-building policy and colonial ambitions (Riccardi, 2017). Although from that time, the country prioritised its relations with the West in the new world order, research on Eurafrica was reinvigorated in the 1950s. D'Agostino Orsini himself published again during this period, his new writings being adapted to the changes in the world order. In his opinion, if Eurafrica was realised, it would represent a balancing third force in international politics between the USA-led Western bloc and the Soviet-led Eastern bloc. He attributed a special role to the Arab world, stating that if the Arab countries were hostile to Europe, they could become a barrier to the implementation of Eurafrica. If they were not, however, they could form the bridge between the northern and southern parts of Eurafrica. From Africa's point of view, he believed that the only solution for its future was cooperation with Europe. By the same token, he considered the so-called "Americafrican" and "Asiafrican" visions to be dangerous (Antonsich, 1997).

The reopening of Italian foreign policy towards Africa began only in the late 1970s. However, it was different from that of the Fascist period; furthermore, it can be considered special and unique for its time. Italy became an important supporter of African independence movements (primarily against Portugal), anti-Apartheid and the Third World. The country actively and successfully built relations on the continent. For instance, Italy was the first Western country to open an embassy in Mozambique, and the African National Congress (ANC) received significant political support for its fight against the Apartheid regime. Solidarity was further demonstrated when Ugo Benassi, the mayor of Reggio Emilia, and Oliver Tambo, the president of the ANC, signed a pact on 26 June 1977,

which was the first of its kind between a city and the South African movement. The next year, with the proactive role of the local Italian politician, Giuseppe Soncini, Reggio Emilia hosted a national conference showing solidarity with the independence and sovereignty of the peoples of South Africa and opposition to colonialism, racism and Apartheid. Thereafter, the Italian city became a symbolic location of the movement (Lanzafame & Podaliri, 2017). Italy also actively participated in multilateral development programmes in Africa. Its role in these initiatives might have been helped by the fact that three UN special agencies – the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme – were all based in Rome. Due to its active Africa policy, and despite the colonial attempts of the past, Italy's image became quite positive on the continent in the 1970s and 1980s. Nevertheless, due to domestic problems, Italian diplomatic activism in Africa declined in the ensuing decades, and Italy lost its advantageous position on the continent (Lanzafame & Podaliri, 2017; Raffaelli, 2017; Riccardi, 2017).

Figure 3: Italy's historical presence in Africa; the colonial system and the diplomatic opening towards the states of southern Africa in the 1970s and 1980s

Italian presence in Africa
- Diplomatic targets (1970s–1980s)
- Fully or partly belonged to the colonial system
- Other states

Source: Author's own elaboration based on Lanzafame & Podaliri (2017)

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10. Eurafrica in Italian Geopolitical Thinking Today

Italy's Africa policy began to revive from the 2010s (Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, 2024). There are several factors why Africa once again became important to Rome. Due to the limitations of its scope, this paper does not comprehensively outline the direct connections between the concept of D'Agostino Orsini and present-day ideas about Italo–African (or Euro–African[10]) cooperation; that said, some of the motivations show distinct similarities. One of the most serious problems of our times is the migration crisis. However, nowadays the demographic pressure is reversed. The flow of people is coming from Africa to Europe, and due to its geographical position, Italy is a frontline country in this crisis, the mitigation of which is a huge challenge. Furthermore, according to some concepts, Africa could actually become the solution both to and for the mass of migrating people. For instance, a representative of the Italian government, Mario Giro, has argued that with the modernisation of the continent's local agriculture, Africa could be transformed from an emigration continent into an immigration destination (Giro, 2015).

The issue of access to necessary raw materials for Italy and the European Union (EU) is also relevant nowadays. The need for energy security and alternative energy supplies accelerated following Russia's attack on Ukraine in 2022. In this regard – after the Russian gas company Gazprom had successfully lobbied against it for years – the GALSI project[11] was relaunched by Italy and Algeria in 2023. There are other projects for energy infrastructure between Italy and Algeria too, for instance one to supply electricity from solar power plants and another to supply green hydrogen (Hamai, 2023). It is also important to mention Africa's significant reserves of rare earth metals, which are needed for the implementation of the green transition and digitalisation in the EU (Raimondi, 2021).

Another rough parallel between D'Agostino Orsini's concept and the geopolitical writings of today is that many of the latter foresee potential economic expansion and benefits for Italian (and European) enterprises within the cooperation between Europe and Africa (Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, 2024). Particular emphasis is placed on the agrifood sector, the health industry, tourism, the vehicle industry, renewable energy, infrastructure development and the start-up sector as being the most significant fields for economic expansion (Giro, 2017; Hamai, 2023). An alternative concept to Eurafrica could be the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Italy. It is important to highlight that – in 2019 – Italy was the first Western country which joined the BRI; that said, however, Italy left the cooperation four years later (Insisa, 2023). It seems that the country's current foreign policy gives priority to Eurafrica.

11. Conclusions

After the First World War, many thinkers addressed Europe's problems of overpopulation and the scarcity of raw materials. Following the conflict, Europe lost its dominant role in the world. The way for Europe to regain its competitiveness was seen by many thinkers to be the creation of large blocs. This is how various visions of the fusion of Europe and Africa emerged. An important representative of the ideas of the time was the Italian Paolo D'Agostino Orsini di Camerota, who is credited with coining the term "Eurafrica". In addition to speculation regarding solutions to the problems of contemporary Europe, his concept also reflected Italy's earlier ambitions for power and the foreign policy interests of Fascist Italy. Due to D'Agostino Orsini's impact, Eurafrica became a central theme in Italian public discourse and geopolitical thinking. During the 1930s and 1940s, and even after the Second World War, many geopoliticians studied the possibility of the fusion of the two continents. Although there is no direct link between the work of D'Agostino Orsini and contemporary issues in the 2020s, the topic of the potential cooperation between Europe and Africa is still pertinent and significant. Compared to the 1930s and 1940s, the situation has changed immensely; for example, the migration trend has reversed. Be that as it may, many vital issues – such as energy, the environment, food, etc. – remain a matter of common concern between the two continents, and research into the common future of Europe and Africa therefore remains a relevant and important area.

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10   It is important to highlight that Italian foreign policy regularly acts in the capacity of a Member State of the EU as well. Italy also represents the common objectives of the Member States of the EU, and thus the interests of Italy and the EU often coincide.

11   *Gasdotto Algeria Sardegna Italia* (Gas pipeline Algeria, Sardinia, Italy).

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III

MIDDLE EAST AND ISLAMIC WORLD COLUMN
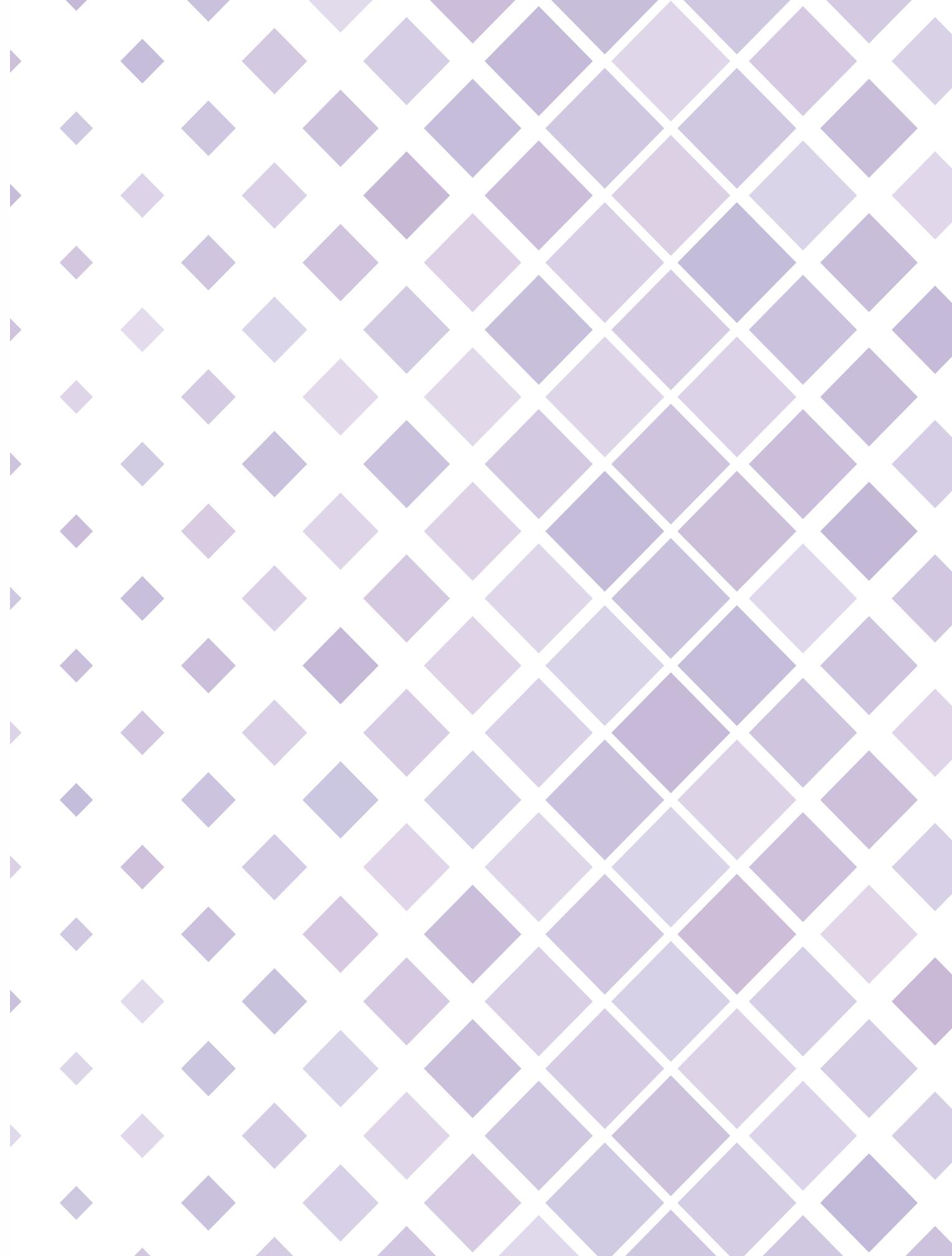
VIKTOR MARSAI –
MESZÁR TÁRIK

The UAE in the Horn of Africa – Friend or Foe?

THE UAE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA – FRIEND OR FOE?

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Abstract

In the last decade, the United Arab Emirates launched a massive diplomatic, economic and political campaign in the Horn of Africa. From Sudan to Somalia, Abu Dhabi plays an important role in shaping infrastructure, trade and security. From Berbera Port in Somaliland to agricultural investments in Ethiopia, the Emiratis' money can help to avoid bankruptcy and provide economic development. Training for Somali soldiers against al-Shabaab could increase resilience in Mogadishu, while diplomatic activity can contribute to new alliances between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Yet many actors criticise the UAE, asserting that it jeopardises regional stability and stokes local tensions, acting as a neo-colonial power which uses proxies, for instance in Sudan, to gain its strategic goals. In our paper, we highlight the strategic interests of Abu Dhabi in the wider Horn of Africa region, analyse the dynamics which influence the policy of the UAE, and examine how this affects the countries of the Horn.

Keywords: UAE, Horn of Africa, international relations, economic ties

1. Foreign Policy Trends in Relation to the United Arab Emirates

Abu Dhabi's foreign policy is characterised by many constant and changing factors. The UAE's previous policy, which lasted almost a decade, was primarily based on reshaping the Middle East, establishing military bases and ports, providing generous financial support to its allies and proxies, dissolving the system of regional and international alliances, and preventing political Islamist groups from coming to or remaining in power (Steinberg, 2020; Trt Arabi, 2021).

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If we also look at the last century, it is pertinent to note that the foreign policy of the United Arab Emirates has undergone many changes in the last fifty years. In the three decades under the leadership of its founder, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the UAE pursued a centrist policy, remained largely neutral on regional and international issues and maintained close relations with other Gulf states as well as Arab and Islamic countries. This period was also characterised by the UAE's commitment to pan-Arabism, especially to the Palestinian cause. It participated in the oil embargo during the October 1973 Yom Kippur War to force Western countries to withdraw from the Arab territories that had been occupied by Israel during the Six-Day War in 1967 (Najat, 2022; Zakariah, 2011).

At the beginning of the 2000s, the UAE's foreign policy underwent a significant transformation. It focused on the changes in the global economy, sought to gain a foothold in areas such as civil aviation and renewable energy sources, and deepened relations with the United States, especially following the attacks on 11 September 2001, after which Abu Dhabi sought to shape the regional order in the Middle East through the construction of military bases and ports, financial support, diplomatic engagement, proxy support and the consolidation of alliances, however loose they may have been (Najat, 2022).

The Arab Spring – which swept through most Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa in 2011 – changed both the regional order and the behaviour of some actors in the region (Kmeczkó, 2024; Korotayev et al., 2014; Rostványi, 2014). During this period, the UAE wished to become a major regional player and power factor through a combination of soft and hard power in the face of developments arising from popular uprisings and the decline of traditional Arab powers such as Egypt, Syria and Iraq. No longer satisfied with merely presenting themselves as a subservient party to agreements mandated by global powers, for the ruling Emirati elite, the key to participating in regional security arrangements was wealth.

Between 2011 and 2020, the UAE pursued a rather tough and assertive foreign policy, often relying on hard means, direct military interventions and military support from its local partners (Steinberg, 2020). Abu Dhabi played an important role in suppressing popular demonstrations in Bahrain, overthrowing the regime of former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, supporting Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in the coup against the Muslim Brotherhood, and providing extensive support to Khalifa Haftar's forces against the internationally backed Libyan government. Additionally, it actively participated in the international coalition, and cooperated with Saudi Arabia in the Arab coalition in Yemen (Badi, 2022; France24, 2011; Najat, 2022; Steinberg, 2020).

Over the past four years, however, the UAE's regional policy has changed significantly, and the country has reduced its involvement in many conflict hotspots in the Middle East. It withdrew the majority of its ground troops from Yemen in 2019 and its military role in Libya has been reduced since 2020. Furthermore, the repositioning of the USA in the region requires the UAE to push for an end to polarisation among its allies and force them to sit down at the negotiating table to find common ground to resolve contentious issues (Trt Arabi, 2021). The reality of the new regional order requires these powers to put aside the differences of the past and to turn to the future and its

fundamental challenges regarding the security and stability of the Middle East. Moreover, if we look at the events of 7 October 2023, when Hamas launched its first attacks on Israel, it is clear that the leaderships of the various countries in the region are keen to avoid the escalation of conflict and to focus on cooperation (Abumbe et al., 2024; Trt Arabi, 2021).

2. Recent Shifts in Foreign Policy

The United Arab Emirates withdrew from Yemen in 2019 and redeployed the troops that had been stationed there (Northam, 2019), leaving its Saudi Arabian ally to bear the brunt of the war. The reason for the withdrawal was that the UAE's regional political and security priorities had changed, and a long-term military presence no longer seemed sustainable for the country. In addition, Abu Dhabi emphasised the search for diplomatic solutions and the strengthening of humanitarian aid. Yaghi (2022) questions these justifications and links the withdrawal of troops to factors such as the geopolitical changes in the region, the slowdown in the UAE's economic performance and the high cost of airstrikes. However, it should not be forgotten that the UAE continues to support the armed forces in South Yemen.

On top of this, the UAE has withdrawn its support for Libya's Khalifa Haftar and suddenly opened up to Türkiye. With regard to Türkiye, it should be noted that the UAE actively interfered in Libyan politics following the revolution of 2011. It mainly supported forces in eastern Libya, in particular the Libyan National Army (LNA) of General Haftar, which also fought against the internationally recognised Libyan government and other militias. The UAE supported Haftar's forces militarily and financially in order to create stability in the region and counter the influence of Islamist groups that it considered extremist (e.g. the Muslim Brotherhood). The United Arab Emirates discontinued its support for Haftar partly because of the Turkish intervention (Badi, 2022). Türkiye increased its military presence in Libya in late 2019 and early 2020 on the side of the internationally recognised government (GNA). It supported the GNA with drones, military advisers and Syrian mercenaries, which provided a significant advantage over Haftar's troops. The Turkish intervention turned the tide and prompted the UAE leadership to rethink its strategy in Libya. In addition, international pressure and the emphasis on diplomatic solutions also contributed to the UAE's decision to reduce its presence in Libya.

Perhaps one of the most important reasons for reassessing the UAE's motives for foreign policy intervention is that it had clearly achieved limited and modest results in all of the aforementioned matters. Given its limited strategic benefits and high financial costs, decision-makers in Abu Dhabi were led to question the viability of this policy.

Furthermore, the UAE's foreign policy has undergone a significant transformation with the country's participation in the Abraham Accords. This landmark agreement, established in 2020, marked a historic normalisation of relations between the UAE and Israel, signalling a shift towards diplomatic engagement and economic cooperation in the region. By fostering open relations with Israel, the UAE

has positioned itself as a key player in promoting stability and peace in the Middle East, diverging from its previous stances characterised by regional conflicts and rivalries. This move highlights Abu Dhabi's strategic pivot towards modernisation, international cooperation and a pragmatic approach to geopolitical challenges.

3. A Flexible Political Stance

The United Arab Emirates has clearly moved away from its hard-line foreign policy in favour of steps towards a more pragmatic and flexible one. Clear evidence of this is that Abu Dhabi has accepted, albeit reluctantly, the lifting of the blockade on Qatar[3] and the resumption of diplomatic relations with Doha (Ramani, 2021). Furthermore, the improvement in diplomatic relations with Ankara should also be highlighted, as the relationship between the two parties has long been characterised by animosity, which was contributed to by the fact that the UEA was accused of being involved in the failed coup attempt in Türkiye in 2016. In addition, political conflicts in the Middle East and competition for regional influence have further exacerbated tensions. The UAE and Türkiye have been on opposing sides of several important issues, such as the aforementioned civil wars in Libya and Syria, as well as the blockade of Qatar. In recent years, however, both countries have recognised the benefits of pragmatic cooperation[4] and have made diplomatic efforts to improve relations. Significant progress has been made in the field of economic cooperation and trade has begun to grow, which has contributed to the stabilisation and development of bilateral relations.

The signing of the Abraham Accords in 2020 marked a significant milestone for the United Arab Emirates in enhancing its international and regional stature. By normalising relations with Israel, the UAE demonstrated its commitment to promoting peace and stability in the Middle East, positioning itself as a leader in regional diplomacy. The accords, facilitated by the United States, were a historic step towards cooperation and dialogue, breaking longstanding barriers to Arab–Israeli relations. This bold move not only underscored the UAE's strategic foresight, but also its willingness to engage with diverse partners to address complex regional challenges. The UAE's role in the Abraham Accords has opened new avenues for economic, technological and cultural collaborations, with agreements spanning sectors such as trade, tourism and technology, thereby strengthening its international alliances and economic diversification efforts. The accords have also enhanced the UAE's reputation as a modern, progressive nation that values tolerance and coexistence, setting a precedent for other countries in the region. As a result, the UAE has solidified its position as a key

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3   On 5 June 2017, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Egypt severed diplomatic relations with the state of Qatar and imposed a blockade against it. Reasons for this included the accusation that Qatar was supporting extremist groups and the destabilising activities of the media service provider Al Jazeera, but the countries' different foreign policy orientations also contributed to the temporary break in relations. The blockade against Qatar did not, however, achieve its goal, as the small Arab state could not be completely isolated economically. See also Antoniades et al, 2021, pp. 81–89.

4   In the summer of 2023, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates signed several agreements worth USD 50.7 billion covering export financing, earthquake bonds, energy, defence and other sectors. See AP, 2023.

player in the geopolitics of the Middle East, gaining recognition for its proactive and pragmatic approach to fostering peace and prosperity.

In addition to this, the influence of Dubai on the UAE's foreign policy has visibly increased – as evidenced by certain changes in the government's leadership positions in early 2021. For example, two new ministers, namely the former ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Shakhbout bin Nahyan, and the former ambassador to Syria, Türkiye and Iran, Khalifa Shaheen Al Marar, were appointed as ministers of state, marking a shift in the UAE's policy towards the countries in question (Trt Arabi, 2021).

What is more, the UAE wants to maintain good relations with Saudi Arabia (Trt Arabi, 2021). In the past, disagreements between Mohammed bin Salman and Emir Mohammed bin Zayed were not uncommon, particularly over the issue of oil prices and the normalisation of relations with Israel, although, despite the war between Hamas and Israel, the latter is no longer quite as hostile as before.

4. The UAE's Increasingly Intensive Africa Policy

In recent decades, the United Arab Emirates has gradually turned towards Africa, and this trend has become particularly pronounced in the last fifteen to twenty years. Many people wonder what exactly the motivation behind the Emirates' ever-increasing role in Africa is. Economic, political and geostrategic interests can be discovered behind the UEA's aspirations (The New Khalij, 2024).

One of the most important driving forces is the development of economic relations. Since the early 2000s, the UAE has established increasingly intensive economic relations with individual African countries (Chen et al., 2024). The Emirates wanted to diversify its economy, and Africa's vast reserves of raw materials and its growing market made it an attractive investment opportunity. Companies from the UAE are active in many African sectors, such as energy, infrastructure, agriculture and financial services (Payton, 2023). In addition, the country's leadership is also trying to tap into Africa's green energy potential.[5]

Political and diplomatic relations also play an important role. Abu Dhabi is seeking to increase its influence and presence on the international stage, and Africa is an important partner in this strategy. Moreover, the UAE has launched extensive aid programmes in African countries (Murad, 2023) and supported humanitarian and development projects to promote stability and development on the continent. The number of the Emirates' diplomatic missions has also increased significantly, which points to a further strengthening of relations.

In terms of strategic interests, Africa is important to Abu Dhabi from both a security and a geopolitical perspective. The UAE is keen to secure its trade routes and interests in the Red Sea

region and the Horn of Africa and to participate in the fight against terrorism and the promotion of regional stability.

The UAE's turn to Africa has served to promote economic growth, political influence and strategic interests. The Emirates has become an active player on the African continent and continues to devote significant resources to developing and strengthening relations. Given its numerous rivals in the Middle East and the mixed results of its foreign policy engagements – such as the withdrawals from Libya and Yemen – the UAE has sought new areas of influence where its efforts might face less resistance: the countries of Africa. This strategic shift indicates a move to diversify its geopolitical interests and find more favourable opportunities for expansion and influence.

A UAE official told the *Financial Times* that his country's engagement with Africa – from trade to food security to the fight against terrorism – should be understood in the context of 'striving for a prosperous future based on mutual benefit' (Pilling et al., 2024). The efficiency and speed with which its promises are kept has also prompted other countries to cooperate with the Emirates in various areas. Since 2019, the UAE has signed dozens of investment agreements with countries such as Zambia, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Ethiopia (Alarab, 2024; Kozlowski, 2024; Pilling et al., 2024).

The Emirates pledged USD 52.8 billion in investments by 2022, when it topped the FDI rankings for the first time. According to FDI Markets data, this was seven times more than the USA's contribution and twenty times more than that of the PRC. By 2023, this figure had fallen to USD 44.5 billion, yet it was still almost double that of the next largest investor, China. These investments are mainly focused on renewable energy, logistics, technology, the real estate sector and agriculture (Munshi et al., 2024).

Officials and analysts alike have outlined promising prospects for trade and investment relations between the UAE and the African continent. Trade between the Emirates and Africa having reached AED 300 billion (approximately USD 81.6 billion) by the end of 2022, forecasts predict a rise of 30% in the coming period (Abd al-Azeem, 2023).

Furthermore, experts attribute the significant increase in investments between the UAE and the countries in question to the potential of the African continent and the great opportunities that the UAE offers to African companies for using the country as a springboard to enter global markets. As part of the intensification of trade cooperation, more than thirty trade missions visited Africa between August 2022 and August 2023, and more than 150 joint events were organised in the UAE and Africa, including conferences, business forums and bilateral business meetings (Abd al-Azeem, 2023). In addition, dozens of UAE companies are active in various sectors in Africa, mainly in the fields of energy and renewable energy, agriculture, transportation and logistics, while more than 45,000 African companies are operating in the Emirates (Abd al-Azeem, 2023).

The UAE's growing economic role in Africa has begun to attract attention – especially since certain countries, such as China, have partially withdrawn their investments, while others have pulled out of the region due to security developments and political changes. These include events related to France

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5   In 2023, the UAE leadership unveiled a financial initiative earmarking USD 4.5 billion to harness Africa's burgeoning clean energy capabilities. See Gulf Africa Review, 2023.

in the Sahel, the Sahara and Central Africa, and also the decline of the United States' role in Niger and Chad (Alarab, 2024; Pilling et al., 2024).

The United Arab Emirates is popular in Africa for several reasons, but mainly because it invests large sums of money in joint projects, which gives it credibility not only with governments but also with the population.[6] Many Africans are fed up with relations with certain Western countries that represent security and military interests while the economic and investment dimension, which would serve the people and improve their standard of living, is pushed into the background. With its strong investment and trade presence, the UAE can increase its diplomatic power, which mainly consists of helping to de-escalate tensions. One such example is the promotion of reconciliation between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which provides the strategically important Horn of Africa with the opportunity to reduce border conflicts (Alarab, 2024; Pilling et al., 2024).

The UAE's close ties with a number of African countries paved the way for it to participate in the 42nd Intergovernmental Authority on Development Special Summit of Heads of State and Government, which discussed tensions between Somalia and Ethiopia, as well as efforts to resolve the conflict in Sudan (Alarab, 2024). A report published by the *Financial Times* showed the UAE's increased activity in Africa, noting that the influence of China has now been surpassed (Pilling et al., 2024). 'The total investments in Africa amount to 110 billion dollars' reported a UAE official (Pilling et al., 2024). This reflects the Emirates' commitment to promoting sustainable development and growth across the continent.

5. Competition Between Saudi Arabia and the UAE

It is worth noting that competition between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates is intensifying as both seek to increase their influence in Africa. At a conference with African countries in September 2023, the former signed an agreement worth more than SAR 2 billion (approximately USD 533 million), significantly strengthening its ties with the continent (Anadolu Agency, 2023). In addition, the Arab Coordination Group, which is made up of the region's various development foundations, has pledged USD 50 billion to support Africa, which it will provide in full by the end of 2030. According to the Saudi Minister of Economy, the country's USD 73-billion investment in Africa to date is 'just a drop in the ocean' in terms of future prospects for trade and cooperation with the continent (Anadolu Agency, 2023).

Both the UAE and Saudi Arabia have recognised Africa's economic and geopolitical potential and are making serious efforts to strengthen their ties and increase their influence on the continent. As a result, a dynamic Arab competition for African influence and resources is expected in the future.

5.1. The Testing Ground – Somalia

In the wider Horn of Africa region, Somalia has been one of the main sources of regional problems for decades. The collapse of the Somali state in 1991 opened a window for violent extremist organisations, clan militias, piracy, illegal migration and environmental degradation via deforestation (Little, 2003; Menkhaus, 2004, 2007). The secession of Somaliland in 1991 – which has not yet been officially recognised by either Mogadishu or any other state (Garowe Online, 2024; International Crisis Group, 2024)[7] – also contributed to regional turmoil. The international community neglected the country, which became the architype of a failed state (Adong Oder, 2011). Paradoxically, in the post-9/11 era the rise of Jihadist extremism and its links to fragile states – and the scientific and political discourse on failed states – helped bring the focus back to Somalia and the Horn of Africa. Furthermore, piracy gave another impetus for external actors to pay more attention to the region and to tackle the root causes of the threats and challenges (Shay, 2008).

The consolidation of Somali statehood had already started by the turn of the century, although it was only in 2012 – after twenty-one years of transitional government – that the first official Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) was established. Despite the fact that numerous challenges still remain, the country has undergone significant development and has moved from being from a failed state to a fragile one (UN News, 2021).

This national stabilisation resulted in an economic boom. The service sector (transportation, telecommunications) mushroomed in Mogadishu and other cities, and international flights reconnected Somalia to the world (BBC News, 2012). In addition, the country occupies a very important geopolitical position in the Horn of Africa. Its coastline – the longest in Africa – controls the main trade routes from the Indian Ocean to the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea and there are huge fishing possibilities too. The country's vast agricultural potential, mineral resources and service sector have also raised the awareness of potential investors.

The UAE's initial approach to Somalia held both security and economic implications. First, Abu Dhabi wanted to mitigate the Somali piracy threats, which undermined the security of transportation in the Gulf of Aden and the wider West-Indian Ocean. Considering the increasing aspirations of the Emirates in massive port and infrastructure projects, its key interest was to secure the waters of the region. Therefore, since 2011 the UAE has become the main supporter of the Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF), which was established to combat piracy both on land and off the shores of Somalia (Garowe Online, 2018). At this point, the UAE endeavoured to maintain a good relationship not only with the federal member states of Somalia, but also with Mogadishu. Thus, in 2014 Abu Dhabi signed a security agreement with the FGS to support the training of the Somali National Army and police personnel. In the framework of the cooperation, the UAE built a training camp in the capital (International Crisis Group, 2018; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UAE, 2014).

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[6] Opinions on this differ and the UAE is also criticised, with many believing its interventions to often be geared towards its own strategic interests and to be anything but popular with the local population. See Lons, 2021.

[7] In spite of the harshly criticised memorandum of understanding between Ethiopia and Somaliland signed on 1 January 2024, at the time of writing Addis Ababa has not confirmed its recognition of Hargesa.

All the same, Abu Dhabi was keen not only to foster a win–win situation, but also to pursue its own interests – even if they contradicted the will of the FGS. In the wider geopolitical competition with Qatar and Iran – and, to a lesser extent, with Türkiye and Saudi Arabia – the Emirates made significant efforts to reduce the influence of its rivals. Remaining as the UAE's foremost challenge, however, was the fact that both Ankara and Doha had established and maintained strong connections with the leadership in Mogadishu – regardless of who was the president, with both Hassan Sheikh Mahmud and Muhammed Abdullahi Muhammed Farmajo having an excellent relationship with Türkiye and Qatar (Marsai & Szalai, 2021). Therefore, besides its economic and security interests, Abu Dhabi also wanted to weaken the position of these two competitors – especially after the eruption of the Qatar crisis in 2017. Nevertheless, the UAE's efforts failed, and it could not convince Mogadishu to join the coalition against Doha.

Abu Dhabi could not resist the temptation to support both the federal member states and Somaliland in order to gain positions in the Horn. To secure the main trading routes, the UAE provided assistance to the notorious piracy hub of Puntland. The PMPF anti-piracy agency received training and equipment from the Emirates (Horseed Media, 2014), and Puntland's capital, Garowe, became Abu Dhabi's most important partner in Somalia. In the meantime, the UAE invested large sums in the infrastructure of the Horn of Africa and established a close connection with the secessionist government of Somaliland. Berbera Port was a key not only to Somaliland, but also to Ethiopia as a possible new transit corridor to Africa's second most populous nation and the most populous landlocked country in the world. In addition, the military operation of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition against the Houthis in Yemen required a strong logistical background. Hence, in 2016 the Emirates – with the involvement of Ethiopia and Dubai Port World – signed a USD-442 million contract with the government of Somaliland to develop and operate a regional trade and logistics hub at Berbera Port (Davison, 2016). The next year, the UAE began to construct what was initially intended to be a military airbase (although in time, its function was reappraised and it is now to be used as a civilian airport) (Miriri, 2019). The UAE has infrastructural investments in Bossaso Port too (Abdirahman, 2024).

The UAE's cooperation with Somaliland and the pressure from the Gulf on the FGS to cease cooperation with Qatar significantly increased the tension between Mogadishu and Abu Dhabi, and ultimately the FGS actually ceased its cooperation with the Emirates (International Crisis Group, 2018). At the peak of the tension, authorities at Mogadishu Airport raided a UAE aeroplane that was en route to Puntland, seizing USD 9.6 million, which, according to Abu Dhabi, was to pay the salaries of PMPF personnel (Olad Hassan, 2022). In the ensuing days, rival forces in the Somali army shot at each other in the capital, with one group trying to storm the former UAE-run training centre, General Gordon Camp. At least six soldiers were killed in the clash at the base (Daily Sabah, 2018).

With the arrival of the administration of the new Somali president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, in 2022, the tension between the parties diminished, and the UAE re-established military cooperation in February 2023 (Levy, 2023). In spite of this, the involvement of Türkiye and Qatar in South-

Central Somalia was more significant. In addition, in February 2024 eighteen servicemen, including three Emiratis and one Bahraini, were killed and twenty others, including two Emiratis, were injured in an attack by a member of al-Shabaab who had infiltrated General Gordon Camp (Ardemagni, 2024). After the attack, the UAE almost totally suspended its military activity in Mogadishu. Nevertheless, its economic activity in Somaliland and Puntland has remained strong.

The most important lesson for the UAE in Somalia was that factionalism can easily jeopardise political and economic concessions. In light of this, Abu Dhabi had to choose between economic and security gains or a good relationship with Mogadishu to prevent the infiltration of the forces of its geopolitical rivals. The Emirates tried a dual-track approach, which eventually failed: the antagonism between Hargeisa and Mogadishu on the one hand, and the deep and strong relations between the FGS and Türkiye and Qatar on the other made it impossible for the UAE to achieve its goals. Ultimately Abu Dhabi chose the economic and security gains, and committed itself to the secessionist region – even if it maintained some connections with the FGS. These experiences were very important for the UAE's later involvement in Sudan and its backing of Muhammad Hamdan Dagalo Hemedti and his Rapid Support Force (RSF).

5.2. The Logistics Hub – Eritrea

Similarly to Somalia, the importance of Eritrea is rooted in its strategic position along the main trade routes of the Gulf of Aden. Its capital, Asmara, could also serve as an alternative transit corridor towards the Ethiopian Highlands, the main ports of Assab and Massawa having been the chief gateways to the Highlands before Eritrea's independence. In 2019, the UAE confirmed that there are negotiations to build an oil pipeline for the region which would connect Assab and Addis Ababa (Africanews, 2019). As yet, the project has not been realised.

Besides the two countries' relationship in trade, Eritrean naval and air force bases provided an important operational and logistics background for UAE operations in Yemen. In 2015, the Emirates signed a thirty-year lease for both a military and a naval base in the city of Assab. Abu Dhabi conducted significant investment to develop the capacity of the two sites. A 3,500-metre runway was overhauled to allow for heavy support aircraft and the bases served as the main logistics hub for Emirati operations – because Assab lies only 70 kilometres from Yemen, the UAE ferried its heavy weapons from there to the Arab Peninsula. Among other hardware, Leclerc main battle tanks, G6 self-propelled howitzers, BMP-3 amphibious fighting vehicles, attack helicopters, drones and other aircraft were stationed in Assab. In addition, it was the main base of the Sudanese troops who were involved in the military operations of the coalition (The African Crime & Conflict Journal, 2023).

When the UAE announced its withdrawal from the Yemeni operations in June 2019, the military importance of Assab decreased. Nevertheless, even if most of the military hardware and troops had left Eritrea, the Emirates maintained its positions there. According to numerous reports, Abu Dhabi used Assab as a refuelling base for its planes heading towards Libya. Nevertheless, following accusations by the Ethiopian rebel organisation the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) that

UAE drones had been used against their positions, in 2021 the Emirates began to dismantle its remaining infrastructure (The African Crime & Conflict Journal, 2023).

The cooling of the relations between Asmara and Abu Dhabi was also related to the deepening cooperation between the UAE and Ethiopia, and – in the meantime – the increasing tension between the two brother nations of Eritrea and Ethiopia. In this context, Addis Ababa represented much higher gains than Asmara. Therefore, the interest of Abu Dhabi turned towards the Horn of Africa's most populous country and largest economy.

5.3. Capturing Addis Ababa

From a long-term strategic perspective, the most important country in the Horn of Africa is Ethiopia. Its booming population (around 130 million in mid-2024) (Worldometer, 2024), economy (with a 2022 GDP of over USD 126 billion) and vast uncultivated lands provide excellent opportunities for both local and foreign investors. In addition, Ethiopia's political weight can significantly shape the landscape in the wider Horn of Africa region. Therefore, it is no accident that Abu Dhabi rediscovered Addis Ababa as a strategic partner.

Since 2010, the UAE has increased its focus on the Highlands, and when its efforts to ally with Somalia failed in 2018, Abu Dhabi invested more energy in Ethiopia. In June 2018, the UAE deposited USD 1 billion in the Ethiopian Central Bank to ease its partner's foreign exchange shortage. This sum was part of a bigger, USD 3-billion aid and investment pledge (Crabtree, 2018). In the next five years, the UAE invested USD 2.9 billion in Ethiopia, mainly in the chemical, food and beverage, aluminium and pharmaceutical sectors. In 2022, the Emirates' non-oil exports to Ethiopia rose by 4.5% year on year, reaching USD 210.3 million (8.5% up on 2019) and re-exports to Ethiopia totalled USD 553.3 million, representing a growth of 8.6%. This growth in trade and investment follows years of UAE aid to Ethiopia to a value of exceeding USD 5 billion, 89% of which was in the form of development aid (Sambidge, 2023).

The Emirates provided essential support for Addis Ababa during the fight against the TPLF as well. The UAE – similarly to Iran and Türkiye – gave drones for the Federal Government of Ethiopia, which played a key role in halting the rebels' offensive and destroying their military power. According to an IPIS Research report by Peter Danssaert (2022), between September and November 2021 alone, ninety cargo planes – operated by Spanish and Ukrainian firms – arrived in Ethiopia with military hardware. It was the first time that Wing Loong II drones – produced by China but operated by the UAE – had appeared in the Highlands. According to experts on the ground, without that support, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed could not have coped with the insurgency and won the war.[8]

The Ethiopian leadership did not forget Abu Dhabi's help. The UAE has now become one of the most influential investors in the Highlands, expanding its businesses into agriculture, real estate and construction. The Emirates has started to build a new presidential palace (Plaut, 2023; The Habesha,

2024) and Abu Dhabi has been involved in the plans for the Ethiopian capital's new cycle network (Solomon et al., 2024).

In spite of the above, the role of the UAE is not universally praised. Many experts question the relevance of a new multi-billion-dollar palace while the country is suffering from economic setbacks, food insecurity and insurgency fighting in the Amhara Region (The Habesha, 2024). According to some interviewees, the aim of the new cycle network is to demolish properties and play the valuable land into the hands of Emirati real-estate investors.[9] In general, many interviewees worry that Abu Dhabi has gained too much power in the Ethiopian government.

Similarly controversial is the role of the UAE in the port projects in Somaliland. While it can help the economic growth of Ethiopia, it also stokes tensions between the states of the Horn of Africa. On 1 January 2024, Addis Ababa and Hargeisa signed a Memorandum of Understanding which aimed to offer Ethiopia access to the sea and provide a lease for a 20-kilometre stretch of coastline to serve as the site of an Ethiopian naval base. The deal raised significant resistance from Somalia, which felt that the MoU impinged on its sovereignty and territorial integrity. As an upshot, Mogadishu expelled the Ethiopian ambassador (Yibeltal & Nesta Kupemba, 2024). Although officially the deal was not brokered by the UAE, considering the Emirates' deep involvement in the Berbera Port projects, it is difficult to imagine that Hargeisa and Addis Ababa did not coordinate with Abu Dhabi before the signing of the MoU (Bakir, 2024).

The new deal also alienated Eritrea, which perceived Ethiopia's hegemonic intentions and access to the sea as a threat. Nevertheless, as became evident with the UAE's withdrawal from Yemen, the strategic interest of Asmara declined considerably, and Addis Ababa represented a more valuable partner for Abu Dhabi.

5.4. A Strategic Failure – Sudan

Perhaps the UAE's most controversial engagement in the Horn of Africa is its role in Sudan. Abu Dhabi's presence in the country strengthened when the Emirates established close relations with the Sudanese leadership. Aiming at both economic and political goals, the UAE became an important actor in the Sudanese gold mining industry. In the meantime, Sudanese mercenaries played a pivotal role in the war in Yemen, where the Saudi-led coalition hired tens of thousands of mercenaries from the East African nation (Issa, 2022). Most of them came from Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo Hemedti's Rapid Support Force: this explains why Hemedti's business and political network had such close ties to the UAE.

When in April 2023, civil war broke out between the Abdelfattah al-Burhan-led Sovereign Council and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Hemedti's Rapid Support Force, the UAE emerged as the latter's most important supporter. Even if Abu Dhabi rejected the allegations that the Emirates

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8   Interview with an Ethiopian university scholar, Addis Ababa, May 2022.

9   Interview with a UN expert, Addis Ababa, May 2024.

provided weapons for the RSF, the report of the UN Panel of Experts cited considerable evidence to corroborate the claims (UN Security Council, 2024).

The alleged role of the UAE in the Sudanese Civil War fuelled harsh criticism from numerous actors – mainly from powers which supported al-Burhan (ADF, 2024). Egyptian officials also highlighted the disruptive nature of Abu Dhabi's engagement in Sudan.[10]

The biggest question – and the object of criticism – regarding the UAE's intervention in Sudan is its strategic goal. In Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia/Somaliland, Abu Dhabi's interests are clear: investing in infrastructure for economic and trade benefits, securing transit routes for tens of millions of customers in a region with rapid population growth, and gaining political and security guarantees. The UAE was ready to change its policy and to give up certain alliances – as in the case of Eritrea and Somalia – when it realised that the new strategic framework with Ethiopia was much more valuable than the cooperation with Mogadishu and Asmara.

Be that as it may, in the case of Sudan it is not entirely clear why the UAE allied itself with Hemedti. Although the RSF controls huge gold mines and deposits, and the Emirates is one of the main hubs for the international gold trade, Abu Dhabi alienated many of its partners with its engagement in Khartoum. Furthermore, al-Burhan and the Sovereign Council controlled the oil pipelines and main ports, which made it extremely complicated for the RSF to stabilise its positions in the country. According to experts, the UAE and the RSF simply overestimated their strength and they thought that they could easily overrun the SAF, creating facts on the ground.[11] In fact, the Sudanese conflict has become a prolonged and bloody war with extensive foreign support for each party. It is destroying the country and merely resulting in a stalemate. Despite this, at the time of writing, the UAE has not made any meaningful efforts to end the conflict and has consistently denied any culpability in the crisis.

6. Conclusions

In recent years, the United Arab Emirates has become an important player in the Horn of Africa and has expanded its presence and influence in the region. The UAE's activities are driven by economic, political and security objectives aimed at strengthening regional stability and promoting its own strategic interests. One of the country's main objectives is to develop and maintain economic relations and trade routes. Through various investments, such as the expansion of ports and agricultural projects, Abu Dhabi is ensuring a strong economic presence in the region. These measures bring economic benefits and also create political influence by promoting closer cooperation with the governments of individual countries. Improving security and stability is another important part of the UAE's strategy. It supports local armed forces with training programmes and participates in

the fight against terrorism, contributing to security in the region. Through diplomatic efforts, the Emirates can also promote regional cooperation and peace.

Nonetheless, the activities of the United Arab Emirates are not without criticism. Many believe that in its interventions, the UAE often prioritises its own strategic interests over the needs and well-being of the local population. This can lead to tensions within the region and provoke disputes between local and international actors. Economically, the UAE is investing heavily in the region's infrastructural and economic development. In addition, it launches aid programmes that contribute to the stability and growth of local communities while garnering political influence for itself. Geopolitically, the Horn of Africa is of particular importance to the UAE due to its strategic location on crucial global trade routes. As the Emirates is committed to the security and stability of these routes, it is actively engaged in the fight against terrorism, thereby increasing its regional influence even further.

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10   Interviews with Egyptian experts and diplomats, Cairo, October 2023.

11   Interviews with Egyptian experts and diplomats, Cairo, October 2023; interview with an expert of the Hudson Institute, Washington D.C., January 2024.

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BOOK REVIEWS
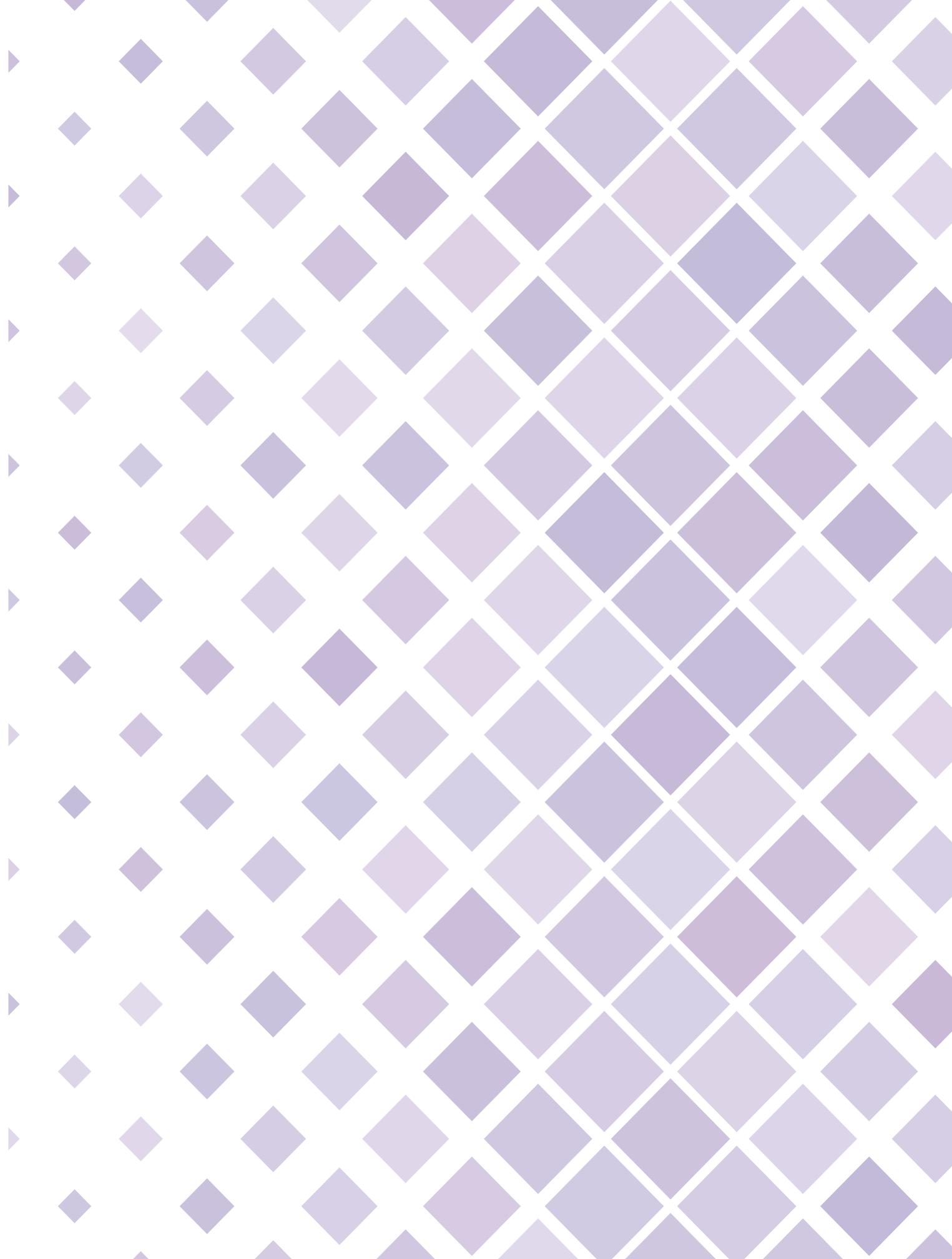
EMRE ERŞEN & SEÇKIN KÖSTEM: TURKEY'S PIVOT TO EURASIA: GEOPOLITICS AND FOREIGN POLICY IN A CHANGING WORLD ORDER

SEMANUR ÖNCÜ[1]

Publisher: Routledge
Year of publication: 2019
ISBN: 9781032092317
Pages: 212

The dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of the Cold War led Türkiye to become an important player on the international stage and shaped its foreign policy preferences. During this period, the independence of Central Asia and the South Caucasus strengthened Türkiye's vision of being a champion of democracy, economic liberalism and moderate Islam. Despite its NATO membership and historical ties with the West, over the last twenty years Turkish diplomacy has been orientated towards strengthening its political and economic relations with Eurasian countries. This has led to Türkiye's foreign policy strategies becoming more diverse and flexible. Türkiye maintains its presence as an important actor in the international arena, aiming to maintain its regional leadership role. In this context, Türkiye's dynamism in its international relations is taken into account at both regional and global levels. Edited by Emre Erşen and Seçkin Köstem, *Turkey's Pivot to Eurasia: Geopolitics and Foreign Policy in a Changing World Order* closely examines the changes in Türkiye's international relations scene. The authors consider Eurasia, a vast geographical area, as a reflection of the upcoming multipolar world order. Aiming to analyse the reasons behind Türkiye's recent turn towards Eurasia, they also discuss whether Eurasianism can be seen as a plausible option for Turkish foreign policy.

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Turkey's Pivot to Eurasia consists of a total of eleven chapters and is written with contributions from local and foreign authors. The book begins with Tarık Oğuzlu's essay 'Turkey and the West: Geopolitical Shifts in the AK Party Era'. Oğuzlu emphasises the importance of the 2013 Gezi Park protests and the failed coup attempt in July 2016 as key moments shaping Türkiye's relations with the USA. He posits that Türkiye's growing interest in Eurasia stems from its disappointment with its Western allies in the aftermath of July 2016.

The second chapter contains the work of Emre Erşen entitled 'The Return of Eurasianism in Turkey: Relations with Russia and Beyond'. Erşen assesses the main internal and external factors behind the rise of Eurasianism in Turkish military, political and intellectual circles. He also provides an overview of the development of Eurasian ideas in Türkiye in the post-Cold War period. This study offers a deep insight into our understanding of Türkiye's relations with Russia and the perspective of Eurasianism beyond it.

The article by Pavel K. Baev, 'Turkey's Ambiguous Strategic Rapprochement with Russia', composes the third chapter of the book. Here, the author examines the complex dynamics of strategic relations between Ankara and Moscow, focusing in particular on how their cooperation in negotiations to end the Syrian Civil War is impacted by developments in the conflict itself. The essay highlights the profound differences between Turkish and Russian objectives. Despite Russia's efforts to exploit opportunities to weaken transatlantic solidarity due to Türkiye's NATO membership, Baev concludes that the fundamental reality of the strategic rivalry between the two countries remains unchanged.

One of the book's most intriguing sections is Çağdaş Üngör's 'Heading towards the East? Sino–Turkish Relations after the July 15 Coup Attempt'. Analysing the shifts in the relationship between China and Türkiye following the coup attempt of 15 July 2016, the study investigates whether or not Turkish foreign policy exhibits a Eurasianist inclination. The author contends that Türkiye's leaning towards Eurasia, particularly in fostering closer ties with China, is more a response to the heightened anti-Western sentiment within the domestic sphere than a strategically calculated pro-China stance. Üngör also underscores the significance of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), commonly referred to as the New Silk Road. He highlights that Türkiye reaps substantial benefits from Chinese credit, particularly through its involvement in the Chinese-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) initiative. Over the past few years, Türkiye's economic ties with Eurasian nations have gained increased importance, emphasising a notable shift in the geopolitical and economic landscape.

In the fifth chapter of the book, the article 'Turkey's Economic Expectations from a Rising China', written by Altay Atlı, states that Türkiye's relations with China have developed moderately, although they lag behind the rapprochement with Russia. Considering Ankara's interest in China's Belt and Road project, it is emphasised that current relations do not yet seem to have reached the level of a strategic partnership.

In the sixth chapter, Nicola P. Contessi's essay entitled 'Turkey and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation' examines Türkiye's motives for better understanding its relations with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Offering various explanations based on different theories of

international relations, the article emphasises that Türkiye sees it as a natural step to strengthen cooperation with the SCO, the aim being to become a bridge between East and West if EU membership is no longer possible.

In the following part of the book, 'Geopolitics, Identity and Beyond' explores Türkiye's renewed focus on the Caucasus and Central Asia. Seçkin Köstem begins by examining emerging geopolitical trends in Eurasia and delves into Ankara's perceptions of these developments. Providing an analysis of Türkiye's efforts to formalise its connections with nations in the Caucasus and Central Asia, this article further explores Türkiye's economic engagements in the region, which, despite being relatively limited compared to its activities elsewhere, hold strategic importance. Lastly, Köstem scrutinises Türkiye's bilateral relations with Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, recognising them as being pivotal elements in Turkish foreign policy concerning the region.

Chapter Eight is Pınar İpek's 'Turkey's Energy Security in Eurasia: Trade-offs or Cognitive Bias?' Emphasising the pivotal role of energy security in Turkish foreign policy and using the jet crisis as a key illustration, İpek contends that Türkiye's increasing demand for natural gas serves as a significant catalyst for its shift towards Eurasia.

Following this, in her contribution entitled 'Dynamics of Estrangement and Realignment in Turkey–Iran Relations in the 2000s', Gülriz Şen delves into the intricate interplay of cooperation and competition between the two countries in the twenty-first century, also exploring the influence of the USA in shaping this complex relationship. The article traces the evolution of bilateral relations from alignment in the early 2000s to a period of estrangement between 2012 and 2016, eventually leading to a realignment since mid-2016. The chapter argues that the increasing disaffection during the Arab Uprisings primarily stemmed from the divergent positions of Türkiye and Iran as emerging regional powers, particularly during a time when the United States exhibited relative distance and a reluctance to engage actively in the Middle East.

In the book's penultimate chapter, Harsv V. Pant and Ketan Mehta scrutinise the evolving dimensions of Türkiye's interactions with India in 'Turkey and India: A Relationship in Progress'. The article highlights the compelling factors prompting the shift within Türkiye's foreign policy and asserts that the altered geopolitical landscapes in the Middle East and South Asia demand a fresh approach from both Ankara and New Delhi in their bilateral relations.

The final article in the book, 'Politics of New Developmentalism: Turkey, BRICS and Beyond' by Mustafa Kutlay, investigates how developing countries, specifically Türkiye and the BRICS nations, respond to and are influenced by the evolving international order. As global dynamics undergo profound shifts, challenging the established norms of the liberal order, this chapter introduces a push-and-pull framework to help understand the changing state–market relations in developing economies within this transforming global landscape. The argument asserts that the internal crises of the neoliberal economic paradigm act as the "push" dynamics for countries on the periphery of global capitalism. Furthermore, it suggests that the "pull" dynamics shape economic paradigms and political regimes in

developing nations. With a focus on BRICS–Türkiye interactions, Kutlay explores the functioning of push-and-pull dynamics on the international stage.

Turkey's Pivot to Eurasia emphasises that Ankara's deepening economic and political ties with major players such as Moscow, Beijing and Tehran have been shaped primarily as a result of the weakening of American hegemony. Türkiye, which had solid relations with the West in the late twentieth century, is now looking for ways to diversify its foreign policy away from the United States and the European Union. This change is particularly centred on Syria, but also manifests itself in other dimensions, such as Türkiye's rapprochement with Russia. Ankara's assumption of new roles in the international arena and the development of various diplomatic relations, reshaping the dynamics in international politics, are also covered. The book aims to analyse and discuss the various dimensions of Türkiye's relations and strategic rapprochement with Eurasia in the twenty-first century.

Analysing Türkiye's foreign policy changes in recent years, the book also examines how changes at the international level are accompanied by intellectual transformations. In particular, it draws attention to the rise of Eurasianism in Türkiye, as popularised by the Russian intellectual Alexander Dugin.

The articles also focus on the details of a number of popular ideological movements such as Pan-Turkism, Neo-Ottomanism and Eurasianism. Explaining the concept of Eurasianism using the term 'Turkish Eurasianism', it is emphasised that Eurasianism not only refers to the post-Soviet region, but also includes and seeks to strengthen Türkiye's relations with other Eurasian actors such as China, India and Iran.

Another notable feature of this volume is its ability to bring together both tangible and conceptual variables throughout the chapters. In concrete terms, Türkiye's desire for deeper Eurasian co-operation was born out of the security and economic challenges it faced. In this context, it is clear that security concerns are the main determinant of Türkiye's relations with Russia, whereas economic concerns dominate its relations with China.

A general consensus is asserted that – in the context of the evolution of the global order – Turkish foreign policy is increasingly focused towards Eurasia. However, some authors, such as Köstem and Baev, argue that sustaining this trend in the long term may present a number of challenges.

The book's various chapters use a rich combination of different primary and secondary sources, often ranging from news reports to expert opinions and statistics. These sources are analysed throughout the eleven essays, mostly through qualitative research methods, but in some cases also through quantitative data analysis. This shows that the volume's content is a well-rounded and balanced source of information.

By addressing the Eurasian orientation of Turkish foreign policy, *Turkey's Pivot to Eurasia* makes an important contribution to the academic literature. Not only does it discuss the concept of Eurasianism from a Turkish perspective, it also analyses Türkiye's evolving relations with Eurasian countries over the last decade. Türkiye's new orientation is the result of a complex interaction of internal and external factors. What remains unclear, however, is the extent to which this turn is underpinned by a long-term strategic vision. Furthermore, the sustainability of this turn and Türkiye's possible asymmetric dependencies are also open to debate.

IYAD EL-BAGHDADI
& AHMED GATNASH:
THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS
FACTORY – TYRANNY,
RESILIENCE AND RESISTANCE

Meszár Tárik[1]

Publisher: Hurst & Company
Year of publication: 2021
ISBN: 9781787383043
Pages: 256

The Middle East Crisis Factory – Tyranny, Resilience and Resistance provides a comprehensive picture of both the history and the current situation of the modern Middle East while offering an in-depth analysis of the region's most pressing issues. The authors discuss in detail the complex issues of tyranny, terrorism and foreign intervention that have defined and continue to define political and social conditions in the region. The book not only focuses on the events of the past and present, but also looks to the future by examining demographic, economic and social trends. Their analysis shows that the challenges facing the Middle East are serious and often worrying, but the opportunities and desire for change in the region are also significant. El-Baghdadi and Gatnash are not afraid to face the truth: the ever-growing young population, urbanisation and technological development represent both great opportunities and potential threats. Using concrete examples, the authors make it clear that previous military interventions and political deals with dictators have not brought lasting solutions. At the same time, however, they outline a hopeful vision for the future, proposing strategies and policy approaches that rely on diplomacy, social justice and sustainable development rather than aggressive intercessions. The book offers ambitious and thoughtful ideas for solving the problems in the Middle East. El-Baghdadi and Gatnash reject violent means and cynical political manoeuvring and instead focus on cooperation and the creation

1   Meszár Tárik, PhD candidate, Senior Researcher, Migration Research Institute, Hungary.

of long-term stability. Their proposals offer guidance to the inhabitants of the region and contain valuable lessons for the international community.

The Middle East Crisis Factory consists of two parts and a total of eight chapters. The first part begins with the events of the Arab Spring, which commenced at the end of 2010 and within a short time triggered revolutionary waves in several Arab countries, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen. Iyad El-Baghdadi and Ahmed Gatnash describe in detail how these uprisings came about – the main catalysts being poverty, unemployment, corruption and a lack of political freedom. In describing the events, the authors analyse the speed with which the revolutions spread and how the various national governments reacted to them. In Tunisia, for example, the self-immolation of the street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi was the trigger for the revolution, which quickly spread not only throughout the land, but also to other countries. The Egyptian demonstrations in Cairo's Tahrir Square have also become iconic scenes that show the power and determination of the people. Delving beneath the surface, the authors take a deeper look at the social and economic factors that engendered the rebellions. In addition to the factors mentioned above, the high proportion of dissatisfied young people and the feeling of oppression likewise contributed to people taking to the streets and demanding change. The increasingly widespread use of the Internet and social media played an important role in the rapid spread of revolutionary ideas and news, coordinating and amplifying the protests. The hopes and disappointments of the Arab Spring are an accurate reflection of the complexity of the region and the struggles of its people. The different paths that individual countries have taken since the revolutions make it clear how difficult it is to predict political and social change. The authors also point out how the events of the Arab Spring and their consequences both impact the region in the long term and influence global political and social processes.

On the subject of dictatorships and oppression, the authors thoroughly analyse how these systems function through internal oppression and on the international stage. They state that 'dictatorship is, above everything else, really good business'. The book contains many examples of the techniques used by autocratic regimes. Among other things, they resort to methods of manipulation and propaganda to maintain their power and strengthen their legitimacy in the eyes of both their own citizens and the international community. These regimes distort reality to paint a positive picture of themselves while preventing the dissemination of genuine information. The state media is often controlled and only promotes the government's narrative, suppressing any critical voices. Such regimes also typically manipulate the international community. For example, they use diplomatic relations and economic agreements to influence other countries to support them or at least not openly criticise them. In addition, disinformation campaigns are routinely used to confuse and divide international public opinion and thus weaken external pressure. The book considers it particularly important to make Western readers understand that these problems are not just superficial phenomena, but are deeply rooted in the respective countries. The Western world often only registers the visible symptoms, such as protests or civil disobedience, but it does not always understand the complex mechanisms at work in the background. Oppressive regimes are frequently based on intricate power networks in which military, economic and political elites are interwoven. To protect their own

interests, these elites will do anything to maintain the status quo, and they habitually employ threats or even violence to suppress all opposition. To make matters worse, the international community often unwittingly or deliberately contributes to the survival of these regimes. Economic interests, geopolitical alliances and the desire for stability frequently override the intention to support human rights and democratic values.

One particularly important part of *The Middle East Crisis Factory* is its detailed description of the resistance movements. On the one hand, El-Baghdadi and Gatnash present the larger, globally-known movements in detail and, on the other, they describe the smaller forms of resistance that took place at a local level. This approach is intended to emphasise the fact that resistance is not solely and exclusively associated with major historical revolutions, but is actually present in our daily lives. It is underlined that 'constantly raising the fear barrier can end up creating a resistance movement that is absolutely fearless'. The authors analyse these forms of resistance in order to better understand how these movements can be catalysts for change. By outlining the role of civil society in this endeavour, it is stressed that individuals and small communities can be extremely important in protecting and promoting democracy and freedom. In addition, the book also addresses the obstacles that people may face in this kind of struggle, be it political oppression, economic hardship or social discrimination. Readers are thus provided with a deep and wide-ranging analysis of resistance movements that helps them to gain a fuller picture of how and why people in the Middle East are rising up against oppression and injustice, and what means and strategies they are using to achieve social change and replace political systems.

El-Baghdadi and Gatnash critically study the role of the West in stabilising the Arab world and they underline the fact that Western interventions have frequently done more harm than good. They discuss in detail how Western powers have repeatedly failed to properly assess local specificities and dynamics, which has exacerbated problems in the long run. It is mentioned that 'often foreign intervention uses the same methods as terrorist groups with more sophistication and less secrecy, carried out by larger and better-equipped forces'. In many cases, Western interventions have served short-term political or economic interests without considering the long-term stability of the region. An example of this is the war in Iraq, which destabilised the country and contributed to greater instability in the region. As a result of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the state structure disintegrated and enabled the rise of extremist groups such as ISIS. Such interventions not only directly destroyed existing systems, but also had long-term consequences, such as refugee crises and humanitarian disasters. The book underlines that these consequences often worsened the social and economic problems that were originally the cause of the conflicts. In addition, Western powers typically supported autocratic regimes when they were strategic or economic partners, and this support frequently legitimised and strengthened repressive systems and further deepened social tensions. Western countries have more than once turned a blind eye to human rights violations as long as it was in line with their geopolitical interests. According to the authors, the long-term effects of Western interventions show that the intercession of external forces does not always lead to positive results. It is pointed out that external interventions often do not take local characteristics and dynamics into account. Western

countries do not always understand the local cultural, religious and political contexts, which can lead to wrong decisions and poorly planned interventions. The book also highlights the fact that the key to stabilising the region lies in the hands of the local population. External support can be important, but it must be long-term and adapted to local needs. In the opinion of the authors, the international community should pursue policies that genuinely support – rather than undermine – the self-determination and development of local communities.

As far as prospects and proposed solutions are concerned, El-Baghdadi and Gatnash paint an optimistic but realistic picture of the future of the Arab world. They believe that the future of the region lies primarily in the hands of the local population and that real, lasting change can only come from within. International aid and support can be important, but local initiatives and movements are crucial to success. The book contains many inspiring examples of individuals and groups courageously standing up to tyrannical systems. Even when it is often at great personal risk, these people and organisations still take action in the name of freedom, justice and democratic values. Examples include young activists, non-governmental organisations and independent journalists who use various means to draw attention to grievances and mobilise public opinion. The authors emphasise that these stories give hope and show that change is possible even in the most repressive systems. Such examples encourage people not to give up the fight and to show that individual and collective efforts can have a great impact. It is also indicated that social change is generally a lengthy process that requires patience and perseverance. Stress is placed on the importance of local communities being empowered to act independently and protect their own interests. Education, the strengthening of civil society and the role of independent media are crucial in this process. Regarding the future, the international community is advised to support these local initiatives and not just act on the basis of short-term geopolitical or economic interests. It is vital that support is adapted to local needs and is sustainable in the long term. It is also the role of international organisations and governments to exert pressure on repressive regimes, and to support respect for human rights. The authors call attention to the fact that, although the challenges are enormous, the outlook for the region is not hopeless. The determination of the local population and their desire for change will ultimately determine the future. The inspiring stories and examples presented in this book reinforce the belief that there is hope even in the most difficult of circumstances and that through collective effort, real, lasting change can be achieved.

The Middle East Crisis Factory can be considered essential reading for anyone who wants to gain a deeper insight into the situation in the Middle East. This work offers detailed analysis, personal stories and comprehensive perspectives to give a complete picture of the region's current situation and its future possibilities. El-Baghdadi and Gatnash's writing is informative, and also inspiring. The situation they describe and the personal stories they feature are thought-provoking, and the reader is encouraged to go deeper and to understand the challenges and struggles that people in the Middle East face on a daily basis. In this way, the book offers a human approach to those interested in the topic. The comprehensive perspectives presented by the authors highlight the diversity and complexity of the region. The deeper understanding that this volume offers can help people to avoid

reliance on superficial news and instead gain a more profound knowledge of the political, social and economic dynamics of the Middle East. Last but not least, the examples and stories described in these pages show that many people in the region firmly believe in the power of change and the universal value of human rights. *The Middle East Crisis Factory* encourages the reader to not form opinions about the region based on stereotypes and prejudices, but rather to get to know its layers and to distinguish between different actors and groups.
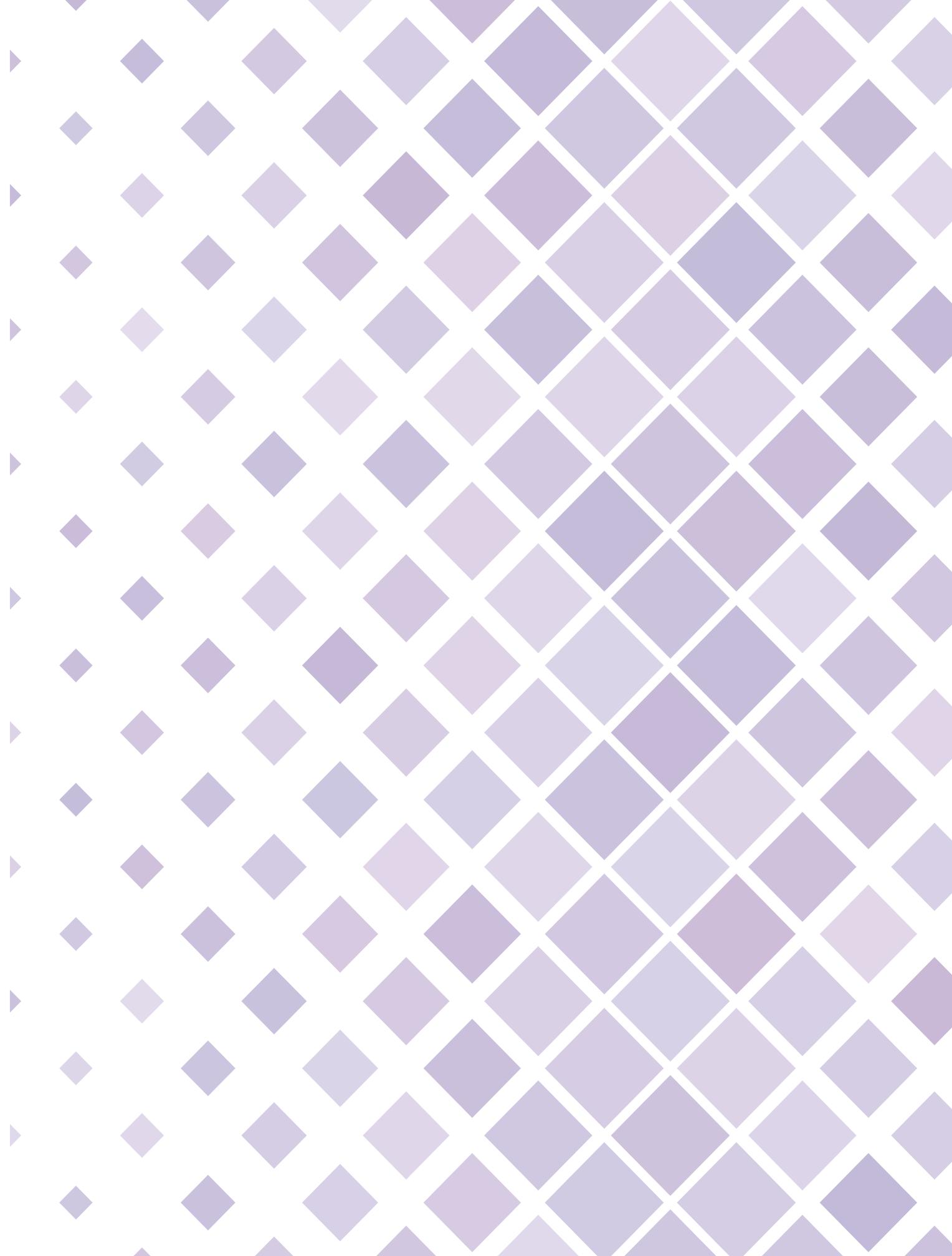
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