SECURITY IN EURASIA

Threats, Challenges and Opportunities

Editor: Şeref ÇETİNKAYA



İSTANBUL UNIVERSITY PRESS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface V

Introduction VI

Chapter 1
Energy and Conflict in Global Security: Hydrocarbons, Water and Nuclear 1
Ahmet Öztürk

Chapter 2
New Regimes and Security Relations in Eurasia 27
Haluk Alkan

Chapter 3
Cybersecurity Threats in Eurasia 51
Serkan Gönen

Chapter 4
Geopolitical Rivalries and Power Struggles 62
Buğra Sarı

Chapter 5
The Impacts of the Anthropocene Epoch on Environmental Security in Eurasia 74
Tuba Taşlıcalı Koç

Chapter 6
Impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative on Eurasia: Economic, Political, Social, and Environmental Transformations 86
Şeref Çetinkaya

Chapter 7
Weaponisation of Migration in the Context of Hybrid Warfare Strategies: The Case of Russia-Ukraine War 98

Ayşegül Bostan

Chapter 8
Three Gorges Dam in the Framework of China's National Security **109**
Tarık Demir

Chapter 9
Navigating Deglobalization in Eurasia: World-Building and Türkiye Amidst Emerging Historical Rupture **120**
Mehmet Akif Okur

Chapter 10
Eurasia in the Context of Cyber Intelligence **140**
Gökçe Karacayılmaz

Chapter 11
Analysis of Russian Foreign Policy Using Classical, Structural, and Neoclassical Realism Theories, Including the Hegemonic Stability Theory **155**
Burak Şakir Şeker

Chapter 12
Russia's Desire for a Cordon Sanitaire **168**
Alper Yılmaz

Chapter 13
The Rise of Strategic Partnerships in the 21st century: The Case of Sino-Saudi Relations **183**
Övgü Kalkan Küçüksolak

Chapter 14
Türkiye Shanghai Cooperation Organization Relations **198**
Çağlar Özer

Chapter 15
Eurasian Security from the Great Game to the Dark Game: Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations **211**
Gökhan Alptekin

Ethnic Diversity and Linguistic Conflict in the Russian Federation

Aytaç Durmaz

PREFACE

Eurasia is gaining prominence globally due to its evolving and dynamic power balances, contributing to its strategic significance. This study, titled "Security in Eurasia: Threats, Challenges, and Opportunities", aims to analyze shifting power dynamics and security frameworks in the region and explore how changes in Eurasia have global implications. The dynamics in this crucial region can escalate and impact global circumstances in a relatively brief timeframe. Similarly, alliances and partnerships formed within a region can be powerful enough to influence international politics. Therefore, ensuring security in Eurasia is of critical importance for world security.

In the contemporary world, Eurasia is emerging as a key region for international trade routes and military-security strategies. Additionally, the region is rich in global energy reserves, making it even more important. These factors collectively render Eurasia a fragile zone on a global scale, underscoring the importance of maintaining regional stability.

When considering security threats in Eurasia, issues such as cyber threats, local conflicts, geopolitical power struggles, energy security, and migration problems stand out. With the rapid advancement of technology, the cyber domain has become an increasingly important arena for power struggles, transforming into a significant national security challenge for states. Moreover, ongoing conflicts and wars in the region not only directly impact regional security but also worsen migration, which, in turn, further destabilizes the region. Another major threat to Eurasia is terrorism, particularly radicalism. Terrorist organizations, such as ISIS, actively recruit from the region and perform activities that can undermine the region's stability. Finally, the efforts of major powers, including Russia, China, the United States, and the European Union, to expand their influence in the region directly threaten Eurasian security.

Eurasia presents a wealth of opportunities within its diverse geography. The region possesses noteworthy potential concerning energy resources and infrastructure initiatives, positioning it as a crucial area for fostering international collaboration. Agreements and partnerships focused on these objectives in the region can also play a key role in enhancing security in the Middle East. Because international trade routes pass through the region and infrastructure projects contribute to connectivity, Eurasia has become a crucial junction for global trade.

In conclusion, ensuring security in Eurasia affects not only the region but also its regional actors and can create global repercussions. Security issues within a region can lead to far-reaching consequences. Given the complexity of this security environment, understanding developments in Eurasia has become increasingly challenging. This study aims to enhance understanding of security dynamics in the Eurasian region by thoroughly examining pertinent issues and challenges. It seeks to provide readers with a nuanced perspective on contemporary security concerns while offering insights into potential developments in this strategically significant area.

INTRODUCTION

The term “Eurasia” was first introduced by the Prussian naturalist Alexander von Humboldt in his 1849 work, ‘Cosmos’. Humboldt used this term to encompass the entire geography of Europe and Asia (İşyar, 2018). However, there is no singular, universally accepted definition of Eurasia in contemporary discussions. Researchers focusing on the subject have been unable to reach a consensus on a common definition because of the countries' differing geopolitical and foreign policy objectives (Özder, 2013). The Eurasian region is commonly defined by specific geographical boundaries. To the west, it is marked by Vienna, while its central area includes significant territories such as Anatolia, Southern Russia, Moldova, the Black Sea, and Ukraine. Extending to the east, the region reaches the Great Wall of China. The southern border of Eurasia is typically identified as the Middle East (Korkmaz, 2022). According to another definition, the Eurasian region runs through Eastern and Southeastern Europe, Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, with Türkiye and the Middle East included (İşyar, 2018).

In addition, its role as a connecting link between Asia and Europe has significantly enhanced Eurasia's strategic relevance. The region is connected to many parts of the world by land and sea routes, facilitating global interactions. Given its geopolitical significance, a region can be defined as a strategic area where major powers compete for influence and where various threats and opportunities coexist. Consequently, developments in Eurasia carry significance not only for the region itself but also have broader implications on a global scale. Throughout history, Eurasia has served as a focal point of interaction for many states, and today, its importance has increased due to the global nature of the consequences arising from these interactions. In this regard, it can be argued that Eurasia has become the epicenter of global security. To ensure security in Eurasia, it is essential not only for countries in the region to safeguard their national security but also for global powers to address the threats arising from their efforts to increase their influence over the region.

When analyzing the security dynamics of Eurasia, it is evident that economic, environmental, sociocultural, and technological factors must also be considered alongside military threats. In today’s world, where hybrid warfare is reshaping security architectures, cyber threats are becoming increasingly prominent. In addition, security concerns related to terrorism are becoming more prevalent in the region. The migration crisis, which emerged due to recent hot conflicts in Eurasia and its vicinity, is also a critical issue threatening security. Since most of the world's energy reserves are located in Eurasia, energy security and related threats have become major focus areas. With such a broad spectrum of threats present in the region, cooperation is essential to ensure security. The region's countries, along with the major powers influencing the area, have sought to secure Eurasia’s stability through alliances and strategic partnerships.

Evaluating security issues in Eurasia cannot be limited to the conflicts of interest among regional actors alone. It is essential to consider the influence of global powers such as China, the European Union, and the United States, which significantly shape the region's security landscape. Consequently, security threats in this area can manifest in various dimensions. This study examines elements such as China’s growing economic and military power, Russia’s strategic objectives, environmental changes, rising digital threats, and ideological conflicts, all of which can be perceived as threats to the region. For instance, China's Belt and Road Initiative is not only an economic project but also a multifaceted initiative with strategic and military dimensions. Similarly, Russia’s efforts to increase its influence over regional states, particularly due to historical and cultural ties, sometimes turn into hot conflicts that can have global consequences.

To understand security in Eurasia, examining evolving and complex threats is insufficient. It is also necessary to analyze the alliances and collaborations between states and how these partnerships affect Eurasia’s security policies. China, Russia, Türkiye, and other regional countries strive to secure their national security and the region’s stability through alliances and partnerships. China’s deepening

relations with regional countries, as well as recent developments such as the warming ties between China and Saudi Arabia and Central Asian states' efforts to diversify their foreign relations beyond Russia, can be considered in this context.

One prominent alliance within the Eurasian security framework is Türkiye's recent relationship with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). As Türkiye strengthens its cooperation within this alliance, the increasing participation of other regional countries could lead to a reshaping of the security dynamics in Eurasia. Alongside these developments, China's Belt and Road Initiative and Russia's influence-building efforts have contributed to both threats and opportunities associated with regional stability in Eurasia. The rise of alliances and partnerships can sometimes lead to conflicts of interest and shifts in power balances. Consequently, the region's security dynamics are becoming more complex as they become intertwined.

Therefore, this book, titled "Security in Eurasia: Threats, Challenges, and Opportunities", offers a thorough understanding of the security challenges inherent in the region by conducting an in-depth analysis of its threats and the strategic responses that can be developed. It aims to examine the evolving power dynamics and security frameworks in Eurasia and explore how these changes resonate on a global scale.

As Mackinder, Mahan, Spykman, and many other geopolitical writers have highlighted, the central and defining place of Eurasia in global politics from different viewpoints, from ancient times to the present, constitutes the geopolitical heart of the world. In his paper 'The Geographical Pivot of History', which was submitted to the Royal Geographical Society in 1904, Mackinder introduced Euroasia's geography and geopolitical analysis into literature, together with his famous 'Heartland Theory'. Mahan's 'sea power thesis' and his famous 1890 book, 'The Influence of Sea Power Upon History (1660-1783)' had never been shy of the seas of Eurasia. Nicholas Spykman's work (1944) 'The Geography of the Peace' and the 'Rimland Theory' have strengthened the theses of both authors, again putting Eurasia at the heart of geopolitical analysis.

Tensions, disputes, and developments in Eurasia can easily escalate into global issues in a short period. Similarly, alliances and partnerships formed within a region can be powerful enough to influence international politics, given the Asian rising major powers like China and India. With the power shift reality in the global political and economic order, Eurasia is becoming a spotting point once more. Therefore, ensuring security in Eurasia is of critical importance.

Numerous individuals have generously shared their expertise and insights within this project, culminating in the creation of this book, which reflects their diverse experiences in universities and various academic institutions. The subsequent sections detail the chapters and their esteemed contributors, along with concise summaries for each chapter.

In Chapter 1, Ahmet Öztürk offers a comprehensive examination of the intricate relationship between energy and global security by focusing on three major sources: fossil fuels, water, and nuclear energy. Tracing the evolution of energy-related conflicts from the Industrial Revolution to contemporary geopolitical crises, the chapter highlights how energy has not only fueled economic development but also served as a catalyst for international conflicts and wars. From the oil-driven policies of global powers in the Middle East and the Caspian Basin to disputes over transboundary water resources and the proliferation of nuclear technology in states such as Iran and North Korea, Öztürk effectively demonstrates that energy security is central to national interests and global stability. The analysis underscores that as global energy demand continues to rise—particularly in developing regions—access to and control over energy resources will increasingly shape the strategic behavior of states. This chapter thus lays a foundational framework for understanding energy as both a driver and a domain of conflict in the 21st century.

In Chapter 2, Haluk Alkan explores the relationship between regime types and security dynamics in the Eurasian region in the post-Soviet era. It categorizes the region's political systems into three main types: illiberal democracies, hybrid rentier regimes, and weak or failing states. The chapter details how these regimes, shaped by institutional fragility, electoral authoritarianism, or rentier-state

logic, influence both domestic politics and foreign policy orientations. Full rentier regimes—such as Russia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan—tend to centralize power, suppress opposition, and favor hard power approaches in regional security. In contrast, semi-rentier states like Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, and Georgia suffer from institutional instability, making them vulnerable to external interference and regional conflict. Meanwhile, illiberal democracies like Poland and Hungary, though members of the EU and NATO, pursue centrifugal foreign policies that often challenge liberal institutional norms. The chapter argues that these divergent regime types contribute to a fragmented and often conflict-prone security landscape in Eurasia, where authoritarian consolidation, external dependency, and contested sovereignty shape regional order.

Chapter 3, authored by Serkan Gönen, addresses the growing cybersecurity threats in the geopolitically fragile and technologically uneven Eurasian region. Highlighting a series of case studies—including the Stuxnet worm, the 2015 Ukraine BlackEnergy attack, the 2007 DDoS attacks in Estonia, and major ransomware campaigns like WannaCry and Petya—the chapter illustrates how vulnerabilities in digital infrastructure pose severe risks to national security, critical services, and international stability. It emphasizes the region's systemic weaknesses, such as outdated systems, asymmetric digital capacities, and insufficient legal and institutional frameworks. Gönen also explores state-sponsored cyber espionage efforts, like those attributed to China and Russia, and their disruptive impact on military, economic, and political domains. The chapter argues that the borderless nature of cyberspace necessitates robust legislation, international cooperation, and enhanced public awareness to build cyber resilience. Overall, cybersecurity is presented not only as a technological concern but as a fundamental pillar of modern international security in the Eurasian context.

Chapter 4, by Buğra Sarı, explores the evolving geopolitical rivalry among the United States, Russia, and China in the strategically critical Eurasian region. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, a power vacuum emerged in Eurasia, transforming it into a contested zone for regional influence and global power projection. Drawing on classical and contemporary geopolitical theories—including Mackinder's Heartland, Spykman's Rimland, and Brzezinski's 'Grand Chessboard'—the chapter argues that Eurasia's vast natural resources and geostrategic location make it central to global hegemonic ambitions. Sarı provides a systemic analysis of great power behavior under the anarchic international order, emphasizing how states strive for regional hegemony while simultaneously preventing others from achieving it. The chapter examines how China leverages economic instruments like the Belt and Road Initiative and military diplomacy to expand its Eurasian footprint; how Russia, viewing Eurasia as its historical sphere of influence, uses energy leverage and military interventions to restore its dominance; and how the United States, concerned by both rivals' growing influence, increases its military presence and diplomatic engagement to maintain strategic superiority. Ultimately, Sarı concludes that Eurasia has re-emerged as the primary theater of great power competition, where shifting alliances, contested resources, and geopolitical rivalries reshape the regional and global order.

Chapter 5, authored by Tuba Taşlıcalı Koç, critically examines how anthropogenic activities—especially since the onset of the Anthropocene epoch—have intensified environmental degradation across the Eurasian continent, turning environmental issues into pressing security concerns. Driven by Critical Security Studies, particularly the Copenhagen School's "five sectors of security," the chapter emphasizes the growing importance of environmental security alongside traditional state-centric approaches. The chapter first explores various forms of pollution—soil, air, water, and noise—and highlights how human activity, particularly industrialization and globalization, has disrupted ecological balance. It then examines the securitization of environmental issues, from the concept of ecocide to the impact of nuclear testing, such as in Semipalatinsk and Chornobyl, and broader industrial and ecological disasters, including the Aral Sea crisis and Fukushima. Eurasia case studies illustrate how environmental pollution transcends borders and disproportionately affects local and global security. The chapter ultimately argues that a paradigm shift is necessary: from viewing security solely through the lens of military power to recognizing environmental degradation as a systemic threat. Taşlıcalı Koç calls for strengthened international cooperation, legal accountability, and environmental awareness as prerequisites to restoring environmental harmony and securing the planet's future.

Chapter 6, authored by Şeref Çetinkaya, comprehensively examines China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its multidimensional impacts on Eurasia, focusing on economic, political, social, and environmental transformations. The chapter traces the BRI's origins and strategic objectives, emphasizing China's efforts to expand trade routes, secure energy corridors, and consolidate global influence through infrastructure investments and regional partnerships. Economically, the BRI has enhanced connectivity, stimulated foreign direct investment, and fostered trade integration across Central and South Asia. Politically, it has shifted power dynamics, increased China's diplomatic leverage, and introduced new regional alignments. Socially, the initiative has generated employment and cultural exchange but also triggered displacement and social unrest. Environmentally, while the BRI has raised concerns over resource depletion and ecosystem degradation, China has introduced sustainability measures, including the Green BRI. Çetinkaya emphasizes that while the BRI presents significant opportunities for regional development, its long-term success depends on transparent governance, inclusive social policies, and environmentally sustainable practices.

Chapter 7, authored by Ayşegül Bostan, investigates the use of migration as a strategic instrument in hybrid warfare, focusing on Russia's actions during the Ukraine war. The chapter conceptualizes hybrid warfare as a mix of conventional and unconventional tools, where migration can be deliberately weaponized to undermine adversaries without direct military confrontation. Using Kelly Greenhill's typologies, the chapter analyses how Russia exploited forced migration as a coercive and dispossessive tool, intentionally triggering a refugee crisis to pressure the EU, weaken Ukraine's demographic resilience, and destabilize Western political unity. It further highlights how Russia utilized passportisation and international propaganda to legitimize interventions and manipulate public opinion domestically and internationally. The study concludes that Russia's multifaceted use of migration in the Ukrainian conflict constitutes a critical case of weaponized migration, revealing the strategic potential of displacement in contemporary warfare and its broader implications for international security.

Chapter 8, written by Tarık Demir, examines the Three Gorges Dam as a strategic infrastructure project central to China's national security doctrine. Positioned on the Yangtze River, the dam serves multiple strategic functions—hydropower generation, flood control, irrigation, and regional economic development—while also addressing geographic disparities between coastal and inland China. The chapter details the dam's historical development, technical specifications, and transformative effects on urbanization, energy security, and riverine ecosystems. While contributing significantly to China's energy needs and geopolitical cohesion, the dam has also generated serious environmental and social concerns, including ecological degradation, fish population decline, and large-scale displacement. Despite these challenges, the dam is framed as a cornerstone of China's efforts to secure territorial integrity and reinforce its geopolitical influence under initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative. The chapter underscores the dual nature of the dam—as both a symbol of national strength and a potential vulnerability in times of conflict.

Chapter 9, authored by Mehmet Akif Okur, explores Türkiye's potential for *World-building* within the context of *deglobalization* and an emerging *historical rupture* in the international system. It argues that as global integration recedes and power fragments into competing 'Worlds'—each characterized by distinct geopolitical, economic, and ideological structures—Türkiye has a unique opportunity to foster a cooperative and stabilizing entity, termed Türk Eli or the *Turkic Peace Zone*. Drawing on Türkiye's historical legacy, cultural and kinship ties with Turkic states and communities, and strategic geopolitical location, the chapter presents *World-building nationalism* as an alternative foreign policy framework for reconfiguring regional order. It introduces key concepts such as *Co-Worlding*, *Roof-Sharing*, and the *Turkic Belt* and situates Türkiye's efforts within a more significant trend of competing World-building projects led by powers such as Russia, China, and members of BRICS. While acknowledging significant challenges—including elite skepticism, resource constraints, and ideological fragmentation—the chapter highlights the Organization of Turkic States (OTS) as a core institutional platform for regional integration. It ultimately argues that Türkiye's proactive role in fostering peace, prosperity, and shared governance across the Turkic World and its adjacent regions can contribute to forming a resilient and adaptive regional order amid global instability.

Chapter 10, authored by Gökçe Karacayılmaz, explores the evolving role of cyber intelligence in Eurasia, emphasizing its significance in addressing complex digital threats to military, economic, and civilian infrastructures. The chapter outlines the multi-layered nature of cyber intelligence—operating at strategic, operational, and tactical levels—and discusses how regional powers such as Russia, China, Türkiye, and Iran utilize it to safeguard national interests and gain geopolitical leverage. Russia integrates cyber tactics into hybrid warfare, including disinformation and critical infrastructure attacks, while China prioritizes cyber espionage aligned with its Digital Silk Road. Türkiye collaborates with NATO and develops indigenous capabilities, whereas Iran has pursued a more aggressive, independent cyber strategy post-Stuxnet. The chapter also examines the growing role of AI, machine learning, and quantum computing in transforming both offensive and defensive cyber capabilities. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of international cyber cooperation through platforms like the SCO and BRICS, especially in securing energy infrastructure and countering threats from state-sponsored actors, cybercriminal organizations, and terrorist groups. Karacayılmaz concludes by stressing the need for enhanced regional collaboration, investment in emerging technologies, and professional training to bolster cyber defense and maintain strategic stability in Eurasia's digital domain.

Chapter 11, written by Burak Şakir Şeker, offers a comprehensive analysis of Russian foreign policy through the lenses of Classical, Structural, and Neoclassical Realism, as well as Hegemonic Stability Theory. Classical realism underscores Russia's emphasis on state sovereignty, power maximization, and cautious engagement with international organizations, exemplified by its legislative restrictions on NGOs and strategic use of vetoes in the UN Security Council. Structural realism explains Russia's actions as responses to systemic anarchy, with institutions like the SCO and BRICS+ serving as platforms to balance against U.S. hegemony. However, it is limited in addressing Russia's internal drivers. Neoclassical realism fills this gap by analyzing how domestic politics, elite perceptions, and national identity shape Russia's regional dominance through mechanisms like the CSTO, CIS, and EAEU. The chapter also uses the Hegemonic Stability Theory and Paul Kennedy's theory of overextension to assess Russia's activities in Africa, particularly the Sahel, as attempts to counter Western influence despite economic constraints. Ultimately, the chapter argues that realist paradigms, particularly neoclassical realism, provide the most nuanced framework for understanding the complex interplay of domestic and international drivers in Russia's assertive yet constrained foreign policy behavior.

Chapter 12, written by Alper Yılmaz, examines Russia's longstanding quest for strategic depth by creating a buffer zone, or *cordon sanitaire*, particularly in the context of its relations with the West and its military involvement in Ukraine. The chapter traces the historical evolution of this concept, beginning with early 20th-century geopolitical theories, and argues that the Western containment strategy has systematically shaped Russia's security perceptions. The author contends that Ukraine's geopolitical positioning as a bridge between Russia and NATO represents a critical fault line in this dynamic and that Russia's military interventions are ultimately driven by the desire to prevent further Western encroachment. Drawing from geopolitical theories by Mackinder, Spykman, and Kennan, the study highlights how Russia's foreign policy—both during and after the Soviet period—reflects a defensive logic rooted in geography and strategic isolation. The chapter concludes by suggesting that Türkiye's geostrategic calculus should be informed by a similar critical reading of historical and spatial dynamics rather than external prescriptions.

Chapter 13, written by Övgü Kalkan Küçüksolak, investigates the transformation of bilateral strategic partnerships as a prominent tool of diplomacy in the post-Cold War international order, with a specific focus on the evolving relationship between China and Saudi Arabia. The chapter begins by conceptualizing strategic partnerships as flexible, goal-oriented alignments distinct from traditional alliances, emphasizing their utility for states seeking autonomy and diversified cooperation. Through the lens of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, the study analyzes the institutionalization and mutual expectations embedded in the Sino-Saudi Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP). It further explores this relationship's geopolitical and geo-economic implications across three critical regions: Türkiye, the Middle East, and Central Asia. The chapter concludes that while this partnership enables both China and Saudi Arabia to advance their respective strategic ambitions,

it also introduces new dynamics of competition and influence, particularly in regions where traditional Western and regional actors have held sway.

Chapter 14, written by Çağlar Özer, explores the historical development, strategic dimensions, and future prospects of Türkiye's engagement with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Initially established as a dialogue partner in 2012, Türkiye's relations with the SCO reflect its pursuit of a more diversified and multilateral foreign policy amid persistent challenges in its EU accession and evolving dynamics within NATO. The chapter examines Türkiye's motivations for strengthening ties with the SCO —particularly in energy security, trade diversification, and regional counter-terrorism cooperation—and evaluates how these engagements align with its broader geopolitical aims. Emphasizing the strategic relevance of Türkiye's Eurasian geography, the study argues that cooperation with SCO member states such as Russia, China, and the Central Asian republics offers significant opportunities while posing challenges in balancing relations with Western institutions. The author concludes that Türkiye's deepening relations with the SCO may enhance its role as a regional power and a bridge between East and West. However, future integration—especially full membership—will require careful calibration of its commitments within the broader multipolar international system.

Chapter 15, written by Gökhan Alptekin, explores the evolving security dynamics between Afghanistan and Pakistan within the broader framework of Eurasian geopolitics. Tracing the trajectory from the British-Russian "Great Game" to the multi-actor "Dark Game" of the post-Cold War period, the chapter examines how great powers such as the United States, Russia, and China have shaped regional instability to serve their strategic interests. It argues that Afghanistan and Pakistan—despite shared cultural, religious, and geographical ties—have struggled to achieve durable bilateral cooperation due to both internal fragmentation and sustained external interference. The chapter concludes by emphasizing that mutual stability and coordinated regional policies are essential for the two countries to contribute meaningfully to Eurasian security.

Chapter 16, authored by Aytaç Durmaz, analyzes ethnic and linguistic diversity in the Russian Federation, focusing on how historical, constitutional, and demographic factors shape interethnic relations today. While drawing on population census data and constitutional provisions, the chapter discusses the recognition and categorization of 193 ethnic groups and highlights issues such as assimilation, language loss, and identity shifts. Special attention is given to the challenges faced by minority and indigenous groups, as well as the decline of local languages in the face of dominant Russian linguistic policy. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for comprehensive demographic planning and inclusive language policies to sustain Russia's multicultural structure within a centralized federal system.

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Chapter 1

Energy and Conflict in Global Security: Hydrocarbons, Water and Nuclear

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Abstract

Energy has long been a driving force behind economic growth, societal development, and international relations. However, resource scarcity, growing demand, and environmental concerns have turned energy into a critical global challenge. Throughout history, energy resources—especially fossil fuels and water—have been both a cause and a catalyst for international conflicts, shaping geopolitical struggles and power dynamics.

Beyond economics, energy plays a crucial role in global security and political stability. Competition over fossil fuels, water disputes, and nuclear energy programs have fueled tensions and conflicts worldwide. As nations seek to secure energy supplies, energy politics remain deeply intertwined with international power struggles, making energy security one of the most pressing global concerns.

Keywords Energy · conflict · global security · oil and gas · hydroenergy · nuclear energy

This book chapter has been written by using the following work previously published in Turkish. While writing the English text, the tables in the Turkish text were changed to include current data and a major revision was made. Öztürk, A. (2010). Energy as a conflict area and global energy policies. In K. İnat, B. Duran, & M. Ataman (Eds.), *World conflict zones* (Vol. II, pp. 665–702). Istanbul: Nobel Publishers.

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Introduction

Energy has been a fundamental driver of human civilization, shaping economies, societies, and international relations. Since ancient times, natural resources such as water and fossil fuels have played a crucial role in sustaining human activities. However, with the Industrial Revolution and the rapid expansion of global energy consumption, the issue of resource scarcity has become a pressing challenge. The increasing demand for energy, coupled with the finite nature of fossil fuels and environmental concerns, has intensified global tensions, making energy not only an economic and strategic issue but also a security concern. Throughout history, energy resources have been both a cause and a catalyst for international conflicts, influencing geopolitical struggles and shaping power dynamics. From wars over oil and disputes over water to the complexities of nuclear energy, the energy problem has evolved into a multifaceted global challenge with economic, political, and environmental implications. As the world faces a future of dwindling resources and growing energy needs, addressing these challenges has become more urgent than ever.

The energy problem extends beyond economic concerns to influence global security and political stability. Many international conflicts have been driven by competition for energy resources, with fossil fuels often playing a decisive role in shaping foreign policies and military interventions. Tensions in energy-rich regions such as the Middle East, the Caspian Basin, and the Caucasus highlight the geopolitical risks associated with energy dependence. Moreover, disputes over water resources have led to regional conflicts, while nuclear energy programs have introduced new security dilemmas, as seen in the cases of Iran and North Korea. As nations struggle to secure energy supplies, energy politics have become deeply intertwined with global power struggles, alliances, and economic policies. The depletion of traditional energy sources, alongside the transition to alternative energy solutions, adds another layer of complexity to international relations. As a result, energy security remains one of the most significant global challenges, with far-reaching implications for economic stability, national security, and environmental sustainability.

Definition of the Problem

The world has entered into a new era in energy security and global energy markets since the 1990s. For decades, the world population has been steadily increasing, driven particularly by dempgraphic growth in developing countries. First of all, in the past 20-25 years, due to the end of the Cold War and the removal of political and economic walls between the East and West blocs, the energy needs of the growing world economy have increased. At the same time there have been many new energy explorations, proved reserves and the production to mett that inresing demand. These developments have introduced an increasing number of actors into the energy landscape, both regionally and globally. The most important result of this has been the fact that the ant difference between the energy demand and supply has had a continuous but different impact on energy prices that it has finally made the energy security a more economic topic than a political one. If a deficit exists in supply side the governments had found it difficult to cope with high energy prices in a way that it had shaken the balance of payments accounts. Secondly and more commonly, due to the political crises that have emerged in the Middle East, and recently in the post-Soviet world, global energy markets have faced with a sudden and unexpected price increases or suplly issue. At a first glance, demand, supply and price issues emerge as a problem for economic and industry planners, however, the matter mostly concerned international politics and foreign policy makers due to energy's crucial role on nations' political and military strategies. This dimension, often referred to as the "energy problem," which involves continuity and security of energy resources in quantity, pricing, and transportation.

The avaliability and use of energy when needed, therefore the energy problem covers a very wide area from food safety to heating of houses, from lighting of living spaces such as homes, offices and streets to operating modern transportation vehicles and systems, from using mass communication tools to implementing military and defense systems. Energy resources are as numerous and diverse in number and quantity as the breadth of their usage area. Many types of energy such as plant fuels, bio energy sources, geothermal sources, fossil fuels better known as coal, oil, natural gas, hydro-electric energy, nuclear energy, ocean resources, wind energy, solar energy are included in the problem in terms of their prevalence and availability. In the early 21st century, despite the increasing energy prices, global energy demand continues to increase and this trend will continue in the coming years. In 2005, global energy use increased by 2.7% compared to 2004, reaching a consumption equal[1] to 226 millions[2] barrels of oil equivalent (mboe) per day (Longmuir, 2006). This figure has reached 301 millions of oil equivalent a day in 2023 and expected to be 374 mboe by 2050. And almost all of that increase will come from developing countries, with 73.5 mboe'd (OPEC, 2024). Table 1 provides two separate forecasts for 2030 and 2050 from two different reports. It also illustrates the shares of different energy sources in global primary energy suplly for 2003 and 2018 respectively (IEA, Energy Outlook 2007 and EIA, Today in Energy, 2019).

Table 1

Major Energy Sources and Their Shares (%) in Global Energy Supply

Energy type	2003*	2018**	2030(forecast*)	2050 (**)
Oil 35.3	32	34.1	27	
Coal	24.1	26	22.9	20
Natural Gas	20.9	22	24.2	22
Total Fossil Fuels	**80.3**	**80**	**81.2**	**69**
Nuclear	6.4	5	4.7	4
Hydro (water)	2.1	2.5	2.3	4-5
Renewables (incl. Hydro)	13.3	15	14.1	27-28

Source: (*) International Energy Agency 2007; (**) Energy Information Administration, Today in Energy, 2019.

As energy resources are subject to harsh international competition and tensions, energy security involves many issues from the diversification of oil supply sources to the uninterrupted flow of these sources to demand centers at affordable prices, and to the adequacy of investments in the field, plus the physical security of production and transportation facilities (Yergin, 2005: 52) Given the significance of hydrocarbon energy resources, the security of oil supplies and their steady flow has been synonymous with energy security for much of the second half of the 20th century. (Alhajji, 2007). For tha last few decades, it has been seen that natural gas' supply, demand and trade has been added to this concept. The energy problem first developed mostly an economic problem into the 1970s, and as a security problem after that. From the 1990s onward, it has also been recognized as an environmental challenge. (Lee, 2006). It should be noted that the problem today represents a complex area with many interconnected or independent dimensions and results. The impact and importance of fossil fuels, especially of oil and natural gas in world energy markets, seems likely to continue for many years due to the increasing population, growing global economy and energy demand, the discovery of new supply sources and the development of new areas of use. According to the estimates of the International

[1] Million barrel of oil equivalent (mboe). It refers to a unit measurement used to Express non-oil energy consumption in terms of oil.

[2] To explain this size in a comparison, note that the capacity of VLCC (very large crude carriers), the largest oil tankers used in oil transportation, is 2 million barrels.

Energy Agency (IEA), fossil fuels known as oil, natural gas and coal will still meet more than 81 percent of the world's energy consumption by 2030 (World Energy Outlook, 2006). Furthermore, IEA data suggest that fossil fuels will retain, and even increase, their share in global energy consumption over the next two decades, contributing to approximately 84 percent of the total increase in world energy demand. (World Energy Outlook, 2009).

It is estimated that the share of oil and natural gas,[3] as two major fossil fuels, will increase from 57% in 2002 to 60% in 2030 (World Energy Outlook, 2004). Another source, based on British Petroleum (BP) data for 2005, reports this figure as 60% in total, comprising 36% from oil and 24% from natural gas. (Longmuir, 2006). In addition to the diverse areas of use of oil and natural gas, the relatively easy transportation and less pollution in comparison with the use of coal are defining this increasing interest and demand. Although coal retains an undeniable share of over 25% in global energy consumption, it has been predominantly favored by developing countries in recent years. This preference is due to its limited range of applications, transportation challenges, and the high levels of air pollution it produces. For this reason, it remains in behind oil and gas in the context of international energy issues, including risk for conflict. In that regard oil has been frequently qouted with international tensions and conflicts fort he past half a century. Entering the 21st century, natural gas has gained increasing prominence and international significance due to its diverse applications, growing production, and expanding trade. That is why this study will discuss the energy problem more in the context of fossil fuels, especially on oil and natural gas.[4] In addition to the issue of oil and natural gas, the use of water resources for hydroelectric production and international developments in the field of nuclear energy are also an important part of the energy problem (Longmuir, 2006).

Possibly due to other factors, and certainly because of their strategic importance, nuclear energy and hydro energy resources—whose shares in global energy markets are smaller and more limited than those of fossil fuels—have increasingly become points of contention in international relations. Thus, two fundamental problems emerge regarding energy politics: the scarcity of resources and the perception or potential that energy resources can be used as a strategic weapon in global politics. In light of these challenges, state energy policies are primarily planned and implemented with one overarching objective: to either acquire as many energy resources as possible or to control them by any available means. States' desire to possess as much energy sources as possible is the mercantilist way of controlling energy sourses. In addition to traditional state action, thru the time tahre have been more and more tactics of the states to control the energy. Parenting energy companies, investing in energy sectors and fields, contracting with other states and companies, selecting and deciding on the routes for energy transportation such as pipelines, railways, land and sea in order to ensure supply security by controlling the flow of oil and gas have become an important and central part of states' energy policies. Governments generally express that their energy policies are ensuring and maintaining energy supply diversity and security as part of their national security.

[3]The figures published by the International Energy Agency regarding the use of oil, natural gas and coal until 2030 vary from year to year. For example, in the Agency's World Energy Outlook 2007 report, it is stated that the biggest increase in the use of fossil fuels between 2005 and 2030 will be in coal, and it is estimated that the share of coal in total energy demand, which was 25% in 2005, will increase to 28% in 2030. Still, the 2007 report states that oil will be the largest energy source with a share of 32% in 2030, and together with natural gas, this figure will be 54%. See: World Energy Outlook 2007, IEA, p. 42, 73 and 76.

[4]It may be misleading that coal, which still has a very significant size in the total and use of energy resources, remains in the background today and is not included in this study. We should remember that coal which was the main energy source at the beginning and spread of the Industrial Revolution, also caused serious crises among states in the last century. In this context, it is necessary to remember that the Saar and Ruhr regions, rich in coal mines, played an important role in the tensions and conflicts between Germany and France in the first half of the last century. This coal problem between Germany and France later would form the basis of the European Coal and Steel Community, which emerged as a common solution for both parties in the following years. John Young and John Kent, International Relations since 1945, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, pp. 135–7.

The Scope of the Problem

In general, the development of international problems involving energy resources should be given in a general and traditional chronological order. From the tensions and conflicts over water resources (if agricultural projects and food production are included in the energy issue) to the crises and conflicts on fossil fuels, and most recently the nuclear energy issues, we can recall many regional and international developments throughout human history. However, in the modern era, the roots of the energy problem must be traced back to the beginning and development of the Industrial Revolution. More specifically, many important developments can be mentioned regarding the emergence of energy as both an economic and a security problem in the international system. On the industrial and economic side, Edwin Drake's opening of the first oil well in Titusville, Pennsylvania, in 1859 can be described as the starting point of a groundbreaking energy sector on a global scale. This development was also the first step in the emergence of the United States as an industrial power. Later, Thomas Edison's discovery of electricity in 1882, Henry Ford's first automobile in 1896, and the Wright Brothers' first aircraft flight in 1903 were the first harbingers of new industries where this fuel would be used for purposes other than lighting and heating, and which would become the center of the international energy problem in later years. Meanwhile, the opening of Baku oil fields to Western entrepreneurs with the Nobel Brothers entering the oil business in Russia in 1873 and the Rothschild family in 1885, the discovery of oil resources in Indonesia (Sumatra) by the Royal Dutch Company in 1885, the discovery of oil in Iran in 1908, in Mexico in 1910, in Venezuela in 1922, in East Texas in 1930, in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in the late 1930s, in Algeria and Nigeria in 1956, in Alaska in 1968 and in the North Sea in 1969 were important developments in the process of building a new economic and social order that would spread to the global arena starting from the USA at the beginning of the 20th century (Yergin, 1992: 789-791). As for the developments that brought about and shaped the problem in political, strategic and military areas, first of all, the decision of Winston Churchill, the Commander of the British Navy in 1911, to change the fuel of the navy from the traditional fuel of coal to oil in order to strengthen Britain's traditional naval superiority against the increasing German influence at sea (Yergin, 1992), also entered a new era in the military and security planning of the countries.

The year 1947 marked a pivotal moment in global energy history, as the United States, which had been the world's largest producer and consumer of oil since the inception of the oil industry, recorded its first instance of oil consumption exceeding production. This milestone occurred after the United States had solidified its position as the world's largest economic and military power following the end of World War II. Consequently, the U.S. became a net oil importer for the first time, a development that would later play a significant role in shaping today's energy dynamics. In the meantime, in order to increase the effectiveness of exporting countries in the markets that became unstable with new discoveries and increased production and to keep oil prices at certain levels, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was established in 1960, and this organization began to adopt common supply policies that were powerful enough to influence the markets from time to time. As a result of the failure to find new reserves in the USA, oil production in existing fields reached its peak or turning point in 1970, and from that date on, the gap between production and consumption in the country began to widen day by day, and the concept of 'foreign oil' or 'imported energy', which entered the economic, domestic and foreign policy literature of this country in 1947, became one of the most important dilemmas of national security. This was due primarily to the development of the transportation sector in the country, population growth, the spread of industrialization, and therefore the growth of all economic and social life.

These developments were immediately followed by the oil embargo imposed by oil-exporting Arab countries on the USA and Western European countries as a result of their support for Israel in the

Arab-Israeli wars in the early 1970s. Thus apart from discovering, producing, selling and consuming it, a new energy problem was emerged as an area of depression and crisis on a global scale for the first time. The international oil supply, which contracted due to the 1973 embargo and the Iran-Iraq War that began in 1980, drove oil prices from their historically low levels to unprecedented highs. For example, the price of oil, which was $3 per barrel just before the Yom Kippur War in 1973, rose to $12 after the embargo that followed the war and reached $28 in the 1980s due to the Iran-Iraq War. This situation affected all economies around the world, especially developing countries, and even caused inflation to reach levels not seen in developed world. In the early 1980s, consecutive annual price increases of 10% were recorded in the USA. In particular, the 1973 War and the oil embargo that followed led to the biggest economic recession the world had seen since the 1930s, and this disrupted the recovery and development process that the world economy had been experiencing since 1945 (Petroleum in the Modern World, 2010).

With the onset of a new economic recovery in the mid-1980s, followed shortly thereafter by the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, as well as the end of the Cold War, significant developments and changes directly impacting global energy security began to emerge in the final years of the 20th century. Countries in the industrialized regions of North America, Japan, Western Europe and the former Soviet Union, which host much less than a quarter of the world's population, were consuming more than three-quarters of the world's energy supply until the 1990s.[5] The inclusion of new demand regions, primarily developing countries such as the People's Republic of China, India, Türkiye, Iran, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, starting in the 1990s, marked a radical and transformative development on the demand side of global energy markets. (Liangxiang, 2005). It is stated that global oil demand increased by more than 2% per year on average during this period. From 1985 to 1998, oil consumption increased by 30% in Latin America, 40% in Africa, and 50% in Asia (Campbell & Laherrère, 1998: 83). According to estimates by the US Department of Energy, global demand for oil would increase by approximately 40 billion barrels per year until 2020. This amount represents a 60% increase compared to the figures of the late 1990s (Campbell & Laherrère, 1998: 28). Moreover, on the supply side, the USA, which was the largest producer and consumer of energy until the 1970s, became a net importer thereafter. Consequently, as energy supply opportunities declined in developed countries, the majority of the world's energy resources and reserves became concentrated in regions dominated by less developed or developing countries, including the Middle East, Russia, the Caspian Region, Africa, and Central America. Today (excluding speculative Canadian unconventional reserves) the biggest oil reserves are in the Middle East, with 45% of natural gas reserves are in Russia and Iran (Lee, 2006).

Meanwhile, the rising oil prices of the 1970s, 1980s, and subsequent years increased non-OPEC oil supply and production while also accelerating energy efficiency and diversification efforts that had commenced in the 1970s. As a result, new production areas such as Alaska and the North Sea were added first to energy markets, while, with the contribution of price pressure, Soviet oil supply doubled from the early 1970s to the mid-1980s. Simultaneously, the search for non-oil resources and methods of energy production, particularly in electricity generation, led to the increasing adoption of hydroelectric, natural gas, and nuclear energy options in energy markets. Although these developments somewhat reduced the external dependence of OECD countries in energy until the 1990s, however the increasing energy demand of the rapidly developing transportation sector in the following years completely slowed this trend. Meanwhile, the failure to add new reserves in some existing oil production fields, the expectation that production will reach at peak levels sometimes in the coming future and decline as in the case of the North Sea. Additionally, some countries that once had export capacities, such as

[5] Today, the world's six largest economies consume 70% of the world's energy resources. In terms of total energy use, these countries are listed as the USA, the European Union, China, Russia, Japan and India. Five of these are net energy (fossil fuels) importers, and only Russia is an exporting country in this field. See: Longmuir, "Energy Statistics".

Romania, became net importers as their oil production capacities declined and their reserves were depleted. That has increased concerns about the future of international oil supply and global energy security. In particular, domestic demand and external price pressures redefined the energy problem for all oil-importing countries, especially OECD nations, elevating it to an international security issue: dependence on imported energy and the security of international energy supply.

In the face of this new situation, traditional energy supply regions such as the Middle East and potential investment and production regions such as the Caspian basin have been at the center of international agenda since the 1990s. Many international problems that have been ongoing in these regions have reached a serious crisis level due to the increasing impact of the energy factor, at some cases they have even escalated to serious regional international conflicts with some global consequences, such as the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf Wars and most recently the Russia-Georgia and Russia-Ukraine wars. Simultaneously, radical advancements in renewable energy sectors have generated significant commercial potential in energy markets; however, they have also introduced numerous challenges. For example, efforts to construct dams in internal and transboundary river basins, along with the pursuit of nuclear energy—perceived as a significant source of insecurity and conflict among nations—have shifted the energy problem from fossil fuels to new domains. Thus, towards the end of the 20th century, the energy problem has become one of the strategic issue for nations under the pressure of the domestic demand and foreign sources. For the governments mostly in developed and developind worlds, controlling and securing the entire process from discovery of energy reserves to the transportation to end users has become one of the biggest international economic and political challenges in national security agenda into the 21st century.

In this study, the energy problem will be limited to 'energy as a issue of conflict into the 21st century'. It will cover the political tensions and conflicts which have emerged over oil, natural gas, hydro-energy and nuclear energy resources. There are some international tensions and crises over transboundary water resources, few conflicts over fossil fuels and severe disputes over nuclear energy. Within this framework, firstly, as the most common energy problem, the problem over oil and gas will be analysized. Then, the water problem, which has led to interstate and regional tensions and conflicts as another energy problem, will be summarized together with the current academic discussions on the problem. Finally, nuclear energy and technology, which has ben transformed from from the monopoly of mostly developed countries to the developing nations newly emerging capabilities, will be examined with current examples from the Middle East and Asia.

Fossil Fuels as a Source of Conflict and Crisis

With the Industrial Revolution radically changing social life, the economic order and structure of societies, the most important economic problem affecting international relations was the increasing energy needs of states, and in this area, oil in particular. Starting from the late 19th century, the issue of oil began to have a significant impact on the foreign policies and military strategies of powerful states in the international system. For example, in 1903, during a session of the House of Lords, British Foreign Secretary Lord Lansdowne emphasized that "the interests of his country necessitate the establishment of a strong and well-equipped naval base in the Persian Gulf" and declared that "they would resort to all means against threats to British interests," highlighting the region's potential energy resources and their future significance for Britain. Lord Curzon, then head of the British Colonial Administration in India, referred to this declaration as the British "Monroe Doctrine" in the Middle East (Yergin, 1992: 140). Oil has emerged as an area of significant importance in which countries may enter into armed conflict for strategic, economic and political reasons, especially in the second half of the 20th century, as societies increasingly base their lives and economic systems on fossil fuels.

Approximately eighty years after Lansdowne and Curzon, in 1981, U.S. President Jimmy Carter emphasized American interests in the Middle East through the Carter Doctrine, declaring that "any attempt by a foreign power to take control of the Persian Gulf will be regarded as an attack on the strategic and vital interests of the United States and will be met with the harshest response, including the use of military force by the United States" (Carter, 1989: 285).' Exactly ten years later, in 1991, President Bush, right after the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, stated that 'the attack on Kuwait was unacceptable and that the transfer of control of the world's significant oil reserves to Saddam Hussein threatened the American economy, lifestyle and freedoms'(Betts, 1995: 13) thus confirming that the invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent First Gulf War were a conflict waged over energy.

As in the recent past, Eurasia seems to be at the center of global energy policies in the coming period. Excluding Western Europe, Eurasia, which encompasses a vast geography including the Middle East, Eastern Europe, the Caspian basin (only Azerbaijan), Central Asia (only Kazakhstan) and Russia, is estimated to contain 70% of total global energy reserves (Oil & Gas Journal, 2002). A data published by the Oil and Gas Journal lists the top 20 countries by their oil reserves (billion barrels per year) and remainnig time (in years) that the corresponding reserves may last at the current level of production as of 2006 (Oil & Gas Journal, 2005) (EIA World Energy Outlook, 2006: 89). US EIA's a new report also gives that list with most recent figures as of October 2023. In this recent report by EIA Venezuela tops the list with 304 billion barrels of proven oil reserves and 925 years of production with that current reserves and oil production of only 900 thousands barrels per day as of 2023 (EIA, 2023).

Table 2

Top 20 Countries by their Oil Reserves.

World	1293 (billion barrels)*	42(years)*	1720 (billion barrels)**	57 (years)**
Saudi Arabia	267	77	267	79
Canada	179	213	170	88
Iran	132	94	209	140
Iraq	115	171	201	87
Kuwait	104	117	102	106
United Arab Emirates	98	109	113	81
Venezuela	80	103	304	925
Russia	60	18	80	22
Libya	39	65	50	76
Nigeria	36	41	37	54
United States	21	11	74	15
China	18	14	26	16
Qatar	15	52	25	52
Mexico	13	11	6	6.5
Algeria	11	23	12	28
Brazil	11	19	13	8
Kazakhstan	9	25	30	42
Norway	8	8	8	9
Azerbaijan	7	48	7	32
India	6	24	4.5	21

Source: Oil & Gas Journal, 2005* and EIA, 2023**

One of the key reasons that rendered the Middle East and the Caspian basin indispensable for Britain at the beginning of the 20th century, and for the United States towards its end and today, is the abundance of oil reserves in the region. On the global stage, oil has been consistently and strategically vital for industrial development in the United States, Japan, the European Union, and China, as these nations have become major production hubs of the global economy. Therefore and with the pressure from the emerging economies major supply regions have become an area of competition between them such as the Middle east, the Caspian and Central Asian basins and parts of Africa and the Latin America. Despite the discovery of new and significant amounts of oil and energy resources in new places and regions, the position of the Middle East and Eurasia within global energy markets and politics seems to continue to be central focus area for the rest of the 21st century. Energy resources in these regions account for more than half of the world's total energy supply. For this at hand, it would not be wrong to name the invasion of Iraq in 2003 as the first energy war of the 21st century. The 2008 Russia-Georgia War can also be viewed as the first significant energy conflict in Eurasia during the 21st century, even though the conflict was driven by additional underlying factors. Similarly, pil and gas resouces which are estimated to exist underseas, as in the Falklands example (BBC News, 2010) which once caused a diplomatic rift and conflict between the United Kingdom and Argentina, seem to be one of the potential areas of conflicts at reginal and global levels in the remaining of the 21st Century.

These examples have shown that at the beginning of a new century two major political and military powers can enter into hot conflicts with regional and small states over energy. As those are at hand, it can be said that the other major energy basins in the world seem to have a certain conflict environment and potential. Next, the focus shifts to the Caspian-Caucasus and Middle East regions, which are among the primary zones of potential conflict and tension.

Caspian Oil at the Heart of the Great Games

The fact that oil and natural gas resources in the Caspian region can be traced back to ancient times. There are some ancient stories that people lived in the region lit large fires as part of their religious rituals around 2500 BC and later. It is believed that these fires were fueled by oil and natural gas, which were readily available on the surface along the shores of the Caspian Sea (Gokay, 2001: 3). There are also many mentions in ancient Greek and ancient Roman records about the use of oil and natural gas around Baku in ancient centuries. For example, in 450 BC, the ancient Greek historian Herodotus recorded complaints about the foul-smelling fires emanating from the Northern Iran, namely Caspian Region (Owen, 1975: 1). It is later recorded that the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius invaded the Panthia region and destroyed the temples of the fire-worshipping groups in the region and that these groups used oil and natural gas in their temple fires (Gokay, 2001: 3). These two events may be regarded as the earliest known examples of human tension and conflict over hydrocarbon fuels.

Apart from the records of the ancient period, in other records regarding the existence of oil wells in the region and local oil trade in later periods, it is understood that Baku oil was frequently used as fuel and stain remover by the local people starting from the 17th century. After the region came under Russian control, it is seen that the Russians produced significant amounts of oil in the region from the beginning of the 19th century and used it for lighting. It is recorded that over 28,000 barrels of production were realized in Baku by 1843 (Owen, 1975: 3), when the region was under Russian control. With the arrival of the Swedish brothers Robert and Ludwig Nobel to the region in 1873, the Russian oil industry opened up to the world, and even the Caspian (Baku) oil reached a level comparable to investments in other regions, including the United States (Gokay, 2001: 7).

The Caspian basin, which attracted attention simultaneously with the development of the oil industry in the USA after the Industrial Revolution, became an important area of interest for Western

investors from the end of the 19th century until the First World War, despite being under Russian control. It is known that the Rothschild family entered the Russian oil industry in 1885, shortly after the Nobel Brothers, and came to Baku in 1892. These two families built small steam tankers to transport the oil they had extracted near Baku to the Volga River by sea, a railway from Baku to Batumi to transport it by land, and plus a pipeline in 1905. Thus, the Nobel Company became the largest oil company in Russia before World War I, which was followed by the Rothschild Company. After the Rothschild Company was purchased by the Royal Dutch-Shell Group in 1911, Western companies came to control the oil industry in the Caspian-Caucasian region to a large extent (Gokay, 2001). It is stated that Caspian oil accounted for 30% of the world oil trade in just before the First World War (Forsythe, 1996: 9).

For Western powers, this situation ended with the onset of World War I and, shortly thereafter, the region came under Soviet control. First, the region entered a period of instability with the Russian Civil War of 1918-1921, which began after the Bolshevik Revolution. In this instability, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia declared their independence in April 1918. Baku, the center of the region's oil industry, was first occupied by Ottoman forces in September 1918 and, a few months later, by the British, bringing the region's oil wells and transportation routes under British control. However, with the Soviets entering Azerbaijan in April 1920, this situation was also eliminated and the Caspian oil was completely taken over by the Soviets. It is also known that the Germans, whose energy resources were depleted as the war dragged on in the last months of World War I, included the capture of Baku oil among their strategic plans to continue the war and made attempts in this direction (Forsythe, 1996). In the summer of 1918, Western media, such as the New York Times, wrote opinions emphasizing the importance of the Caspian oil for the Allied powers and suggesting that their governments allocate significant military forces to seize these resources (Forsythe, 1996). As a result, it is also claimed that the Germans' inability to access the Caspian oil made it impossible for the German armies to continue the war and thus accelerated their surrender. Following the Nazi-Soviet Pact signed shortly before World War II, Soviet oil extracted from the region accounted for more than one-third of Germany's total oil imports. For this reason, the Germans, who entered the war with the Soviets as soon as the war began, would see that their ability to continue the war would once again be possible only by seizing the Caspian oil and would make more than one attempt to seize these resources (Forsythe, 1996). The Nazis, who will again fail in these efforts, will, in Daniel Yergin's words, *'run out of oil on the path they seek oil* (Yergin, 1992: 337).' Meanwhile, starting from the 1920s, oil production in the Caspian basin has always had a significant place in the Soviet oil industry and production, and from the 1920s to the 1990s, it was of indispensable importance to the Soviet Union. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the region's energy resources have once again become the center of international energy markets with the interest and entry of Western investors into the region. This development coincided with a period when oil prices were high in international markets. Apart from this, both in the process of the growth of the world economy and in the expectation of exceeding peak production levels and decline in important oil supply centers, the Caspian energy resources have begun to have an increasing strategic importance not only for Russia but for the entire world from the early 1990s. In short, as Forsythe also stated, oil has always been at the center of regional and international competition in the Caspian and the Caucasus for centuries (Forsythe, 1996: 10).

When the oil resources in the Caspian region are combined with the underdevelopment, administrative deficiencies and political corruption that caused by governments, ethnic groups, the regional tensions and conflicts over oil (and natural gas) have continued (Forsythe, 1996: 11). Under these conditions, it is clear that Caspian oil carries a serious risk and potential for conflict and international crisis in the future as well. As a result of the international interest in the energy resources of the region, the involvement of non-regional actors in many regional problems such as South Ossetia and Abkhazia

in Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh and the Occupied Territories between Armenia and Azerbaijan, have further deepened the tensions in the region.

Middle Eastern Oil and International Conflicts

The oil exploration activities of Western companies in the Middle East and the discovery of oil in the region emerged towards the end of the 19th century as a result of the resources in the Caspian Region coming under Russian influence and also of the political turmoil in the Caspian and Caucasus in the early 1900s. The first British energy company in the Middle East was established in 1908 under the name of Anglo-Persian Oil Company. In the same year, this company opened and put into operation the first modern oil well in the region in the Suleyman Mosque region located east of the Shatt al-Arab waterway in Southern Iran. During the same period, steps were taken to address oil transportation, a critical aspect of energy policies. After the first oil wells were opened, the extracted oil was transported via pipeline to Abadan in the south for processing. Thus an oil industry was established around the Shatt al-Arab waterway and it has emerged as the third largest oil production area in the world of that period, apart from the Caspian region and the North America. Soon after, more Western companies have become interested in Iraq, which was under the Ottoman rule and was thought to have oil reserves. At this time, Armenian businessman Calouste Gulbenkian, known for his closeness to the Ottoman Palace, prepared a report on the instructions of the Palace and submitted it to Sultan Abdulhamid II in 1904 (Yergin, 1992: 186). In his report, he indicated that the Empire possessed significant oil reserves in Iraqi territory. The Sultan then registered a significant part of the region as his own in order to keep it away from Western investors and as a precaution (Cowen, 2010), but this policy could not prevent the establishment of the Iraqi Petroleum Company in the region in 1914 with the joint venture of British and Dutch investors. Following the British Navy's decision to switch from coal to oil just before World War I, the Iraqi Petroleum Company's discovery of significant reserves in the region. This development made the region a focal point of international competition both before and after the war. Consequently, the question of who would control Iraqi territory became one of the key energy-related issues of that era and beyond.

Following Iran and Iraq, the discovery of abundant oil reserves in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia just before World War II, and subsequently in North Africa, solidified the Middle East as a crucial hub for the global oil industry and a focal point of international politics. Today, more than 50% of the world's oil supply is provided by the Middle Eastern producers. More than 20% of the oil imports of the USA, which has been the largest buyer and consumer in international oil markets, has come from the region thoughout the time. In contrast, Caspian and Russian oil account for only 2–5% of U.S. oil imports (IEA, 2007: 303). In the early 21st century, Japan, which imports almost all of its energy resources, is increasingly depended on energy flowing from abroad. Despite having continental energy reserves and production like the USA and China, India and many other developing countries, which have to meet the energy needs of their developing economies from the regions they are geographically in close approximity, and thisis also increasing the vital importance of Middle Eastern oil. For instance, while the Middle East accounted for just under 40% of the People's Republic of China's total oil imports in the early 1990s, this share rose to over 50% by the early 2000s (Liangxiang, 2005).

The Middle East's oil resources remained largely under British control during the first three quarters of the 20th century, particularly during the two world wars.When Britain withdrew its military units from the Gulf with the Tehran Agreement in 1971, the United States, which had become a net oil importer since the 1950s, filled the power vacuum vacated by Britain. By the early 1970s, the United States was importing more than 25% of its total oil consumption, a figure that rose to nearly 50% by the early 1980s (Yergin, 1980: 16). As one of the most important off-continental sources from which this country meets its increasing energy needs, Middle Eastern oil has been the most important determining factor in

Washington's regional and global strategies. When we look at the region's recent political and economic history, we see that the US has taken over the role that Britain has long played in the region and has continued to do so in accordance with its own political and economic interests, since the 1970s. U.S. energy and security policies regarding the region have been centered on managing energy reserves and resources through U.S.-based international oil companies. In cases where direct management was not feasible, the U.S. sought to oversee and control the exploitation of resources. There is a wider dimension in US energy politics that emerges in the form of determining the trade and shipment of produced oil and gas resources by influencing price mechanisms and plus by controlling transit routes. These policies are generally and widely formulated within the general aim of 'ensuring and maintaining energy supply security' (Morse & Jaffe, 2001).

To assess the foreign policy dimension of U.S. energy policies, particularly regarding the Middle East, it is necessary to examine the international developments surrounding Middle Eastern oil, alongside the pressures of decreasing supply and increasing demand in U.S. and global markets. There are many incidents that can be mentioned regarding the role played by Middle Eastern oil on regional political events and international developments. First of all, it should be noted that during World War I, the fuel needs of the warring nations were provided largely by Romania for the Germans, Baku for the Russians, and the USA for the Allied powers. The known oil resources in Iran and Iraq remained mostly under the control of the British and no serious conflict was recorded between them and the Germans over these resources. However, later during World War II and in the post-war arrangements, the Middle Eastern oil became among the military and strategic targets of Western governments, especially England, with the discovery of oil in the Gulf Region particularly Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. During the war, control over the region's oil was a major issue. For example, after the Italians targeted Bahrain in 1940 and bombed Dhahran, the nascent center of Saudi Arabia's oil industry, the number of British and American workers in the region was reduced, and oil wells in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were sealed with concrete to prevent them from falling into German hands (Yergin, 1992: 301). Meanwhile, it is famuously known that in the battles between the British and the Germans in the North Africa, which would significantly affect the course of the entire war, General Rommel, the commander of the German armies, had aimed to reach Baku oil via Palestine, Iraq and Iran with the initial aim of defeating the British forces in Egypt and ultimately to solve the energy problem for Germans during the Second World War. It should be remembered that the outcome of the battles in this front was determined by the Germans' running out of energy and the British bombing of ships and convoys carrying fuel to the German armies (Yergin, 1992: 340-341).

After the war, the first significant event took place in the context of the conflict regarding Middle Eastern oil was the nationalization of Iranian oil by Prime Minister Mossadegh in 1951, which was both the first nationalization attempt in international oil markets and also known as the first oil crisis of the post-war period (Yergin, 1992: 790). Mossadegh would pay the price for his attempt two years later by being overthrown in a coup organized by the United States and the UK (Reynolds, 2004). The second major oil crisis after the war also occurred in the Middle East. The Suez Crisis has begun with the decision of Gamal Abdul-Nasser of Egypt in 1956 to nationalize the Suez Canal and it lasted for two years. The Suez Crisis taught significant lessons to major oil companies, world governments, and key actors in the global energy market—namely the United States and Western Europe. One critical lesson was that increasing energy resources and supply alone was insufficient to address global energy challenges. A more serious part of the problem is ransporting resources from supply centers to demand markets and consumers. This was considered as important as the discovery and operation of energy resources. In 1973, as a reaction to the political and military support provided to Israel by Western European countries and the US during the Arab-Israeli crises that began in 1948 and turned into hot conflicts in 1967 and 1973, the decision of Arab countries to impose an oil embargo on Western countries led to the biggest oil

crisis that had the greatest impact on the global markets and politics. As a result of the embargo, crude oil prices in international markets quadrupled, rising to $12 per barrel (Petroleum in the Modern World, 2010). According to some claims, some intelligence information disclosed by the British government in 2004 revealed that the US was working on the plans to overcome the effects of the Arab oil embargo imposed on the West by seizing the oil wells in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Abu Dhabi during the 1973 oil crisis (Reynolds, 2004).

Not long after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which marked the end of the Shah regime, the country entered an eight-year war with Iraq in the same year. This period can be considered the beginning of "a new era of hot conflicts" over Middle Eastern oil. While the scars of the 1973 war and oil embargo had not yet faded, the war between the two major oil producing countries in the region and the world led to the destruction of each other's oil infrastructure and production capacities. The Iran-Iraq War also posed significant risks to international oil markets by threatening and disrupting transportation through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital corridor for the shipment of oil exports from the Gulf region to global markets, particularly Western economies. The news bulletins conveying the news that Saddam Hussein regime, which had received political and military support from the West before and during the war, had bombed with the artillery fire on the cities of Abadan, Ahvaz, Dizful and Suleyman Mosque in the south, which is considered to be the heart of Iran's oil industry, are still remembered. Similarly, Iran has frequently attacked oil wells and facilities in Iraq and these incidents have disrupted the oil production and exports of these countries. So much so that the international oil supply, which shrank due to the Iran-Iraq war, increased the oil prices, which had been at their lowest levels in history before the war, to a peak level of 28 dollars per barrel, a level that had never been seen before (Petroleum in the Modern World, 2010). Just after the end of the Iran-Iraq War and at the onset of the 1990s, a new crisis started with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. This crisis, brought before the United Nations by the United States, marked the first multilateral conflict explicitly over energy, involving Iraq, Kuwait, the United States, and allied forces under the UN's leadership. We know that the US and the UK have carried out air strikes on Iraq even after the First Gulf War from time to time from the end of the war in 1991 until 2001.

In the meantime, there have been other regional events of a lower extent regarding the Middle East energy resources during the same period. For instance, terrorist groups, particularly the PKK, operating in Southeastern Türkiye and Northern Iraq, carried out attacks targeting oil production and transportation facilities throughout the 1990s. We can say that the Middle East oil sector entered a new period of conflict with the September 11, 2001 attacks. It can be said that the September 11 attacks are directly related to the Middle East oil sector. It has been stated that Osama Bin Laden, the alleged mastermind behind the attacks and a Saudi citizen, viewed the presence and involvement of American and other Western nations in his country's oil resources as exploitation. He reportedly described this presence as an unacceptable form of imperialism and planned the September 11 attacks as a reaction to this situation (Economist, 2001). This new era, which began with the September 11 events, was marked by the invasions of Afghanistan by the United States and the United Kingdom in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. These conflicts were strongly linked to the oil and energy policies of Western governments. Like the First Gulf War, with the second, same governments have aimed at controlling the Middle East energy resources (Reynolds, 2004).

As in the first and second Gulf Wars and previous crises and conflicts in the Middle East, the growing global demand for energy, coupled with the continued reliance on oil and other fossil fuels to meet a significant portion of the world's energy needs, underscores the strategic importance of Middle Eastern energy resources. With the energy deficits of major global powers such as the United States, the European Union, and the People's Republic of China expected to increase, it is not difficult to foresee that Middle Eastern energy resources will continue to play a critical role in potential future

tensions and crises. In other words, it can be said that Middle Eastern societies may find themselves in constant tensions and frequent conflicts due to the resources that were supposed to bring them wealth, prosperity and peace. They may see foreign agents, security forces and even worse in their countries for many years to come. Tensions and conflicts arising from oil and energy will be seen not only between Western powers coming to the region from outside and societies in the region, but also between Western countries themselves, as was the case throughout the 20th century. In this regard, due to the deepening of the global energy problem in the triangle of supply, demand and price, there are even predictions that a crisis and conflict may arise between the US and European countries over Middle Eastern energy resources in the future.

Transportation of Oil to Markets and Regional Conflicts

Another issue that needs to be mentioned in the energy and conflict topic is the problem of transportation of energy extracted as raw material from the fields where it is extracted to refineries or consumer markets for processing. In the examples of oil and natural gas, although the methods used since the birth of these industries have been different, it is seen that pipelines and tankers have been preferred as the most common way in recent years. The choice between these two transportation methods is influenced by factors such as the geographical locations of production fields and consumer countries, the distances between them, and economies of scale. Among these, tankers and marine transport remain the traditional and most widely used method adopted by oil and gas-producing companies and nations. The vast majority of oil produced worldwide reaches end markets in this way. This is due to the fact that the production fields and refineries where the oil will be processed are located at sea or on the coast or in a location with easy access to the sea and therefore this method is both cheaper and more practical. Apart from this, in recent years, pipelines have emerged as another important and widespread transportation model due to the risks and costs of increasing maritime traffic and accidents as well as the contribution of developing technology. However, both transportation models present potential crisis points and conflict risks that are of particular concern to the oil industry and governments.

Transporting Oil to Markets: Pipelines

In international oil transportation, pipelines have become an important part of the problem with increasing interest in recent years. The geographical, political, and economic circumstances of the regions through which pipelines pass create risks for investor companies, oil and gas exporting and importing countries, as well as host nations where the pipelines are located. One of the most significant risks associated with pipeline transportation arises in conflict-prone regions. These risks include local social and political tensions, possible terrorist attacks on pipelines or ports, and sabotage. However, when pipelines pass through the territories of two or more countries, the risks and political consequences are more frequent and greater. In recent years, no direct hot conflict has taken place except for the intense competition between countries and short-term tensions caused by rival projects due to the pipelines planned and built between states. In this regard, international or transboundary pipelines deepen existing problems between states, especially in the post-Cold War era, as in the pipelines built to transfer the Caspian and Central Asian energy resources to the world markets. In many cases, competing pipelines projects and proposals have created an environment of distrust between states that they even disrupt economic and political balances between local and regional powers, which in turn damages regional relations. Some of the pipelines that have drawn attention as potential problem areas in international energy transportation are summarized below, from the end of the Cold War (Cheng et. al, 2008).

Druzhba Pipeline System

Completed in 1964, the Druzba pipeline is the world's longest oil pipeline with a length of approximately 4,000 kms. It transfers Russian and some Kazakh oil from the Siberian, Ural and Caspian oil fields to Central Russia, from Samarra in southeastern Russia to the Mozyr region in southern Belarus, and from there it branches off into two lines which were constructed in the 1970s and transfers oil to Ukraine, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary from the south and to Poland and Germany from the north. In recent years, the line is planned to be extended to the port of Wilhelmshaven in northern Germany, thus both easing tanker traffic in the Baltic Sea. With a daily capacity of 1.2 to 1.4 million barrels—equivalent to approximately 1% of global oil demand—the Druzhba pipeline is currently the primary conduit for Russian oil exports to Europe. The oil transported through this pipeline ultimately reaches countries such as the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, and France, as well as several Eastern European nations (Cheng et. al, 2008). Due to the large number of countries through which the line passes, its carrying capacity and its share in Russia's oil exports, the Druzba pipeline is an important artery in international oil transportation, and is sometimes the subject of regional conflicts and tensions.

After the outbrake of the war between Russia and Ukraine in February 2022, the northern route of the system which goes to Germany was closed by German government in January 2023 as part of the Western sanctions on Russia and a month later Russia has also ceased the oil flow to Poland fom the pipeline system. Although those measures have been more or less in place the pipeline system had retained its prime east-west export route position for Russia and some eastern European countries (Liboreiro, 2022) and in case a cease fire may end the hostilies between Russia and the West. However, on January 1, 2025, Ukraine has totally halted Russia gas transport from its territory after announcing that Ukraine's stat oil and gas company Naftogas refused to renew the final five-year contract with Russian state company of Gasprom (Al Jazeera News, 2025).

CPC Pipeline

The 1,511 km Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) route, opened in 2001 under the leadership of Chevron to transfer oil from the Tengiz region of Kazakhstan to the Novorossiysk Terminal 2 on the Black Sea in Russia, reached its first-stage capacity of 500,000 barrels per day or 28.2 million tons per year in 2004. Although the CPC line is planned to be increased to 1.4 million barrels per day or 67 million tons per year by 2015, the targets for this second phase have not yet been realized by the end of that year and after (Cheng et. al, 2008). However, in May 2019, CPC Company has decided to expand the capacity of the pipeline upto 72.5 million tons per annum from Kazakh sources with its Debottlenecking Program, which has also indicated that the total capacity of the pipeline will reach 81.5 millions of tons with additional oil shall join from Russian sources (Astana Times, 2023). But these projected results have not been realized yet.

During the 1990s, the CPC line has caused severe discussions between Turkiye and Russia, and again between Turkiye and the companies and countries investing in this line, because it will increase oil and tanker traffic in the Turkish Straits (Öztürk, 2002).

Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) Pipeline

The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, which was built to transport Caspian oil to be extracted from the Azeri-Chirag-Güneşli fields to the Mediterranean via Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkiye, has also caused tensions both regionally and globally during its planning and construction stages. The BTC line, which is the world's second longest oil pipeline with a length of 1,776 km, starts in Azerbaijan, passes 260 kms and 1,076 kms thru Georgia and Turkiye respectively. The daily capacity of the line was planned as

one million barrels of oil. The BTC pipeline has long been a contentious issue in the region, primarily because it bypasses Russia and Iran, both of which are significant players in Eurasian energy politics. Additionally, it competes directly with the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) line and other alternative routes, further intensifying regional rivalries. Also, during its construction and after it is often claimed that some ethnic groups who are excluded from economic activities during the construction and operation stages of the line may cause troubles that it may increase the risk of the BTC line becoming the target of local conflicts and possible terrorist attacks (Öztürk, 2006).

Caspian Alternative Pipelines

The alternative bypass pipelines that will transfer Russian, Caspian and Central Asian oil, which are located in the same geography as the CPC and BTC pipelines and reach the Black Sea via many routes, from the Black Sea to the Aegean Sea via the Thrace route, to the Mediterranean via Anatolia, to the Adriatic Sea via the Balkans or directly to Northern European ports via Ukraine, bypassing the Turkish Straits, had also been discussed regionally and globally. The pipelines constructed in Eurasia after the Cold War and the alternative and proposed pipeline investments have been part of political issues in the Caspian, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans and Eastern Europe in the 1990s and later. These energy investments have exacerbated regional tensions, notably straining relations between Russia and Azerbaijan, Russia and Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia, and Türkiye and Armenia over the years (Öztürk, 2009)[6] Another point that should be mentioned in this regard is that pipelines affect local or internal conflicts. Many ethnic elements located on the pipeline routes sometimes felt that they have been excluded from projects and economic developments carried out in the countries they are located in. Due to their economic, social and political conditions they faced and with that feeling at hand, they opposed energy investments, target especially pipelines passing through isolated regions. In this regard, terrorist attacks on pipelines or other oil industry investments are the most common examples of incidents and such attacks have been seen in recent years in Iraq and Turkiye (Oppel, 2007), as in the case of the Kirkuk-Yumurtalık Pipeline after the 2003 War and as similar cases seen generally in African countries (Connors, 2010).

Transportation of Oil by Sea and Crisis Points

Another issue area where international tensions are observed is the energy transportation routes that connect energy supply and demand markets. In addition to oil and gas importing countries in the developed world, the increasing energy needs of developing countries have brought new international energy trade routes and shipments. With this, energy production in supply regions, such as the Persian Gulf, Russia, the Caspian basin, Africa, Central America, the North Sea and Alaska, have had more options to sell their outputs to new customers that this has globalized energy trade and energy markets. When the world geography, distribution of sea and land areas in it are added to table, we see that transportation of energy by tankers becomes a prime solution. Today, there are certain transit points in the world where seaborne oil and gas transportation is concentrated and where the risk for conflicts or tensions becomes a serious concern. These are the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca, the Suez Canal, the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, the Bosphorus-Dardanelles Straits and the Panama Canal.[7]

In 2007, the world's oil supply averaged 85 million barrels per day, and more than half of this amount (43 million tons/day) was shipped by tankers through these narrow and busy sea transit routes. These

[6] Although it was not the main reason for the war between Russia and Georgia that was arupted in August 2008, it can be said that the relations between Russia and Georgia have been strained by oil and pipeline politics in the region that it had a certain contribution to the conflict.

[7] The Panama Canal will be excluded from this study because its share in international oil transportation is insignificant (500 thousand barrels per day) due to the capacity of the canal.

transit corridors, alongside pipelines, are not only among the most fragile, politicized, and risk-prone areas in energy transportation but also carry a high potential for triggering serious conflicts.

Table 3

Crude oil and petroleum liquids transported world chokepoints (2018–2023).

Location	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Strait of Malacca	23.0	23.1	22.8	21.9	22.9	23.7
Strait of Hormuz	21.4	20.0	18.4	19.0	21.1	20.9
Suez Canal and SUMED Pipeline	6.4	6.2	5.3	5.1	7.3	8.8
Bab el-Mandeb	6.4	6.0	5.2	5.4	7.5	8.6
Danish Straits	3.3	3.4	3.1	3.1	4.2	4.9
Turkish Straits (Dardanelles)	3.4	3.5	3.3	3.4	3.2	3.4
Panama Canal	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.8	2.1	2.1
Cape of Good Hope	7.6	7.5	7.7	7.0	5.9	6.0
World Maritime Oil Trade	**78.5**	**78.2**	**73.0**	**74.3**	**76.2**	**77.5**
World Total Oil Supply	**100.1**	**100.9**	**91.6**	**97.6**	**99.9**	**101.9**

Source: US Energy Information Administration 2024). (million barrels per day)

Strait of Hormuz

The 21-nautical-mile-long Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean and is a sea route through which a significant portion of the oil of the Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates, reaches world markets, allowing the passage of 16.5-17 million barrels of oil per day (20% of the world's total oil demand) in 2006. The amount of the oil being transported from this route has reached above 20 millions barrels per day by 2018, and it stands at around 21 millions barrels in 2022 and 2023 (US EIA, 2024). Although there is a 745-mile East-West pipeline extending from Saudi Arabia to the Red Sea as an alternative to this route, the oil exports of the Gulf countries are largely dependent on the Strait of Hormuz. The oil transported by this sea route reaches the United States, Japan, the European Union, the People's Republic of China and other Asian and Pacific countries. One of the most significant periods of tension in the Strait of Hormuz occurred during the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988). Throughout the nearly decade-long conflict, Iran frequently laid sea mines in retaliation for Iraq's bombing of its oil cities, such as Abadan and Dizful. These actions were aimed at punishing Iraq, the Gulf oil-exporting countries that supported it, and their Western allies, including the United States and Western European nations. These actions dealt significant blows to oil shipments from the region. The post-9/11 terrorist threats targeting oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz are also noteworthy in this context.

Strait of Malacca

The Strait of Malacca, spanning 3,200 meters in width, serves as a critical maritime route for global energy transportation. As of 2006, the strait had an average daily oil traffic of 15 million barrels, accounting for approximately 18% of the world's total oil demand. It facilitates the transportation of oil from the Persian Gulf countries and West Africa to Asian nations, including Japan and China, as well as the Pacific basin. The route has surpassed the Strait of Hormuz and has become the biggest of those oil routes in the world with a total amount of oil which has reached above 23 millions barrells of oil per day in 2018, 2019 and in 2023 (23.7 mbpd) after recovering after the Covid pandemic (US EIA, 2024).

The only alternative to the strait seems to be a possible pipeline that can be built between the Lombok and Sunda Straits in the Indonesian islands and Malaysia and Thailand. Although there is no conflict in the Strait of Malacca that could affect energy traffic, ships passing through the region are frequently targeted by pirates, which disrupts the flow of oil in the strait. Tanker accidents and environmental pollution pose a serious problem, causing significant damage to local communities and the ecological environment. The global rise in terrorism threats, particularly after the September 11 attacks, has also influenced security in the Strait of Malacca. These threats became more pronounced following the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, adding another layer of complexity to the region's security landscape.

Suez Canal

The Suez Canal, which is only 300 meters wide but 200 nautical miles long, was opened to traffic in 1869. With the opening of the canal, the route of ships that normally had to pass south of Africa was shortened by 6,000 nautical miles. It allows oil and other cargo originating from the Gulf countries, Saudi Arabia and Asia to reach European and American markets. Approximately more than 3,000 oil tankers use the Suez annually, and in 2006, an average of 4.5 million barrels of oil (5% of the world's total oil demand) passed through the canal. Combined with the SUMED Pipeline, the canal reached a record volume of 6.4 million barrels per day in 2018. The canal has set new records with 7.3 millions in 2022 and 8.8 millions in 2023 after a quick recovery of the amount which had seen a big setback due to the Covid pandemic from 2020 to 2021, as 5.3 and 5.1 millions respectively (US EIA, 2024).

Apart from the previously mentioned 1956-1957 Canal Crisis, the Suez Canal had remained closed for 8 years after the Six-Day War in 1967. In 2007 two oil tankers ran aground and the maritime traffic and oil shipments were disrupted in the canal. Furthermore, the canal has frequently been a target of terrorist threats, stemming from political tensions in the Middle East and Egypt.

Bab-el-Mandeb Strait

As it seems a twin route to the Suez Canal, the 18-nautical-mile-long Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, which connects the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean, has an average annual (2006) oil traffic of 3.3 million barrels (4% of the world's total oil demand) in the early 2000s. In recent years, the strait has carried oil volumes comparable to those transported through the Suez Canal. For instance, in 2018, 6.4 million barrels of oil per day were transported through Bab-el-Mandeb. This volume declined to 5.3 and 5.4 million barrels per day in 2020 and 2021, respectively, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global energy demand and transportation. However, by 2022 and 2023, oil traffic through the strait had recovered to 7.5 and 8.6 million barrels per day, respectively (US EIA, 2024).

It is the link before the Suez Canal on the route where the oil of the Gulf countries is transferred to the Europe and the North America. The most important political and military conflicts recorded in the strait are the terrorist attacks on the American USS Cole warship in 2000 and a French oil tanker in 2002. However, the fact that the strait is located between Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea in the Horn of Africa and Yemen in the Arabian Peninsula and is surrounded by an unstable and internally conflicting region, that poses significant risks in itself. In addition, tankers and other vessels navigating the strait have increasingly become targets of piracy in recent years, further exacerbating the security challenges associated with this critical chokepoint.

Turkish Straits

The riskiest point in terms of maritime transportation in Turkish Straits region, which consists of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles along with the Sea of Marmara, is located between Kandilli in Anatolian side and Aşiyan in European side, which is only 698 meters in width. In 2006, an average of 2.5 million

barrels of oil per day (3% of the world's total oil demand) was transported through the Bosphorus where Russian, Caspian and Kazakh oil is transferred to the Mediterranean and Western Europe. By 2018, oil transport through the Turkish Straits had increased to 3.4 million barrels per day. This amount has had a steady level with 3.5 millions in 2019, 3.3 in 2020, 3.4 in 2021 and 2023 (US EIA, 2024). It seems that the Covid pandemic has not had an impact on the oil transport facilities in the Turkish Straits. However, the impact of the Western sanctions against Russia due to its invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the ongiong war between them, shold be taken into account in the fiures for 2022 (3.2 millions barrels pd), 2023, and after (US EIA, 2024).

The most important incidents and disruptions related to energy transportation occur due to maritime accidents, the largest of which occurred in 1979 and 1994 (Kasap, 2002). As in every oil transit route, tanker transportation in the Turkish Straits has also been the target of terrorist threats after 2001. The Istanbul bombings in 2003 brought these threats to their most serious level. With the opening of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, which carries Azerbaijani and partly Caspian oil directly to the Mediterranean, and Russia shifting its oil shipments to Europe to Baltic ports in recent years, oil traffic in the straits has decreased somewhat, but temporarily. However, the straits, which are still passed by more than 50,000 ships and more than 5,000 oil and gas tankers annually, are among the riskiest regions in the world for oil transportation. Unless a bypass pipeline is built from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas, and as Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan's oil exports are directed to the Black Sea increase, the situation in the Turkish Straits will be worsened (Öztürk, 2002).

The issues around oil supply, demand and transportation are mostly making international and industry headlines in global energy markets for some decades. Along with oil, natural gas is also having a parallel attention and impact on global energy markets and agenda. However, there are two more energy sources as well that they have become also a topic of disputes and disagreements in international politics. They are hydropower and nuclear energy.

Another Crisis Area: Water as a Source of Energy and Conflict

There are 165 rivers in the world longer than a thousand kilometers, and 80 of these rivers pass through the territory of more than one country. Many of these rivers have historically been utilized for irrigation through the construction of dams and irrigation systems. In order to reduce dependence on fossil fuels in energy and to ensure diversity in energy supply, hydropower plants have been established in many countries from the 1970s. For this purpose, river resources have been developed. However, the use of basins containing transboundary river resources passing through the territories of two or more countries for electrical energy and simultaneous agricultural irrigation purposes has been met with severe reactions and opposition from downstream riparian states, and possibility of water wars have feared many people especially since the 1970s. The concepts of water and war have an important place in academic literature on transboundary water resources. Despite the frequent association between water and conflict, the international academic literature has yet to reach a consensus on whether water resources are likely to trigger significant interstate wars akin to conflicts over fossil fuels. While localized disputes over water have been documented, major "water wars" between nations remain hypothetical. On the one hand, predictions and analyses have been made that hot conflicts may occur in the very near future in basins where the population in water stress are high, namely water resources are scarce (Homer-Dixon, 1995). Accordingly there are disagreements between countries on the sharing and use of water resources. In this regard, the prophecy of the then United Nations Secretary General Boutros Gali in 1991 that 'a new war in the Middle East will not break out due to political reasons but due to the water problem' (Adams, 2002: 51) has attracted sufficient attention. It has not been proved in the ground but we can not totally discard the impact of the water in conflicts in the Middle East and some others around the world (Bulloch & Darwish, 1993).

On the other hand, it would be complementary and useful to mention in this context that in addition to this now unfashionable thesis of the 1980s and 1990s on the relationship between water and war, there are opposite theses and approaches to water and conflict. For example, Peter Beamuont, one of the authors who criticizes the water war thesis, is closer to the view that a water war will not break out in the Middle East in the near future (Beaumont, 1996). According to this second group of authors, water has never been the main reason for a war on its own (Shaheen, 1997: 51). This is particularly evident in basins like the Jordan River, where significant economic, political, and military imbalances exist between riparian states. In addition, the claim that a water war can break out in basins where riparian states or regional countries have serious interdependencies with each other is also not realistic (Shuval, 2000).

Another view in this field is known as the 'economic approach' thesis. Accordingly, the mutual economic interests and interdependence of riparian countries in disputed water basins are important enough to deter these countries from a water war (Fisher, 1994). In this regard, the belief that the benefits of a hot conflict and war over water resources would be less than the losses, has become more dominant in the literature. This approach predicts that states will not consider water important enough to justify the risks and devastating consequences of war, particularly given the long-term damage such conflicts could inflict on interstate relations. However, despite this optimistic approach and interpretations, many river basins in the world today are increasingly heading towards tensions between states due to their role both in irrigation for agricultural production and in investments for energy purposes. In other words, water causes problems not only when used for irrigation purposes, but also when used for energy production, even if it does not affect the amount of water flowing to downstream riparian countries. For example, the Ilisu Dam, which was built on the Tigris River for energy production, despite not having an irrigation purpose, has long been an important domestic and foreign policy issue for Turkiye in terms of international finance, protection of historical and cultural sites and human rights issues (Turan, 2000). Water is a natural resource used for both food and electrical energy production. In this respect, it is a fact that water, as an energy source, has been a cause or subject of conflicts at the local or interstate levels in modern times, as it was in ancient times. Therefore, below, with the help of historical data, it will be highlighted that the problem of water as an energy source has frequently been the subject of crises and conflicts between societies and states throughout history and that this has become an increasing reality in international or transboundary water basins into the 21st Century.

Water Problem and Conflict: A Historical Perspective

A border conflict involving water issues between the Sumerian states of Lagash and Umma around 2500 BC and efforts to resolve it are considered the first example of diplomatic relations in human and world history (Pazarcı, 2004: 41). That conflict in the history of international relations also appears to be the first international conflict known over a water source. From the time of the Sumerians to the present day, rivers such as the Nile, Euphrates, Tigris, Yarmouk, and Jordan in the Middle East; the Indus and Ganges in Asia; the Paraná in South America; the Colorado in North America; the Danube in Europe; and the Nile and Zambezi in Africa have triggered significant crises and conflicts between societies.

According to Pacific Institute data, since 3000 BC, there have been 203 significant incidents (such as crises, border violations, damage to structures and facilities, military conflicts, terrorist attacks, and protests resulting in deaths) on river resources, 54 of which were in the Middle East and 46 in Asia. The number of crises and conflicts caused by developmental activities (irrigation and energy production) alone is given as 74. Considering that 2 of these incidents occurred between 0-1799, 8 between 1800-1899, 3 between 1900-1949, 9 between 1950-1974, 14 between 1975-1999, and 24 between 2000-2009. It is seen that the use of water for developmental purposes has caused an increasing number of tensions and conflicts in recent years. Among these incidents, the conflicts that occurred

between Syria and Israel in 1951 over the Yarmouk River and in 1953 over the Galilee, between Egypt and Sudan over the Nile River in 1958, between Brazil and Paraguay over the Parana River in 1962 and 1967, the mutual mobilization of military units by Iraq and Syria over the sharing of the Euphrates River in 1975, the political tension between Turkiye and Syria over the Atatürk Dam in 1990, crises and conflicts at the inter-state level, and the events that occurred in Kashmir in 2002, China, India, Ethiopia in 2004, Yemen, China, Somalia, Ethiopia in 2006, and India and Burkina Faso in 2007, some of which were fatal, can be given as examples of local and social tensions in modern day. Meanwhile, according to data compiled from the same source, 1 incident between 0-1799, 6 between 1800-1899, 1 between 1900-1949, 5 between 1950-1974, 21 between 1975-1999, and 23 between 2000-2009 on water resources can be evaluated in the context of attacks carried out due to regional wars, internal unrests, as well as in incidents arising from terrorist attacks (Gleick, 2008). Again, water resources and facilities on these resources have been the target of military attacks between states in 3 incidents before Christ, 1 between 0-1799, 1 between 1800-1899, 7 between 1900-1949, 10 between 1950-1974, 12 between 1975-1999, and 11 between 2000-2009. From all these events, we can say that the water problem has become a matter of conflict today, due to the increasing water demand in recent years and the increase in the world's population, plus environmental polution and degragation. (Water Conflict Chronology Map).

Nuclear Energy as a Conflict Area

At the beginning of the 21st century, nuclear energy, like water resources and fossil fuels, emerged as a critical issue in international energy policies. Nuclear energy, which is seen as an alternative energy source by countries with increasing energy deficit, has been monopolized by a few industrialized countries and former Soviet and Eastern Bloc countries for many years. This concentration of nuclear technology ownership is partly due to the technical and financial challenges associated with acquiring nuclear capabilities. Additionally, the substantial costs of implementing stringent security measures to prevent radiation leaks in nuclear power plants have further limited access to this energy source (Petroleum in the Modern World, 2010). Over time, new countries have been added to the nuclear countries that according to 2005 data, the number of countries in the world that use nuclear technology for energy production has increased to 31. That number now stands at 32 as of 2025. Of these 31 countries, 17 are OECD countries, 8 are former Eastern Bloc countries and only 7 are developing countries. 15% of the world's electrical energy production is produced in a total of 443 reactors, the vast majority of which are located in OECD countries (World Energy Outlook, 2006). However, with the increasing interest of other countries in nuclear energy in recent years, the spread of nuclear energy technology from developed countries to developing countries has emerged, and developed countries that have nuclear technology have begun to give serious reactions to this situation. In general, the USA and Western European countries have begun to accuse developing countries, especially those with whom they do not have good political relations or whose political regimes they do not like, of using nuclear energy for military purposes. Thus, nuclear power plants, which are used as an important alternative energy source in many countries, have become one of the most controversial and tense areas of international energy policies. In the field of nuclear energy, the most important crisis areas or potential conflict zones in recent years have been the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea.

Iran's Nuclear Energy Program

After the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the first clues that the next serious problem with conflict potential in the Middle East would be caused by Iran began to become apparent in the early 2000s. The first major indication of this was President George W. Bush's inclusion of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea in the so-called "Axis of Evil" during his first "State of the Union" address to Congress after the September 11 attacks (Bush, 2001). Immediately after September 11, 2001, intelligence reports prepared

on order regarding the Saddam Hussein Regime's large amount of weapons of mass destruction were seen as sufficient reason for the occupation of this country and the control of its energy resources (Peter & Walters, 2007: 35). In the early years of the Iraq War, Western governments, especially the Bush Administration, began to serve similar scenarios and intelligence reports on Iran to the international community. There are two important characteristics of the Iran problem in the field of nuclear technology, and these characteristics also summarize the development of the nuclear Iran problem. The first is that this country does not hide its interest in nuclear technology and the projects it carries out for this purpose. Although Iran later announced the existence of some facilities that the international community had not previously known about, it has long accepted that it has nuclear activities, albeit with the claim that they are for energy production, and has even opened this issue to the inspection of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The problem in the first stage is that Iran, a net energy exporter, has undertaken very expensive nuclear technology investments in order to produce electrical energy. Iran has not been able to alleviate the concerns of the international community regarding its nuclear program for many years. Secondly, towards the end of 2009, Iran announced the existence of other facilities in the country, in addition to those it had previously reported to the IAEA and opened to the inspection of this institution, which increased the pressure of the international community on the country (Halt, 2009). Whether the nuclear tension between Iran and the Western Bloc, led by the US and major European countries, will turn into a conflict will be shown by the steps that both sides will take from now on and time.

North Korea

North Korea's nuclear program dates back to the 1980s, with dual objectives of energy production and nuclear weapons development (Nuclear Weapons Program, 2006). The Pyongyang administration accelerated its military nuclear program in the 2000s and conducted its first nuclear test on October 9, 2006 (Hecker, 2006). Similar to Iran, North Korea faces significant international backlash for its nuclear ambitions, exacerbated by its strained relations with the global community. While it is understandable that a country with limited energy resources, like many others in the region, would turn to nuclear technology for electricity generation, North Korea's approach has been markedly different. However, North Korea has both conducted its relations with the outside world in a cold and tense atmosphere since the beginning, and has kept the Far East in a constant nuclear tension in recent years by keeping its nuclear activities within a military line.

Conclusions

Energy needs have been one of humanity's most critical challenges since its emergence on Earth. Natural resources, which form the basis of human activities and are utilized in various forms and sources, are broadly defined as energy. Among natural resources, water and fossil fuels have held an important place among energy sources since ancient times. Coal, oil and natural gas, which started to be used in a new way after the industrial revolution in the late 19th century, have become the driving force of today's civilization. In terms of natural resources, the problem of "scarcity" has become apparent due to the increasing world population and their widespread use over time. The scarcity of resources, combined with their intensive and extensive utilization, has given rise to what is now known as the "energy problem" over the past two centuries. The following conclusions can be reached regarding energy and international conflicts. First, the relationship between international tensions and conflicts with energy resources and investments has always been two-way. Many energy resources have developed together with existing or potential international conflicts in many regions of the world. In the case of oil, in the early periods of the oil age that began in the 20th century, international problems, tensions and even conflicts between countries in many oil production regions had significant and negative effects on

the oil industry (Odell, 1975: 166). However, these regions, which have long been associated with local problems and conflicts, have entered a more complex structure and an unstable period due to new investors coming as the oil industry developed, the increasing global economic, political and strategic interest and the influence of political powers outside the region. This situation, which is valid for both the Middle East, the Caspian basin and the Caucasus, may bring about new conflicts caused or affected by energy resources in these regions. The same applies to water and other energy resources. Today, in the case of Iran, it can be said that the political problems and current tensions in the Middle East may be an obstacle to this country's nuclear projects. Similarly, the emergence of new nuclear powers in the region and globally has the potential to deepen existing regional and international problems, further complicating the geopolitical landscape.

Secondly, there are frequent tensions between societies and conflicts between states over energy. Fossil fuels, in particular, have played a critical role in international disputes since the early 20th century, often acting as both a catalyst and a cause of conflicts. The Italian bombing of Dhahran during World War II, the overthrow of Mossadegh in Iran in 1953 by a coup organized by the US and the UK, the nationalization of the Suez Canal by Abdul-Nasser in Egypt in 1956 and the Suez War that followed, the decision of Arab countries to impose an oil embargo on Western countries in 1973, the overthrow of the Shah in Iran in 1979, the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War the same year, the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in August 1990 and the First Gulf War in 1991, the attacks of September 11, 2001, the attacks of the US and the UK on Afghanistan in 2001, the invasion of Iraq by the same forces in March 2003 and most recently the invasion of Georgia by Russia in August 2008, all show that the energy problem frequently leads to conflict between states, in the case of fossil fuels. are very concrete proofs. Apart from fossil fuels, another source of energy and important conflict has been water. Water has sometimes been an important cause and sometimes a part of the conflicts and political tensions that have occurred in many parts of the world since the second half of the 20th century. The conflicts between Syria and Israel over the Yarmouk River in 1951 and the Galilee in 1953, between Egypt and Sudan over the Nile River in 1958, between Brazil and Paraguay over the Parana River in 1962 and 1967, the mutual mobilization of military units by Iraq and Syria over the sharing of the Euphrates River in 1975, and the political tensions between Turkiye and Syria over the Atatürk Dam in 1990 show that crises and conflicts have also emerged over water at the international level.

More recently, with the proliferation of nuclear technology, conflicts have also emerged in the field of nuclear energy. Policies pursued by developed and nuclear-armed nations to prevent certain developing countries from acquiring nuclear energy or weapons have led to significant international crises, as demonstrated by the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea. Finally, it is known that world energy resources will decrease in the coming years, and in return, energy demand will increase. This situation is valid for every energy source. The energy production capacity of water resources used since ancient times is limited and insufficient compared to world energy demand. Water resources used for energy production are also both decreasing and polluted on a global scale. Alternative energy solutions developed as technology advances are not only expensive and risky, as in the case of nuclear energy, but are also not sufficient. In this case, fossil fuels face a significant increase in demand and supply opportunities are strained as consumption increases. It is uncertain whether the current reserves will carry the world economy until sufficient, cheap, and risk-free alternative energy sources are found. This adds a strategic dimension to the problem and further increases international stress and tension over resources. For these reasons, the energy problem is a growing and complex problem. As Henry Lee stated earlier, the energy problem was merely an economic and strategic issue in the 1930-1970 period, but from the 1970s onwards it reached a security dimension, and since the 1990s it has become very complex with the addition of the environmental issue dimension (Lee, 2006).

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Chapter 2

New Regimes and Security Relations in Eurasia

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Abstract

This study focuses on the security relationship with the new regimes that emerged in the post-Soviet period in the Eurasian region. The study is based on the data obtained from the country samples of the Eurasian region. In this context, the study consists of three parts. First is a discussion of the conceptual framework of the main new regime types in the Eurasian region that examines Illiberal democracies, hybrid regimes structured on a rentier basis, and weak or failing states alongside their sub-conceptual distinctions. The second part of the study compares these regime types to the constitutional and political structures of the countries in the region and discusses how the region functions politically in light of examples. The third part of the study analyzes what kind of foreign policy tendencies these regimes foster by adhering to the above classifications. The main finding of the study is that the security relationship between the new regimes in the Eurasian region follows a threefold development course, the first being shaped around full rentier-hybrid regimes with a strong tendency to resort to hard power policies. The second trend is the transformation of semi-rentier hybrid regimes into conflict zones based on the political instability caused by weak state structures. These countries can be dragged into conflict under the influence of regional and global actors. The third aspect involves the divergence that illiberal democracies experience in foreign policy with the global organizations of which they are members based on their self-defined national interests. These countries question the status quo with regard to regional and global security and challenge it through centrifugal foreign policy tendencies.

Keywords Eurasian region · international security · international conflict · new regimes · democracy

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Introduction

This chapter aims to identify the effects political systems have on the security strategies countries in the Eurasian region develop. In this framework, the study will first discuss the new regimes that were institutionalized in the post-Soviet period and that dominate the Eurasian geography in the context of their characteristics before emphasizing how these political systems are structured by giving examples of countries. Of course, such an analysis requires a more detailed look at the conceptual background of the new regimes in the region. The study will conclude by discussing the relationship between these new regimes and security in the Eurasian region in light of the findings from these two analyses.

Eurasia and Political Regimes: The Conceptual Dimension

When looking at the Eurasian region in general, three different political system structures stand out among the countries in the region. The first of these is illiberal democracies, which occur mostly in Eastern European countries. The second type is hybrid regimes based on rentier state structures. These states can be further sub-divided into first order rentier regimes where the political regime is structured more on the basis of energy exports and second order rentier regimes that are more dependent on foreign aid. While these regimes are partly found in Eastern European countries, they occur mainly in the Caucasus and Central Asia. In the Eurasian region, hybrid regimes with rentier underpinnings have evolved into other subtypes known as patronal or modern patrimonial sultanates. We will elaborate on the characteristics of these regime types in more detail below.

Illiberal Democracies

Illiberal democracies, as the nomenclature suggests, are a type of democracy. These systems are used to describe countries where democracy is based on elections, but democracy has not yet developed in terms of the rule of law. Elections generally favor authoritarian politics in these democracies, and political leaders who favor authoritarian policies can come to power for long periods of time with strong electoral support. The defining characteristic of elections does not change. In other words, elections in illiberal democracies are free and fair, and the change of power through elections is possible in these systems. In essence, illiberal democracies are systems that can transition to a liberal democracy is possible depending on the change of leader. The main reason why the system works this way is that voters tend to support an authoritarian style of politics for various reasons. This concept was first systematically articulated by Fareed Zakaria (1997) in his study analyzing 1996 elections in the Balkan countries. The civil wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and other countries that were ended by NATO-led foreign intervention and the subsequent free elections held under the supervision of the United Nations resulted in the strengthening of political parties representing confrontational and authoritarian tendencies rather than liberal parties. Again, the fact that the Islamist opposition gained strength in the elections held during democratization process in Middle Eastern countries caused the concept of illiberal democracies to be mentioned more in Western circles. Noteworthily, Balkan countries were mentioned even before the emergence of the concept, which is important in terms of revealing its relationship with the Eurasian region. Eggel (2018) described a four-stage process for illiberal democracies: A government comes to power with strong electoral support; the executive branch gains power over the legislative and judicial powers as a result of the same cadres continuously coming to power in the elections; the government tends to change the existing constitutional and legal system of the country, and the continuity of this situation through elections and referendums. According to Groussot (2023: 49-51), illiberal democracy has two basic criteria: The will of the people must be emphasized and laws and procedures must be established or legitimized on this basis. Emphasizing

the will of the people expresses a reaction against the elites and the institutional structures they have created without regard for the people. Therefore, this democracy type is an attempt at an alternative institutional reform and a procedural-oriented legal system.

The background of the concept of an illiberal democracy is based on the strong global promotion of the thesis that no alternative exists to the liberal democracy that was assumed to have been established in this geography after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Fukuyama, 1992). In Western circles, the post-Soviet world's main expectation politically and economically speaking was that change would be directed towards more liberal policies and institutional changes, and the Eurasian geography was at the center of this global expectation. The Copenhagen criteria, which formed the main strategy of the enlargement process, emerged in 1993 as a product of this dominant tendency. The most important problem with this paradigm was how it ignored the fact that the relationship between liberal thought and democracy has a background that is not at all complete and that even has its own difficulties. While the limitation of the majority coming to power through elections may sound good at first, who would draw the boundaries limiting power remained unclear, as well as whether such an approach would open the door to a minority hegemony and an elitist understanding of governance (Cichocki, 2017: 12-14).

Once coined, the concept of illiberal democracy was quickly decontextualized and used in analyses of other regions of the world. It was often used to make sense of political transformations in Latin American, Middle Eastern, and Far Eastern countries that had not experienced what the Eastern Bloc had, as well as in countries with a certain tradition of democracy, such as Türkiye. With the rise of populist politics in established European democracies and the United States, the scope of the concept has been expanded over time, with discussion have started about the phenomenon of democratic decline (Diamond and Plattner, 2015; Stasavage, 2020). According to this approach, illiberal democracies are problematic democracies in that they enable the repressive potential of the majority and bring to light authoritarian elements in liberal constitutions that are historically incomplete and inherently vulnerable (Sajó, 2021: 25). While the concept started from the assumption that an established liberal Western democracy exists, it has continued to be used without ever confronting the reality of this premise. As a result, while the sphere of "deviance" has expanded globally, the core belief remains unquestioned.

In contrast, the notion of an illiberal democracy draws attention to the fact that the process of change is driven by the actors who come to power through elections and the effects this has on the structuring of the system and the policies that are produced. This interaction does not always or mostly coincide with the expectations of external actors but is instead closely influenced by the internal dynamics of the country, the context of international relations, and the way political authorities interpret the process. As Karatnycky (1999, 112-125) pointed out, the fact that a democracy can function on the basis of elections is not in itself an indication of an inability to protect fundamental and political rights. Elections often constitute a crucial step in the process of gaining political legitimacy, albeit not necessarily a process that leads toward liberalism.

Hybrid-Rentier Regimes

Hybrid-rentier regimes are a type of political regime in which authoritarian and democratic institutions are included together in the political system, and these institutions can function in unison within the regime. In addition to this feature, although the system includes democratic institutions, the determining characteristic of this type of regime is its authoritarian nature. In other words, democratic elements are structured within the system in order to give it a democratic appearance and veil its authoritarianism. Diamond (2002: 21-22) pointed out that, instead of shifting toward liberal democracy in the post-Cold War period, the general trend has been toward strengthening hybrid regimes at

different levels in many parts of the world, from Eastern Europe to Asia and Latin America. Of the six regime types in Diamond's classification, two that fit the above definition are noteworthy in our context. *Competitive authoritarianism* is a regime type in which civil society and opposition formations are given relatively more leeway and artificial democratic institutions are better formulated legally. However, political elites visibly dominate the functioning of political life, and what freedoms are recognized have no impact on authoritarian functioning. Meanwhile, *hegemonic electoral authoritarianism,* on the other hand, artificial democratic institutions are not successfully entrenched in the system. The ruling elite frequently intervene in the structure and functioning of institutions. The opposition, media, and civil society have severely limited space. Diamond (2002) cited Russia and Belarus as examples of competitive and Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan as examples of hegemonic authoritarian regimes.

Rentier states are basically hybrid or full authoritarian regimes. These countries' economic resources are concentrated in the hands of the ruling elite instead of being distributed to society. Mahdavy (1970) defined a rentier state as one that has rent based on income from outside the country. The source of revenue can be individuals, corporations, or other states. Beblawi and Luciani (1987: 49-61) divided rentier states into par excellence -first-order- rentier states whose revenue sources are based on natural resource exports and second-order rentier states (semi rentier) whose revenue sources are dependent on foreign aid. Smith (2004: 232-246) stated that first order rentier states are more prone to produce authoritarian regimes. In contrast, rentier states that are dependent on foreign aid are more likely to produce weak administrative structures. In a rentier state, the ruling minority has a say over the management and distribution of the rent. Monetary resources facilitate the elite's ability to penetrate society at all levels and autonomize power from society. Patronage relations between the rulers and the ruled are strengthened and economic development does not create a true middle class. In this sense, rentier states are based on a patronal functioning. A network of personal dependence on the leader dominates the mechanisms of governance. In such a regime, if the leader can transfer power to a member of his own family, a form of regime called a patrimonial sultanate emerges. Chehabi and Linz (1998: 7-8) discussed the sultanate regime in detail with modern terminology. A sultanate is a regime type that is dependent on personal leadership where obedience is not based on an ideological foundation or charismatic qualities but rather on fear of instability and the status and economic gains that come from cooperating with and being in the leader's inner circle. The leader allocates careers and managerial positions among family members, family friends, businessmen, and those who can use the tools of coercion to help maintain power (Guliyev, 2005).

Flawed Democracies and Weak/Failing States

Flawed democracies are countries that have made and are willing to make progress in terms of democratization, but they are unable to achieve this goal because of social and economic reasons and their fragile structure. They differ from mixed regimes by having no authoritarian aims or qualities. However, due to their conditions, they unable to show development in this direction and may present different tendencies. The Economist's Democracy Index (The Economist, 2007: 1-3) include Estonia, Cyprus, Poland, Israel, Romania, Moldova, and Macedonia in this category. Weak or failed states refer to states with insufficient institutional capacity for coping with their social, political, and economic conditions. These states face political, economic, and security crises, especially in times of change. Due to their inability to overcome these crises, they are unable to maintain international security and regional stability and may become a threat to international security. These states also face a serious crisis of legitimacy due to their inability to deliver public services effectively. Similarly, weak states are also incapable of protecting their territorial space (Lamb, 2005: 1-28). This concept was first introduced for Balkan countries and started being used in a broader framework, especially after the September 11 attacks. The concept of weak states was used in an attempt to explain the administrative

structures created after international interventions in countries such as Bosnia, Macedonia and Kosovo (Sotiropoulos, 2002: 64). After the 9/11 attacks, emphasis was placed on weak states being able to become hotbeds for terrorist organizations as well as global threat centers by taking advantage of the weakness of such states if no interventions are made, with Sudan, Somalia, and Afghanistan being cited as examples (Newman, 2007: 463). Democracy, the position of elites within the regime, and the degree of political institutionalization no longer matter here but are instead replaced by the security concerns of global actors.

New Regimes in the Eurasian Region Different Directions

Political System in First Order Rentier States

The first group of new regimes in Eurasia were hybrid regimes with a rentier infrastructure. Countries such as Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan have rentier infrastructures based on the export of carbon resources. These countries are predominantly governed by semi-presidential and presidential systems, and the presidential authority constitutionally directs and dominates the legislature and the judiciary. The executive branch and its direct appointees are authorized to submit bills to parliament. The Constitution of Kazakhstan also authorizes the president to determine the procedures for considering bills. When the president requests that a bill be discussed urgently, it must be finalized by parliament within two months. In all of these countries, the president has the power to unilaterally dissolve the legislature. For example, the Constitution of Kazakhstan grants the president the power to unilaterally dissolve parliament for twice rejecting the prime minister whom the president proposes, as well as for disagreements between parliament and other state organs. All these countries have the ability to resubmit a law the president has vetoed to the presidency for approval through an overriding veto. In Azerbaijan, the president has absolute veto power over constitutional amendments. The Constitution of Kazakhstan authorizes the president to enact legislation "in the form to which he objects" if the two-thirds majority is not met that is required for resubmitting to the president for approval a law the president has already returned to parliament. In these countries, the cabinet is fully subordinated to presidential authority. In Kazakhstan, the president can keep a government in office that has not received parliamentary approval and also use this as grounds for dissolving parliament, as explained above. The requirement that the president cannot be elected more than twice was abolished by constitutional amendments in Turkmenistan in 2003 and Azerbaijan in 2009, and renewed for the current president in Russia by constitutional amendment in 2020. In these countries, the president determines who can be candidates for high court judgeships, and these appointments are made with parliament's approval. Judges and prosecutors outside the supreme courts are appointed directly by the president. In Kazakhstan, the president has the authority to appoint the Chairperson of the Constitutional Council, as well as to attend and vote in its sessions. The president also has the power of coercive veto against the council's decisions (Alkan, 2011, 2012). Although the powers granted to the president were significantly reduced with the constitutional amendments made on June 5 after the violent events in Kazakhstan in January 2022, the distribution of powers in the constitution indicates no change in practice due to the strong hegemonic party system in the country. These amendments have been generally regarded as a symbolic step that involved pushing former leader Nursultan Nazarbayev to the background within the system and revising the authority of the new President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev (Cornell and Barro, 2022: 14-22).

Russia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan are countries that have a dominant state party with small, coherent parties clustered around it that the leader controls and that are decisive in political life; meanwhile, opposition parties are given limited space. The United Russia Party in Russia, the New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) in Azerbaijan, and the Amanat Party (previously OTAN then Nur-OTAN before 2022)

in Kazakhstan have come to the fore as institutions at the center of political life, the main policy tool of each country's leader, as well as the institutions through which a balance is established between political actors. Turkmenistan has a de facto one-party system. The dominant party is also influential and directive over the local parliament and administrators. These countries have two different types of opposition parties. The first group can be called nomenklatura parties and their main characteristic is that they were formed by breaking away from the existing political power elite. Examples of such parties are the Azerbaijan Democratic Party in Azerbaijan (Cornell, 2001), the People's Unity Party in Kazakhstan under the leadership of former Prime Minister Akezhan M. Kazhageldin (Kubicek, 1998), and the RPR-Parnas in Russia (White, 2013). The second type of party involve those that have been in opposition to the existing power structure since the first years of independence. The system is operated to prevent opposition parties from forming a bloc, especially in parliament, sometimes by giving them limited room to maneuver and sometimes by completely suppressing them (Gel'Man, 2008: 913-930, Reuter, 2013: 101-135; Alkan, 2012; Heradstveit, 2001: 264-273). Although their names change from time to time, small moderate parties in these countries act close to the dominant party and have the function of giving the system a multi-party appearance.

Again, these countries have a proportional electoral system that allows for a malleable parliamentary composition. The main actor in the electoral system is the Central Election Commission (CEC), which is responsible for conducting and supervising elections, as well as the regional election commissions that report to it. Candidacy applications are submitted to these commissions and usually use their powers to exclude undesirable candidates from the electoral process. In the early years of independence, presidents directly influenced the composition of these commissions, and the role parliaments play in appointing CEC members has also increased in parallel with the institutionalization of pliant parliamentary structures in these countries. In all cases, however, the CEC and sub-commissions have functioned as screening mechanisms operating under the tutelage of the president and the dominant party (Bremmer and Morse, 1996: 188; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe [OSCE] Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights [OSCE/ODIHR, 2003: 6; OSCE/ODIHR, 2004: 6-9). The CEC and other commissions have tended to limit opposition participation in elections. For example, the two leading opposition parties in the 1995 parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan were denied participation. In the same elections, only the participation of 356 out of 1.040 candidates who submitted individual applications was approved, and only 10% of these candidates had the support of the opposition (OSCE/UN, 1996: 10). Implicit and explicit thresholds in the electoral systems of most of these countries limit the effectiveness of entities in elections outside of the dominant party and moderate parties. In Azerbaijan, political parties that want to participate in elections must apply to the CEC by collecting the signatures of at least 50,000 voters. The collected signatures must cover at least 75 out of one hundred electoral districts in the country and the number of signatures collected from any one district must not fall short of 250. Candidates from one constituency are also required to collect at least 2,000 voter signatures (OSCE/ODIHR, 2000: 4-6). In Kazakhstan, a party must receive 7% of the valid votes across the country in order to get a member into Parliament. The electoral law prohibits independent candidacy and alliances between parties before the elections, thus preventing them from overcoming the electoral threshold (Lillis, 2007). In the 2007 parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan, the only party that exceeded the 7% threshold was the state party Nur-OTAN, which won all seats in the parliament (Isaacs, 2008: 384).

Rentier systems based on the export of carbon resources not only facilitate the leader's management of power groups and thus foreign policy, but also expand his or her room for maneuver in determining the names and cadres who will succeed him or her in power. This has led to intra-family power shifts, helping to transform these systems into modern patrimonial sultanates in some countries. In Azerbaijan, a series of institutional arrangements and purges led to the transfer of power from father

to son in 2003 (Alkan, 2010: 181-193). A similar development took place in Turkmenistan, and despite serious discussions in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan on intra-family succession, this was not possible (Junisbai, 2020: 1-5; Ruiz-Ramas and Hernández, 2021).

Political Systems in Semi Rentier States

Meanwhile, a different process is experienced in countries with a foreign aid-based rentier system. The political regimes in countries such as Ukraine, Kosovo, Armenia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan are more fragile and unstable. Political instability is also reflected in the constitutional institutions of these countries. For example, three comprehensive constitutional amendments were made in Kyrgyzstan after its independence, corresponding to three different systems of government. Because of the lack of a malleable parliamentary structure in this country, frequent political crises have occurred between the president and the multiparty legislature, and almost every conflict has been resolved through constitutional amendments. Other consequences include the president's inability to dominate the ruling elite due to the weak rentier infrastructure and the fact that political disagreements have led to violent power shifts. Although many political parties are present in the country, nationally organized parties have not developed. In 2005, the country's first President Askar Akayev was ousted by protests, and the new administration under Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who served as prime minister during Akayev's term, was removed from power in 2010, again as a result of bloody protests (Jones, 2011). On June 27, 2010, a new constitution adopted by referendum introduced a system of proportional representation, whereby the majority party in the parliament, regardless of its electoral success, was given a maximum of 65 seats in the 120-member parliament. This was intended to strengthen the influence the multi-party parliament had over the executive branch and to autonomize it from presidential authority. In addition, the strategic powers of the president were significantly weakened (Alkan, 2011). However, the 2010 Constitution failed to create an institutional framework that would allow either the parliament or the government to effectively exercise the powers granted by the constitution. In the face of a government based on a makeshift parliamentary majority, the frequent interference in parliament by an elected president with limited powers has put a strain on the political system. The last mass demonstrations in Kyrgyzstan that started in 2020 have led to a new change of power in Kyrgyzstan, with Sadyr Caparov's administration being brought to power as a result of a bloody process. The new constitution adopted on April 10, 2021 introduced a presidential system that gave presidential authority a strong position in relation to the legislature and judiciary (Partlett, 2021).

The 1996 Constitution of Ukraine has been amended six times since its independence. The Constitution formulates a tripartite functioning of the Presidency, the Cabinet of Ministers, and Parliament on a semi-presidential basis. The president is authorized to call extraordinary legislative elections, and Parliament is authorized to call presidential elections. The Constitution empowers the president to submit proposals to Parliament for appointing the Ministers of Defense and of Foreign Affairs. The prime minister is recommended to the president by a parliamentary majority. Other ministries and some senior officials can be appointed by the prime minister's recommendation and parliamentary approval. The Constitution also authorizes the president to propose some high-level appointments, such as the Central Bank. Parliament only has the power to remove the president through impeachment for the crime of treason with a two-thirds majority vote. The president's decision to declare a state of emergency can only take effect with parliamentary approval. Parliament can question the president and, with a simple majority, can cast a vote of no confidence in the Cabinet of Ministers. The president and the Cabinet of Ministers are authorized to submit separate bills. The Constitution also grants the president the power of an overriding veto. The president is elected for a five-year term and is limited to two consecutive terms. The president also has the power to call a referendum. Another strategic power granted to the president is the ability to suspend the Cabinet of Ministers' actions and regulations that

the president considers unconstitutional. The Constitution also gives the Cabinet a dual responsibility to both the parliament and the president (Martyniuk and Datsiuk, 2021).

The constitutional and political system in Ukraine is divided between the forces that want to pursue a Russia-centered policy in domestic politics and those who favor a European Union and Western-centered policy. This division was reflected first and foremost in the country's constitutional changes. The Constitution that was adopted immediately after its independence introduced a regime inspired by the Russian Constitution, with the authority of the president at the center. The country's first President Leonid Kravchuk pursued a policy of balance between the West and the then relatively weak Russia. In the 1994 elections, Leonid Kuchma, who was elected to the presidency, chose to pursue an explicitly pro-Russian domestic and foreign policy. The strong position the Constitution provided, together with this style of politics, deepened the polarization between the political parties in the country. The tension in Ukrainian politics would turn into open conflict with the 2004 elections. The wave of protests that started over allegations of rigging in the second round of the elections between Viktor Yushchenko, who emphasized pro-Western politics, and Viktor Yanukovych, who was supported by former President Kuchma and pro-Russians, resulted in the renewal of the elections and Yushchenko's return to power (D'Anieri, 2012, 447-456). This controversial process was characterized as the Orange Revolution and was considered by pro-Russian politicians as a Western intervention in Ukraine's internal affairs. Meanwhile, Yushchenko emphasized a pro-Western policy. The process was reflected at the constitutional level in the 2004 Amendments. These amendments introduced a semi-presidential system largely based on the tripartite balance outlined above (Choudhry et al., 2018: 17-19). Shortly after Yanukovych won the 2010 elections backed by pro-Russian supporters, the Constitutional Court of Ukraine annulled the 2004 Constitutional Amendments. With this decision, the country returned to its original Constitution. In 2013, Yanukovych signed a series of economic agreements with Russia and announced that he would not sign the EU Association Agreement, sparking widespread protests in the country. The parliament defied the president and passed a resolution approving the EU agreement. The demonstrations, dubbed Euromaidan, were violently suppressed by security forces, but the crisis deepened. The conflict would culminate in the Parliament's decision to dismiss the president and Yanukovych departing from the country (Shveda and Park, 2016: 85-91). As expected, Petro Poroshenko, who emphasized pro-Western politics, won the elections held in May 2014. Poroshenko signed the EU economic partnership agreement and secured the parliamentary passage of a resolution reinstating the 2004 Constitution. The process in the country would now take another dimension with Russia's annexation of Crimea and the civil war in the east of the country that Russian separatists started. The 2019 elections would be overwhelmingly won by Volodymyr Zelensky, who promised to normalize relations with Russia in contrast with Poroshenko (Gorchinskaya, 2019: 3-11). However, the process would not allow him to implement a policy of change or balance, and the country would face an open invasion. This whole process was again reflected at the constitutional level. In 2019, the Constitution was amended to characterize the president as the guarantor of Ukraine's full membership in the EU and NATO. Moreover, Article 116 of the Constitution tasked the Cabinet of Ministers with implementing Ukraine's strategy for full membership in the EU and NATO (Stetsiuk, 2023: 3-12).

Georgia is another example of these countries. Georgia achieved independence through a conflictual process. In May 1991, the country's first elected President Zviad Gamsakhurdia supported the anti-Gorbachev military coup, and this led to internal conflicts. Although the opposition, backed by the Yeltsin administration, succeeded in removing the country's first president, this did not bring stability to the country. The civil war between Gamsakhurdia and Eduard Shevardnadze lasted until 1994 and wore the country down (Baev, 2018). After Gamsakhurdia's death, Eduard Shevardnadze won the elections that were held in November 1995. The country's first comprehensive constitution was adopted during his term in 1995. The 1995 Constitution established a semi-presidential system similar

to Russia's, which put the president in the center. This system paved the way for the prominence of the presidential office in politics. Shevardnadze faced difficulties due to his differences with Russia. He faced three assassination attempts during his rule and tried to curb the pressure on him by openly pursuing a policy that prioritized NATO and the EU (Jones and Kakhishvili, 2013: 15-22). On November 2, 2003, he was removed from office following protests by the opposition that did not recognize the election results. As a result of the so-called Rose Revolution, elections were held only in January 2004, in which Mikheil Saakashvili won the presidential elections. Saakashvili pursued a strongly pro-Western policy. The Georgian government was dependent on Western financial support, and this dependence was that determined the government's policies. However, economic support from the West did not bring economic stability, and domestic political instability remained multidimensional. In 2007, Saakashvili signed a controversial resolution extending the mandate of the Parliament. He then won the early presidential elections in 2008 and retained his rule. The outbreak of the five-day Georgian-Russian war in 2008 saw the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia fall effectively out of Tbilisi's control. As a result of increasing pressure, Saakashvili announced that he would not run in the elections to be held in 2013, left the country, and traveled to the United States of America (Ghasemi et al., 2024: 341-343). As a result, Giorgi Margvelashvili won the elections. Margvelashvili also preferred to pursue a pro-Western policy. During his term, constitutional amendments were adopted that would restrict the powers of the President and ensure the transition to a parliamentary system in the country after 2024 (Kakhishvili, 2020: 13). The last presidential elections in Georgia were held in 2018, in which Salome Zourabichvili was elected as the country's first female and last elected president.

However, this process was not enough to bring stability to Georgia. Disagreements between the parliament and the president led to a fruitless impeachment attempt against Zourabichvili in 2023. In response, Zourabichvili closely supported the opposition against the government's draft of the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence. This law was allegedly enacted with Russian influence and imposed close controls on the international relations of civil society organizations in the country. It was adopted in 2024 despite violent protests and a presidential veto (Reinhold, 2024: 4-6). The transition to a parliamentary system also included a period in which debates about the growing Russian influence in the country came to the fore. These debates came to the fore especially with Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, whose presence coincided with the system change. Since 2012, nine prime ministers have taken office in the country. The common characteristic of these prime ministers, who served on average for more than one year, is their membership in the Georgian Dream Party and direct or indirect closeness to Ivanishvili. A discourse prioritizing Russia came to the fore under Irakli Kobakhidze in particular, who became prime minister in 2024. In 2022, Kobakhidze, then chairman of the Georgian Dream Party, criticized Ukraine and Western countries, declaring that the West had pressured Georgia to open a second front in the Russia-Ukraine war. When the European Parliament adopted some sanctions against the Georgian government in June 2022, Kobakhidze declared that they would not abandon the EU membership strategy despite the West (Aprasidze, 2024). After taking office as prime minister, he continued to blame the EU authorities and, as noted, brought the Law on Foreign Influence Transparency to Parliament and got it enacted despite internal and external opposition.

The above examples are not unique to the countries under consideration. As mentioned, unstable political systems can be found in almost all Eurasian countries that are dependent on foreign aid. These countries are caught between the pressures of their Soviet past and the demands of Western countries. Their economic infrastructures are insufficient at helping their governments deal with socioeconomic tensions and curbing external pressures. They are often confronted with regional problems that are open to foreign influence, and these problems directly affect domestic politics. The same can be said of Armenia's politics, which is focused on the Karabakh conflict and has been caught between the diaspora and Russia. Kosovo's politics, where the Serbian minority in the country has become an international

problem, and all its institutions and economy are driven by the West. Another state in this group is Southern Cyprus, which was made a member of the EU in 2004 through a controversial process and is dependent on Union funds. Although these countries have different political systems formulated on the basis of presidential, semi-presidential, or parliamentary systems, they show similar characteristics in terms of domestic and foreign policy interactions. As a legacy of the Eurasian geography, they have a high potential to turn into an arena for conflicts shaped after the Cold War. The political regimes of these countries are weaker than the first type of rentier systems in terms of balancing and building resistance.

Illiberal Democracies and Political Life

Another group of countries that should be considered in terms of new regimes in Eurasia are illiberal democracies. The vast majority of these are countries that were rapidly incorporated into the EU with the 2004 enlargement. These countries initially came to the fore with institutional and constitutional reforms determined by the EU and have come into conflict with EU authorities over time as a result of their democratic processes, with these conflicts even evolving into a confrontational process.

Poland is a country that transitioned to a democracy after its independence in 1990, mainly through some revisions to its Soviet-era constitution. The most important of these revisions was the creation of a directly elected presidency. The 1991 elections ushered in a political process in which a strong president and a weak four-party government would work together. Lech Walesa, the charismatic leader of the former Solidarity Movement, broadly interpreted his constitutional powers as president and tended to shape the political system around his center; this led to a conflict between the president and Parliament (The Sejm). In February 1992, a Constitutional Commission was established within the Sejm to work on eliminating the ambiguities of powers in the existing Constitution. As a result of these efforts, the Small Constitution of 1992 was adopted. These amendments only regulated the powers between the legislature and the president and otherwise retained the provisions of the old Constitution of 1952. Due to having the same characteristic, these amendments lacked some of the complementary elements such as judicial mechanisms that are effective in maintaining the balance of powers within a political system (Fijalkowski, 2010: 124). In addition to no time limits being set for a president to run for elections, the president had the power of veto and strategic appointment powers. After winning the 1993 parliamentary and 1995 presidential elections, the leftist coalition initiated a new constitution aimed at putting an end to this situation. The 1997 Constitution is the main document shaping the current political regime in Poland and was drafted in this context as a result of the search for a comprehensive constitution as well as a reaction to the conflicts of authority between the president and the Sejm between 1991 and 1995 (Cole, 1998).

The 1997 Constitution introduced a semi-presidential model in which the president and a government accountable to parliament would work together. Although the powers of the government in relation to the president were increased compared to the previous arrangement, the president was given strong powers of decisiveness in the system. Before signing an international agreement, the president can have its constitutionality checked, and the relevant minister must act in partnership with the president when determining and executing foreign policy. In the event of a failure to appoint a government, the president can appoint one on the condition of a vote of confidence or dissolve Parliament after consulting with the presidents of the Sejm and the Senate. The president has the power to convene the cabinet under the president's chairmanship. The 1997 Constitution gives the president a wide scope for acting alone and can be said to include constitutional provisions that potentially enable the president to come to the fore in the system in the event of a crisis. Potentially, the president could emerge as a decisive figure in the political system (Sanford, 2002: 233). The elections held in the country up to 2015 did not have enough of a majority in the parliament to form a single-party

government. Whether the coalition governments function stably or not is also difficult to say. During the same period, presidents were able to win the second round of elections with the support of parties other than their own. This allowed the political system to remain in a tenuous balance until the 2015 elections. The Law and Justice Party (PiS) became the first party in Poland shortly after its foundation. After failing to win the 2007 and 2011 elections, the party won the 2015 parliamentary elections and gained the power to form a government on its own. The party, whose ideology and leadership had been determined by brothers Lech and Jaroslaw Kaczyński, emphasized that relations with the EU were a process that had eroded the sense of solidarity and cultural values of the Polish people. Sometimes emphasizing far-right discourses, the party gained strength by recruiting voters from the center-right and small right-wing parties. In particular, the party viewed the death of party leader Lech Kaczyński in a plane crash in Russia as an assassination and started resorting to mass protests. Raising the slogan of a social-solidarist Poland against a liberal Poland, the party won both the presidential (Andrzej Duda) and parliamentary elections in 2015, ending the tripartite balance the constitution had established (Grabowski, 2019; Markowski, 2016). Despite the unification of the legislative and executive branches in Poland, the majority was insufficient for making constitutional amendments, so systemic change was mostly manifested through legislative amendments and different practices. Another post-2015 practice was to prevent the implementation of the decisions of the Polish Constitutional Court by not publishing them. In this way, the government was able to render many institutional responsibilities arising from EU norms effectively inoperative (Drin´oczi and Bień-Kacała, 2019: 1153). Due to the controversial judicial and media reform in 2017, the EU Commission initiated an Article 7 infringement proceeding against Poland, which could have resulted in the suspension of some members' privileges. However, this process had no visible impact on Poland as it could be finalized by a qualified majority in the European Parliament. Since winning the 2019 elections again, PiS has gained influence in the judiciary, particularly in the Constitutional Court with the help of constitutional powers of appointment in the higher judiciary. In 2023, a law that could impose a 10-year political ban on politicians by a parliamentary committee decision had to be softened as a result of the heightened reactions in EU and domestic politics (Fella, 2024: 23-30). In the October 2023 parliamentary elections, PiS came first in the elections, but lost power to the opposition coalition by failing to reach a majority to form a single government in parliament. The country's politics are now positioned over a new balance between a pro-PiS president and an opposition government.

Another notable country in terms of illiberal democracies is Hungary. It is a typical central European country that became a democracy as a result of reconciling the Soviet Union-era elites with the new political and social actors. The builders of the new system created the constitutional framework for the post-independence period by making extensive amendments to the old Constitution of 1949. With these changes, Hungary was structured as a typical parliamentary system. The President of the Republic is a representative authority endowed with symbolic powers, and all but a limited number of actions are subject to the countersignature rule. The initiative for policy-making rests entirely with the government, which is criminally and politically accountable to Parliament. The Hungarian system has a fully rationalized parliamentary functioning. The Constitution also includes mechanisms for strengthening the government. Another important feature of the 1989 constitutional revision is the recognition of a constitutional court review (Halmai, 1998). Therefore, a system that includes institutions and rules for a constitutional review of the legislature and the executive has shaped the political life in the country post-independence.

In this context, political life in Hungary can be analyzed in two phases: pre- and post-2010 elections. Excluding Miklôs Németh's transitional government, eight cabinets have served in the country as a result of the five elections held up to the 2010 elections. This first period was also a period of political entrenchment in Hungary. Politics functioning on the basis of alliances shaped around the conserv-

ative-right, liberals, and former socialists turned into a dominant party system after 2010, with the conservative far-right Federation of Young Democrats-Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidezs) Party holding the monopoly on power. In the 2010 parliamentary elections, Fidesz achieved a two-thirds majority, resulting in a sharp change in the country's politics. In the 2014, 2018, and 2022 parliamentary elections, Fidezs secured an absolute majority in parliament. Fidezs and its Prime Minister Victor Orban played a decisive role in transforming the political system into an illiberal democracy through constitutional changes after the 2010 elections. This process is described by the concept of illiberal constitutionalism, in which the government relied on a two-thirds majority in Parliament to first pass a constitutional amendment that changed the procedure for appointing members of the Constitutional Court and then to restrict its powers. The new Constitution, which had been targeted in the 1989 revision, was then adopted by Parliament in 2011 through a non-participatory process. With the 2011 Constitution, the supervisory powers of the Constitutional Court were further restricted, especially its powers of financial supervision. The number of members of the Court was increased from 11 to 15, and the term of office was extended from nine to 12 years. The power to elect the President of the Constitutional Court was taken from the court and given to Parliament, thus enabling the Orban government to influence the Constitutional Court, with which it had problems (Drin´oczi & Bień-Kacała, 2019: 1153). The 2011 Constitution's preamble referred to Christian European culture, spoke of a historical constitution, and made vague statements such as the protection of sacred royal achievements. The constitutional text itself contained wording that this text, titled the National Pact, would be the benchmark for interpreting constitutional rules. This allowed for a wide area of ambiguity when interpreting constitutional provisions. In the area of fundamental rights and freedoms, the constitutional definition of marriage as an institution between a man and a woman and the emphasis on the need to protect the fetus from the moment of conception in Article 2 on the right to life are other examples of the constitutionalization of a party program. The new Constitution created a Fiscal Council that was given broad powers of control over the budget. Moreover, the constitution gave the president the power to dissolve Parliament if it fails to pass the budget on time. This has been interpreted as a mechanism for indirectly bringing down an incumbent government in the future when Fidesz is not in charge. By including statements in the Constitution stating that Hungary has a responsibility towards Hungarians living abroad, a constitutional basis was created for a more interventionist foreign policy toward Hungarian minorities living in neighboring countries. Similarly, having the Constitution include the statement that the Forint is the national currency of Hungary was considered an element that would potentially make switching to the Euro difficult for Hungary in the near future, or at least draw the issue to the grounds of a constitutional conflict (Ratip, 2011; Puppinck & Pecorario, 2011). On March 11, 2013, another constitutional amendment annulled court decisions taken by the Constitutional Court prior to the adoption of the 2011 Constitution, thus resetting the precedents, jurisprudence, and interpretations the court had developed. The same amendments added the provision that a law adopted by Parliament with a two-thirds majority cannot be reviewed by the Constitutional Court and also introduced the rule that election campaigns can only be broadcast through public media. Another change was that Parliament was given the power to determine which churches would receive state aid (Venice Commission, CDL-REF(2013)014). In 2011, the electoral system was also changed, reducing the number of members of parliament from 386 to 199 and introducing some additional provisions that favored larger parties over the old system. This constitutional change was supported by numerous sub-regulations, such as the restrictive Media Act (Mécs, 2024; Polyák, 2019). The Hungarian government rejected the migrant quota and financial contribution obligations imposed by the EU and built a wire fence on the border with Serbia. In 2020, a law facilitating the government's ability to declare a state of emergency was passed, and in 2021 another regulation increasing the government's financial control over public universities was also passed (Kakuk, 2019; Mészáros, 2024; Scheppele et al., 2021). While this whole process changed

the rules of the game in Hungarian politics, it paved the way for establishing a dominant party system in domestic politics and for the emergence of new areas of conflict in foreign policy, especially the EU.

Analyses of illiberal democracies are not limited to Poland and Hungary. Similar analyses have been conducted for other countries, notably Czechia and Slovakia.

The determinants of political power are quite strong in determining foreign policy strategy in illiberal democracies and full rentier regimes. This situation may trigger a tendency to resort to hard power policies, as we will discuss separately for each regime type below. Meanwhile, the second type of rentier regimes have the opposite situation. Due to their weak state systems, these countries have conditions that make them prone to turning into a theater of conflict at the international level.

New Regimes and Eurasian Regional Security

Full Rentier States and Eurasian Security

In the post-Cold War period, Russia has been the central actor of the primary type of rentier states in the Eurasian region, which has felt the greatest need to revise its international relations. The change Russia underwent has closely affected many countries in its immediate neighborhood and been decisive in almost every field in the Eurasian region, from the structuring of political systems to the divergence in security policies. Russia has primarily had to contend with developments in its immediate neighborhood that it perceived to be to its detriment. The increasing US and EU influence in Eastern Europe, the entry of Western companies into the energy resources of the Caspian region, the emergence of alternative routes such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline that aim to break the Russian energy monopoly, the developments in Ukraine, and the problems of Chinese influence in Central Asia have been the main problem areas of the new Russian foreign policy. Russia also faced the problem of integrating into the world system with its existing economic structure, and the search for a protectionist reconstruction in economics as well as politics became an integral element of Russian foreign policy (Blank, 1995: 10-11). The result has been an oligarchic economy embedded in a capitalist system and driven by state determinism. It is a patronal competitive authoritarian regime type based on a rentier infrastructure, which Diamond considered to be the most successful hybrid regime model (2002: 25-26), with a foreign policy strategy oriented towards maintaining and restructuring hegemony, especially post-2000.

Until 1999, Russia had appeared as a country of domestic instability and foreign policy instability, but after Yeltsin handed power over to Putin, the above-mentioned change was implemented step by step. Centrifugal initiatives within the Federation (i.e., Chechnya and Tatarstan) were rigidly suppressed. The economy recovered with the support of energy prices in international markets, and Russia's quest to establish hegemony in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, which it characterizes as its near abroad, gained momentum through diplomatic, economic, and sometimes military interventions. Since the June 28, 2000 document titled "Foreign Policy Concept," Russia's foreign policy has increasingly been based on opposition to the United States (Smith, 2000). Russia has emphasized a multi-pronged strategy, ranging from reasserting its influence in Eastern Europe; openly supporting Iran against the embargo imposed on that country; implementing direct military hard power policies against Georgia, Syria, and Ukraine; and returning to the policy of nuclear deterrence. In 2003, a comprehensive operation was launched against the pro-Western oligarchs formed during the Yeltsin era, many of whom were arrested or forced to flee abroad (Guriev and Rachinsky, 2005: 135), thus creating an oligarchy loyal to national interests. The same period saw the institutionalization of a political regime organized around the leader, the discourse of a manageable democracy against the concept of liberal democracy, and the concept of multipolarity in international relations (Makarychev and Morozov, 2011). After the September

11 attacks in particular, Russia realized that a self-centered near-region policy was unsustainable and accelerated its efforts to control the channels of cooperation Western operations in Afghanistan and Iraq had opened for the countries in the region. Russia has turned to a softer strategies regarding the status of the Caspian Sea and its monopoly on energy resources. In January 2002, Russia signed a long-term natural gas agreement with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan in Moscow, agreed to share the data from the Gabala Radar Station in Azerbaijan with this country, and increased its rent (Sohbetqızı, 2002). In the same year, Russia also held a joint naval exercise in the Caspian Sea with the participation of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan and stepped up its diplomatic efforts to get Turkmenistan to change its policy on the Caspian Sea (Lelyveld, 2002). With this change in strategy, Russia aimed to keep the Caspian Sea out of USA and NATO's sphere of influence. Russia is eager to develop a self-led energy cooperation that includes the Siberian region and would also control energy flows to China and Japan (Bremmer and Morse, 2003; Mereu, 2001). Russia, which until a few years ago was striving to maintain its monopoly on distribution channels, is now striving to control the distribution network on a global scale by having a say on all alternative routes both east and west, including the creation of new alternatives. The main elements of Russia's new approach are the transportation of natural gas and oil to Europe through alternative pipelines that will eliminate dependence on Eastern European countries; the development of its monopoly in Central Asia and the Caucasus through long-term operation and distribution agreements that ensure Russian companies have a share in the pipelines to be built towards China, the Indian Ocean, and the Persian Gulf; and a military strategy that utilizes the security concerns of the countries in the region to support all these policies.

Russia has supported this policy with its initiatives to establish a common security concept. In this framework, it established the *Collective* Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2002, played a leading role in the transformation of the Shanghai Five Initiative into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001, held the first military exercise of this organization in 2003, declared that it considered NATO enlargement as a clear threat in 2004, and suspended the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) in 2007. Since the mid-2000s, Russia has focused on improving its relations with African and Latin American countries.

As mentioned, Russia's shift towards a mutually beneficial near abroad policy has been supported by hard power policies since the second half of the 2000s. In August 2008, Russia launched a major military operation into Georgian territory in response to the Georgian government's sudden aggression against the South Ossetia region. This operation was a decisive development both for the US policy towards the Caucasus and for revising the policies pursued by the countries in the region that wanted to improve their relations with the US (Cornell et al., 2008). Russia has continued its hard power policy by directly intervening in the Syrian civil war since 2015 and supported this intervention with certain diplomatic initiatives. Russia initially provided support to Syria with Su-type bombers, attack aircraft, and helicopters and reinforced the region with new advanced aircraft, especially after Türkiye shot down a Russian Su-24 bomber in November 2015. Russian air defense assets in the country were reinforced with an S-400 missile system, electronic warfare units, and greater force protection, with the Russian Marines and a T-90A tank company being deployed in the country. Later, the S-300V4 and S-400 missile systems, as well as secondary air defense units and artillery units, were deployed to the combat zone for close support, covering Northeastern Syria. Russian Special Operations Command troops have been actively involved in combat operations (Kofman, 2020: 45-46). Finally, the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its support for the conflicts in Eastern Ukraine turned into an occupation on February 24, 2024, thus moving the hard power policy towards an East-West conflict.

Since 2009, Russia has started expanding its sphere of influence beyond former Soviet countries. With a series of agreements signed between Türkiye and Russia, Türkiye has been able to cooperate with Russia in the Caucasus. For Russia, which had acknowledged its dependence on Türkiye for realizing the

South Stream pipeline, Türkiye has become an interlocutor for problems in the Caucasus. Türkiye has also become more influential than ever in Russia's pursuit of a more balanced policy for resolving the Karabakh conflict, at least in terms of reconsidering the regional balances created in favor of Armenia and exerting pressure on this country (Alkan, 2010: 162-165). The new dimension of relations between Russia and Türkiye during the Syrian crisis can be considered a reflection of this new strategy.

On March 31, 2023, Russia revised its foreign policy document based on the Foreign Policy Concept 2021 document. This document stated that global change is not welcomed by the colonial logic of the West, which is why Western countries are hostile to new developments. Russia therefore bases its position on the struggle for existence and defense of freedom of development. Russia's primary goal is to achieve global supremacy and to further deepen the relations developed on the basis of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and Eurasian Economic Union. These statements clearly indicate that Russia will pursue an uncompromising policy in its sphere of influence. Another noteworthy emphasis in the document is the development of relations with China. Russia states that it will oppose any foreign interference in the multilateral security and economic alliance system in Asia and will strengthen relations with Islamic, African, and Latin American countries in support of multipolarity. The USA and European states are positioned as the opposing front to this strategy (Başaran, 2023).

Russia's position in the Eurasian region represents a dilemma both for itself and for the countries of the region. Russia is both a protector and an imminent threat to the countries of the region. Russia contributes to the sustainability of the regimes by supporting the existing governments against internal opposition and demands for economic and political reforms emanating from the West. At the same time, it also does not hesitate to use direct hard power against developments in these countries that considers to be detrimental to itself. In the event of a clash between Russia's regional strategy and its interests, the countries of the region have no power to balance it. The invasion of Georgia and Ukraine has clearly revealed a potential threat to all countries in the Eurasian region. Caught between the Western sanctions against Russia and the Russian threat, the countries of the region have much less space to maneuver with regard to their foreign policy. Russia's success or failure in the Ukraine war points to a pressure for change in the near future for the countries of the region. At the same time, this dilemma paves the way for potentially new security challenges for each country in the region.

Another dimension of the relationship between political regimes and security in the Eurasian region concerns the behavior of regional actors in bilateral disputes when Russia remains neutral. In this case, powerful regional actors use hard power against the weaker states with which they have disputes. Border disputes are a good example in this regard. Without outside help, weaker states are unable to resist the demands of the stronger side. The majority of border disputes in the region have been resolved in the interests of powerful actors (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and China; Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan; Russia and Kazakhstan). In the case of bilateral disputes between equivalent powers, which are often occur more as problems between primary-type rentier states, long-term intractability is the prevailing pattern. For example, while differences over the status of the Caspian Sea were resolved by an agreement signed in 2018 as a result of Russia's multilateral initiatives, the issue of disputed territories in the southern Caspian Sea between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan has yet to be fully resolved. The embassies of these two countries remained mutually closed until 2007. Relations between the two countries began to soften in 2008, but concrete results had to wait until 2021 (Alkan, 2010: 147; Kasım, 2021; 951-954). The possible consequences of a change that would weaken Russia's influence in its immediate neighborhood regarding the relations between the countries in the region should also be evaluated in this framework.

Political Instability and Eurasian Security

As mentioned above, the countries in the region with the second type of rentier infrastructure are characterized by political instability. In line with this characteristic, these countries constitute unstable areas in terms of international security. They are caught between the influence and competition of international actors and regional problems. As one of these countries, Kyrgyzstan inherited international ethnic and border conflicts from the Soviet Union. Some regions such as Osh are heavily populated by ethnic Uzbeks, and Soviet-era train networks in the region cross the countries in a way that does not coincide with the new borders. Transportation between certain regions sometimes requires crossing the borders and going around the neighboring republic (Roy, 2000: 109). Some security concerns are found in terms of bordering China as an independent country. A Kyrgyz minority of 200,000 people live in the Uighur region of China, while 50,000 Uighurs live in Kyrgyzstan. Since gaining independence, population movements along the border with China have created tensions between the two countries. Again, China is very sensitive about the Uighur minority living in Kyrgyzstan. The possibility that the Uighurs in the country might help the East Turkestan groups fighting against the Chinese government causes China to turn its attention to Kyrgyzstan. At China's request, three Uyghur organizations operating in Kyrgyzstan were shut down in 2004 (Ibraimov, 2004). The agreements between Kyrgyzstan and China in the late 1990s was aimed at resolving border issues between the two countries but caused a deep political crisis in Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan's parliament, the Supreme Council, launched an attempt to remove then President Akayev from office (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2001: 10). Similarly, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have some border issues. Uzbekistan and its large population and military power, together with the presence of an Uzbek minority in some parts of southern Kyrgyzstan who make up nearly half of the population constitute another potential threat to Kyrgyzstan's security concerns. In 2001, protests in the Aksu region of Kyrgyzstan over the border agreements signed with Uzbekistan resulted in the deaths of many demonstrators and forced then Prime Minister Bakiyev to resign (Khamidov, 2002). Ethnic conflicts intersecting with border issues in Kyrgyzstan are also related to the activities of radical groups in the region. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), an armed opposition group with close ties to organizations such as al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, has carried out attacks across the Kyrgyz border into Uzbekistan. In 1999 and 2000, the Uzbek government's response to these attacks was harsh, leading to border violations that at times disturbed the Kyrgyz government (ICG, 2001: 17). Border movements between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan can occasionally create new problems between the two countries. The events of 2005 in the Andijan region of Uzbekistan are a case in point. During these events, a large number of Uzbeks crossed the border and took refuge in the Kyrgyz cities of Osh and Jalal-Abad (ICG, 2005: 19), and the number of Uzbeks who fled the incidents between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Osh and Jalal-Abad from July 10-14, 2010 was stated to have reached 80,000. The border dispute involving water resources on the border with Tajikistan escalated into a conflict involving the armies of both countries in 2021. On September 14, 2022, the Tajik army crossed the border and attacked the territory of Kyrgyzstan, causing the evacuation of 140,000 people from the region. As a result, Kyrgyzstan was able to repel these attacks with the diplomatic and military support of some countries (Gabdulhakov et al., 2023: 5-20; Abdulkerimov, 2024). Nevertheless, Kyrgyzstan lacks the capacity to cope with these multifaceted problems. During the 1999 and 2000 IMU attacks, it was able to repel the aggressors into Tajikistan with the support of Russia, Uzbekistan, and China. It was also able to provide similar support against the Tajikistan attacks. With regard to regional problems, Kyrgyzstan has received support from Russia in particular within the CSTO and still utilizes Russian military power for the security of its border with China (Rudov, 2001-2002: 207). Kyrgyzstan also has military bases allocated to both the USA and Russia (Cooley, 2008: 74; Saidazimova, 2005). This dual stance in international relations has paved the way for the emergence of many economic and political problems. Kyrgyzstan is a member of the CSTO Treaty, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Eurasian Economic Union, and World Trade Organization and has

relations with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Therefore, relations based on economic concerns and relations based on security concerns are in contradiction with one another (Misra, 2001: 315).

Armenia is another example of such a country, with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict at its center and being caught in the balance between the USA, Western countries, and Russia. Armenia is an interesting post-Soviet country that expanded its territory territorially through war during its process of independence. For Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh as a part of Azerbaijan has been an issue on the agenda since the Soviet Union era. Armenians have frequently raised their demands for the region's annexation to Armenia, especially since the 1960s (Devlet, 1993: 275). During the Gorbachev era, what started in 1986 with the petitions for Karabakh to be given to Armenia quickly turned into a conflict. Due to clashes, approximately 160,000 Azerbaijani Turks were forced to leave the region (Aslanlı, 2001: 400). The conflict turned into an open occupation as anti-Russian opponents gained power in Azerbaijan during its independence process and Russia, worried that this development would erode its monopoly over Azerbaijani oil and natural gas, gave open support to Armenia. With the 366th Russian Regiment's support to Armenian troops, the Armenian occupation expanded in 1992, first to Khojaly and then to Shusha and Lachin. The Russian-determined Bishkek Protocol was signed in May 1994 and brought a direct ceasefire without changing the situation on the front line, thus making the status on the front line permanent. The Protocol was also signed by separatist Armenian leaders and provided no solution to Azerbaijan's losses and de facto the entire Karabakh region and eight surrounding rayons came under Armenian control (Alkan, 2010: 56-61). Such an outcome was far beyond its capacity to deal with and was based on the direct support of Russia and the diplomatic support of Western countries. Prior to the 1994 Bishkek Protocol, the Minsk Group, which had been established in 1992 under the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) umbrella, became increasingly involved in the process after the protocol, and this process actually reinforced the permanence of the existing lawlessness due to the common attitude that prioritized Armenian demands. During the talks in France in February 2006, the OSCE put forward a plan for a two-stage settlement process. According to the plan, Armenian troops were to first withdraw from the occupied territories around Karabakh, and a peacekeeping force was to be deployed in the region (Ismailzade, 2006). In the second stage of the settlement, the political status of the region was to be determined through a referendum to be held in Nagorno-Karabakh (Başer, 2008: 96). The concrete result of the plan was that Azerbaijan was asked to give up Nagorno-Karabakh, which was also de facto occupied, in exchange for its occupied territories. Moreover, an international military force under the status of peacekeeping would be able to enter Azerbaijani territory. In the meantime, the US Senate should be noted to have decided to embargo Azerbaijan within the scope of the Freedom Support Act that was passed in 1992, and this decision wasn't implemented until 2008. Article 907 of the Act, which included the embargo, was an article added to the law as a result of the efforts of the Armenian lobby due to the Karabakh conflict (Swietochowski, 1999: 422). Russia continued to provide reciprocal and discounted military aid to Armenia, where it deployed its troops under the umbrella of ensuring Armenia's border security, until 2022. On the one hand, in order for Russia to maintain its military presence in Armenia, the Russian administration aimed to maintain its position as the sole guarantor country in the eyes of Armenia by perpetuating the perceived threat against Azerbaijan in this country. On the other hand, it aimed to manipulate Azerbaijan by giving Azerbaijani leadership the impression that Russia was the only country capable of putting real pressure on Armenia (Kasım, 2009: 127). These examples show the degree to which international actors intervened in the Karabakh conflict and the advantages this gave to Armenia.

For Armenia, the Karabakh conflict remains important as an element of legitimacy in domestic politics, which at the same time reinforces the sustainability of the power structure by pushing the political system's other problems to the background. Armenia has often resorted to border conflicts to

cover internal political crises. The most important reason for the widespread conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2008 was the internal power struggle between pro-Russian and pro-Western factions. The events of 2008 also marked the beginning of the rise of pro-Western groups and Nikol Pashinyan, a struggle that would last until 2018 (Nikoghosyan and Ter-Matevosyan, 2022; Babayev and Mahmudov, 2023).

This equation over which Armenia was positioned was extremely vulnerable to the rivalry between the actors supporting it. As a matter of fact, this status would be challenged in parallel with the deterioration of relations between the West and Russia. With the West seeking to create a second anti-Russian bloc in the Caucasus and Russia seeking to maintain its hegemony in the region, these actors have displayed a more confrontational attitude in the region, especially after the Ukraine crisis. Pashinyan's coming to power in 2018 and his pro-Western policy was unsustainable under the high tensions between Russia and the West. Armenia thus ended up losing its multi-partner protection umbrella in the process. Russia first stopped its discounted military aid and then suspended arms sales altogether (Anggraeni, 2022). The Bishkek status quo on which Armenian politics closely depended was put to an end by the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, which began in late 2020 and lasted 44 days, and the de facto status of Nagorno-Karabakh was also put to an end by the two-day Azerbaijani offensive in September 2023. In other words, the status quo that had been established under international influence for nearly 30 years was restored in less than two months. Today, Armenia's domestic politics is positioned over the tensions between Russia and the Western countries and involves dynamics that could trigger a new conflict in the Caucasus at any moment.

This relationship of secondary rentier states with regional security in the Eurasian region is not limited to Central Asia and the Caucasus. This is also the case for Eastern European countries with similar characteristics. As mentioned, Ukraine is currently under Russian occupation, and more than two years of war have not only widened and deepened the conflict on the East-West axis but also increased Ukraine's dependency and limited its ability to develop autonomous policies. Kosovo and North Macedonia are other countries where ethnic problems are likely to trigger a potential conflict on the East-West axis. A conflict in these countries is likely to involve regional actors such as Albania. The makeshift balance created in Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Dayton Agreement cannot withstand such a wave of crises. At the same time, the ethnic and border issues that flare up from time to time in the region are likely to set the stage for deepening NATO-Russia tensions, similar to those in Ukraine.

Illiberal Democracies as a Centrifugal Space

The political regimes of illiberal democracies point to a different situation in terms of international security relations. First of all, they are members of well-established international organizations related to Western democracies. Hungary and Poland are also members of both the EU and NATO. Therefore, they differ from other countries by being under a stronger security umbrella regulated by international agreements. Meanwhile, these countries are not pursuing domestic and foreign policies that are fully in line with the regional strategies of the organizations of which they are members or the powerful actors in these organizations. In other words, centrifugal tendencies rather than dependency are strong in the domestic and foreign policies of these countries. Opposition to the social and cultural policies produced by the EU, accusing the central countries of the EU of pursuing imperialist policies, and focusing on policies centered on Christianity and conservative values have been common features of these governments. Seeing the process of integration with the EU as a neoliberal hegemony building process, these governments emphasize the determinism of the state, which in reality is the political power, with regard to the economy and nationalist policies. At the center of all this tension is the understanding that the EU undermines national sovereignty as a value and institutional structure. The EU's international European identity is positioned against the national identities of these countries.

Increased migration to EU countries and the EU's refugee policies have turned this tension into open conflict. The so-called Visegrád Group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) have taken an open stance against the EU's immigration and quota policies. Orban equates his country's position with regard to the EU with the resistance against the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1848 and the Soviet Union in 1956. The anti-Islamic, anti-Jewish and anti-elite political discourses form the intellectual background of the criticism of EU policies. Anti-EU sentiment not only includes a stance against policies but also a criticism of the legitimacy of EU institutions. For example, the Kaczyński government in Poland refused to implement the rulings of the EU Court of Justice against the country on the grounds that they were contrary to the Polish Constitution. Namely, national courts and institutions can stop the implementation of EU policies by subjecting them to constitutional and legal review (Zgut, 2021: 11).

In Hungary, the Eastern Opening process initiated by the Fidesz government after 2011 is a good example of the anti-EU center-left orientation. In this context, Hungary has turned towards establishing multilateral strategic ties with Russia, China, Türkiye, the Caucasus and Central Asian countries, as well as India and East Asian countries. Hungary is trying to support this policy with its cultural identity and economy. Prime Minister Orban's frequent emphasis on the Kipchak cultural heritage is one indication of this. Again, the Hungarian government has frequently stated that the Eastern Opening is more suitable for the current economic structure of the country and will bring new opportunities to the country. Hungary is the leading supporter of China's Belt and Road Initiative in Europe. The Amber *Rail* Freight Corridor, which is considered a part of this initiative, was launched in 2016 in partnership with Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. In opposition to the EU's migration policy, advocates strengthening relations with Türkiye and supporting Türkiye in creating a common barrier against international migration. Its energy policies emphasize the development of cooperation with Russia, Azerbaijan, and Central Asian countries. It is the strongest supporter of the Turkish Stream project in Europe and therefore has not hesitated to contradict the EU's energy policies. The energy bottleneck in Europe caused by the Russia-Ukraine war has been relatively mildly affected thanks to the guarantees provided by Russia. It has been a full member of the Turkic Academy since 2012, a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic States since 2014, and an observer member of the Community of Turkic States since 2019 (Ercan, 2023: 171-175).

The PiS government that came to power in Poland in 2015 has also experienced a similar shift in foreign policy. This change was driven by social dissatisfaction with EU-centered economic policies, as well as the belief that the values the EU advocated were eroding the country's Catholic values. The PiS has emphasized a foreign policy that advocates a bilateral alliance with the USA rather than with the EU or even NATO. During the Trump era especially, EU authorities did not welcome this USA-centered foreign policy. PiS bases its foreign policy on two historical threats. The first is the occupation of Nazi Germany in the 1940s, and the second is the occupation by the Soviet Union after World War II. Therefore, Poland pursues a foreign policy based on the anti-German that occasionally emerges and a deeper anti-Russian. These two perceived threats constitute the basic dynamics of Poland's foreign policy, which is based on a USA-oriented foreign policy independent of the EU. As a result, the development of Poland's relations with the US has been realized and justified with the discourse of an opposition to EU policies and EU values. The main examples of the centrifugal policies Poland has pursued can be listed as the demand for reparations from Germany for the events of World War II, the termination of arms agreements signed with France, resistance to the EU's policies regarding carbon emissions, support for the UK in the Brexit process, and joint action with Hungary within EU bodies. The fact that Poland's USA-centered foreign policy faced problems during the Democratic governments in Washington should also be added to this picture. The Biden era in particular had some ebbs and flows in the relations between the two countries, with the government initiative to impose restrictions on US broadcasting organizations in 2021 being prevented in the last minute (Zgut, 2021: 16-18). One of the best examples of

Poland's autonomous foreign policy pursuits has been the Three *Seas* Initiative. This initiative is based on the historical background in which Poland was a regional power stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea in the 16th century. The third sea of the initiative is the Adriatic. Poland endeavors to create a multilevel area of cooperation with Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, which are in this basin autonomously from the EU (Zieba, 2021; 514-522). Polish foreign policy ebbs and flows against the background of Europeanism and anti-Russianism, and a peculiar kind of Eurasianism, that is more oriented toward Eastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. Despite all these flows, the country is able to use its membership in international organizations and its geographical location according to the conjuncture.

Conclusion

In this article, we have examined the relationship between new regimes and security in the Eurasian region, and our analysis shows this relationship to be shaped around three main aspects.

The first aspect is based on the regime-international security policy relationship of full rentier states. These countries have a type of political regime that is highly resilient against both domestic opposition and the global system. Therefore, they have a tendency to develop an autonomous foreign policy and to resort to hard power as needed when shaping this policy. A hierarchy should be noted to exist among these new regimes in the Eurasian region, with Russia undoubtedly being at the top of this hierarchy. Russia is both a model and a hierarchical country capable of exerting pressure on its environment through its domestic policy solutions as well as its attempts to establish a regional system at the international level. Meanwhile, the countries that form the second leg of the hierarchy may exhibit a non-cooperative attitude towards each other when implementing their own policies in areas where Russia does not intervene, thus leading to long-term unresolved bilateral relations. These countries are able to implement hard power and to pressure policies against weaker countries when necessary.

The second aspect is based on weak rentier states. These countries have weak institutional state structures and politically unstable governments that reinforce external dependence. Therefore, the weak rentier system deepens foreign influence and facilitates the transformation of these countries into conflict zones where regional and global actors compete. A closer look reveals the hot conflict zones in the Eurasian region to usually be located in these countries. Against this background, regional conflicts cannot be said to always be closely related to the national interests of these countries. The military entrenchment of global or regional powers in these countries as a result of global or regional rivalry creates a basis that may cause countries to be dragged into conflict over issues unrelated to their own interests.

The third group of countries are illiberal democracies. The distinctive feature of these countries is that they are members of globally influential international organizations. At the same time, they may have centrifugal tendencies that question the policies these organizations develop. This not only provides illiberal democracies with a protective zone regarding security issues but also supports them in producing more resilient centrifugal policies. Illiberal democracies are electoral systems, and the sustainability of the system depends on their ability to secure strong electoral support for these policies. Therefore, these countries are able to pursue a multi-alternative foreign policy strategy and are more cautious about turning it into a conflict. Another characteristic of such countries in terms of international security is that they question the institutional structure of the international organizations to which the authorities representing the political power are affiliated, the dominant discourse these organizations produce, and the global actors that are determinant in the background of this discourse. For this reason, they sometimes contradict and even clash with international organizations and global

actors. For now, how illiberal democracies are able to play a role in ensuring security in the Eurasian region is unclear. They may develop alternatives to the established balances and launch new initiatives that strengthen regional cooperation. On the contrary, they may resort to hardline policies that will result in the revision of the established security system at the regional level.



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Chapter 3

Cybersecurity Threats in Eurasia

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Abstract

As a politically and economically disintegrated and technologically unequal region, Eurasia is vulnerable to cyber security threats. The rapid development of the region's digital infrastructure and the inadequacy of the corresponding defense mechanisms increase the seriousness of these threats. The cyber crimes such as Stuxnet attack, the 2015 Ukraine Blackenergy attack, Wannacry, and Petya ransom software campaigns serve as a stark reminder of the potential impact of cyber attacks on national defense capacity, economic stability, and international relations. The 2015 Energy Network attack in Türkiye and the 2007 DDOS attacks in Estonia emphasize how fragile national critical infrastructures are against cyber threats. The findings of this study reveal the importance of inter-state cooperation and knowledge sharing of information. Cyber security policies, advanced technological defense mechanisms, and societal awareness strategies are critical in increasing the region's resistance to digital threats. In summary, the primary goal of this study is to analyze cyber security threats in a spatial context, therefore case analysis method was applied to explore the dimensions of cyber security in the Eurasian region, employing critical examples of key points. In this context, in the first part of the study, cyber security is defined; in the second part, cyber security's pivotal role in shaping international security dynamics is analyzed; and in the third part, case studies are given from the Eurasian continent, which constitutes the spatial border of our study. This study is expected to contribute to international relations by increasing cyber security awareness.

Keywords Cyber Security · International Relationships · Cyber War · Cyber Attacks · Cyber Awareness

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Introduction

Cyber security is a necessity in today's interconnected world and a recognized foundation of current geopolitics and economies worldwide. Digital transformation is particularly evident in Eurasia, where diverse cultures interact with different political systems and economic paths. Once considered an IT concern, information security has become vital for national stability and regional power balance. This shift in perspective underscores the need to develop robust protective strategies that recognize this region's unique nature of cyber threats.

Hence, Europe will be having many conflicts simultaneously but in different dimensions, starting from Eastern Europe down the steps up to Central Asia. Some countries within those vast regions have higher rates of technology uptake than others, whereas their knowledge of cyber cleanliness is also much more advanced. These imbalances affect not only the attitude of individual states against security but also the broader regional dynamics. When these nations begin to rely on digital infrastructures for business or government purposes, the weaknesses in protective mechanisms designed to protect against such infrastructure attacks become very dangerous.

Geographical positioning does not help with the cyber security difficulties affecting Eurasia. Undoubtedly, the fastest growing social activities in digitalization rates should come to the gloves with immediate and swift efforts to improve their ability to resist cyber crimes. The urgency of the situation remains apparent. Significant progress is to be made in preventing cyber crimes, and immediate and swift defense measures are needed. Fast development without corresponding defense measures creates an efficient environment that facilitates the commissioning of fraud cases through online platforms. From a geopolitical standpoint, it's important to consider the complex dynamics in this region. The intersection of major powers and their competing interests not only shapes diplomatic relations but also creates an environment conducive to state-supported hacking campaigns aimed at stealing military intelligence.

A multifaceted approach is necessary to address the cyber security difficulties encountered in the region. One of these steps involves the entry into force of relevant laws that will not only penalize criminal acts in cyber security but also serve as a deterrent for potential criminals. This has led most countries in this belt to find comprehensive legislation covering all aspects of computer network attacks, such as unauthorized access, intervention or explanation, data intervention between, and others.

As the primary goal of this study is to analyze cyber security threats in a spatial context, this study used case analysis to explore the dimensions of cyber security in the expansive Eurasian region, employing critical examples of key points. In this context, in the first part of the study, the elements of cyber security are defined; in the second part, cyber security's pivotal role in shaping international security dynamics is analyzed; and in the third part, examples are given from the Eurasian continent, which constitutes the spatial border of our study. This study is expected to contribute to international relations by increasing cyber security awareness.

Defining Cyber Security

Cyber crime is defined as " *all criminal activities done using the medium of computers, the Internet and the worldwide web*" (Shah et. al, 2016: 266). Cyber security is a research area focusing on preventing those crimes caused by unauthorized access or threats to endanger the privacy integrity of information systems (Craigen et al., 2014). Moreover, Apandkar defined cyber security as "*the form of skills, procedures and performs intended to defend networks, computers, programs and data from attack, damage or illegal access*" (Apandkar, 2017: 277). Rauscher and Yashenko defined cyber security as

"*a property of cyber space that is an ability to resist intentional and unintentional threats and respond and recover*" (Rauscher & Yashenko, 2011: 31).

As many definitions are given depending on the binding for cyber security, Luiijf and Besseling states that "*large differences exist between the national focal points and approaches*" (Luiijf & Besseling, 2013: 3). Still, usually, all mean the same thing: protection measures against computers share common resources directly or through networks (Kosseff, 2017)—public governance communication, etc., from financial services provision.

Cyber security has developed due to the complexity associated with the evolution of growth, the increase in users' dependence on connection devices, and other factors (Sotiriou, 2019). In the early days of the computer network, the concept revealed that there were security vulnerabilities that could be used by malicious actors to obtain unauthorized privileges and emerged to eliminate normal operations within the affected organizations (Richey, 2022). Over time, cyber theft and cyber sabotage have come to replace traditional conflicts between nations (Lessig, 1999).

In Eurasia, cybersecurity is complex and touches not only technology alone but also economic, social, and political aspects. Therefore, practical approaches to securing this region consider the multi-faceted nature of threats in cyberspace, which keep changing with time. This includes strong legislation against cyber-crimes, advanced technologies for preventing attacks, cooperation among neighboring countries like the ones mentioned earlier, and raising awareness among citizens that would guard against the rising number of electronic assaults on nations within Eurasia.

Cybersecurity and Its Pivotal Role in Shaping International Security Dynamics

In today's world, few issues are as crucial to global peace as cybersecurity. On a planet where nations constantly negotiate how they relate with each other—taking into account diplomacy, military, and economic concerns vis-à-vis cyber intersections—there are several ways to understand international security's relationship with cyber defense: statehood rights, financial stability, and political landscapes as or among balancing acts between countries.

The state's control over cyberspace is no longer the same, disrupting traditional concepts about boundaries and power. The difference between the physical world and the cyber field is that second global operations are possible without any place because they are remotely done. It is difficult for nations to protect themselves from cyber terrorism that can interrupt critical systems, steal classified data, or manipulate politics (Hussain, 2024). In addition, some events represent the threats from cyber fields that can destabilize governments by interfering with the public at great distances or making decisions on their behalf.

Globally, the world's financial systems and national economic health have solid cyber defense infrastructures. This is because the computer pirates attack payment systems, stock exchanges, and other financial institutions and engage in activities that turn off economies, thus eroding people's trust in capital markets. Businesses worldwide broke down after the Wannacry ransom software attack, which infected fifty countries and led to a significant economic interruption, so it is imperative to emphasize the significance of robust cyber security measures in order to maintain the stability of economies (Tan & Selvarajah, 2024).

In addition, theft through the internet has more significant effects than individual identity fraud cases, as it negatively affects economies. One country can gain a significant competitive advantage over another through industrial espionage, especially if they are technology or manufacturing leaders; these

acts not only make firms less competitive but also reduce technological opportunities for development, which in turn lowers the overall economic safety of a nation.

In the military context, cybersecurity has gone from a battlefield asset to becoming a country's strategic value. It is worth mentioning that some nations have made cyber warfare one of their primary defense portfolios and invested more in offensive and defensive cyber capabilities. Integrating cyber operations in a nation's armed forces enables them to extend their power projection without engaging in kinetic warfare, thereby altering the traditional forces balance between states (Boyd, 2009). Establishing US Cyber Command, among other similar commands like Russia, China, etc., shows how significant this matter is strategically. These transformations represent an increasing trend towards what is sometimes called 'the fifth domain' — using cyber power for military objectives and strategic ends.

The borderless nature of cyberspace threats, compounded by the internet's global reach, calls for international cooperation. However, developing worldwide rules that govern what states can do in cyberspace is complex. International cybersecurity governance remains fragmented due to differences in national interests, values, and capabilities, among other things. However, a lot has still been done to promote collaboration across borders. The United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in Information and Telecommunications has made significant strides towards this in the context of international security (Pauletto, 2020). These new standards aim to ensure that countries behave responsibly when using ICT for or against each other; they include not attacking critical infrastructure during peacetime and working together against malicious activities to stabilize cyberspace as an international arena.

Effects of Cyber Safety on International Security: Case Studies from Eurasia

The Stuxnet Attack

Stuxnet is the first known malware that can cause physical damage to computer-controlled machines. Therefore, international actors started discussions what such a formation means for the defense systems, such as atomic power plants (Baezner & Robin, 2017). It was crucial for cyber safety due to its potential impact on the Stuxnet worm, critical infrastructure, and national security. when Iran was deployed in 2010 against the Natanz nuclear enrichment facility (Craigen et al., 2014).

Cyber security experts discovered Stuxnet in 2010. However, reports may have been developed since 2005 and can be activated around 2007. Malicious software targeted a Siemens programmable logic controller (PLC) centrifugal for uranium enrichment at an Iranian nuclear facility in Natanz. It had been programmed not to act until it recognized particular industrial control system (ICS) controller settings at Natanz, after which it would activate itself and carry out its mission (Denning, 2012).

Stuxnet took advantage of four zero-day vulnerabilities within Microsoft Windows while creating two infection methods for PLCs to disrupt the uranium enrichment process. Initially distributed via infected USB drives, the worm propagated through network shares and Siemens Step7 project files. Upon entering a system, it sought out Siemens PLCs and then altered their code so that they would spin too fast, causing them to break apart while still appearing normal to operators. However, the malware did not stop and it included self-updating capabilities with a peer-to-peer configuration over a local network, which made it highly resistant to eradication and allowed propagation across air-gapped networks that might be present in protected industrial environments (Denning, 2012).

The Iranian atomic facility at Natanz was significantly impacted by Stuxnet, even though the exact information about the damage has varied over time. Reports have suggested that this attack destroyed or made inoperable around 1000 of the 5,000 centrifuges installed there. Such interference led to a considerable delay in Iran's nuclear program, thus achieving what Stuxnet seemed to be designed for.

Moreover, this event's psychological and strategic consequences were not limited to physical destruction. The fact that people discovered such an advanced cyber weapon and then launched investigations into it changed their attitude towards global cyberwar capabilities against the vulnerability of critical infrastructure worldwide. States changed how they safeguard themselves from cyber threats after realizing the strength of Stuxnet and its ability to destroy secure installations. Previously, many countries have accepted physical security, unlike information protection, but what happened in Iran changed everything (Hussain, 2024).

The US Military Command (CENTCOM) was attacked by Stuxet, as well as other sensitive goals around the world. Therefore, governments and industries are concerned about ensuring the security of critical systems (Hussain, 2024). This meant putting more powerful controls on sophisticated threats to safety walls, multi-layered attack detection systems, access privileges between the personnel working in Industrial Control Systems (ICS), comprehensive risk assessments, and abnormal activities directly or indirectly related to continuous monitoring frames (Çetinkaya & Terzi, 2024). Moreover, in addition to disrupting Iran's nuclear program, Stuxet significantly affected both cyber security and war. It became clear that strategic military targets can be achieved using digital weapons and global obligation for solid defense mechanisms against vital atomic facilities around the world.

The 2015 Ukraine BlackEnergy Attack

In 2015, the most dangerous cyber attack occurred in the power network of Ukraine. This event drew attention to their emergency effects and showed that computer pirates could easily penetrate systems that control critical infrastructure, such as city-wide interruptions. The Blackenergy virus, initially created for Distributed Denial of Service (DDOS) attacks, was used as an instrument in this spy software and self-elimination after computer network infiltration.

Power companies were targeted by sending spear-phishing emails to their staff members. These emails contained infected attachments with Black Energy trojan; once opened, they would install themselves into the victimized organization's network environment. What happened next remains one of the clear indications for premeditation at a higher level than usual among attackers who might have state backing: The use of tailored payloads delivered via Blackenergy against industrial control systems strongly implies extensive surveillance before the attack (Pollard & Mansell, 2024). Cold weather and high electricity usage associated with winter led the actors behind this campaign to select moments when many parts of Ukrainian regions could face prolonged darkness if disturbances happened along main power grid lines during peak demand hours.

They knew what – or rather where – exactly they were hitting while infecting different substations across various administrative areas where emergency services might find it difficult to reach affected populations fast enough because weather conditions would slow down traffic flow at rush hours, thus requiring the shortest possible response times due lives at stake. Around 230.000 people locally experienced up to six-hour blackouts, marking the most significant number impacted by a single successful penetration into utilities' computing infrastructure worldwide (Pollard & Mansell, 2024). It was also globally unprecedented that electric grids had been brought down by cyber attacks. As result of this attack, cities stopped working; hospitals shut down; factories ceased production; traffic lights went off, preventing individuals from getting to work or school; power interruptions affected the banking

industry, making it impossible to withdraw cash from ATMs, and credit card transactions could not go through due to point sale terminals being offline.

The attack raised severe international concerns, leading to a reevaluation of current safeguarding strategies adopted by nations worldwide towards both public and private sectors' critical infrastructures (Joseph Weiss & CISM). It also indicated that there would be regions on Earth with heightened geopolitical tensions which can serve as hotspots for cyber warfare activities aimed at crippling the opponent's energy sector, thereby rendering them weak militarily.

Georgia's Saakashvili-Era Cyber Propaganda

During the 2008 presidential election in Georgia, a cyberattack occurred, significantly affecting the nation's digital communication infrastructure. The attackers used DDoS attacks and website defacements, which involved injecting pictures that compared President Mikheil Saakashvili with Adolf Hitler (Treyger et al., 2022). This attack on Georgian cyberspace was not a random vandalism but it was a deliberate campaign planned for political purposes. This attack occured just as the Russo-Georgian conflict was unfolding, suggesting involvement by state or state-affiliated groups. The most popular method used was DDoS attacks, in which online resources were flooded until they could not be accessed in Georgia.

The motivation for defacing websites can be classified as psychological warfare, which was designed to discredit the government of Georgia both domestically and internationally. Tampering with digital content was also done to influence public opinion and interfere with elections. Following the security breach, Georgia implemented several measures to enhance its cybersecurity infrastructure. Among them were securing essential assets and upgrading detection and response capabilities for any cyber attacks. The authorities also sought assistance from other states to enhance their preparedness for similar occurrences. This collaborative effort fostered closer ties between Western partners and Georgia. This incident has affected various policies worldwide about securing electronic systems during elections and other critical times while safeguarding international security interests.

Estonia's 2007 DDoS Attacks

In 2007, Estonia, a country that is among the most technologically advanced in the world (Ottis, 2008), was attacked for its digital infrastructure. These cyber assaults, which occurred on such a large scale, became known as one of history's most extensive series by targeting banks, government offices, news agencies, and other essential systems. The reason for this attack was the relocation of a Soviet-era monument in Tallinn which caused dissatisfaction among many Russian-speaking residents and increased tensions with Russia. What followed were multi-layered events in which DDoS attacks and attempts to infiltrate critical communication channels occurred (Herzog, 2017).

These attacks were carried out by flooding servers with requests, temporarily making them inaccessible. Considering the timing and magnitude of these strikes, it appeared that there must have been some coordination at a very high level. However, no direct involvement of any state actor could ever been proved to be beyond a reasonable doubt, given that such sophistication would require considerable resources and capabilities. Indeed, immediate impacts were felt by Estonians whose daily lives were disrupted while businesses halted operations due to this historic cyber warfare campaign against their country's infrastructure. This revealed the weaknesses of heavily digitized societies regarding security vis-à-vis national safety within the information age.

However, the global consequences of this went much further than that. It warned the world about how cyber conflicts could destabilize nations (global village). Governments worldwide also started spending more funds defending their borders from online threats following this incident (Czosseck et

al., 2013). Additionally, it revealed the difficulties in attributing hostile activities in cyberspace, which calls for international collaboration to protect networks against these incidents.

After this sequence of events, the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence was established in Tallinn, one of many steps Estonian authorities took to prevent such attacks from reoccurring. It became a place where nations can exchange information on how to protect their digital space and assist each other when required while fending off hackers. In addition, what happened in Estonia influenced international cyber policy, leading governments worldwide, including private sector entities, to make more financial commitments to securing computer networks against state-sponsored or any other type of organization attack. The main lesson learned was that robust defense systems coupled with efficient incident response plans should be implemented to safeguard critical national infrastructures (Czosseck et al., 2013).

The Global Impact of Petya and WannaCry Ransomware in Eurasia

2017 witnessed two major ransomware attacks that dominated the cybersecurity landscape: WannaCry in May and Petya in June. The two incidents disrupted operations globally and revealed the unique vulnerabilities and difficulties faced by countries within Eurasia. Many institutions across Eurasia were affected by WannaCry, a malware that encrypted data by exploiting weaknesses in older Windows OS versions before demanding payment to release it. For example, the attack hit Russia hard, with its Interior Ministry and significant companies like Rosneft crippled. The ransomware spread to most of the world because many countries around the Eurasian band had outdated and unpatched systems, making it more infectious and potent. This incident immediately caused a new reassessment of national and regional cyber-defense strategies, which focused on upgrading critical infrastructure protection systems. The need for enhanced public sharing of best security practices was also accepted (Kamaljanova & Khussainova, 2020).

Petya ransomware caused much trouble worldwide, with Ukraine being the primary target. It started by targeting institutions outside Kyiv, media houses, and financiers. This made it look like a global event when businesses in some countries were connected to those regions through affiliation or proximity relationships. This incident was different because it erased data, or disrupted activities, proving that the Ukrainian digital infrastructure and economy disruption was intended to destabilize its state bodies permanently (Perlroth et al., 2017). Some countries united to enhance their national and corporate cyber safety strategies when ransomware hit different portions of Eurasia. The states within these territories made their legislation stricter about internal cyber protection and spent additional money on digital infrastructures as they educated their citizens on internet threats.

Furthermore, these occurrences highlighted the need for international cooperation in securing information systems space from attacks. Given this region's diversity and interconnectedness levels, a concerted response to such risks was needed. In addition, they resulted in broader participation in global conferences concerning cyber safety, initiatives seeking standard benchmarks, and cooperative measures to prevent future incidents (Roškot et al., 2021).

Türkiye's 2015 Grid Attack

In March 2015, Türkiye was hit by one of the most severe cyber attacks on record — a blackout that affected its largest cities and exposed significant vulnerabilities in national infrastructure security. It waa considered as one of the biggest-ever single cyber assaults against a national power grid system, leading to widespread implications for emergency preparedness and national security (Dabrowski et al., 2017).

This incident's sophistication, impact, and speed were unprecedented: it showed attackers had deep knowledge of grid vulnerabilities, including digital control systems that could be hacked. However, it was speculating about what they knew about who did it or how it is just speculation. No one outside those attackers knew what happened during those few days in March 2015; however, some things remained certain that chaos was achieved. This event posed severe doubts about the strength of Turkish critical infrastructure protection systems against such attacks.

This may have disrupted the lives of millions residing in these areas, but let us also consider wider consequences. These consequences show that terrorists caused a nationwide blackout by hacking electrical lines from miles away without ever entering Türkiye or having any evidence found connecting them directly to these acts, among other things. It exposed deficiencies within Türkiye's cybersecurity posture, especially in sectors that are considered critical for protecting nationhood.

In light of this incident, Turkish authorities enhanced their security around vital installations. The steps were improving cyber security measures, strengthening digital security configurations for control systems, and fostering collaboration among various government arms tasked with cybersecurity roles and private sector players engaging in similar areas. In addition, international cooperation was established in cyber security after the global assistance movement to strengthen Türkiye's defenses against future attacks. More comprehensive regional negotiations have been initiated to increase cyber security to protect the critical infrastructure directed by the emergence while simultaneously catalyzing international intervention efforts to resist cross-transnational hack threats.

Chinese Cyber Espionage

Starting in 2021, hacking groups residing in China have attacked numerous Asian telecommunication companies, causing a significant escalation in cyber espionage. The hacks were persistent, highly technical, and strategic, with the aim of breaching telecom infrastructure that supported individuals' privacy rights and national defense (Lakshmanan, 2024a).

The ongoing cyber-espionage campaign was linked to several Chinese state-backed hacking groups. These groups have taken advantage of vulnerabilities in the telecommunications industry as entry points for backdoors that give them continued access to vast volumes of communication data(Lakshmanan, 2024a; Moore, 2023).

Behind this wave of espionage seemed to have dual strategic motives: the collection of large amounts of communication data could provide practical intelligence about regional government/corporate activities while at the same time supporting the power of instrumentality to disrupt or manipulate more essential telecommunication services—geopolitical movements by state-supported actors, especially conflicts between countries.

These cyber espionage operations, which Chinese HACK groups against telecommunication providers support, have revealed critical fragility in national and regional security regulations. The deliberate targeting of these vital services underscored the need for continued awareness, improved cyber defenses, and broader international collaboration to protect sensitive communications from being compromised elsewhere within the system – especially given that the evolving nature of cyber threats requires an adaptive/proactive security posture for safeguarding critical infrastructures against sophisticated state-directed offensive actions.

SPECTR Malware Targets Ukraine Defense Forces

SPECTR malware is well known because it is insidious and masterful in playing information, so it is suitable for this operation. It attacked weak points in the digital infrastructure of Ukrainian defense

systems (Newsroom, 2024). The software spread through the spear-flowing e-mails, but what made them different from other campaigns was that they did not have malicious attachments or connections so that buyers would download them without suspicion. Once installed on a computer, SPECTR creates unauthorized access points to networks and prevents intelligence from being detected.

The malicious program's ingredients were designed to avoid being identified by cyber security defenses. It used sophisticated encryption algorithms to communicate with C2 servers, making watching traditional security tools difficult. In addition, it remained asleep in an infected host until traditional security protocols meet certain conditions.

Using SPECTR against Ukraine's armed forces proposed broader strategic goals to violate national security and gain an advantage in conflicts. This means that attackers want more than to collect information through intelligence collection methods; they also want to weaken the operational abilities of Ukrainian defense systems. Moreover, the stolen data gave competitors information about military tactics, distribution patterns, and defense technologies—all of which pose severe risks to state security. This incident emphasized how cyberterrorism can catalyze interstate war and disrupt global peace efforts. Considering the sophisticated levels of various malicious software attacks, no nation can see itself as immune to cyber espionage in its critical infrastructure.

The spectrum malware campaign for the Ukrainian Defense Forces exemplified how vulnerable nations were to cyber threats in today's digital field. For this reason, it underlined the need for cyber security measures that constantly progress globally to protect public security and national interests. As long as these malicious programs continue to develop, countries can protect their critical infrastructures from cyber war by adopting various measures and acquiring information about their techniques.

Conclusion

Throughout this research, we have explored the intricate and dynamic landscape of cybersecurity in Eurasia, a region marked by geopolitical complexities and technological disparities. The detailed case studies of cyber incidents across Eurasia—from the Ukraine BlackEnergy attack to the debilitating ransomware assaults like Petya and WannaCry—underscore the profound impact these threats can have on national security, economic stability, and international relations.

Eurasia's experience with cybersecurity vividly illustrates that the realm of digital threats transcends traditional geopolitical boundaries, demanding a robust and coordinated response from nations within and beyond the region. The interconnectivity of modern systems means that a breach in one nation can have cascading effects across the globe, highlighting the need for comprehensive international cooperation in cyber defense and intelligence sharing.

Moreover, the evolving nature of cyber threats necessitates continual adaptation and advancement in cybersecurity measures. Nations within Eurasia must prioritize the development of advanced technological defenses, legal frameworks, and public awareness programs to mitigate the risks posed by cyber threats. Additionally, fostering a culture of resilience and preparedness, from governmental entities to private sector stakeholders, is crucial.

The insights gleaned from the cybersecurity challenges in Eurasia should be taken into consideration when developing global strategies for the future. Emphasizing resilience, fostering innovation in cyber defense technologies, and building inclusive international frameworks for cyber cooperation is imperative. In taking such actions, we aspire to not only protect against but also discourage future cyber threats, thereby establishing a more stable and secure cyberspace for all.



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Chapter 4

Geopolitical Rivalries and Power Struggles

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Abstract

With the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union, which had previously dominated over the Eurasian region, fragmented, resulting in a significant power vacuum in the area. The unique characteristics of Eurasia, including its abundant natural resources and strategic geopolitical position, highlight the region's unoccupied hegemonic status in the post-Cold War era, which presents both potential advantages and intrinsic dangers for great powers. In this context, the absence of a regional hegemon creates a distinctive opportunity for great powers within the international system, potentially providing a rare chance to assume this pivotal role that may not present itself again in the annals of history As a result, the competition for power within the region has reemerged, characterized by the involvement of China, Russia and the United States with distinct dynamics. The objective of this chapter, by focusing on great power rivalry, is to illuminate the geopolitical tensions and struggles for power occurring within the Eurasian landscape. Initially, the chapter explores the systemic dynamics and geopolitical factors that compel great powers to seek supremacy within the region. Then, the focus is given on the dynamics of great power politics in Eurasia, particularly highlighting the strategies implemented by China, Russia, and the United States.

Keywords China · Geopolitics · Russia · Regional Hegemon · the United States

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Introduction

The Eurasian landmass, spanning from the Atlantic to the Pacific, has long been a focal point of geopolitical rivalries throughout history (Mackinder, 1962). Initially coined in the 19th century, the term "Great Game" refers to the geopolitical rivalry between the British Empire and Tsarist Russia in the region of Central Asia (Hopkirk, 1990). Although the protagonists and stakes have shifted, the fundamental dynamics of rivalry for power and resources in Eurasia remain potent as ever. For example, the collapse of the Soviet Union marked a profound transformation in the geopolitical dynamics of Eurasia. Hence, the era characterized by American hegemony appeared to mark the onset of a relatively stable period in global affairs (see Fukuyama, 1992). However, demonstrating the emergence of a new geopolitical rivalry in Eurasia, Russia's revival as a revisionist entity, in conjunction with China's swift rise, has profoundly shifted the prevailing balance of power.

Russia, guided by Vladimir Putin, has actively sought to restore its influence in the regions of the former Soviet Union and in areas beyond its historical borders (see Putin, 2000). By engaging in military operations in Ukraine and Syria and pursuing a proactive diplomatic agenda, Moscow, centered in Eurasia, is posing a challenge to the international framework dominated by Western powers. The annexation of Crimea, coupled with the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine, has heightened tensions with the West. Concurrently, Russia's reorientation towards Asia, notably its increasingly robust connections with China, has transformed the geopolitical dynamics within the region.

The economic ascent of China has been nothing short of remarkable. Its expanding military and diplomatic capabilities have redefined it as a global power, characterized by a unique perspective on the international system (Allison, 2017). The BRI serves as a pivotal element in China's approach to broadening its economic and political impact across the Eurasian region (Jie, 2018).

Despite facing internal challenges, the United States (the US) continues to maintain its status as a dominant global player. The Obama administration's "pivot to Asia" approach signaled a strategic shift in the region aimed at containing the rise of China (Blackwill and Harris, 2016). The Trump administration adopted a more confrontational approach, implementing tariffs and challenging China's trade practices (Friedman, 2018). Although the Biden administration is attempting to recalibrate the relationship, it is likely that competition between the two great powers will intensify in the coming years.

The evolving interactions between these three great powers significantly influence the geopolitical landscape of Eurasia. Once characterized as a peripheral region, Central Asia has emerged as a crucial geopolitical nexus. In this respect, the nations situated in Eurasia are positioned in a complex environment characterized by the rival interests of Russia, China, and the US (see Rubin, 1997). Hence, the region, abundant in natural resources, has emerged as a new arena of rivalry where great powers vie for control over wealth.

Additionally, the proliferation of extremist groups and terrorist activities in the region further intensifies the attention of great powers towards Eurasia. Accordingly, the interplay between regional and international conflicts, particularly in Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine, and the great power rivalry serves to intensify the complexities inherent in the Eurasian geopolitical framework. Such conflicts act as a proxy for extensive geopolitical rivalries, wherein Russia, China, and various factions of the US provide support to differing parties, or even intervene in themselves.

In light of these, this chapter seeks to elucidate the geopolitical rivalries and power struggles among China, Russia and the US in the Eurasian region. To this end, the chapter, first, discusses the systemic dynamics and geopolitical necessities that motivate great powers to strive for supremacy in the Eurasian region. The chapter, then, examines the dynamics of great power politics within the Eurasian region, with particular emphasis on the strategies employed by China, Russia, and the US.

Systemic Imperatives and Geopolitical Explanations for the Power Struggle in Eurasia

Sovereign states continue to emerge as the main actors within the international system. The foremost concern of sovereign nations is to safeguard their sovereignty, which inherently involves guaranteeing their security, because of the inherent presence of uncertainty and fear within the nature of interactions among states. The primary reason for this phenomenon is that the international system is characterized by an 'anarchic' structure (Waltz, 1979: 103; Mearsheimer, 2001: 30). An anarchic structure fundamentally implies the absence of a higher authority that regulates the behaviors and interactions of states. Consequently, there exists no central authority or mechanism capable of restraining states from attacking one another or infringing upon each other's sovereignty in such circumstances (Waltz, 1979: 103-104; Grieco, 1988: 497-498; Mearsheimer, 2001: 30).

In addition, states, particularly great powers, possess military capabilities that can pose significant threats to each other's sovereignty (Mearsheimer, 2001: 30). In other words, states pose a potential threat to one another. There is no certainty that this potential will translate into action, meaning that states will attack one another. However, there is also no guarantee that states will refrain from attacking one another or infringing upon each other's independence (Mearsheimer, 2001: 31). Hence, the international system is characterized by an unavoidable uncertainty concerning the present and prospective intentions of states. In the relationships of states confronted with uncertainty, elements of doubt and fear tend to dominate. This situation compels states to adopt a self-help behavior, prioritizing their own capabilities over reliance on others to ensure their security and safeguard their independence (Waltz, 1979: 105 and 107; Mearsheimer, 2001: 30-31). States that adopt a self-sufficiency behavior closely monitor the distribution of power in the international system and endeavor to maximize their relative power in relation to others (Grieco, 1988: 498; Mearsheimer, 2001: 3, 21 and34). In pursuing this objective, they not only strive to enhance their own power but also actively work to impede the empowerment of others in a similar manner (Gilpin, 1981: 87-88; Grieco, 1988: 498; Mearsheimer, 2001: 3 and 35).

In the international system, states characterized as superpowers, possessing vast economic, military, and political resources, are confronted with the effects of an anarchic structure with greater intensity. The material capacities possessed by great powers render them a significant existential threat to one another across all domains. Thus, the uncertainty and fear that great powers confront in an anarchic international system are exacerbated relative to the experiences of other states. As a result, great powers are increasingly engaged in efforts to augment their power, particularly in relation to their self-help behavior. As such, a great power's quest for security through the acquisition of power culminates solely when it attains global hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2001: 34-35). In this framework, a global hegemon refers to a state that possesses sufficient power to dominate all others, thereby occupying a preeminent position in the international system that enables it to construct and maintain a stable order (Gilpin, 1981: 29; Wolhforth, 1993: 12-14; Mearsheimer, 2001: 40).

According to Mearsheimer (2001: 41, 84, and 140-141), the interplay of nuclear balance and the formidable nature of the oceans significantly complicates the pursuit of global hegemony by any state, making it a daunting, if not unattainable, objective in the present era. Hence, great powers can only aim for regional hegemony that exerts control over particular geographic regions. Mearsheimer (2001: 40-41) posits that the US is the sole regional hegemon situated within the Americas or the Western Hemisphere in the context of the international system. For this reason, it is frequently depicted as a global hegemon, despite the fact that this representation may not fully reflect reality. Given the anarchic nature of the international system, the US aims to establish hegemony in different areas. If this goal proves unfeasible, it actively seeks to prevent other great powers from achieving regional hegemony

elsewhere. Great powers not only aim for regional hegemony but also actively strive to prevent others from achieving similar dominance in their respective regions. Under these circumstances, great powers seek to establish regional hegemony, concurrently endeavoring to hinder the aspirations of other great powers to achieve hegemony in other regions. This situation reflects the manifestation of great power rivalry at regional levels, thereby enhancing the significance of regions that constitute a sort of subsystems within the international system.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, Eurasia has emerged as one of the regions of increasing importance for the systemic power struggles and geopolitical rivalries. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union held a position of regional hegemony in the Eurasian region; however, in the post-Cold War era, no single regional hegemon has emerged to dominate the region independently. Thus, a rivalry among great powers has surfaced in the Eurasian region, which has been significantly influenced by the presence of a power vacuum. The rivalry for great power dominance in Eurasia is not unexpected, especially when one takes into account the region's rich natural resources, including oil and natural gas, along with its strategic geopolitical location.

Regarding natural resources, the proven oil reserves of the Eurasia region amounted to approximately 146.2 billion barrels. This level corresponds to about 8.4% of the total proven oil reserves in the world (British Petroleum). In addition, in 2023, the Eurasian region accounted for 15% of global oil production (Energy Institute). Looking at natural gas, the proven natural gas reserves of the region amounted to approximately 56.6 trillion cubic meters. This amount holds about 30.1% of the total proven natural gas reserves in the world (British Petroleum).

From a geopolitical standpoint, Eurasia constitutes one of the most significant regions in the world. In this respect, the field of geopolitics investigates how geographical elements affect political landscape, power struggles, thus the dynamics of international relations. In this respect, the role of geographical components—such as the territorial expanse of states, their available natural resources, strategic locations, and relationships with neighboring countries—is deemed crucial in determining the course of international relations and the conduct of state behavior. Therefore, the dynamics of rivalries and power struggles within the Eurasian region are most effectively analyzed through the lens of geopolitical theories. In fact, the Eurasian region is manifesting itself as a key locus of geopolitical rivalries on the world stage. Hence, the region is of critical importance regarding global dominance, as articulated by conventional geopolitical theories. In this respect, both Mackinder and Spykman, prominent figures of classical geopolitics, highlight the significance of the Eurasian region in the dynamics of global power politics.

Accordingly, Mackinder (1904: 421-424; 1962: 262) posits that the Eurasian landmass, referred to as the “world island,” is the paramount geographical region for powers seeking global dominance. Within this island lies an area known as “Heartland” which is acknowledged as the most extensive and formidable terrestrial expanse in the world. This region holds strategic significance for establishing global dominance due to its geographical location, natural resources, and extensive land area. The Heartland region encompasses a vast area that includes the Volga, Eastern Siberia, the Northern Arctic Ocean, as well as Iran and Afghanistan. Hence, the region is positioned where the continents of Europe and Asia converge. This advantageous geographical location enables a controlling power to wield influence across both Europe and Asia. Moreover, the presence of natural barriers in the Heartland such as mountains, deserts, and forests serves to shield the region from external interventions, thereby facilitating the maintenance of internal cohesion. This situation provides a natural defensive advantage to the power that controls the region. Based on these, the fundamental assertion made by Mackinder is that whoever governs the Heartland will ultimately govern the world island, thereby achieving control over the entire world. Therefore, any power seeking global dominance must first secure control over the Heartland, which is situated at the center of Eurasia.

Spykman (1942: 43), on the other hand, developed the Rimland theory as a response to Mackinder's Heartland theory. The Rimland theory proposed by Spykman suggests that the ability to exert control over the Eurasian region is primarily linked to the supremacy of the Rimland, defined as the coastal regions of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. The Rimland, in this respect, is home to many of the world's major powers and is a crucial point of access to the sea, which is necessary for global trade and military dominance. According to Spykman (1942: 43), "who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world." The significance of Eurasia in Spykman's Rimland theory is multifaceted. First, Eurasia encompasses an extensive territory that is home to a rich tapestry of cultures, a wealth of resources, and a complex array of geopolitical interests. Its pivotal location at the junction of Europe and Asia establishes it as a significant nexus for trade, communication, and military power. Second, Eurasia possesses an abundance of natural resources, encompassing energy reserves, various minerals, and a wide array of agricultural products. Effective control over these resources is vital for fostering economic growth and enhancing geopolitical influence. The Rimland, in thin conjecture, is the coastal surrounding region of Eurasia and has access to many of these resources and serves as a vital conduit for their distribution. Third, Eurasia has served as a significant arena for the rivalry among great powers throughout history. The quest for supremacy over the region has profoundly shaped the course of world history, tracing a path from the 19th-century expansion of the British Empire to the Cold War confrontation between the USand the Soviet Union. In the current geopolitical context, the resurgence of Russia alongside the rise of China has intensified the struggle for power within Eurasia.

Building upon a contemporary literature on geopolitics, Brzezinski (1997: 30) introduced the concept of the "Grand Chessboard" in order to analyze the post-Cold War world order and to determine the future strategies of the USduring the last quarter of the 20th century. Similar to Mackinder and Spykman, this concept, too, aims to analyze how developments in Eurasia positioned at the center of global politics can influence the balance of power on a worldwide scale. Accordingly, the Eurasian continent serves as a pivotal arena in global politics, significantly influencing international relations and power dynamics. Similar to a chessboard, the actions taken on this continent play a crucial role in shaping the international system. Hence, the ability to dominate Eurasia or to have a substantial influence within this continent can lead to the acquisition of global supremacy. Therefore, the rivalry among great powers over the Eurasian continent in the post-Cold War era is called the Grand Chessboard by Brzezinski. As such, the collapse of the Soviet Union has rendered the Eurasian region the most crucial geopolitical asset for the United States. For almost five centuries, the global political landscape has been significantly shaped by the dominance of Eurasian powers. Following the end of the Cold War, a significant opportunity emerged for a non-Eurasian power to gain supremacy within the region. In this light, Brzezinski asserts that the sustainability of American global hegemony is fundamentally contingent upon its preeminence in Eurasia and the degree to which it can exert influence there.

In light of these, the Eurasian region, in the post-Cold War era, emerges as a focal point for great power rivalry, reflecting a systemic outcome of geopolitical dynamics. When considering the distinctive features of Eurasia, such as its rich natural resources and significant geopolitical location, the region's vacant hegemonic status reveals both potential opportunities and inherent risks for great powers. In this respect, the vacated position of regional hegemony, on the one hand, presents a unique opportunity for great powers within the international system, potentially offering a chance that may not arise again in the course of history to fill this strategic role. On the other hand, the endeavors of various great powers aiming to exploit this newly arisen opportunity in Eurasia will inevitably involve risks and threats linked to their ambitions for regional hegemony. Therefore, the implications of the anarchic structure of the international system have led to a rivalry among great powers in Eurasia, particularly among the United States, Russia, and China, in the post-Cold War context.

Great Power Rivalry in Eurasia

The intense competition among great powers in Eurasia, along with the conflicting interests that underpin this rivalry, is a longstanding phenomenon. This is largely attributable to the region's historical significance as a crucial hub for trade routes, such as the Silk Road, and its role as a melting pot for diverse cultures. For centuries, Great Britain, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire have contended with one another in their efforts to establish dominance over the region. During the Cold War era, Eurasia emerged as the focal point of geopolitical rivalry between the USand the Soviet Union. Finally, the conclusion of the Cold War has introduced a new dimension to the great power competition in Eurasia.

Accordingly, the US is endeavoring to enhance its influence in the region through the expansion of NATO and its policies directed towards Central Asia, while Russia is striving to reestablish its dominance within the former Soviet territories. China has emerged as an increasingly influential power in Eurasia, driven by its economic growth and the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI). Among these three great powers, there exists competition across various domains, particularly concerning energy resources, trade routes, and security issues in the Eurasian region.

China

As its economy continues to grow, China seeks to enhance its relations with Eurasia to address its increasing energy demands. In fact, the present reintegration of the region for China has its origins in the industrial growth of East Asia during the late twentieth century and the collapse of barriers established during the Cold War (Calder, 2012). The end of the Cold War and the subsequent removal of the iron curtain facilitated the development of new relationships with Eurasia, particularly in the economic sector. At the forefront of economic exchange, the trade in energy has forged a significant connection between the resource-rich hydrocarbon regions of the Middle East and Central Asia and the exceptionally productive manufacturing industries of East and Southeast Asia (Kemp, 2010: 229). On this, according to Calder, "energy is to the New Silk Road what silk was to its ancestors." (Calder, 2010: 1). In line with this direction, China prioritizes the construction of pipelines from Eurasia to its own territory. The Turkmenistan-China natural gas pipeline, measuring 7,000 kilometers in length, connecting Turkmenistan with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and China, is the main demonstration of Chinese strategy. As a reflection of the great power rivalry over the region, this pipeline represents a significant development as it is the first energy transportation route in the region that excludes Russia (Magen and Bagno-Moldavsky, 2010: 123).

Furthermore, the Eurasian landscape functions as a dual asset for the Chinese economy, acting as a market while providing a crucial overland link to Western markets. In this respect, China has engineered a significant suite of resources designed for the implementation of economic statecraft. It has become an indispensable lender, investor, and trader in Pakistan, Kazakhstan, and Iran, along with several other states in the surrounding Eurasia (Markey 2020, 160). Moreover, China has launched the BRI, an extensive array of development and investment projects that was initially conceived to connect East Asia and Europe via tangible infrastructure. The BRI encompasses the establishment of an extensive infrastructure network comprising railways, energy pipelines, highways, and efficient border crossings. This network extends westward through the mountainous regions of the former Soviet republics and southward towards Pakistan, India, and the broader Southeast Asian region (McBride, Berman and Chatzky, 2023).

In addition to employing economic tools, the Chinese military has augmented its participation in exercises and operations that enhance the mobility of its personnel on both regional and global scales. There are also efforts directed towards improving additional resources, including the engagement of

private security contractors and the promotion of stronger collaborative ties with the security and intelligence agencies of the host country. Generally, China seems to prefer to conduct such activities discreetly, as illustrated by its security measures implemented along the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border (Markey 2020, 161). Moreover, the advancements in manufacturing and technology spearheaded by Chinese leadership are likely to position China as a more favorable defense supplier and partner than Russia across a significant portion of the region. In this respect, the defense relationship between China and Pakistan is already well-established, and missiles designed by China constitute a fundamental component of Iran's military capabilities.

The Chinese government has also allocated resources towards the development of modern diplomatic mechanisms, exemplified by the creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, thereby positioning China to assume a more prominent role in both regional and international leadership (Markey 2020, 160). Through such mechanisms, China has created an environment in which skepticism regarding the sustainability of American and Western leadership can flourish, potentially leading to divisions between the US and its longstanding allies and partners. At the same time, the actions undertaken by China in Eurasia have implications that extend beyond the US and its allied nations. Hence, new strategic alternatives are being subtly developed for nations in Eurasia that were previously aligned with Russia. This shift is prompting Pakistani and Iranian leaders to view China as a formidable ally amid escalating their tensions with India and the US (Markey 2020, 161).

Additionally, the presence of a Muslim community within its borders leads China to attribute vital significance to its diplomatic relations in the Eurasian region. The existence of this population within China is viewed as a threat to national security, primarily because of the possible dissemination of radical ideas abusing the religion Islam. In this respect, the potential for radical movements originating from Afghanistan to exert influence in the region is elevating the level of threat perceived by China (Magen and Bagno-Moldavsky, 2010: 123-124). Conversely, the establishment of Western powers in the region under the US leadership in the guise of eliminating radical and terrorist groups is an undesirable situation for China (Zhao, 2007: 149). Therefore, it can be asserted that there exists a temporary collaboration between China and Russia aimed at countering the influence of the USin the region. Nevertheless, there are uncertainties regarding the future trajectory of the collaboration between Russia and China. Hence, it is possible to anticipate that a competition will emerge regarding the influence over the energy resources, valuable minerals, and increasing economic dynamism of the Eurasian region between Russia and China.

Russia

Russia considers the Eurasian region to be within its natural sphere of influence and is intent on reestablishing the authority it historically possessed (Trenin, 2007: 81). This perspective aligns with the beliefs held by a significant contingent of foreign policy experts in Russia who adhere to the principles of neo-Eurasianism, often referred to as geopolitics (Kubyshkin and Sergunin, 2012). Accordingly, Russia interprets the influence that other great powers could gain in the Eurasian landscape as a threat to its national security (Pirro, 2015: 117). To curb such influence and strengthen its own supremacy in the region, Russia has utilized multilateral organizations such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which has proven to be largely ineffective, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which plays a significant role in its security framework. Moreover, Russia does not hesitate to use force when it deems it necessary (Magen & Bagno-Moldavksy, 2010: 116-120). The military interventions by Russia in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2022 serve as notable examples of the geopolitical tensions that arise when these nations express interest in joining NATO.

The military intervention in Ukraine has led Western countries led by the US to reassess their perception of Moscow, viewing it as a more significant threat than previously acknowledged. Although Russia has sought to leverage the dependency of Western nations on its energy resources as a strategic advantage, these Western states have reformed into a cohesive bloc, initiating sanctions against Russia and providing military support to Ukraine. Consequently, the territory of Ukraine has become the stage for a protracted and detrimental conflict for both Russia and Ukraine. As a result, a significant geopolitical vacuum has developed in the heart of Eurasia, straddling the divide between East and West. In light of this vacuum, the West, spearheaded by the US, is solidifying its consolidation, while the potential for establishing a balance with China is gaining momentum as Russia continues to weaken. This context suggests that the formation of a new geopolitical equation that could exacerbate the superpower competition in Eurasia is increasingly likely.

The Eurasian landscape is also of considerable economic importance to Russia. Russia's interests are closely tied to the influence over energy resources in Eurasia, especially regarding minerals of strategic and economic significance, including uranium (Trenin, 2007: 106-109; Pirro, 2015: 120). Russia's primary concern, in this regard, is to ensure that it is not excluded from the pipeline routes for the supply of oil and natural gas to the West, thereby facilitating the transfer of energy resources from Eurasia to international markets through its territory. The objective is to ensure that no state within Eurasia can compete with Russia in the export of energy, thereby facilitating Western importers' access to Eurasian energy resources through Russia. Thus, through its control over energy supplies, Russia is poised to secure a notable geopolitical advantage, subsequently increasing its presence and influence in the international system.

Russia places significant emphasis on preventing radical movements, similar to those in China, from gaining traction and strengthening within the Eurasian region (Ziegler, 2015: 103). Russia is home to a considerable Muslim community. The connection between radical factions and the Muslim populace in Russia constitutes a significant security concern (Trenin, 2007. 91). In light of this, Russia regards the Eurasian region as a strategic buffer zone for its national security interests. At the same time, Russia exhibits a stance against the establishment and activities of the United States in the region, framing its opposition within the context of radical movements and terrorism. In this regard, the involvement of external military entities in Eurasia is acceptable only if it aligns with the security interests of Russia, is sanctioned by Moscow, and is linked to a defined mission with a reasonable schedule for withdrawal (Trenin, 2007: 82).

The United States

Chinese and Russian economic, diplomatic, military and political influence in the Eurasian region constitutes an inevitable systemic risk and geopolitical disadvantages for the US. This is evident in the 2017 National Security Strategy of the US (27) document as it says:

> ...after being dismissed as a phenomenon of an earlier century, great power competition returned. China and Russia began to reassert their influence regionally and globally. Today, they are fielding military capabilities designed to deny America access in times of crisis and to contest our ability to operate freely in critical commercial zones during peacetime. In short, they are contesting our geopolitical advantages and trying to change the international order in their favor.

Accordingly, both China and Russia are defined as challenges to the US as they endeavor to erode its security. The document underlines that “a geopolitical competition between free and repressive visions of world order is taking place...” (2017 National Security Strategy of the US: 2 and 45-46).

In this respect, the US appeared to be the sole hegemon in the international system with the collapse of the Soviet Union. At this juncture, the US national strategy shifted towards the objective of thwarting the rise of any great power capable of contesting its hegemony within the international system (Cheney, 1993). To this end, Eurasia represents a critical region due to its extensive mineral, economic, demographic, and military resources. It is the sole area on the planet from which a plausible peer competitor could arise to contest the hegemony of the US (Kuchins, 2018: 126). Therefore, from the early 1900s, the United States has sought to prevent any hostile power or coalition from achieving direct, physical, or indirect economic and geopolitical dominance over either end of the Eurasian landmass (Friedberg, 2018: 7).

The military presence of the United States in the Eurasian region significantly increased following the attacks of September 11, 2001 (Rumer, 2007: 45). The ability of the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization to establish a secure base in Afghanistan and orchestrate terrorist activities globally compelled the United States to engage in military intervention in the area. In this respect, the prevention of radical movements that exploit the Islamic faith, particularly those originating from Afghanistan, and ensuring that they do not spread to the region are among the issues prioritized by the US (2017 National Security Strategy of the US: 50). Later, the military presence of the United States in Eurasia extended beyond Afghanistan. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 significantly expanded the U.S. military footprint in the Middle East.

However, a significant number of observers, particularly from China and Russia, expressed profound skepticism regarding the US extensive military engagement in Eurasia, questioning whether the primary motivation was solely the fight against terrorism (Magen and Bagno-Moldavksy, 2010: 120; Kuchins, 2018: 128). There are fundamental concerns that have arisen in relation to the genuine intentions of the US in the Eurasian region. The first is that presence of the US military personnel in Afghanistan is utilized as a pragmatic justification for establishing a sustained military foothold in Russian and Chinese strategic hinterland, an area that exhibits notable vulnerabilities, especially considering the significant Muslim populations in Western China and its adjacency to Tibet. Second, the US, in collaboration with NATO, is strategically engaging with the Caucasus and Central Asia to diminish Russian influence in these regions. This strategy involves significant Western investments, collaborative efforts on numerous issues, and the provision of security aid.

The main aim of the US engagement in Eurasia is said to establish dominance in a region of significant strategic value, which holds some of the most critical energy reserves globally (Magen & Bagno-Moldavksy, 2010: 120). From the perspective of the US, the influence it can exert over Eurasia is significant due to the control of its abundant energy resources and the facilitation of their supply to the West. Hence, control over energy resources should be regarded not merely as a secondary element, but rather as the primary goal in the US Eurasian strategy (Rumer, 2007: 32).

In relation to China's extensive economic and infrastructure project in the Eurasian area, known as the BRI, the United States has expressed significant concerns and has enacted policies aimed at countering this initiative. For example, the then US Defense Secretary James Mattis stated that

> ...regarding “One Belt, One Road,” I think in a globalized world, there are many belts and many roads, and no one nation should put itself into a position of dictating “One Belt, One Road.”That said, the “One Belt, One Road” also goes through disputed territory, and I think that in itself shows the vulnerability of trying to establish that sort of a dictate (US Senate Committee on Armed Services, 2017).

Moreover, the US further expressed its dissent towards the Belt and Road Initiative by alleging that China is bolstering its geopolitical ambitions under the pretense of infrastructure development and

trade initiatives (2017 National Security Strategy: 46). To counter Chinese motives, the US announced that the Indo-Pacific region is currently witnessing a geopolitical rivalry that highlights the tension between aspirations for freedom and the realities of authoritarianism in shaping world order (2017 National Security Strategy of the US: 45).

The foreign and security policy of the US regarding Eurasia indicates an intention to allocate additional military, economic, and diplomatic resources to enhance its standing in the current geopolitical competition within the Eurasian region. Particularly in light of Russia's incursion into Ukraine, the US aims to bolster its presence and assert greater influence within the region. The US is actively enhancing its defense capabilities and increasing military expenditures under the pretext of deterring potential attacks from Russia, while also striving to provide greater support to its allies in the region. The US is also attempting to alter Russia's behavior by imposing economic sanctions. Additionally, the US is striving to enhance its influence in the Eurasian region by strengthening economic ties with other countries in the region. Hence, the foreign policy and security strategy of the US in Eurasia has undergone a significant intensification following the Ukraine War. The US has decided to allocate additional resources to enhance its presence and influence in the region.

Conclusion

The Eurasian region occupies a central position in global politics due to its geographical location, abundant natural resources, and extensive markets. Therefore, Eurasia has been a significant arena for the rivalry among great powers. While the end of the Cold War has transformed the international order, the power struggle within Eurasia remains active, influenced by new players and diverse dynamics. In the current era, the Eurasian region exhibits a genuine multipolarity, characterized by the presence of three great powers: China, Russia, and the US.

Ultimately, the continent of Eurasia is witnessing the emergence of a new period marked by substantial rivalry among great powers. The rivalry between the United States, Russia, and China is playing a crucial role in shaping the political, economic, and security landscape within the region. As these powers vie for position, the other nations of Eurasia are increasingly finding themselves under pressure to choose sides, or look for regional alternatives. The implications of this rivalry and the decisions it engenders possess the potential to generate significant consequences for regional and international peace and security.

It would be no surprise that the rivalry between the US and China is likely to endure in the years ahead, further impacting the power dynamics within Eurasia. The economic decline of Russia, coupled with the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, is likely to diminish the country's influence in the region. Nevertheless, Russia will continue to strive to maintain its status as a significant player by leveraging its nuclear arsenal and energy resources. Consequently, Eurasia is expected to persist as a key arena for the great power rivalry. Nations within the region will attempt to utilize this context to their advantage and will work towards establishing a foreign policy that is independent.

Hence, the geopolitical rivalry in Eurasia is characterized by its complexity and dynamism. Countries in the region are compelled to pursue their own interests while navigating this intricate landscape. To prevent being caught in the crossfire of competing great powers, it is crucial for these nations to maintain a delicate equilibrium. Looking ahead, the potential for new alliances to form, the weakening of current coalitions, and a complete shift in regional power balances is significant. Therefore, vigilant observation and analysis of Eurasian developments are essential.



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Chapter 5

The Impacts of the Anthropocene Epoch on Environmental Security in Eurasia

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Abstract

The actions of humanity have exerted a growing influence on our world, especially since the advent of the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent process of globalization, which some consider the Anthropocene epoch. Although the term "*the Anthropocene epoch*" has not been officially recognized in the field of geography, some scientists continue to use it to highlight humanity's significant impact on nature and the environment. Moreover, although the Anthropocene epoch is seen as a span in which technological developments were witnessed and quality of life changed positively, it also brought about various environmental problems. Environmental pollution, which negatively affects the quality of life in some regions, has now reached a level of threatening and has become a security concern. Furthermore, the initiative to incorporate ecocide into the international legal framework as the fifth crime represents a significant step towards implement environmental security. As a matter of fact, in critical security approaches, environmental security is examined among the sectors that threaten human security. The main goal of this study is to analyze environmental pollution in terms of security in a spatial context, especially because of humanity's shaping of nature and life through industrialization. This study used case analysis to explore the dimensions of environmental pollution in the expansive Eurasian region, employing critical examples of key points. In this context, in the first part of the study, the elements of environmental pollution are explained; in the second part, environmental safety and critical approaches are explained; and in the third part, examples are given from the Eurasian continent, which constitutes the spatial border of our study. This study is expected to make a valuable contribution to international relations by increasing awareness of environmental security.

Keywords Environmental Pollution · Environmental Security · Eurasia · International Security · Critical Security Studies · Ecocide

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Introduction

In conventional security studies, it has often been posited that the security of the individual is inherently linked to the security of the state. This perspective has encouraged the evaluation of safety levels through the comparative numerical presence of military force elements, which play a vital role in a nation's overall power. Due to this rationale, this state-centered perspective perceived security as internationally focused and refrained from minimizing security at the individual level. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the influence of national borders was more susceptible to disruption than in the pre-Cold War era. It became clear that this fragility enhanced the permeability. For this reason, it has been observed that even if the country's borders are protected by military force, which is given particular importance in traditional security approaches, the security of the individual may be endangered and pose a security concern arises due to the relative permeability of the borders.

In addition, the increase in the diversity of actors in the international system after the Cold War was one of the factors that enabled the abandonment of the traditional security approach that focused on the state. Eventually, the concept of security was liberated and no longer examined within certain limits. This untraditional approach, which criticized the previous perspective as prioritizing only one main focus—military power—has come to be known as Critical Security Studies (Lemon, 2018: 1). The Copenhagen School, a prominent proponent of these critical security approaches, analyzed national security in five different sectors and broadened its elements by incorporating political, economic, social and environmental dimensions.

The globalized world has become a way of life in which the impacts of individual localities are no longer constrained, and advancements in one country can readily impact others. The increasingly interconnected nature of modern life has resulted in communities on different continents' everyday experiences being impacted by the actions of societies on any continent. As a matter of fact, the "meaningless" actions of some nations that do not care about the consequences of carbon emissions have resulted in the dilution of the ozone layer in the long term. This dilution has caused irreparable consequences, such as the escalation of sea levels, leading to the surrender of island countries to the sea (Yıldırım Çinar & Çomak, 2023: 358). The post-industrialization period in the 1950s, called the Anthropocene epoch by some scientists, also underlines the greater observability of human-made destruction of nature is more observable (Froestad & Shearing, 2017:2).

Unfortunately, this "meaningless" and even "criminal" attitude, which ignores the studies and research that scientists have done for years, is not represented by just one example, and a trend has been seen spreading throughout the world. This tendency has affected individuals' perceptions about security over time, and environmental destruction caused by anthropogenic activities has taken its place in the field of international relations as a security concern. With these concerns in mind, scientists have carried out studies on the integration of the concept of ecocide - "the crime of conscious destruction of nature" into the international legal system (Metcheva, Ostoich & Beltcheva, 2022: 8). In other words, environmental safety due to environmental pollution has become a process that scholars are studying because it threatens the safety of individuals and society.

This study presents examples of environmental destruction caused by anthropogenic activities, and the levels at which human security is threatened are examined through case studies. The Eurasian continent was chosen as the spatial border of the study, and the post-1950s was chosen as the temporal constraint. In this context, this study is evaluated as contributing to the field of international relations by analyzing examples of environmental pollution caused by anthropogenic activities in post-industrialized Eurasia in the context of critical approaches, thus raising more awareness about the importance of environmental security.

Elements of Environmental Pollution

Soil Pollution

Akalan defined soil as "*a three-dimensional entity that covers the surface of the earth in a thin layer, consists of a mixture of various decomposition products of rocks and organic matter, hosts a wide range of living things in and on it, is a stopping place and a source of food for plants, and contains water and air in certain proportions*." (Akalan, 1965: 8). Bülbül, Çözüm, Günal, and Budak also point out that soil forms the basis of food production (2022: 111). Sağlam, on the other hand, states that soil affects plant development directly or indirectly and enables the continuation of life by creating a living environment for many small and large organisms (Sağlam, 2008: 1) and defines soil as "*a vital living system in improving or protecting air quality and increasing plant and animal health*" (2008: 22).

While in the past, it was considered "*a tool consisting of some mineral components, covering the surface of our planet, inanimate and existing only to benefit people*", it has now been understood that the soil is a living ecosystem (Atlı et al., 2021: 14). In summary, soil hosts flora and fauna, improves the quality of water resources through its filtering system, and therefore constitutes one of the essential elements for sustaining the life of humans.

In cases in which flora and fauna cannot be adequately nourished or chemicals contaminate the environment, soil conditions become a hostile habitat, threatening the well-being of flora and fauna while endangering human health. Considering this, the United Nations has recognized the significance of soil in human existence. As a matter of fact, it was decided by the UN Secretary-General that every December 5th will be celebrated as World Soil Day since 2013. Furthermore, the year 2015 was named as the International Year of Soils (UN, 2014: 2). In the noted decision, the UN emphasized that soil forms the basis for agricultural development and is the key to sustaining life on Earth (UN, 2014: 1). The Food and Agriculture Organization, which was given the task of organizing World Soil Day, endeavored to draw attention to the importance of the issue through its annual campaigns and emphasized in these campaigns that the fate of our planet depends on the condition of the soil, from ecosystems to natural habitats, and from resources to biodiversity and humanity (FAO, 2024: 3).

Haines-Young and Potschin listed soil's functions as "*regulation of the water cycle, nutrient cycle, filtering and storage of acids, organic or inorganic pollutants, regulation of the carbon pool, habitat of plants, animals, and microorganisms, biodiversity, and agricultural and forestry production*" (2008). However, mismanaging a resource that is crucial for humanity's survival by the same individuals causes soil pollution. Thus, agricultural production is threatened because sustainability cannot be achieved.

Air Pollution

Pala defined air pollution as "*a weather condition that endangers a person's health and happiness, as well as animal and plant life, as a result of the presence of substances that are not naturally present in the air, or some substances that are found in minimal amounts in the air under normal conditions, reaching intense amounts for any reason*" (2019: 4). Çarboğa and Dökmeci also state that "*the substances rising into the air from polluting sources disrupt the natural structure of the air and create air pollution*" (2021: 4). Toros and Bagis correspondingly describe air pollution, which emerges as a result of industrialization and urbanization, as "*an environmental problem that grows every day in terms of what we breathe*". Çakır defines air pollution as "the degradation of the indoor or outdoor environment by any chemical, physical, or biological factors that change the natural properties of the atmosphere" (2017: 5).

The issue of air pollution is typically categorized into two distinct categories: external and internal. According to the definition, the analysis covers air quality in buildings and outdoor environments. Air is a crucial component of the sustenance of all living organisms and contamination of this component leads to numerous health concerns. As a matter of fact, a correlation has been found between the decrease in air quality and respiratory/heart diseases, and premature birth (India SLDB, 2021: 1). It has also been determined that particulate matter mixed into the air settles in the respiratory tract and threatens human life (İncecik & İm, 2013: 133).

Due to industrialization, the intensive use of fossil fuels, industrial manufacturing, and exhaust gases from motor vehicles have become a way of life that individuals frequently encounter in today's ecosystem, for which states that continue to exhibit "criminal" attitudes are responsible. This "criminal" attitude shortens life expectancy at birth (Şahin, 2022: 759), causes significant damage to human health and the environment, increases health expenses (Çabaş and Torun, 2022: 155), and poses a security threat.

Water Pollution

Water contamination arises from the introduction of plastic, chemical waste, or microorganisms into lakes, seas, rivers, and other water bodies. These contaminated resources become harmful to the environment and human health over time. The well-being of living organisms is at risk when water is scarce because it is fundamental to life. Water pollution causes the food ecosystem to deteriorate and endanger not only humans but also other life forms (Karataş, 2023: 425). According to FAO, "*More than 95% of our food comes from two primary sources: soil and water. Both are essential for plants to absorb nutrients and play crucial roles in connecting and sustaining our ecosystems. This interdependent relationship forms the basis of our agricultural systems*." (2024:1).

One of the greatest supporters of the life cycle is water. However, the brutal use of water by humanity, failure to protect water quality due to industry-oriented pressures, environmental destruction caused by fossil fuels (Arı, 2023: 698), excessive consumption due to population growth (Atar, 2021: 83), wrong irrigation methods, and financial-oriented companies' "criminal" attitudes cause water pollution. This "meaningless" attitude prevents the sustainability of water resources. Demirci and Tufaner also pointed to the rapid increase in population, urbanization, industrialization, inadequate infrastructure, the absence or inefficiency of adequate treatment facilities in many industrial establishments, and unconscious agricultural activities as the main actors in water pollution (2019: 262). Ertaş and Sarımehmetoğlu likewise state that the quality will be preserved with the effective use of water resources, and thus, sustainability will be ensured (2019: 142).

Concerns about water sustainability, a scarce global resource, have increased the number of studies on water security. Water security is defined as providing sufficient quantity and quality water for human health, such as drinking and food production, energy, and ecosystems (Koç, 2024: 211), and it has received significant attention from international organizations. As a matter of fact, at the UN 2023 Water Conference, it was declared that water is necessary for human well-being, energy and food production, healthy ecosystems, gender equality, poverty reduction, and more, and it was underlined that we are facing a global water crisis (UN Türkiye).

Noise Pollution

With the progression of technology and advances in science, improving health conditions has increased the population. The globalization process and the rise in population have also increased the burden of living on Earth. The combined sounds generated by vehicle engines, exhausts, and brakes in traffic, as well as horns, emergency sirens, construction and repair machinery, sound systems,

factories, and speakers collectively contribute to the environmental noise levels. When the demand for transportation and the increase in production during industrialization are combined, the resulting environmental noise levels have a more adverse impact on the well-being of humans.

Kaya defined noise as either unwanted or harmful sound (2022: 55). In the third article of the EU's Directive on the Management and Evaluation of Environmental Noise No. 2002/49 EC dated 25.06.2002, environmental noise is defined as unwanted and harmful external sounds emitted from transportation, road traffic, railway traffic, air traffic and industrial activities (EU, 2002).

In fact, due to environmental noise, wild animals may change their migration routes or not prefer their old breeding areas. Adjustments to these preferences harm the ecosystem. In addition, high environmental noise can have adverse effects, causing mental and physical diseases caused by sleep disorders.

With the help of modern technological advancements, measuring and categorizing environmental sound levels is feasible today. Environmental sound exceeding a certain level is classified as noise pollution, and countries take the necessary legal measures under their jurisdiction system (Sert Sütçü and Şahin,2021: 676). Moreover, to raise awareness about environmental noise, the International Noise Awareness Day (INAD) was established in 1996 by the Center for Hearing and Communication (CHC) to improve health and quality of life (Luzzi et al., 2013: 1). The World Health Organization recommends the following noise level limits: road traffic: 53 dB, rail systems: 54 dB, wind turbines: 53 dB, entertainment centers: 70 dB. The overall noise levels should be limited to 45 dB (WHO, 2018: xvi-xvii).

Critical Security Studies and Environmental Security

In traditional security approaches, the security of an individual is considered a duty that should be provided by the state (Vural, 2018: 23). However, the outbreak of the First World War and the losses experienced revealed that states were not sufficiently successful in ensuring the security of individuals. As a result, a new perspective emerged advocating for the potential benefits of international organizations. However, the League of Nations, which was established for this purpose, failed to resolve conflicts between countries through peaceful means, and the Second World War broke out. The two World Wars revealed the tragic and profound losses experienced by humanity during both conflicts.

Developments in the post-World War II era resulted in the Cold War, during which individuals' security was at risk within a bipolar system. In this period, circumstances that required the direct use of military force were classified as high politics, while security concerns that did not require military force were defined as low politics (Baldwin, 1997: 9). All these conflicts between states have consequently created the need to review security in different dimensions, and the search for new security paradigms has begun in the field of international relations. In addition, the permeability of communication networks, along with the development of technology, has created a negative perception in society about the consequences of war and therefore states' foreign policy practices. This perception, which raises awareness about the sense of security, has made the foreign policy practices of states more questionable in the eyes of the public.

In addition to all these outcomes, the increase in accessibility to information about the place where an individual lives has enabled the extent of human-induced destruction in nature to be noticed and has also improved environmental awareness. The increasing global consciousness has led to mounting pressure on nations to uphold environmental security, according to the international community. As a matter of fact, during the Cold War period, at the United Nations Human and Environment Conference in 1972, an attempt was made to instill in the states an awareness of joint responsibility against environmental issues (Egeli, 1996: 15). At the conference a new concept was declared by the Prime Minister Olof Palme in his opening speech, referring to the Vietnam war as "environmental massacre".

This declaration initiated efforts to integrate the concept of ecocide into the international legal system as the fifth crime. The usage of Agent Orange in the fields by the US was also classified as the first modern example of environmental destruction for military purposes at that time (Falk, 1973: 80) and it led to the proposal of adding 'ecocide' to the Genocide Convention by UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (Minkova, 2021: 8). The absence of participation by Eastern Bloc countries in the conference, as well as their decision to boycott it (Hill, 1972: 12), underscored the challenges of reaching consensus among states. This divergence on matters of global significance, such as environmental security, raised concerns about the potential threat to human security in the bipolar system.

Although the Stockholm Conference in 1972 progressed under the relative pressure of the bipolar system, it proved essential in spreading environmental awareness worldwide. At the end of the conference, the UN Declaration on the Human Environment was accepted (Pallamaerts, 1993), and thanks to the developing environmental awareness, environmental ministries were established in many countries (Alada et al., 1993: 94). The Conference also led to the establishment of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) (Chasek, 2020: 1). The Bruntland Report, published by the United Nations and the Environment Commission in 1987, is a significant document in terms of establishing the relationship between sustainable development and environmental security (Barnett, 2001: 41). Another conference on the environment was planned to be held in the following years, and the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UN) was held in Rio in 1992. At the conference, in addition to Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration and Forest Principles were adopted, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity were opened for signature. In addition, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, prepared in line with the decisions taken at the Rio Conference, was opened for signature in 1994 (MFA).

Realizing the threats posed by climate change, humanity contributed to its efforts to achieve sustainable development at the World Sustainable Development Summit in Johannesburg in 2002, and following the Rio + 20 Summit in 2012, a result document called "*The Future We Want*", which is a road map for development, was adopted. In addition to all these initiatives, the importance of environmental security was further understood by adopting Agenda 2030: UN Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. In summary, these efforts to spread environmental awareness have led to a change in the demand for military/hard power from a realist perspective over time. In other words, military power has evolved into secondary importance in the search for new security paradigms, and the emergence of environmental awareness has required a critical approach to security in international relations.

In this context, Buzan, one of the representatives of the Copenhagen school, evaluated security not only with its military dimension but also with political, social, economic, and environmental dimensions within the scope of "five sector analysis" (Buzan, 1991a: 134-136). Environmental security, as one of these five sectors, includes elements related to biological life continuation. In other words, according to this paradigm, the factors that cause environmental pollution listed above threaten the safety of individuals and therefore environmental security. Buzan explains environmental security as "*being concerned with creating a defense system locally and universally above all living areas on earth*" (Buzan, 1991b: 431-451).

The Impact of Anthropogenic Activities on Environmental Security: Case Studies from Eurasia

Nuclear activities have been a cause of significant concern due to their impact on the environment, and humanity has made extensive efforts to confirm such activities, leading to a "nuclear atrocity". This "nuclear atrocity" that started with Nagasaki and Hiroshima in 1945, was followed by nuclear experiments during the Cold War era. Although these experiments were sometimes carried out for the

peaceful use of nuclear power, they resulted in severe consequences for residents living in the locations where they were carried out. In order to surpass each other in the nuclear arms race, countries have caused unnecessary damage to the environment and have forced individuals living in the region to become environmental immigrants. These "criminal" acts, which have been remembered as a disgrace in human history, caused the sites where nuclear weapons tests were conducted to spread poison for an extended period.

One initiative carried out to avoid being left behind in the nuclear race, where such dire results have been experienced, is the Semipalatinsky region on the Eurasian continent. In the said region, the USSR tested its first nuclear bomb in 1949, and more than 450 nuclear tests were carried out over the following 40 years. Despite health challenges among the region's population over the past four decades, the government has not acknowledged the situation or implemented corrective actions.

In 1989, public awareness of nuclear tests being conducted in the region led to nationwide demonstrations, prompting the eventual termination of the tests in 1991. As a result of an analysis of the health conditions of those living in the Semipalatinsky region, which is currently located within the borders of Kazakhstan, it has been determined that people exposed to radiation face a significant risk of cancer-related death. In addition, the same study proved that second, third, and fourth-generation local people still experience radiation-related health problems (Bauer et al., 2005: 409-419).

Another disaster that threatened environmental security on the Eurasian continent was the nuclear explosion that occurred in Kyshtym, Russia, in 1957 (Saveleva, Danilenko, 2023: 33). The explosion was primarily attributed to the decision that the specified system was unnecessary in the radioactive waste tanks with a malfunctioning cooling system (AFAD). As a result of the contact of the waste in the uncooled tank with air and a spark from the monitoring equipment, a total of 5-10 tons of TNT explosion was released, and the possible consequences of this explosion were hidden from the local people, as in Semipalatinsk.

However, the law titled "*On the social protection of citizens exposed to radiation as a result of the 1957 accident at the Mayak production association and the discharge of radioactive waste into the Techa River*", issued in 1993, offers the Russian Government's implicit acceptance (Saveleva & Danilenko, 2023: 36). As a result of the scans carried out in the region, a decrease in leukocyte blood count was observed in the first two years after the accident, and a relative increase in radiation-related cancer cases and death rates was observed in the following years (Akleyev et al., 2017: 19).

Examples of environmental pollution caused by nuclear activities are frequently encountered on the Eurasian continent, especially during the Cold War. Both the consciously created conditions in the Semipalatinsky region and the wrong decisions taken in the Kyshtym region have resulted in environmental pollution and destruction of the flora and fauna in the region. The Chornobyl Disaster is another tragic example of environmental pollution caused by human activity in Eurasia as a result of an accident. This accident, which occurred in Ukraine under the USSR in 1986, was scaled to the level of 7, which is the highest classification rate on the international nuclear incident scale, and its secondary effects in the region are still felt. Extensive research has been conducted on the incident that primarily impacted Türkiye, Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia. These studies have revealed a noteworthy connection between radiation exposure and fatalities associated with cancer.

In addition to these factors, Russia, a key nuclear power supplier in the Eurasian region with a substantial landmass, is grappling with air pollution from heavy industry, emissions from coal-fired power plants, and transportation in major urban areas. Additionally, the country faces challenges related to industrial, municipal, and agricultural pollution of inland waterways and coastlines, soil contamination due to improper agricultural chemical use, sporadic instances of severe radioactive contamination, and urban solid waste management issues (CIA, 2024a).

The 2011 nuclear incident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant in Japan serves as a striking example of environmental contamination resulting from anthropogenic activities. At Fukushima, an incident similar to the international nuclear incident at Chornobyl occurred as a result of a flood following an earthquake. When the flood prevented the reactors from operating, an explosion occurred at the power plant, and the nuclear leak spread. The particles first reached the US state of California and then Iceland.

Due to the pressure created by the accident in question on the environment, approximately half a million people have become environmental immigrants, and ongoing research is still being conducted to determine the most appropriate method for the disposal of radioactive water at the power plant (BBC, 2021). Although there was a tendency to eliminate nuclear power in Japan in the first years after the accident, new policies were later implemented to establish nuclear power plants that met stricter safety standards (CIA, 2024b).

It is evident that the Eurasian continent's soil, air, and water have been polluted many times by nuclear activities. Industrialization is another activity that unfortunately contributes to pollution on the continent (The Economist, 2019). In fact, China ranks first in the world in terms of carbon emissions due to industrialization (Liu et al., 2023). However, within the framework of the new policies announced in 2020, China aims to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2060 (UN, 2021). Within the scope of this goal, China is turning to wind and solar energy sources to minimize fossil fuel consumption (US Department of Energy, 2023: 8). The carbon footprint of the Earth originating from the Eurasian continent, including China, has reached significant levels. Upon reviewing the world rankings, it becomes clear that 17 out of the top 30 countries are located within the Eurasian continent. The carbon emission rates of India, Russia, Japan, Indonesia, Germany, and North Korea are noteworthy as they fall within the top 10 of the 17 countries under consideration (Global Carbon Atlas).

Industrialization causes significant damage to the environment. However, the raw material supply processes on which production depends can also put pressure on environmental compliance. In fact, cotton, the raw material used in fabric making during the USSR, had a significant impact on the delicate environmental equilibrium of the Eurasian continent. The Aral Sea, lying between Kazakhstan to its north and Uzbekistan to its south, has suffered an environmental catastrophe because historical policies aimed at boosting cotton production during the USSR era led to the division of the lake into northern and southern parts and later into eastern and western parts. Due to excessive irrigation, ongoing losses have occurred in the Aral Sea—once the second-largest lake in Asia and the fourth-largest worldwide, spanning 68,000 square kilometers–experienced ongoing losses. Over the years, the lake's size dwindled by a staggering 90% due to changes in the ecosystem and subsequent evaporation.

The lake desiccation led to salt dispersion into the surrounding areas, adversely affecting soil quality. Additionally, condensation in the lake disrupted its mineral balance (Aladin et al., 2019: 6), causing the salinity level to surge from 1% to 20% (Chernyh et al., 2024: 3). This imbalance has significantly hindered the feasibility of utilizing the lake for irrigation (Yıldız, 2019: 2), exerting immense pressure on the entire ecosystem, and posing a substantial environmental security concern. This disturbs the biological equilibrium of the region. Consequently, efforts to restore the lake to its original state have been initiated (İyikan, 2013: 225), and discussions have taken place regarding the potential involvement of the Russian Federation in the efforts to facilitate restoration (Yalçınkaya & Mehmetçik, 2017: 150).

Another issue that threatens environmental safety and therefore the safety of humanity is noise pollution. Noise exposure is frequently observed in the Eurasian continent, especially in Europe. It is estimated that noise contributes to 12,000 premature deaths and 48,000 new cases of ischemic heart disease every year in Europe, where there is long-term exposure to environmental noise. In addition, it is estimated that 22 million people suffer from chronic hypersomnia, 6.5 million suffer from chronic

hypersomnia, and 12,500 schoolchildren experience learning difficulties at school due to aircraft noise (EEA, 2021). Although European countries have planned to reduce transportation-related environmental noise by 30% by 2030 in the 7th Environmental Action Plan, reaching this goal was deemed unattainable according to the 8th Environmental Action Plan report (European Commission, 2024: 10).

Nations on the Eurasian continent play a vital role in shaping the global economy. The global economy's dependence on energy and production puts environmental factors under pressure. The renewability and sustainability of energy used by countries on the Eurasian continent in their development strategy are essential in this respect. However, as seen in the examples above, the continent's impact on global environmental security remains predominantly unfavorable. Considering these developments, Eurasian countries must take additional measures to address pollution and build environmental harmony.

Conclusion

Every living being is entitled to a peaceful, healthy, and secure existence. As living beings, whether plants, animals, or humans, we all deserve the chance to thrive on our precious Earth; accordingly, we have innate responsibilities for the ecosystem in which we live. A wholeness and universality blended with a peaceful and healthy sense of security brings pure harmony to nature. In cases where this harmony is disrupted, the right to life is threatened; therefore, the perception of trust begins to disappear. Harmony in nature, which we can also call environmental harmony, has come under threat, especially with industrialization and globalization. The loss of this harmony in nature, the results of which we observe as environmental pollution, causes environmental security issues.

With the development of environmental awareness, perceptions of security also change. New security paradigms that take the security of an individual from the castle walls to plateaus lined with surrounding flowers now analyze security on different levels. The Copenhagen School, one of these approaches, contributed to security studies with the concept of five security sectors and developed many different discourses compared to the realist perspective that equates security with the individual's physical integrity and, therefore, prioritizes military power. Emphasizing that security has not only military but also political, economic, social, and environmental dimensions, this school points out that environmental security is a situation in which harmony between the individual and nature is preserved.

Environmental security is not an issue that can be reduced only to the security of an individual, as it concerns all living things. As can be seen from the examples we have given from the Eurasian continent, the attitudes of "criminal" groups toward the environment, who believe that only individuals live on Earth, have adversely affected some regions. For this reason, all actors in the international system must unite and reach a common sense regarding environmental security.

These case studies demonstrate that some countries on the Eurasian continent put pressure on the environment and perform activities that negatively affect the entire Earth. These actions leading to environmental pollution often extend beyond national boundaries. As demonstrated by these examples, which can be classified as ecocide acts, the effects of mass pollution not only lead locals to become environmental immigrants but also threaten international security.

However, the fact that those who have not reached a sufficient level of awareness exhibit "criminal" attitudes toward environmental security by ignoring the risks that scientists highlight puts pressure on the Earth. While certain groups may require more awareness about environmental pollution and others may choose to overlook the implications of environmental pollution and protection, there is optimism that these issues can be addressed through thorough education and international legal regulations, ultimately leading to environmental harmony.

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Chapter 6

Impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative on Eurasia: Economic, Political, Social, and Environmental Transformations

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Abstract

In 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was established by Chinese President Xi Jinping. However, it is important to note that the origins of this organization date back much further in history. In 1980, several initiatives for the BRI were launched. These initiatives aimed to create a comprehensive trade network and infrastructure for the global system. Regarding this matter, one could assert that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) represents an ambitious endeavor. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has led to shifts in perceptions across Eurasia and has sparked significant political, social, and economic transformations. This study is aimed at conducting a comprehensive analysis of these transformations. With the BRI, we can say that trade routes have expanded, countries have grown economically, and economic integration has strengthened. "Despite the positive benefits, there have been some emerging challenges. There are concerns about debt risks and fiscal sustainability being jeopardized. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has significantly impacted regional dynamics by enhancing China's presence and influence in the area. In recent times, China has increased its influence in both Central and South Asia. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the existing dynamics in the region as well. The Belt and Road Initiative has had significant social and environmental implications for the region, leading to both positive and negative effects on the lives of individuals and the sustainability of the natural environment. This study will provide an analysis of both the benefits and drawbacks of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Keywords Belt and Road Initiative · China · Eurasia · economic transformation · political transformation · social transformation · environmental transformation

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Introduction

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project launched by China is perhaps one of the most ambitious initiatives of the century. The BRI aims to make the Silk Road operational again from a new perspective. In this framework, a more comprehensive commercial network and infrastructure than the Silk Road, including Asia, Europe, and Africa, is intended. With the BRI, the countries included in the project will further develop economically and integrate with each other, trade flows will accelerate, and infrastructure investments will increase. The BRI, which will have serious impacts on Eurasian countries, needs to be analyzed in depth.

The BRI is a project with a focus on the Eurasia region. Through this initiative, China aims to achieve its economic objectives. As with the Silk Road, this region is of strategic importance. It is a bridge between the east and west. With the BRI, Eurasia will be transformed into a region where new connections can be established both economically and geographically. Trade routes will be modernized and new ports, motorways, energy lines and railways will be built in conjunction with the project. In short, the project will strengthen the economy of not only China but also the countries in the region.

The BRI is expected to have significant economic impacts. In particular, trade flows among the countries included in the project will increase. Therefore, local economies will grow, and investments will increase. Thanks to the Khorgos Gateway project in Kazakhstan, road transport between China and Europe has improved. With the Gwadar Port project in Pakistan, trade flows in Central and South Asia have accelerated and the country's economy has strengthened. The BRI will lead to similar developments and the economies of the countries in the region will improve significantly.

A number of political consequences have also emerged from the BRI. This project has strengthened China's political relations with countries along the trade route. This situation, which can be interpreted as having a global impact, has led to the emergence of different political dynamics. The BRI has resulted in some political consequences for South and Central Asia. For example, China has established close relations with Pakistan, which has changed the balance between countries. Russia's influence in the region has been broken with China's cooperation with Central Asian countries.

As a result of the infrastructure projects implemented through the BRI, notable societal changes have been witnessed within the region. The project also has environmental impacts. During the construction phase, it is important to acknowledge that the development of infrastructure can lead to changes in the lifestyle of the local population and may have an impact on the surrounding environment. Therefore, It is imperative to prioritize sustainable development goals and ensure the implementation of environmental policies throughout the project.

The BRI will be successful not only through Chinese initiatives but also by countries in the region. In this way, countries in the region that are at a lower economic level will be able to benefit from China's commercial investments. Thus, countries in the region will have new opportunities and possibilities. It is important to acknowledge that this project presents both opportunities and challenges, along with associated risks. Scholars and researchers in the countries concerned should take all these factors into consideration. This study will analyze the impact of the BRI on Eurasia and its contribution to economic and political transformation.

The Belt and Road Initiative: Definition and Objectives

The BRI is a significant economic project initiated by China to tackle its economic challenges. In 2012, overcapacity of industrial products became a national problem in China (Xinhuanet, 2012). In response to the overcapacity and adverse impacts of the 2008 global economic crisis, a stimulus package was implemented to address the surplus and mitigate the crisis's negative consequences. This package

has reduced the negative effects of the crisis. However, as economic growth increases, overcapacity becomes a problem (He, 2020). In this process, economists have produced many solutions to revitalize the economy. They considered an initiative similar to a 'new Marshall Plan' or a 'Chinese version of the Marshall Plan' to solve infrastructure problems and redirect excess capacity to other countries. At the Central Economic Work Conference held in December 2012, Xi Jinping identified surplus capacity as a top priority for strategic economic restructuring (Xinhuanet, 2012).

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), through the Silk Road Economic Belt, aims to increase infrastructure development, inter-societal communication, and trade by constructing land routes. Meanwhile, the Maritime Silk Road Project seeks to establish new sea routes that will facilitate trade between Asia and Europe. The BRI, also known as the 'Modern Silk Road', is a comprehensive initiative that exemplifies China's attempt to integrate its economic power into regional and commercial influence, highlighting its export-driven growth model and using its expanding economic strength to transform the functioning of political institutions. The BRI encompasses two distinct transportation networks, comprising of two maritime routes and six overland corridors. These routes offer strategic pathways for international trade and economic development, utilizing both sea and land-based channels. Routes for the project consist of rail, sea, and land networks, connecting China to Europe and the Middle East. Approximately 65 countries are located along the project's pathways (Tokatlı, 2023).

The project was first introduced by President Xi Jinping in 2013. In public addresses given in Kazakhstan and Indonesia, Xi highlighted the project, underscoring its potential positive impact on the global arena. Kazakhstan and Indonesia were deliberately chosen; Kazakhstan, as a typical country along the Belt, and Indonesia, symbolically representing the Road, were selected with intention. The project seeks to revive the ancient Silk Road and establish a trade and infrastructure network spanning three major continents: Asia, Europe, and Africa (Miller, 2019). The Belt and Road Initiative consists of two main components: the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road." Through these components, the initiative establishes connections between China and other states by using both land and sea routes (Rolland, 2017).

As of September 2023, 154 countries had joined the Belt and Road Initiative, representing 80% of the 193 member states of the UN (Tiezzi, 2023). Since 2013, China has invested over $1 trillion in infrastructure projects (Bipindra, 2023). The initiative encompasses not only infrastructure projects but also cooperation in areas such as energy, trade, investment, finance, cultural exchange, and policy coordination (Ghiasy & Zhou, 2017). In this context, the BRI is a comprehensive strategy aimed at promoting global economic integration while fostering deeper cooperation and connectivity among the participating countries.

Figure 1
The Belt and Road Initiative



Source: Hart-Landsberg, 2018.

In the post-Cold War era, China developed a unique economic model reinforced by a distinct political identity, positioning itself as a rising regional power. Following significant economic achievements in and after the 1990s, China began seeking a new world order that supported a more centralized governance model. Western powers have expressed concerns about China's increasing influence and impact on the current international system, leading to discussions about the perceived "China threat." In response, China emphasized global and regional cooperation, replacing the notion of a “China threat” with the “rise of China” narrative (Tokatlı, 2023).

China laid the foundation for the Belt and Road Initiative through its open-door policy and neoliberal free market model, which were introduced in the 1980s. Emerging from the 1997 Asian crisis stronger than other regional countries, China played a significant role in restoring stability and previous order in the region. However, the sharp decline in export growth following the Asian crisis negatively affected China’s current account balance. After the crisis, Asian countries facing current account deficits found themselves in worse conditions due to dollar-denominated loans. Overvaluation of the dollar after 1995 reduced the competitiveness of Asian countries that pegged their currencies to the dollar, further worsening their current account deficits (Yay, Yay & Yılmaz, 2001). On the contrary, by implementing institutional and political reforms, China became more integrated into the liberal economic model, especially after the 2000s.

Former President Hu Jintao prioritized multilateral relations, making significant strides toward establishing a comprehensive network of cooperation. Following its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), China adapted to the liberal economic order and gained substantial advantages in attracting foreign capital. After joining the WTO, foreign investment in China increased rapidly. For instance, prior to 2001, China’s export rate was approximately 5%, but after its WTO membership, the figure rose to 35%. With its accession to the WTO in 2001, China began implementing a liberal economic model, adopting export-oriented production and market-driven reforms. The removal of existing tariffs and quota barriers against China allowed the country to open its doors to the world and take a more active role in international trade. The process of globalization further contributed to China’s economic growth, transforming it into a key actor in the international economic system (Kohli, Linn & Zucker, 2020). Therefore, the BRI is a strategy aimed at enhancing China's economic power and influence

globally. It seeks to strengthen China's global supply chains, eliminate barriers to opening new markets, and ensure energy security (Summers, 2016).

The Outlines and Strategic Objectives of the BRI

China's rise within the new world order has increasingly come to the forefront through international organizations. Chinese President Xi Jinping, while emphasizing the importance of economic diplomacy within the framework of cooperative partnerships, has defined the Asian region as a "community with a shared destiny and common interests" (Zhang, Alon & Lattemann, 2018). From this perspective, it is possible to conclude that China aims to extend its influence globally, starting with the Eurasian region. The Belt and Road Initiative is a key project in this global outreach effort.

The BRI's outlines are based on large-scale infrastructure projects carried out via land and sea routes and their strategic objectives. The Silk Road Economic Belt spans land routes extending from China through Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe (Clarke, 2017). This belt strengthens regional connectivity through infrastructure projects such as railways, highways, energy pipelines, and logistics hubs. For example, the China-Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway line significantly reduces the distance between Asia and Europe (Blanchard & Flint, 2017).

The 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road starts in China and extends by sea to Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, and Europe (Liu, 2019). The project has had a positive impact on China's trade volume. Ports, trade routes, and infrastructure have improved. The aim of this project is to increase maritime trade. It is also necessary to ensure the security of China's maritime routes. The project has also facilitated China's access to West Asia and Africa through Gwadar Port in Pakistan (Sørensen, 2015).

With the BRI, the countries involved in the project have made progress in certain areas. They have grown economically, gained a more advantageous position in terms of energy security, accelerated trade flows, and, most importantly, their cultural exchanges have increased (Cai, 2017). These steps have consolidated China's position in the global economy. New opportunities have emerged for China. With the BRI, the economies of the countries included in the project have grown, and investors have started to come to these countries (Zhang, Alon & Lattemann, 2018).

Energy security is also ensured by the BRI. This strategic situation has ensured the securing of resources and the diversification of energy transmission lines (Ferdinand, 2016). China's energy lines and security are ensured by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Wolf, 2020). In addition, China's energy imports have become more secure through energy projects in Central Asia.

One of the most important roles China plays globally is its supply chain volume. Due to the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the nation has strengthened its position and expanded its presence in global trade (Huang, 2016). The most significant contribution of the BRI to China is that it has developed new trade routes and logistics hubs. Thus, the export market has expanded and processes have shortened (Rolland, 2017). With the BRI, tariffs imposed by countries have decreased and trade restrictions have been eased (Blanchard, 2018).

BRI The encompasses not only economic objectives but also facilitates cultural exchange as an integral aspect of the project. China has developed cooperation with the countries in the region through cultural, scientific, and touristic projects. Considering that trade impacts the economy, the BRI is a crucial project.

With the BRI, co-operation with the countries participating in the project has been improved and a crucial step has been taken toward global integration. In this sense, the project is the product of a comprehensive strategy. China's economic reforms and open-door policy constitute the infrastructure of the BRI. The project has made it possible to include Asia, Europe, and Africa. The essence of the BRI

is economic integration. The project has also ensured the acceleration of trade, cultural exchange, and, perhaps most importantly, energy security have also been ensured by the project. For this purpose, infrastructure projects related to sea and land routes have been implemented. It is essential to emphasize the political and economic effects of this project on the Eurasian countries.

Economic Impacts

With the BRI, China will gain significant economic advantages, but the project will also contribute to other countries in the region. The primary economic goals of this project, which constitute a significant component of the BRI, are as follows (Leverett & Bingbing, 2016):

- Enhancing commercial activity.
- Facilitating the mobility of capital and production factors to increase production.
- Ensuring that China's production capacity remains competitive with those of other countries while establishing China as a single market.
- Achieving economic growth to elevate China to a leading country position.
- Promoting industrialization and globalization through integration and physical projects.
- Institutionalizing financing mechanisms.
- Ensuring trade and financial integration.
- Enhancing international cooperation and specialization.

This project appears to align with China's strategy of becoming a global power. Consequently, world trade is expected to shift from the Atlantic axis to the Pacific axes, with China emerging as a key player (Kopuk & Bayraç, 2021).

The Belt and Road Initiative aims to provide a comprehensive framework for many of the policy objectives that Chinese authorities have been pursuing in response to various domestic and international challenges over recent years (Amighini, 2017). The Chinese President has expressed hope that trade with countries involved in the initiative will exceed approximately US$2.5 trillion within the next decade. Trade between China and Central Asia was approximately $1 billion in 2000, rising to $50 billion by 2013 (Zimmerman, 2015). By 2023, that figure had reached $90.7 billion (Buyar, 2024). China aims to further develop this trade, seeking new export markets and establishing mechanisms to export not only goods but also production surpluses in the shipping and infrastructure sectors through new railways and facilities (Tekir & Demir, 2018).

Infrastructure and Investment Projects

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has implemented numerous significant infrastructure and investment projects across Eurasia. These projects are designed to accelerate economic development in the region and improve trade flows. For example, the Khorgos Gateway project in Kazakhstan has accelerated overland transportation between China and Europe, enhancing regional trade (Cai, 2017). With the railway network, the BRI will reduce the costs and times of transporting products from China to the interior of Europe.

There are projects similar to BRI. With the Gwadar Port project in Pakistan, trade flows between South and Central Asia have accelerated and economic relations between countries have increased (Blanchard, 2018). The Gwadar Port, a strategic point providing China with access to West Asia and Africa, will diversify China's maritime trade routes and positively impact energy security (Clarke, 2017).

The Marmaray Tunnel in Türkiye and the China-Central Asia–Eastern Europe International Railway are among the BRI projects (Huang, 2016). This will increase trade with Eurasia and facilitate regional economic integration. The Marmaray Tunnel, uninterrupted rail transport between Asia and Europe will be possible (Liu, 2019).

Within the framework of the BRI, the establishment of infrastructure systems will enable countries in the region to attract foreign direct investments, consequently leading to amplified economic growth. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund are the mechanisms used by China to finance these projects (Summers, 2016). Thus, infrastructure projects will become sustainable in the countries involved in the project, and the chances of success will increase.

Trade and Economic Growth

As a result of the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), it is anticipated that the economies of Eurasian nations will experience significant expansion. This project offers a crucial advantage as it enhances trade routes and contributes to the reduction of transport costs. In addition, countries' trade volumes will improve (Rolland, 2017). Another effect is the improvement of railway transport between China and Europe.

Small- and medium-sized enterprises have begun to develop with the BRI. It will enable them to tap into new global markets and enhance their competitiveness in international trade. (Ghiasy & Zhou, 2017). The implementation of the BRI is anticipated to result in the rejuvenation of the labor market in the region's countries, leading to the emergence of new employment prospects (Zhang, Alon & Lattemann, 2018).

With the BRI, new investments have been made in the countries of the region, and economic growth has been achieved. Economic development has accelerated because of foreign direct investments (Miller, 2019). Chinese investments in energy and infrastructure projects have enhanced Pakistan's energy security and accelerated economic growth (Wolf, 2020).

International trade policies and tariff reductions also support the effects of the BRI on trade volume. China is reducing trade barriers and promoting international trade by entering into free trade agreements with participating countries under the BRI (Ferdinand, 2016). In this context, BRI contributes to the liberalization of global trade and accelerating economic growth.

Political Impacts

Given that approximately 80% of the UN member states are involved in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), it is inevitable that the project will have significant political impact. For China, the outward-looking policies that began in the late 1970s have gained international significance for the first time with the BRI; in this sense, the project is also referred to as China's Geopolitical Grand Strategy. This strategy seeks to enhance China's presence on the global platform while also seeking to improve its relationships with neighboring regions, including Southeast Asia and Central Asia, in a manner that aligns with China's interests (Ploberger, 2017).

While this project offers China numerous political advantages, it also brings certain risks to the country. Instabilities in countries involved in the project, such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Middle East, and Central Asia, are likely to increase political risks. Additionally, in the event of conflicts between Arab states and Israel in these regions, China may encounter pressure to align with one side or the other (Ferdinand, 2016). It is apparent that the growing influence of China in the international arena may lead to concerns among the U.S. and other Western countries.

At this point, it is appropriate to evaluate the broad changes that the Belt and Road Initiative may bring to the international arena.

Regional Cooperation and Diplomacy

The BRI is notable not only for its economic but also for its political effects. Through the BRI, China has strengthened diplomatic relations with other countries in the region and established strategic partnerships (Cai, 2017). In this process, China's influence over regional power balances is increasing, and new political dynamics emerge. With the BRI, a 'win-win' approach has prevailed and diplomatic relations improved.

In Central and South Asian countries, the impact of the BRI is evident. China's cooperation with Pakistan has changed the balance of power in South Asia (Blanchard & Flint, 2017). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is an important example of such cooperation.

The influence of Russia within the Central Asian countries is quite substantial. Furthermore, China, through the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), has initiated a competitive dynamic with Russia in the region. Thus, political power dynamics have changed, and new alliances have emerged (Clarke, 2017). China's relations with Central Asian countries are also vital. With energy projects and infrastructure investments, cooperation opportunities in the region have developed and diplomatic relations have strengthened (Huang, 2016).

Political Transformation and Power Dynamics

With the BRI, some political transformations have taken place in the countries involved. There have also been changes in power dynamics. The political agendas of the countries in the region have changed, and there have been differences in the balance of power (Summers, 2016). China's investments in infrastructure have transformed the economic and political structures of the countries in the region.

The BRI has instigated widespread regional and global transformations. As a result of the BRI, China has significantly impacted the global economic landscape and the international order (Miller, 2019). As a global power, China has increased its influence over the international economy through this project (Ghiasy & Zhou, 2017).

The Belt and Road Initiative has led to political changes in the countries of the region, which are closely intertwined with the economic transformations taking place. The economic development of Central Asian countries has been positively affected, and these countries have become regional powers (Wolf, 2020). Central Asian countries have begun to establish new and different relations with regional powers through their relations with China (Zhang, Alon & Lattemann, 2018).

The BRI is advancing China's global ambitions and continues to transform regional power dynamics. Through the project, various infrastructure projects have been implemented, and economic development initiatives have been undertaken. In this way, a new international order has been created, and the relationship between the countries in the region and China has taken a different turn (Rolland, 2017).

Social and Environmental Impacts

Social Changes

With the BRI, large-scale infrastructure projects have been carried out throughout Eurasia. This has led to social change. Economic investments also impact social dynamics in every country. The BRI has changed the social dynamics of the countries in the region. In short, the projects have positively and negatively affected countries in the region.

The BRI has increased employment opportunities and has boosted the economies of the countries in the region. The construction sector has been particularly positively affected. Infrastructure projects have created new employment opportunities (Xiheng, 2019). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project in Pakistan has created thousands of new job opportunities (Wolf, 2020).

The BRI has also created negative social impacts. In some regions, population shifted to other areas, and the social fabric deteriorated (Clarke, 2017). The land of the local residents was utilized for infrastructure development, resulting in changes to their living spaces. As a result, there has been some unrest and protests in the area (Zhang, Alon & Lattemann, 2018).

Economic changes have a direct or indirect impact on culture. The BRI has also caused some cultural changes. This impact is one of the main social impacts of the BRI. There have been many exchange programs. China's cultural ties with the countries in the region have improved. Changes have occurred in cultural values. With the project, the cultural structure has changed and cultural interaction has increased (Ghiasy & Zhou, 2017).

Environmental Impacts

BRI infrastructure projects and economic initiatives have had environmental impacts. Natural resources were used in the project. Therefore, changes have occurred in the ecosystem. Naturally, discussions on environmental sustainability have also begun.

The BRI projects have led to the destruction of the natural environment and a decline in biodiversity. Railway and highway projects have reduced forests and damaged wildlife (Huang, 2016). As a result, biodiversity has declined, and the ecological balance has been damaged (Summers, 2016).

The BRI has also damaged water resources. Water pollution has increased along with the use of water resources. The riverbeds have been altered by infrastructure projects, resulting in reduced water quality. The aquatic ecosystem has been damaged by hydroelectric power plants and dam projects. Therefore, water resources have been negatively affected by sustainable use (Rolland, 2017).

However, China wants to reduce environmental impacts by adopting various measures. For this, sustainability-related measures have been taken. With the Green BRI initiative, environmental sustainability is increasing and carbon footprint is decreasing (Xiheng, 2019). Renewable energy projects have been implemented. Energy efficiency measures and environmentally friendly infrastructure practices have increased (Zhang, Alon & Lattemann, 2018).

Within the scope of the project, China has encouraged the use of renewable energy sources and tried to reduce fossil fuel consumption (Miller, 2019). Emphasis was placed on solar and wind energy projects, which are environmentally friendly solutions. Environmental sustainability and energy security projects were supported (Wolf, 2020).

Environmental impact assessments are also conducted under the BRI. Environmental impact assessments determine the environmental impact of the project before any measures are taken (Summers, 2016). Thus, the negative impacts of the BRI are minimized.

While the BRI projects are underway, China has endeavored to comply with both environmental sustainability and global standards. In particular, the company has stated that it adopts and strives to comply with global environmental standards (Ghiasy & Zhou, 2017). It cooperated with the countries participating in the project and took initiatives to minimize negative environmental impacts.

The environmental and social impacts of the BRI must be studied in depth. The local area has experienced job opportunities, leading to some residents relocating, and resulting in cultural shifts. These are the social impacts of the project. The use of natural resources, pollution of water resources,

and protection of biodiversity are the environmental impacts of the project. Ensuring environmental and social sustainability within the scope of the project is essential for China (Xiheng, 2019).

Conclusion

The BRI reflects China's efforts to pursue various political, economic, and social objectives. In this regard, the project has a global dimension. In our research, we have focused on the definition of the BRI and its background and strategic objectives. We have also addressed the economic, social, political, and environmental implications of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as it pertains to the countries in the region. Infrastructure projects and investments have increased alongside the BRI. Trade routes have expanded, positively affecting economic growth. Transportation costs have decreased with rail and maritime investments. The investments have also contributed to the reduction of transportation times. The growth in employment can be attributed to strategic direct investments, although there are ongoing concerns related to sustainability and financing that need to be addressed.

China has utilized the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to enhance its diplomatic influence. Through this initiative, China has cultivated new alliances with neighboring nations and fostered collaborative efforts to realize mutual strategic objectives. Thus, regional cooperation and diplomacy have increased China’s global power. The changes in political and power dynamics caused by the BRI have reshaped the balance of power.

The BRI has various impacts on the local population, which include both positive and negative aspects. While investments have led to increased employment, people have also been displaced due to the necessity of yielding their land for infrastructure projects. As a result, the social structure is disrupted. As natural resources have been utilized, changes have occurred in the ecosystem, sparking discussions on environmental sustainability. To mitigate these impacts, China has taken some measures.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has diverse and complex impacts. When all effects are considered together, it creates challenges and opportunities. The success of the BRI can be ensured through a number of sustainability-related recommendations. To enhance and sustain the economic impacts of the project, emphasis should be placed on financial sustainability and risk management. Both China and regional countries can create new financing opportunities through various collaborations. Projects can be made more sustainable by carefully considering their economic gains and costs.

To enhance the positive diplomatic impacts of the project, China should establish more transparent relationships with countries involved in the BRI. Strengthening cooperation with BRI countries will influence regional power balances. In addition, this approach will enable the development of new partnerships.

Socially, to mitigate the negative impact of the BRI, public participation and social benefits should be encouraged. The opinions of people in regional countries should be considered, and local employment should be increased. Additionally, cultural activities should be organized within the scope of the project to demonstrate that local cultural values are being preserved.

Environmentally, the project should incorporate eco-friendly technologies to demonstrate a commitment to environmental preservation. The use of renewable energy sources is crucial because they enhance energy efficiency. For example, environmental impact assessments can be conducted and implemented with proper monitoring of these practices. Global environmental standards should be considered, and collaborations with participating countries should be established.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) will facilitate economic development in Eurasian countries. Regional cooperation is another contribution of the project. In order to capitalize on the full range

of opportunities and secure the long-term viability of the project, it is important to effectively tackle a number of challenges. The project can only become sustainable through the cooperation of participating countries. In addition, transparency is essential for the continuation of these relationships. In order for the project to maintain its effectiveness in the future, it is crucial that it be managed and implemented with great care and attention to detail.



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Chapter 7

Weaponisation of Migration in the Context of Hybrid Warfare Strategies: The Case of Russia-Ukraine War

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Abstract

Hybrid warfare is defined as the utilisation of a combination of conventional and unconventional methods. Among the various forms of unconventional hybrid warfare, international migration is employed as an effective strategy, rather than as a means of exerting military power or imposing economic sanctions. To forcible relocation of individuals from their place of residence to a designated location is undertaken by a state or actor for the pursuit of its own interests. This study concentrates on the deployment of migration as a weapon, which represents a pivotal element of hybrid warfare strategies. This study will examine the weaponisation of migration in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war as a case study. The objective of this study is to determine on which variants of weaponisation of migration are applied by Russia in the context of Ukrainian asylum seekers. The findings of this analysis indicate that Russia has employed a range of variants in the case of the Ukrainian asylum seekers including coercive, dispossessive, exportive and political variants, as well as passportisation and international propaganda.

Keywords Hybrid Warfare · International Security · International Migration · International Politics · Russia · Ukraine

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Introduction

In February 2022, Russian President Putin announced his recognition of the independence of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions from Ukraine. Following the authorisation of the Russian Parliament to deploy troops beyond the boundaries of the Russian Federation, Putin dispatched Russian troops with the objective of establishing peace in the two regions in question. Consequently, Ukraine was placed under a state of emergency, marking the commencement of the Russian occupation on 24 February 2022. Russia deployed a similar strategy of hybrid warfare against Ukraine as it had previously in the occupation and illegal annexation of Ossetia and Crimea. A result of the bombing of infrastructure in residential areas and the transformation of cities into battlegrounds, a mass influx of Ukrainian immigrants occurred. The EU announced the openning of its borders to the Ukrainians. On the second day of the conflict in Ukraine, approximately 50,000 Ukrainians were admitted by neighbouring countries. The influx of Ukrainians asylum seekers has recently emerged as a significant challenge for the European countries (Özçelik, 2020a; Işığıçok & Kariman, 2022; Özçelik, 2020b).

This study focuses on the utilisation of migration as a weapon, which represents a crucial element of hybrid warfare strategies. This study will examine the weaponisation of migration in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Firstly, it will begin by providing an overview of the literature on hybrid warfare, followed by a comprehensive examination of the instruments in which migration is employed as a weapon in a hybrid warfare context. It will then proceed to analyse the Russian-Ukrainian war in detail, with a view to illustrating the weaponisation of migration.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The Concept of Hybrid Warfare

The concept of hybrid warfare was articulated by Frank Hoffman in 2007. This concept, which introduces a new perspective to the field of war studies, is defined as the usage of both conventional and unconventional methods simultaneously or in conjunction with one another (Fairclough, 2018). Hoffmann (2007: 29) asserted that "*hybrid wars incorporate a range of different modes of warfare including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder*". Such warfare may be conducted by a variety of non-state actors as well as states. Another scholar, Peter R. Mansoor, offers a similar definition, defining hybrid warfare as "*conflict involving a combination of conventional military forces and irregulars (such as terrorists, insurgents) which could include both state and non-state actors, aimed at achieving a common political purpose*" (Wither, 2016: 74).

The conceptual framework of hybrid warfare was explained by Gerasimov, the former chief of the Russian General Staff. In his 2013 speech, he asserted that the nature of warfare in the modern world has undergone a transformation, and that unmilitary instruments can be employed in political conflicts. He further observed that, as result of technological developments, unmilitary instruments confer greater superiority on states than military instruments. Consequently, unmilitary instruments, including media and information warfare, cyber warfare and psychological warfare was utilized in Crimea, Ukraine and the Donbas region as well as by ununiformed little green men (Bingöl, 2023).

This concept was also discussed in the master's thesis by William J. Nemeth who presents the case of a non-state actor employing hybrid warfare techniques against a superior state. In 1999 two Chinese Generals attempted to provide a definition of hybrid warfare in their studies. They defined it as a model of warfare that includes both of all military and non-military tools used to impose the demands of a state on its enemy. According to Russian General Mahmud Akhmetovich Gareyev, an advocate of hybrid

warfare integration through political, economic and psychological tools, asserts that a hybrid warfare should be regarded as an integration of all instruments including military and non-military tools. The use of military tools in isolation from other instruments represents only a partical aspect of warfare, rather than a comprehensive approach (Muradov, 2022).

The objective of hybrid warfare is to weaken and damage the enemy through the implementation of intimidation strategies and the sustained maintenance of a low-intensity conflict. Hybrid warfare is characterized by a number of key attributes, including continuity, low-intensity conflict and manageable chaos. The deployment of disinformation, economic manipulation and other analogous tactics is undertaken with the objective of undermining and ultimately destroying the adversary (Özcan, 2022). The aforementioned tools and strategies encompass a range of techniques, including the potential for influencing public perception through bot accounts in social media, the involvement of non-governmental organisations and trade unions on behalf of the opposing side, the creation and support of non-violent popular uprisings and the utilisation of opposition policies (Karabulut, 2016).

It is argued that the concept of hybrid warfare is not a novel phenomeon; therefore, it is not possible to distinguish between traditional and hybrid warfare. However, hybrid warfare allows for the utilization of a combination of both traditional forces and unconventional forces, while conventional methods such as guns, tanks, missiles and regular armies are employed in a traditional manner within the context of a conventional military operation. In the context of the 2008 Georgian War, Russia deployed a combination of both conventional and unconventional troops, including South Ossetian and Abkhazian militias and Russian special operations forces, which were presented as local defence troops. Another illustrative example is that of Hezbollah, which effectively utilized the internet, other social media platforms and information technologies as a strategic instrument to disseminates its propaganda against its adversaries. The example of Hezbollah proved more effective than Israeli propaganda in influencing global public opinion. The unconventional instruments of hybrid warfare are diverse. Colourful revolutions can be seen as unmilitary instruments to threaten and destabilise Russia in the near neighbourhood. In response to these, Russia operated defensive campaigns in the eastern Ukraine and occupied Crimea to counter the American hybrid tactics (Wither, 2016).

International Migration and Hybrid Warfare

In its official documents of 2011, NATO defined the concept of hybrid warfare, which it subsequently expanding it to include terrorism, ethnic conflict, piracy and migration. The definition of hybrid warfare has been proposed by encompassing the aforementioned categories. NATO also highlighted the role of propoganda in destabilising countries and demoralising the adversary's population, identifying migration as a potential tactic in hybrid warfare. The document asserted that mass migration instils feelings of fear and insecurity in European countries because of undermining their security, political and economic stability. In addition, it is acknowledged that such mass migration can also be deliberately created by a state with the intention of placing hostile states in a difficult position (Krishnan, 2022).

The international migration is currently a prominent topic of European public debate, frequently discussed in conjunction with a range of related issues, including the erosion of national identity, social deterioration, xenophobia and Islamophobia. Irregular migration, perceived as a national threat, has been mostly subjected to a process of securitisation by the receiving countries. The process of securitisation is initiated when decision-makers categorise a political issue within the security domain. This addresses an issue that could be resolved by political means, through the utilisation of security measures and the persuasion of the opposing side to perceive this issue as a security concern. To illustrate, while irregular migration is a political issue, it has been reframed by policymakers as a national security concern. Decision makers have transformed asylum-seekers and immigrants into a

security issue, thereby creating the perception that international migration can be addressed through security measures (İrdem & Raychev, 2021; Demirtaş, 2019).

It would be reasonable to suggest that the fear of immigration is a genuine concern for a majority of people. Research indicates that people feel some concerns on the issue that immigrants and asylum seekers may find challenging to adapt to the receiving country's national identity, norms and rules, and to fully integrate into such country's society. Furthermore, some economic considerations can be added to these concerns as well. It is frequently claimed that asylum seekers impose a financial burden on the EU members. Due to unwilling of paying for this burden, this situation has resulted in a solidarity crisis among the members. Those countries on the eastern and southern borders have expressed the feeling of concern that they are bearing the brunt of the costs associated with the refugee crisis without adequate support from the Union and its core members. In conclusion, it has been proposed that the affluence of prosperous Europe could be exploited by irregular immigrants, that the democratic, secular and liberal fabric of the European society would be disrupted, and that the Union could even dissolve if the wave of irregular migration could not be stopped (Heisler& Layton-Henry, 1993; İrdem & Raychev, 2021; Bostan 2021; Bostan 2023). This illustrates how international migration can destabilise receiving countries from a political, economic and social perspective, due to the creation of an irregular migration flow.

In this sense, it is discussed that international migration could be represented as an unconventional hybrid war including pervasive attrition strategy. There is also a perception that the deployment of mass migration is more efficacious strategy than an exertion of military power or imposition of economic sanctions. To forcely provide people to immigrate from their local inhabitats to a specific location is driven by a state or an actor which implement its own military and political objectives. Some activities such as population reduction or increase can be used as a means of manipulation for interests of a state or an actor (Greenhill, 2016).

The use of migration as a weapon was first introduced to the literature by Kelly Greenhill (Başer, 2022). In his book, namely Weapons of Mass Migration, Greenhill provides a comprehensive analysis of coercively designed migration. He posits that a state or an actor can be used it as a coercive action against its hostile state. If a state which is relatively weak and employs it as a strategic instrument of foreign policy, it may be regarded as a decisive factor that could be used to prevail over its stronger adversary. It is relatively not costly method for a weak state by forcibly displacing people and subjugating its adversary in accordance with its own interest and desire. In 1995 Myron Weiner was the first to highlight its significant implications for international security studies, although Greenhill was the first scholar to introduce this concept to the literature. According to Weiner, the international migration is politically and financially expedient for a weak state, thereby enabling utilisation of the migration wave to its own advantage/interest (Salehyan, 2010).

Greenhill (2008: 7, 8) who refers it as strategic engineered migration, defines migration as "*are deliberately induced or manipulated by state or non-state actors, in ways designed to augment, reduce, or change the composition of the population residing within a particular territory, for political or military ends*". He describes how a weak actor can use forced migration as a coercive tool in interest of itself. Some strategies highlighted by Greenhill, show how an actor can use political discord created by a forced migration in another country for its interests.

Greenhill categories actors who use forced migration under three typologies: generators, agents provocateurs and opportunists. Although agents provocateurs are mainly non-state actors who intentionally provoke refugee-generating government repression to attract international attention, even generators consciously cause displacement of people. On the other hand, opportunists have not responsbility for causing mass displacement. However, they just try to take advantage. For instances,

Macedonia could obtain concessions from NATO members during the Kosovo campaign in exchange for accepting Albanian refugees (Salehyan, 2010).

The first example for the utilisation of migration as a strategic instrument, namely weapon, in the international arena was undertaken by the former Libyan leader, Gaddafi. Gaddafi employed migration as a weapon when his demands were not met by the EU. In 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010, he was responsible for initiating a significant migration flow Libya to Europe (Tsourapas, 2017). Gaddafi, who characterised this tactic as '*painting Europe black*', deploy it as a weapon against the EU. Another example can be seen in the case of used by Milosevic, who attempted to prevent the NATO air campaign against Serbia during the Kosovo intervention in 1999. Milosevic pursued a policy of aggression against Kosovo Albanians, declaring that he could '*evacuate Kosovo in a week*' and attempted to impede NATO's intervention by concentrating Kosovo Albanians along the border. It could be asserted that the influx of displaced refugees is more effective deterrent than military action (Greenhill, 2016).

The weaponisation of migration creates a disadvantageous situation for states governed by liberal democracies, which are targeted. This is because countries governed by liberal democracies have undertaken certain commitments in international agreements and have responsibilities towards both their own people and the international community due to their normative values. The obligation to comply with the principle of non-refoulement and to facilitate the integration of hosted asylum seekers and immigrants with the host society imposes an economic, political and sociocultural burden/cost on these countries, which may in turn lead to national security weaknesses. Democratic countries are therefore more vulnerable than other countries (Greenhill, 2016).

Weaponisation of Migration

The use of migration by actors is categorised into seven instruments. In his study, Greenhill (2008) identified the method of using migration by four instruments. However, Steger (2017) conducted a study in which fifty samples were analysed and concluded that actors utilise the influx of migration by seven instruments. This study will apply these seven instruments to ascertain whether Russian has used the influx of migration during the Ukrainian war.

These seven variants are *dispossessive, exportive, militarized, coercive, economic, political and fifth column*. The varian of *dispossessive* refers to a category of events, which compass both external and internal immigrants, wherein the primary aim is the acquisition of another group's property and territory. In addition, it is used to describe the removal of this group as a perceived threat to the ethnic-political status quo and economic interests. This is generally known as a ethnic-cleasing. In terms of *exportive,* this displacement is a strategic action undertaken with the purpose of consolidating its own political position and expelling its political adversary or domestic adversary in a region/country. Furthermore, this strategy seeks to also aims to undermine and/or destabilise the adversary's government (Greenhill, 2008).

The variant of *militarized* can be defined as a strategic displacement of populations during a conflict, with the objective of gaining a military advantage over the adversary. The aim is to disrupt and destroy the adversary's mobility, command-control and logistics capabilities, while simultaneously acquiring additional resources and manpower from the displaced individuals. Such actions thus serve to enhance the military capabilities. The most common strategy of this variant is to recruit their own military personnel. As regards of the variant of *coercive,* the events in which outflows are employed as a foreign policy instrument to impede or prompt alterations in political conduct and to secure additional payments from the adversary. The coercive deployment of outflows encompasses a propagandistic utilisation (Greenhill, 2008; Steger, 2017).

The variant of *economic* is the encouragement and/or facilitation of forced or economic migration for economic gains. The variant of *fifth column* is defined as a long-term strategy designed to ensure or facilitate the migration of a significant number of individuals towards the territory of an adversary state. The objective of this strategy is to undermine the adversary state's legitimacy and activities within its bordes by abusing the displaced citizens and sympathisers. The *political* variant is employed by the state for the purpose of legitimizing future actions, countering enemy political moves, and increasing the state's own political legitimacy. The instruments of passportisation and international propaganda are associated with the polical variant (Steger, 2017; Başer, 2022).

Case Study

The Russian-Ukrainian War

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a military operation against Ukraine. Prior to this operation, in June 2017, the Ukrainian parliament voted on the goal of NATO membership. A few months later, Zelenski declared that NATO membership represents a national objective for Ukraine. Putin then sent Russian troops to the Ukrainian border. In the last month of 2021, Putin demanded guarantees that Ukraine would not accept NATO membership. However, Western diplomats were unable to assuage the tensions along the Ukrainian-Russian border. In response, Russia augmented the number of its troops stationed along the border of Ukraine. In response to the US sending military assistance to the Eastern European member states of the NATO, Russia and Belarus held a joint military exercise along the border of Ukraine. In recognition of the separatist movements in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, the Russian government instructed its military units to enter these areas and ensure the safety of ethnic Russians. Ultimately, in February 2022, Moscow launched a military operation against Ukraine (Karasoy, 2022).

Russia's approach towards Ukraine, characterised as hybrid warfare, has evolved in the following manner. First, the objective was to render Ukraine interventionist by creating an environment of turmoil in the country. The Russian government sought to maintain pressure on Ukraine by imposing political and economic sanctions on Kyiv. In parallel with this strategy of attrition, the uprising of the Ukrainian Russians and the mobilisation of the Green Men on the ground were employed with the objective of creating an environment conducive to civil war in Ukraine. To create a legitimate ground for Moscow's potential military intervention, the information component of hybrid warfare has been initiated. To protect its interests, Moscow has tried to reduce the intensity of the conflict and de-escalate tensions (Özdemir & Eminoğlu, 2022).

The Ukrainian Asylum Seekers

The war strategy employed by Russia against Ukraine has resulted in the forced displacement of Ukrainian citizens. The destruction of the infrastructure, which is necessary to meet the basic needs of the civilian population, and the creation of a perception of vulnerability to violence by the Russians have been identified as key factors in this displacement. After the Syrian refugee crisis, it is one of the largest migrations (Işığıçok & Kariman, 2022) and the fastest migration wave that European countries have been exposed to. As a result of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and the threat to life, a migration flow from the country of origin to the country of destination began. The EU stated that it would welcome Ukrainian asylum seekers. On the second day of the war, 50.000 Ukrainian citizens were compelled to flee their homeland. To guarantee the dafety of those migrating from Ukraine to other countries, a few humanitarian corridors have been set up. The humanitarian corridor witnessed a significant influx of Ukrainian immigrants seeking asylum in Europe, with Poland receiving approximately two million asylum seekers. In addition to Poland, other countries that were favoured

by Ukrainians included Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Moldova, Belarus and Russia (Başçıllar, Karataş & Güre, 2022).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has reported that nearly 6.5 million Ukrainians are currently classified as refugees in neighbouring countries, while a further 3.7 million are internally displaced persons. Poland has accepted 60 % of the Ukrainian asylum seekers. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has resulted in a number of significant challenges. In particular, the damage to energy infrastructures has resulted in significant disruptions to healthcare, water, heating, education and electricity. As a consequence, the majority of the Ukranians are experiencing these difficulties. International organisations are striving to address the humanitarian needs of those displaced due to the destruction of infrastructure and the threat to life safety resulting from rocket attacks. According to the 2024 dataset, nearly 14.6 million Ukrainians are in need of humanitarian assistance (UNHCR, 2024).

The Case Analysis

The employment of air and artillery attacks, long-rane missiles, and warplanes in the Ukrainian-Russian war, and the transformation of the conflict into an urban war, constitute the most significant factors that have precipitated a mass migration. The strategic targeting of the city's infrastructure by the Russian military resulted in the inability of Ukrainian civilians residing in the city to meet their essential needs, including access to electricity, gas and heating. Furthermore, the destruction of the settlements that changed hands prevented Ukrainians from returning to their own homes. In this conflict, in which all factors of hybrid warfare were employed, Ukrainian citizens were compelled to migrate to secure areas and reside there for an extended period. These strategic actions enable Putin to launch, orientate and benefit from the migration of the Ukrainians in manner that served Russia's interests (Kononov, 2024).

The coercive variant, which seeks to intimidate the enemy by encouraging the migration flow towards hostile countries, has been one of the Russia's most effective tools in its strategy against the West in the case of Ukrainian asylum seekers. In 2021, Belarus sought to exert pressure on the EU by allowing illegal immigrants to cross its borders into Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania. In response to this action, the EU members, facing a challenging situation due to the influx of illegal immigrants, negotiated a solution with Belarus (Miholjcic, 2022).

Similarly, the curren influx of Ukrainian migration, which was deliberately initiated by targeting Ukrainian civilians and destroying urban infrastructure, has resulted in certain advantages for the Russian government. This has resulted in the forced removal of Ukrainian civilians who are opposed to the Russian government, thereby externalising the pro-Ukrainian supporters. It was estimated that 90 % of the Ukranian immigrants to the Europe belong to the dissident, urban and highly educated class (Kronov, 2024). The exodus of this demographic has arguably served to weaken the Zelensky's position and strengthening that of Putin by the expulsion of those who live in cities. This demonstrates the use of dispossession as a tool by Russia against Ukraine.

Furthermore, international migration can be utilized as a foreign policy instrument to obtain concessions and isolate an adversary. Following the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis, the Ukrainian immigrants which has been considered the most traumatic crisis, was exploited by Putin as a bargaining chip against the EU. As reported by Reuters, Russia government sought to initiate a new wave of Ukrainian migration towards the EU by deliberately targeting the city's electricity infrastructure (Reuters, October 20, 2022).

International migration has constituted a significant challenge for the member states of the EU. The ability of asylum seekers to reside in secure locations and to be employed to meet their essential needs represents a significant challenge for the members. Furthermore, the capacity fof the EU members to protect their identities and the ability of immigrants to integrate into the host society represent

additional challenges confronting the members. The articulation of racist and exclusionary discourses against asylum seekers and immigrants by the leaders of far-right and far-left political parties has the potential to undermine social cohesion and the foundations of Western democracies at the national level. The Western states are bound by international agreements and commitments and are thus obliged to respect the principle of non-refoulement, which places a significant burden on them. As a result of their inability to assume these, the EU members may be compelled to deport illegal asylum seekers to third countries designated as safety countries for asylum seekers. The Western states that adhere to principles of human rights and the rule of law are subjected to criticism from the international community. They damage their international prestige as well. So, it helps Russia a trump card to use against the members that support Ukraine (Charlish & Florkiewicz, 16 October 2024; Aljazeera, October 11, 2022). This may prove that Russia is applying the coercive variant of the weaponisation of migration to Europe.

Furthermore, tle lack of coherence in the Union's common migration and asylum policy has resulted in an unequal distribution of asylum seekers among its member states. This distribution has had the effect of undermining the process of integration and causing the erosion of solidarity within the Union. In the academic literature, there are also some comments on the fact that the Union is on the verge of disintegration. These comments were initially precipitated by the 2015 Syrian asylum seeker crisis and have recently been echoed in the context of the Ukrainian asylum seekers (Reuters, June 27, 2024).

In the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine, Russia has employed both the strategy of passportisation and internal propaganda with considerable efficacy. In his statements, Putin explicitly referenced to the concept of the "Russkiy Mir" (Russian world), defining it as an idealised vision of the Russian language and culture. Furthermore, he asserted that Russia is a protector of the interests of ethnic Russian and Russian-speaking minorities. This concept has become a key element of Russian state policy, with the Moscow government assuming a responsibility to protect any Russian speaking minority or individuals identifying as Russian. The Russian govervenment has developed a foreign policy based on the premise that it has a moral obligation to safeguard and provide assistance Russian-speaking minorities around the world. In the contemporary era, this strategy is manifested as a means of safeguarding Russian speaking minority groups residing in the former Soviet countries. This demonstrates that Russia does not perceive its borders to be finite, and that it is prepared to justify any intervention or action taken by Russia with the objective of safeguarding the Russian diaspora (Veebel & Ploom, 2023).

In the case of Ukraine, Putin highlighted the historical connection with the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which are predominantly inhabited by Russian minorities. The conferral of Russian citizenship upon the inhabitants of these regions serves to provide Russia with a legitimate basis for any future intervention or action in these regions. This policy of the Russian government is not in contravention of international norms, given that each state is entitled to determine its own citizens in accordance with the Hague Convention (Natoli, 2010). In this sense, the practice of passportisation has been a prevalent strategy, particularly employed by the Russian government within the political variant.

International propaganda represents a second pillar of the political variant in the context of weaponisation of migration. Being a former member of the Soviet Union, Ukraine has been influenced by Russia in social and political spheres. In Ukraine, Russia actively uses mass communication channels that stem from the socialist propaganda tradition. While Ukrainian-language channels are broadcast in the western regions of Ukraine, the Russian-language channels such as Rossiya 24, RTR, ORT (Channel 1) and NTV are broadcast in the eastern and southern regions. The Russian-language broadcasts provide the Russian government with soft power to provoke and orient to the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk. In this sense, since 2014, the pro-Western Ukrainian leader has introduced a number of media reforms in the legal framework to curb the Russian government's mass propaganda. Ukrainian President Zelensky has officially suspended the broadcasting of some pro-Russian media channels (İlbasmış, 2022).

The reforms implemented by Zelenskyy proved ineffective in preventing the dissemination of disinformation by the Russia media. Throughout the course of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the Russian media has presented Ukrainians as neo-Nazi soldiers and Russian soldiers as heroes engaged in the rescue of the Russian minority in Ukraine. The Russian media agents has disseminated content to the masses, portraying the conflict as a war against neo-Nazis and implying that NATO was on the brink of the Russian borders. The dissemination of disinformation by the Russia seeks to legitimate its military actions in the eyes of both the international community and Russians, thereby rendering the Ukrainian government defenceless (Gölcü & Nurlanova, 2022).

An additional illustration of international propaganda is the data rovided by the UN regarding Ukrainian immigrants. The number of Ukrainian asylum seekers in Russia is not determined by any international organisations; rather, the data provided by the Russian government is to be regarded as the definitive source. The prohibition by Russian government on access to the refugee camps impedes the international community's capacity to ascertain any data. The statistical data disseminated by the Russian government is employed by international new outlets. Conversely, the Russian government cites these numerical figures, which are reflected in the reports of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, as the primary source from the UNHCR in its own reports (Steger, 2017). This situation exemplifies the capacity of migration-related data to influence international public opinion through the dissemination of information. International propaganda deployed as a political instrument in the weaponisation of migration is associated with the concept of hybrid warfare.

Conclusion

Hybrid warfare is defined as the utilization of a combination of conventional and unconventional methods. The objective of hybrid warfare is to weaken and damage the enemy through the implementation of intimidation strategies and the sustained maintenance of a low-intensity conflict, with the intention of ultimately undermining the adversary's ability to defend itself effectively. Hybrid warfare is characterized by a number of key attributes, including continuity, low-intensity conflict and manageable chaos. In the context of unconventional hybrid warfare, international migration is represented as an efficacious strategy rather than an exertion of military power or imposition of economic sanctions. To forcible relocation of people from their local inhabitats to a specific location is driven by a state or an actor because of its own interests. This study concentrated on the utilisation of migration as a weapon, which represents a crucial aspect of hybrid warfare strategies. In his study, an examination was conducted to ascertain the variants of the weaponisation of migration that Russia employed in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war as a case study. The findings indicated that Russia employed a range of variants, including coercive, dispossessive, exportive and political as well as passportisation and international propaganda.

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Chapter 8

Three Gorges Dam in the Framework of China's National Security

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Abstract

The Three Gorges Dam stands as a significant engineering achievement reflecting China's ascent as a dominant force in global economics and politics. As China's economy expanded, the dam was constructed to address the increasing demand for energy, serving both economic and strategic objectives. While economic benefits were a primary focus, the overarching goal was to enhance China's geopolitical security and integrity. This study delves into the dam's strategic role in bolstering national security by reinforcing the geopolitical framework of China, a nation of vast continental scale. The initial section outlines the historical evolution, technical characteristics, and diverse impacts of the dam on both physical and human landscapes. Subsequently, the core analysis evaluates the dam's critical role within China's broader national security strategy. Considering the fact of meeting China's increasing energy demand, the Three Gorges Dam appears to have a strategic function. It also plays an extremely strategic role in ensuring the geopolitical integrity of Chinese territory.

Keywords Three Gorges Dam, China, national security, geopolitical integrity, dominant power

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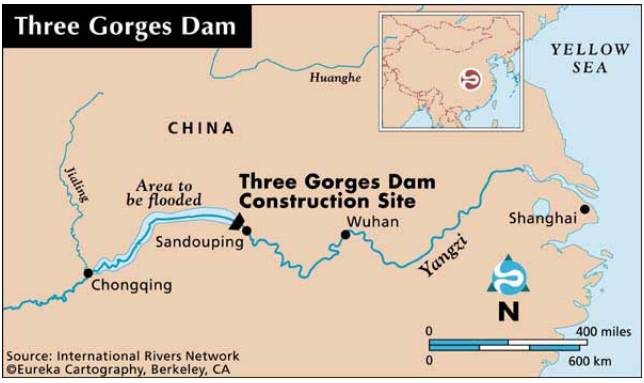
Introduction

Water management, or hydropolitics, emerges as a strategic issue that states evaluate at the strategic level for ensuring national security. In the field of water management, the control of inland waters, which are as strategic as the security of aquifers or transboundary waters, can also be functional in ensuring national security through economic and social development. At this point, the Three Gorges Dam, built by the Chinese state on the Yangtze/Yangzi River, the nation's longest river, stands out as a premier example of water management, bolstering national security by addressing economic and social threats.

China's largest engineering project, the Three Gorges Dam (Sanxia/Three Gorges Dam) (See Map 1, Map 2, and Picture 1), is located in the Sandouping district west of Yichang city in Hubei province. The dam sits on the Yangtze (Chang Jiang/Long River/Blue River), the third-largest river globally and the biggest in Asia (Wilmsen, 2017). It is also situated upstream of the Yangtze River (Gao et.al., 2013). The drainage basin downstream of the dam covers nearly 0.8 million km², which is almost twice the size of Germany. This river basin accounts for approximately 36.5% of China's water resources and supports about one-third of its population. Additionally, this wetland-rich basin contributes to 40% of China's GDP. The dam's primary contributions include flood control, power generation, and improving river navigation (Liu et.al., 2016; Zhenli and Bingfang, 2018).

Map 1

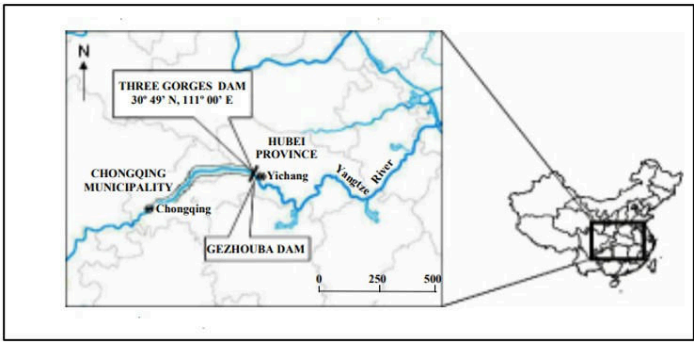
Three Gorges Dam



Source: Allin, 2004

Map 2

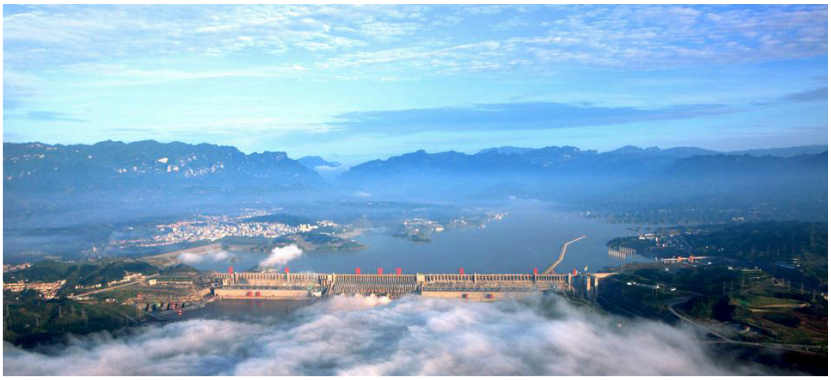
Three Gorges Dam



Source: Ponseti and López-Pujol, 2006

Picture 1

Three Gorges Dam (Yichang Prefecture-Hubei Province)



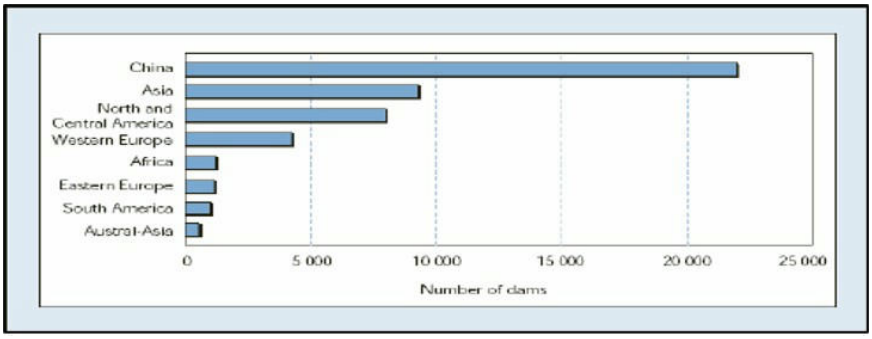
Source: https://www.chinadiscovery.com/yangtze-cruises/three-gorges-dam.html

Historical Development of the Dam

It is seen that the history of Chinese hydraulic technology initiatives goes back a long time. Notably, China's engagement with hydraulic projects dates as far back as 598 BC, with the construction of the Qebei Dam in Anhui Province. The Dujiangyan Dam, completed around 256 BC, remains functional even today. To combat monsoon floods, structures like the Jingjiang harbour on the Yangtze River were built as early as 345 BC. Another notable ancient hydraulic achievement is the Grand Canal, which was started in 486 BC and now links Hangzhou to Beijing. Despite China's impressive hydraulic legacy, modern dam building was relatively limited until 1949, with only 22 major dams totaling 163 MW of installed capacity. However, after the founding of the People's Republic of China, large dam construction accelerated rapidly as a key developmental strategy for the nation's anticipated economic growth. Consequently, as of 2006, China had built over 85,000 dams nationwide, with more than 22,000 classified as large dams, representing nearly half of the global total (See Figure 1) (Ponseti & López-Pujol, 2006).

Figure 1

According to 2000 Data, Distribution of Large Dams in the World



Source: Allin, 2004

The concept of constructing a dam on the Yangtze River was initially suggested in 1919 by Sun Yat Sen, a prominent nationalist leader, and was revisited in the 1950s during the era of Mao Zedong. Detailed planning efforts for the dam commenced in 1955, but economic challenges and the political instability of the Cultural Revolution hindered progress. The dam project was revived in 1978, spurred by economic reforms under Deng Xiaoping's leadership. Following Deng Xiaoping's death, the proposal

sparked heated debates, with notable opposition from Prime Minister Zhu Rongji, who criticized it as being overly ambitious and costly. Despite opposition, the Chinese parliament approved the project in 1992, with 1,767 votes in favor and 177 against. Construction of the dam officially began in 1994. Although the main structure was completed in 2003, the reservoir became operational in 2006, and the dam reached full capacity in 2008 (Gao et.al., 2013).

Throughout its development, from the planning stage to completion, the Three Gorges Dam has been recognized as one of China's most contentious projects, primarily due to its vast scale and the environmental and social challenges it presents alongside its benefits. The dam has drawn global attention from communities, researchers, and environmental activists. Key environmental concerns include water quality issues, sediment disruption in the river, seismic risks from the reservoir, and geological instability. Social challenges involve health risks for the population and the displacement of approximately 1.3 million residents. The Chinese government has identified major problems associated with the dam, such as pollution, silt accumulation, ecological degradation, and geological threats within the project area. Additionally, the impact of the dam on the nuclear power plant located within the reservoir area remains inadequately understood (Xu, 2011; Heming et. al., 2001).

Purposes of Dam Construction

It is observed that the Three Gorges Dam primarily includes a hydroelectric power plant and navigation facilities. The dam plays multiple roles: it controls flooding in the lower and middle sections of the Yangtze River, utilizing its 40 billion m^3 reservoir capacity, while also meeting China's substantial energy needs by generating 84.7 billion kWh of hydroelectric power annually. This infrastructure significantly contributes to the economic growth of northeastern China and central regions like Chongqing and Sichuan. Essentially, the Three Gorges Dam is expected to improve the navigation conditions of the river system, especially in the upper reaches of the river system, thereby increasing navigation capacity through a pool system and thus reducing transport costs and ensuring the economic stability of these regions; providing environmental protection through flood prevention in the lower reaches; and meeting the increasing energy demand for China's growing cities through power generation (Ping, 2010). Furthermore, the dam enhances river navigation, particularly in the upper sections, by improving navigation conditions and increasing transport capacity through a pool system, which helps reduce costs and stabilize regional economies. Additionally, it plays a vital role in flood prevention and supports the energy demands of rapidly growing urban centers. Another key function of the dam is to provide access to fresh water. Fluctuations in the Yangtze River's water levels impact the availability of drinking and irrigation water. As part of an extensive inter-basin water transfer initiative, the dam helps supply water to agricultural fields, residents, and industries located near the dam (Allin, 2004).[1]

It is observed that the differences in physical geography between the coastal and inland parts of China naturally lead to differences in demographic and economic development between the regions of the country. In this framework, when the physical characteristics of the country are examined (See Map 3), it is seen that especially the Tibetan Plateau and the main mountain barriers of the country structure the drainage axes of the major rivers, including the Yellow River (Huang He), Yangtze, and Xijiang rivers, which mostly leave this plateau to join the Pacific Ocean. China's territory is divided into

[1] Flood control along the Yangtze River has been a critical objective of this project. During the 20th century, over three hundred thousand lives were lost due to floods along the Yangtze River. Intense rainfall, significant deforestation, and widespread erosion led to massive silt deposits in the river, causing embankment failures and severe flooding events. Managing siltation in the river has been essential in achieving effective flood mitigation. The Yangtze River is currently recognized as the fourth most silt-laden river globally, discharging approximately 680 million tonnes of silt into the East China Sea each year. However, concerns have been raised that the dam itself may worsen siltation issues. This apprehension stems from the potential for silt, which naturally settles along riverbanks as water flows towards the sea, to accumulate instead behind the dam wall (Salazar, 2000).

several climatic zones, two of which clearly differ from each other. It is observed that the southern and eastern parts of the country consist of hills, humid plateaus and large deltas and as a result of this favourable geography, 85% of China's population, in other words almost one billion people, live in these regions. In contrast, only 15% of the population resides in the colder and more arid regions of the west and north (Victor, 2005).

With the coming to power of Deng Xiaoping in 1978, the economic strategy shifted, promoting China's rise on the global stage. This shift prioritized investments in coastal areas, leading to infrastructure and population growth in these regions, while the inland areas saw little to no investment (Sevim, 2015). The primary goal of the Three Gorges Dam project was to bridge the economic and demographic development disparities between China's inland and coastal regions, thus enhancing the nation's geopolitical and national integrity. As the world's largest hydroelectric power plant situated on the Yangtze River in central China, the dam became a strategic necessity to address the economic imbalances between the southern/eastern and northern/western regions, ensuring China's geopolitical unity and overall national security.

Map 3

Physical Geography of China



Source: Victor, 2005

Technical Specifications of the Dam

The Three Gorges Dam is the largest dam structure globally, characterized by its straight-crested concrete weight design. Standing 185 meters tall and extending 2,335 meters in length, the dam contains 28 million m^3 of concrete and 463,000 tonnes of steel. It has submerged large areas of the Qutang, Wu, and Xiling gorges upstream, forming a deep-water reservoir that facilitates cargo ship navigation between Shanghai and Chongqing, spanning approximately 600 km. Initial hydroelectric power generation began in 2003, and the dam reached full operational capacity with 32 turbine generators in 2012. With the ability to produce 22,500 MW of electricity, it holds the title of the world's largest hydroelectric dam.

In addition, the downstream portion of the dam, comprising the middle and lower sections, covers a drainage area of 0.8 million km^2, while the upstream portion encompasses an area of 1 million km^2 (Gao et.al., 2013).[2]

[2]The Three Gorges Dam is named after the historically significant area known as the Three Gorges. It is located along the upper stretches of the Yangtze River, where the water passes through the striking limestone cliffs of the Xiling, Wu, and Qutang gorges, extending for 120 miles. The dam's primary objective is to control the Yangtze River, which originates from the Tibetan Plateau and travels approximately 3,900 miles to its endpoint in the East China Sea. Ranking as the

The dam also supports the irrigation of 30,000 hectares of fertile land, which sustains approximately two million people (Allin, 2004).

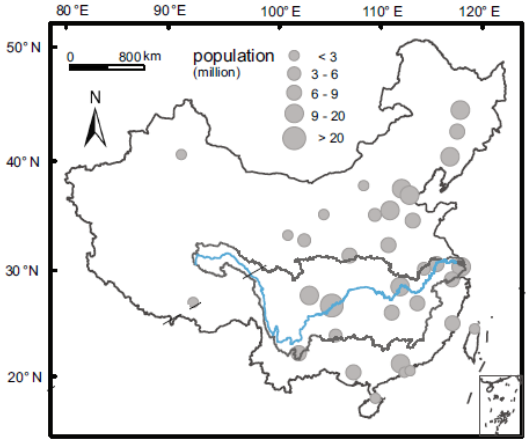
Positive and Negative Physical and Human Impacts of the Dam

In 2012, the Three Gorges Dam became the world's largest hydroelectric dam in terms of electricity generation, surpassing the Itaipú hydroelectric power plant in Brazil and Paraguay. It has already been stated that the Three Gorges Dam has a generating capacity of 22,500 MW, compared to the 14,000 MW generating capacity of the Itaipu Dam. However, over the course of a year, both dams can generate about the same amount of electricity, as seasonal variations in water availability on the Yangtze River in China can limit power generation at the dam for several months throughout the year (https://www.usgs.gov/special-topic/water-science-school/science/three-gorges-dam-worlds-largest-hydroelectric-plant?qt-science_center_objects=0#qt-science_center_objects). Nevertheless, the dam is seen to be of utmost strategic importance in meeting China's enormous energy demand.

According to China's development plans, the Yangtze River Basin is characterized by regions that need to be economically developed and brought to an equal footing with the coastal regions. Today, many harbours have been opened on the Yangtze River. Therefore, the presence of cities and canals along the river, which rely on rich energy resources, provides a strong momentum for the development of the region. In other words, it is seen that the Yangtze River Delta Economic Belt, surrounded by the cities of Shanghai, Nanjing and Hangzhou, has enabled the emergence of many medium-sized cities (See Map 4) (Ping, 2010). In contrast to private sector-led development in Western countries, China's urban expansion is largely based on strategic restructuring at the city-region level. In fact, the restructuring process was initiated by the central government to coordinate spatial development and spatial governance. In this framework, there are regional plans for the Pearl River Delta and Yangtze River Delta. A pan-regional co-operation process has also been initiated by the local government to promote competitive advantage (Wang, 2016,).

Map 4

Population of Cities along the Yangtze River



Source: Liu et.al., 2016[3]

third longest river globally after the Amazon and the Nile, the Yangtze River is only surpassed by the Congo and the Amazon in terms of flow volume (Salazar, 2000).

[3]The map has been edited [Ed.].

One of the three most important environmental problem groups in terms of China's impacts is the issues caused by the expansive and delicate catchment area of large dams such as the Three Gorges Dam (See Map 5). Large dams have significantly altered river flow patterns, leading to various ecological and environmental consequences. For instance, changes in flow regimes have led to a drastic decline in fish populations, greatly reducing downstream fish harvests, and causing accelerated coastal erosion or increased saltwater intrusion. Many have expressed concerns that after the Three Gorges Dam began operating, these impacts would similarly affect the Middle and Lower Yangtze River regions, which are some of China's most economically developed and biodiverse areas. Since changes in flow regimes can substantially affect water availability and ecosystem health, it is crucial to study how the dam influences these dynamics, especially in downstream zones.

Map 5

China's Top Three Environmental Problem Areas



Source: Stone, 2008[4]

In this regard, a study shows that the dam's water storage causes a significant reduction in river flow in the Middle and Lower Yangtze River basin during the autumn months. It was observed that the dam's water release significantly increased the downstream river flow during the winter months, whereas the dam increased the annual minimum flows and decreased the annual maximum flow downstream. However, the reduction of river discharge in the Middle and Lower Yangtze River basin due to the water storage of the dam in autumn months seems to have a serious impact on the downstream river and lake ecosystem. In other words, it is seen that the dam has a negative effect on the downstream flow reduction. Therefore, in the near future, the dam will face serious challenges in maintaining water storage and meeting downstream ecosystem water demand (Gao et.al., 2013).

China is the country with the largest urban population in the world, with over 700 million people residing in cities. In 2011, China's urban population exceeded its rural population for the first time, including informal migrants. It is estimated that one billion people will be living in urban areas in 2030. It is thought that most of this growth will be achieved through migration from rural to urban areas. For example, according to World Bank 2014 data, it is estimated that 250 million people will migrate to

[4]The map has been edited [Ed.]. In addition to the environmental concerns associated with the Three Gorges Dam, China faces other environmental challenges, including plans for the reorganization of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and severe air pollution issues in and around Beijing (Stone, 2008).

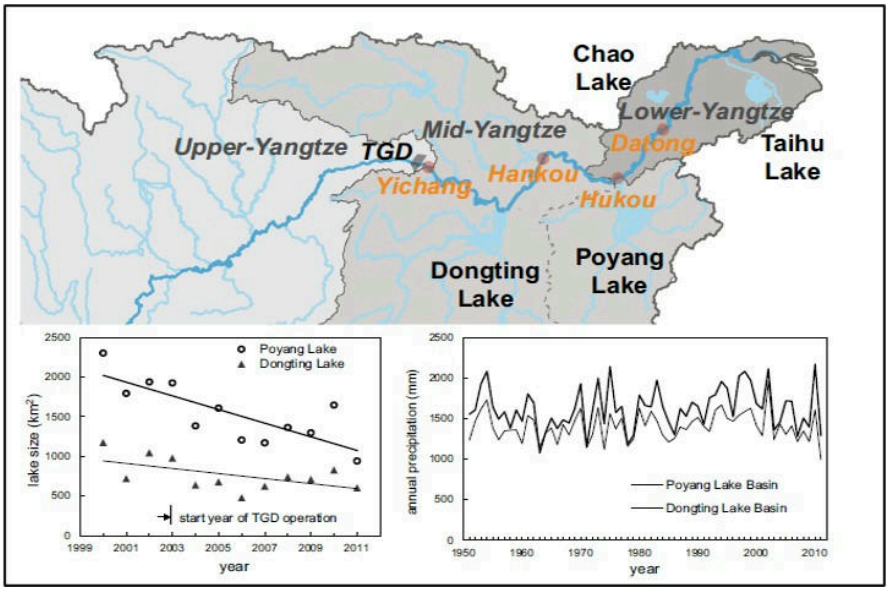
cities in the next twenty years. However, it appears that this movement of people is not only a response to perceived economic opportunities or social relations, but also the result of an urbanisation plan issued by China's State Council in early 2014 to counter slowing economic growth. In this context, the dam displaced 1.24 million people and flooded 13 cities, 140 districts and 1,350 villages along a reservoir area of more than 600 km (Wilmsen, 2017).

In addition, although the recent stagnation of the lake and increasingly severe droughts in the lower basin have been subjectively attributed to the presence of the dam, sufficient empirical support based on comprehensive analysis is still lacking. However, it shows that the dam's water retention, in addition to natural changes in the lower Yangtze River basin caused by climatic conditions, weakens the river's capacity to prevent backflows from its connected lakes, directly contributing to their shrinkage. It is suggested that water retention may have significantly increased the severity of droughts in the downstream catchment, impacting the landscape in various harmful ways.

The Yangtze River basin is divided into upper, middle, and lower sections between Yichang and Hukou. Historically, the river has been a critical water source for downstream lakes, such as Poyang, Dongting, Taihu, and Chao—four of the five largest freshwater lakes in China, located in the middle and lower reaches (See Map 6). Consequently, water retention in the dam's reservoir prevents backflows from these lakes, altering their natural dynamics (Liu et al., 2016).

Map 6

Overview of Lakes Located in the Middle and Lower Basins of the Yangtze River



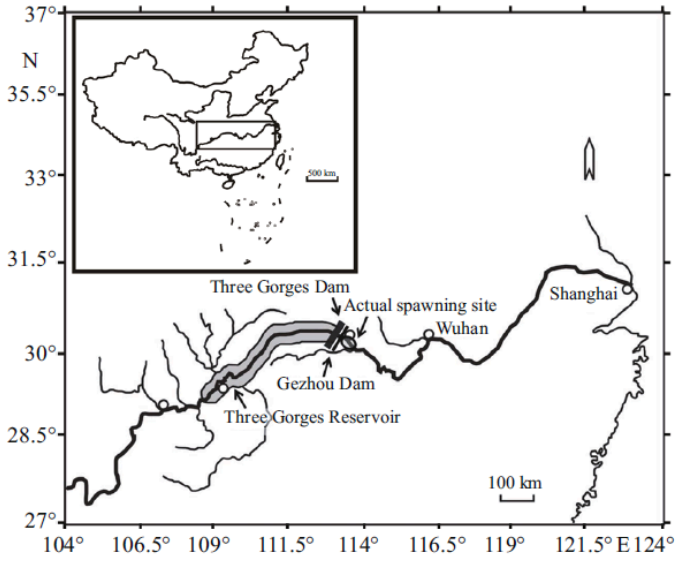
Source: Liu et.al., 2016

It is seen that dam construction has a negative impact on the fisheries sector. This is because the dam has caused a decrease in the population of fish species, including carp, which is a favourite species of local people. In the Yangtze River, fishermen harvest less than half of the carp compared to five years ago. The four major carp species of the Yangtze emerge when water levels rise during the summer monsoon rains. According to Liu Huanzhang, an ecologist at the Institute of Hydrobiology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Wuhan, the Three Gorges reservoir, a 660-kilometre-long serpentine lake that began filling up in 2003, has caused significant changes in water levels below the dam. Huanzhang noted that these changes have led to a sharp decline in carp eggs and larvae downstream. Additionally,

migratory fish like sturgeon and carp must navigate a complex five-step, staircase-like structure at the dam's northern end, which elevates vessels by more than 100 meters to facilitate upstream movement. This situation also hinders migratory fish from passing through the Gezhou Dam, which is situated about 38 kilometers downstream of the Yangtze River (Stone, 2008; Xin et.al., 2015; 2014).

Map 7

Location of Sturgeon Spawning Area Below Gezhou Dam



Source: Stone, 2015

Impact of the Dam on National Security

China's National Defence in the New Era, published in 2019, indicates that China regards water power and hydroelectric projects as strategic components of its national security framework. Specifically, the impact of the Three Gorges Dam on national security should be viewed within this larger context. The dam's construction exemplifies the longstanding link between infrastructure projects and national defence in China. In particular, significant infrastructure initiatives, such as hydroelectric power plants, have played a pivotal role in the Belt and Road Project, launched by Xi Jinping in 2013, which aims to connect global regions through trade and economic relations (Annual Report to Congress, 2020; China's National Defence in the New Era, 2019).

Supporters of the dam project argue that dam construction will have a positive impact on the country's defence and national security by increasing electricity generation/energy supply and economic development. However, it is argued that the existence of such a large dam in Central China also involves some risks and threats to China's national security. Indeed, considering today's advanced weapon systems, it is argued that in the event of a war, large cities, nuclear energy or hydroelectric power plants are the primary military targets. Therefore, it is seen that the dam, like *the* Sword *of* Damocles, has positive effects in terms of economic development and energy supply, as well as negative effects in terms of the threats it will be exposed to in the event of a military attack (Bing, 2015).

Conclusion

Chinese rulers have historically struggled to control powerful rivers such as the Yellow River and the Yangtze River. Since ancient times, Chinese rulers have thought that those who want to rule the state must first control the waters. Therefore, the construction motives of projects such as the Three Gorges Dam should be evaluated in this context. Indeed, with the construction of water and hydropower projects that began on a large scale after 1949, the Chinese government began to tame the rivers (Allin, 2004). Looking at dam constructions around the world, it is seen that these constructions have multifaceted positive or negative impacts on the human and physical environment. At this point, it can be argued that decision-makers decide on the construction of a dam by analysing the positive and negative environmental impacts of a dam and considering the effects of these impacts on the overall strategic objective. In other words, in the context of this general strategic objective, it can be argued that dam construction was decided if the gains from the positive effects of dam construction exceeded the costs of negative effects. In the case of the Three Gorges Dam, it is seen that the overall strategic goal for Chinese policymakers is to meet China's growing energy demand and to ensure the geopolitical integrity of Chinese territory. Therefore, the economic and strategic gains from the positive effects of dam construction seem to have emerged as the primary objective for Chinese policy makers.

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Chapter 9

Navigating Deglobalization in Eurasia: World-Building and Türkiye Amidst Emerging Historical Rupture

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Abstract

This chapter introduces an examination of Türkiye's potential for World-building in Eurasia within the context of deglobalization, which is conceptualized as both a reflection and an accelerator of a historical rupture process in the current international system. Deglobalization affects all three interconnected pillars of it: geopolitics, international political economy, and meaning systems. As the globe fragments into competing 'Worlds,' the chapter proposes that Türkiye's unique identity, position, and other capabilities—along with those of other states of Turks, non-state actors, diasporas, and partners from both Muslim-majority countries and beyond—collectively offer opportunities for fostering a 'World within Worlds,' which may be called 'Türk Eli' or the Turkic Peace Zone. The study also outlines Türkiye's foreign policy trajectory from the early Republican era to the present, introducing key concepts such as World-building nationalism, the Turkic Belt, Co-Worlding, and Roof-Sharing. It highlights both potential obstacles and prospects. While acknowledging hurdles such as limited elite support, resource constraints, and the need for a more coherent ideological framework, this assessment suggests that the reimagined concept of 'Türk Eli' could foster thinking on cooperation and stability. The article aims to set the stage for further exploration of how Türkiye's World-building efforts might shape Eurasia's future in an increasingly divided and dysfunctional global system.

Keywords Historical rupture · Deglobalization · Türk Eli · World-building nationalism · Organization of Turkic States · Turkic World · Co-Worlding · Roof-Sharing

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Introduction

The international system is undergoing a profound transformation characterized by deglobalization, reminiscent of past historical ruptures but unfolding in a unique contemporary context. These developments present both challenges and opportunities for multiple players, including Türkiye. This chapter introduces an examination of Türkiye and its partners' potential for World-building, framed within the context of systemic change, increasing regional instability, and reconfiguring global power dynamics.

The concept of "historical rupture" serves as a foundational framework for understanding current international relations. It has several indicators, with deglobalization, both a natural consequence of previous globalization and a deliberate project of great powers, reshaping the global landscape and fostering widespread disruption. Past experiments suggest that during these ruptures, established powers only selectively maintain international stability, while both they and their rivals may exploit or instigate regional crises to their advantage. In such scenarios, the potential for escalating chaos necessitates a proactive approach to regional security for indigenous actors, highlighting the expanding need for World-building initiatives.

In this context, Türkiye's World-building potential can be assessed through the lens of three interconnected factors: the ongoing shift towards a multi-World order driven by deglobalization trends; Türkiye's non-central position in World-building initiatives of both Western and Eastern powers; and the urgent need to address growing regional instability that could compromise Türkiye's security and vital interests. By leveraging their material capabilities and multilayered ties (including functional-material connections together with kinship, historical, cultural, and religious bonds), Türkiye, other states of Turks, stateless entities and communities, diasporas, and their willing partners from both Muslim-majority countries and others collectively possess the necessary resources and capabilities to build a World within Worlds. This concept envisions a cooperative network that maintains necessary linkages with rival power centers while promoting regional stability and development through converging relations within “Türk Eli”, a Turkic Peace Zone. World-building here refers to cultivating a zone of peace, cooperation, and mutual prosperity among historically and functionally related regions, not to creating a sphere of influence in the 19th-century imperialist sense.

Besides Türk Eli, this study proposes several key concepts such as World-building nationalism, Turkic Belt, Co-Worlding and Roof-Sharing. It also outlines Türkiye's evolving path in international relations within this context. The article highlights not just potential opportunities but also the challenges by acknowledging obstacles such as limited elite support, resource constraints, the hardships in balancing the interests of other major powers vis-à-vis the World-building project, and the necessity of finding ways to keep partners willing and disciplined in a nonhierarchical framework.

The analysis proceeds in four main sections: theoretical/conceptual notes, manifestations of deglobalization across the three pillars of the international system, points on Türkiye's foreign policy course in relation to its World-zone, and prospects for Türkiye’s and its partners' World-building project, including the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). By situating Türkiye's and its allies’ potential within broader systemic changes and the imperative for regional stability, this work contributes to the understanding of emerging security dynamics in Eurasia. It provides insights into how countries with a history of World-leadership might navigate a deglobalizing landscape, fostering cooperation and stability while adapting to great power competition and the fragmentation of the global order.

Like any unfinished project, this article has its limitations. It offers a concise summary of a research agenda and does not cover all the significant debates and empirical data related to the issue. Instead, it sets the stage for further exploration of the historical rupture process, presents and defines key

concepts, explains their significance, and highlights the core parameters of forthcoming upheavals and potential future trajectories for the once-globalizing system, Türkiye, the Turkic World, and broader Eurasia.

Theoretical and Conceptual Notes: Heralding a Change in the Ontological Map of the International System

Historical Rupture and the Three Pillars of the International System

The concept of historical rupture provides a crucial lens for understanding the current transformations taking place in the international system. Unlike routine fluctuations or cyclical changes, historical ruptures represent a sea change that fundamentally alters the structure and functioning of global affairs. These periods are characterized by simultaneous crises across three interconnected pillars: geopolitics, international political economy, and meaning systems.

In the geopolitical realm, we observe a reconfiguration of power dynamics, with the established hegemony being challenged both from within and outside, and new centers of gravity emerging. Meanwhile, the international political economy undergoes substantial restructuring as existing patterns of trade, finance, and production are disrupted and new economic paradigms take shape. Concurrently, meaning systems – encompassing ideologies, religion and belief structures, legitimizing narratives – experience a crisis of credibility, leading to the emergence of new or revived Worldviews.

The concurrent occurrence of crises across these three pillars is crucial. While isolated breakdowns in individual pillars can often be managed or contained, the convergence of crises across all three domains creates a catastrophe that catalyzes fundamental change. This multi-dimensional upheaval produces both challenges and opportunities for actors within the international system, particularly for those with the potential to reshape regional or global dynamics (Okur, 2018).

20th century provides several examples of such historical ruptures. The First World War marked a significant break, leading to the collapse of some empires, the redrawing of maps on the basis of nationality, and the emergence of new ideologies. The Second World War similarly reshaped the global order, giving rise to the bipolar Cold War structure, decolonization, new international institutions, and defeat of Nazism and Fascism as meaning systems. The end of the Cold War in 1989-1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union together with ideological appeal of communism as a meaning system represents another historical rupture, ushering in a period of American unipolarity and accelerated neoliberal globalization. Currently, the effects of deglobalization are escalating the accumulation of tensions that could trigger simultaneous disruptions along the fault lines, threatening the fundamentals of all three systemic pillars.

Given the pivotal role deglobalization plays in the argument as an accelerator of historical rupture, it will be addressed in a standalone section below.

What is a "World"? The Agencies of the Coming Great Rivalry

The escalation of the historical rupture process with deglobalization is giving rise to the emergence of rival Worlds within the international system. The "World", in this sense, refers to a system of material and moral relationships, shared beliefs, norms, principles, solidarity, and governance that transcend individual states. A World denotes a large, cohesive entity with a shared identity, converging interests, and organizational framework. This system is well-defined in its core sections and more flexibly arranged in its loosely connected parts, even when lacking some key aspects of its ideal definition. When we look at historical precedents, it becomes clear that Worlds represent more than mere spheres

of influence or geopolitical blocs; they encompass distinct economic, political, and cultural realms with their own internal logics and external orientations (Okur, 2018). These Worlds can be newly constructed or built upon the legacy of previous historical Worlds. They come into existence under the leadership of a dominant nation-state or leading members of a community of states, which share commonalities such as kinship, religion, a shared past, and various forms of collective material interests, ranging from economics to security. (Okur, 2023).

The formation of Worlds occurs in a multitude of ways, encompassing a spectrum of structures, from empires to alliances among sovereign entities. In the case of the "Russian World" (Russkiy Mir) project, the objective is to integrate Russian-speaking populations and former Soviet territories into a distinct cultural and political sphere (Kazharski, 2019). The strategy around this vision reflects, at least partly, an imperial logic, as evidenced by the use of force against Ukraine, which has produced significant reactions and resistance. However, the Russian World initiative's toolbox extends beyond military interventions, embracing security and economic integration through international institutions like the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Union, along with soft power strategies such as the promotion of the Russian language, media influence and cultural programs (Suslov, 2018, Feklyunina, 2015).

As another instance, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), together with other material, cultural, economic and military investments of China aiming to reach the "community with a shared future for mankind" (Xiaochun, 2018), helps a World-building project by creating a vast network of economic and infrastructure connections across Eurasia and beyond. The BRI and other initiatives are not merely an economic endeavor but a comprehensive geoeconomic strategy to reshape global trade routes and geopolitical alignments in China's favor (Okur, 2017). Unlike Russia, Beijing has not yet employed direct, massive military force. Instead, China resorts to geoeconomic policy tools, such as providing assistance with infrastructure development, to extend its influence. This approach is complemented by a meaning system diplomacy that promotes Chinese cultural values, offers an alternative development model, and presents China's governance system as a credible alternative to Western liberal democracy. By integrating material investments with this meaning system, China aims to offer alternatives to Western norms and practices which were globalized. Central to this meaning system is the reconstruction of a traditional Chinese world order, portraying it as uniquely benevolent and harmonious, in contrast to the Western-dominated international system (Zhao, 2019). This multifaceted strategy occasionally raises concerns about debt-trap diplomacy, economic coercion, and challenges to the existing international order (Hiebert, 2020).

The BRICS group (comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates) and its expansion plans illustrate efforts to establish alternative platforms to the Western-dominated global order (Papa & Chaturvedi, 2023). The BRICS serves as an umbrella for "non-Western" powers, some of which have their own World-building projects, while others maintain concurrent memberships with prominent countries of the Western World in various regional organizations. The group's initiatives, such as the New Development Bank (NDB), indicate an effort to establish parallel financial institutions and challenge the primacy of Western-led organizations, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as the structural power of the U.S. dollar (Nach & Ncwadi, 2024).

BRICS, with its "Roof-Sharing" model of solidarity, provides support for non-Western major powers engaged in World-building projects. It enables them to gain visibility and a more prominent voice in international debates, thereby enhancing their symbolic capital. World-building projects necessitate intersubjectivities that value such symbolism, facilitating belief in a future that could shift the balance between the West and the rest in favor of the latter. However, if BRICS fails to achieve tangible success

within a reasonable timeframe, it risks meeting the same fate as the Group of 77 and other similar initiatives.

In this context, multilateral efforts to organize the Turkic World may seek to establish a model of cooperation among sovereign actors, drawing upon the experiences of others. Despite a deficiency in bottom-up, civil society-based input through democratic participation channels, the convergence of Turkic states exemplifies a World-building process based on voluntary collaboration. As will be discussed subsequently, this project has the potential to contribute to stability in Eurasia in a number of ways. At some point, intensified solidarity within the Turkic World could reach a level sufficient to deter potential aggressors, some of whom may pursue imperial ambitions. Such deterrence can contribute to peace and prosperity in Eurasia by reducing the likelihood of miscalculations that could lead to severe conflicts.

Worlds, Civilizations and World-building Nationalism

Worlds across vast geographies organize different spheres of life within a triangle that brings together meaning systems, various needs, and limited material and spiritual resources/opportunities. Their unique solutions to the challenges they face—from economics to security, from education to architecture—give life to civilization. If Worlds are the largest looms weaving different aspects of life, civilizations are the uniquely colored and patterned fabrics produced by these looms. They continue to exist even after the looms that facilitated their creation have been dismantled. When Worlds lose their organized existence and disintegrate due to internal and/or external factors, the civilizations they once produced/weaved become a legacy that influences the new Worlds that arise in the same area, affecting them on various levels. As a result, this heritage gradually loses its function because the system and context in which it was produced no longer exist, depriving it of the possibility of being updated and renewed to meet new needs. Its value is then relegated to that of museum aesthetic objects. A change in this status can only occur when efforts to reorganize in relation to the historical World come to the fore. The heritage then becomes the primary reference for the phase of remembrance necessary for such reconstruction (Okur, 2023).

While civilizations represent the enduring cultural and historical legacies of past Worlds, World-building nationalism seeks to actively shape new geopolitical realities based on these grounds. World-building nationalism represents a foreign policy approach that sees it as both possible and desirable to (re)organize a World in alignment with visions of national identity, especially those deeply rooted in history which covers the memories of a past World. In other words, it seeks to design an operational system whose core codes are based on national foundations. This approach recognizes the challenges of both pure localism and complete assimilation into emulated Worlds, advocating instead for a path that leverages unique material, political, historical, and cultural accumulations to foster intra- and inter-regional cooperation and stability (Okur, 2023).

From the perspective of this vision, Türkiye is perceived as full of potential due to its exceptional historical legacy and current capabilities. As a former leader of a vast World spanning multiple continents, Turkish national identity incorporates values and memories from this period. Türkiye's historical experience creates a distinctive situation where the expansion of national identity toward a broader World-building project does not generate fundamental contradictions at the level of core values. Consequently, it becomes possible to channel the energy of nationalism into a project that transcends national boundaries – a feature not easily replicated in other nationalist contexts. The concept of Türk Eli or "Turkish Peace Zone" embodies this vision of World-building. Drawing on historical linguistic and cultural connections, Türk Eli carries dual meanings of both "peace" and "homeland" in ancient Turkish.

As noted by Serkan Şen (Şen, 2023, p. 35), the word "elçi" (ambassador) is also derived from this root, emphasizing the concept's association with peaceful relations.

In his work, "Türkçülüğün Esasları" (The Principles of Turkism) (Gökalp, 2023), Ziya Gökalp points to the concept of "il," which he defines as "peace," and its pivotal role in Turkish political thought. Gökalp underscores that the fundamental connotation of "il" is peace and that the historical trajectory of Turkish leadership has been oriented towards the establishment and preservation of peace across a vast geographical expanse. He posits that the objective of Turkish wars was the establishment of a permanent region of peace, rather than imperialistic conquest. The contemporary characterization of Türk Eli as a peace zone aligns closely with this great decision[1] of the historical Turkic World, (Okur, 2023).

World-building nationalism doesn't reject multilateral relations with key economic and political centers influential in regions it considers part of Türk Eli. Instead, it seeks to coexist with such relationships while simultaneously developing its own unique institutions in the areas concerned. However, achieving its objectives may still require navigating crises that demand taking risks and showing initiative, even in dealings with major powers. This foreign policy perspective is rooted in the recognition that distrust of the prevailing Western-based system has reached a critical point, and the prospect of joining global initiatives offering alternatives to the West is either unconvincing or inadequate to meet Türkiye's all needs. While World-building is financially burdensome in the short term, the alternative—accepting a marginalized role without having a significant place in World-projects of either the West or East—may prove equally, if not more, costly given the growing systemic turbulence.

This approach accepts that the process of restructuring a World is not a simple undertaking and requires several key elements to be successful. Firstly, the circumstances surrounding the original breakup of the historical World are of great consequence. In cases of external factors, such as invasion or war, the legacy of such events can facilitate future reconstruction if they are perceived as significant historical trauma. Conversely, internal crises that corrupt the foundational principles of the World make rejuvenation far more difficult. The dissolution of the old Turkic World provides a vivid example of the former scenario.

Secondly, the state of other Worlds is a significant factor. The re-emergence of a historical World becomes possible when rival powers experience crises or decline, creating a power vacuum that enables realignment. Such a conjuncture allows the former constituent parts of the old historical World to consider new affiliations based on shared interests, cultural affinities, and collective memory, and to freely discuss the possibility of moving toward a reorganization project.

Thirdly, World-building nationalism must represent a comprehensive and inclusive concept of identity encompassing the proposed World. This approach facilitates the reawakening and reimagining of historical identities and relationships that presumably support the reorganization project. Additionally, a strong social base within the leading country or countries is crucial for generating the intellectual, political, and economic support necessary for the reintegration effort.

Fourthly, it is also necessary for the general context of the international system to be conducive to such revival. A perception of insecurity and dissatisfaction with existing alliances can create a 'push effect,' driving the constituents of the historical World to seek renewed partnerships and look to the

[1] Great decisions are strategic choices made by actors capable of building a World around themselves. These decisions define the broadest security environment for humans and influence the thinking and behavior patterns of others, including rivals, leading them to make similar decisions. Great decisions, products of interactions between power, interests, and values, shape systems in areas like economy, belief, culture, ideology, and communication. They emerge at historical turning points, contributing to the construction of a new era and affecting not only the decision-maker's World but others as well. The emergence and diffusion of nuclear weapons and the Millet system in the historical Turkic World exemplify such great decisions, demonstrating their profound impact on global security landscapes and socio-political structures across vast regions (Okur, 2018).

power centers of their former World. Simultaneously, the World-building project must offer appealing incentives, creating a 'pull effect' through enhanced security, economic prospects, and cultural compatibility.

Fifth, the concept of World-building as a process of reorganization does not imply an abrupt break with existing systems. Rather, it is envisioned as a gradual process of creating a "World within Worlds." This requires careful coordination between the existing systems and the new integrative principles, involving both state-level interactions and civil society engagement. Although strategies for immediate rupture exist, they are generally associated with war and carry costs that are particularly prohibitive for non-nuclear World leaders.

Deglobalization and the Transformation of the International Order

Deglobalization as Process and Project

Deglobalization, much like its predecessor globalization, lacks a consensus definition in academic literature. This ambiguity reflects the complex and multifaceted nature of the phenomenon. However, it is evident that deglobalization processes are deeply intertwined with the crisis dynamics characterizing the 'historical rupture' mentioned earlier. These forces actively challenge the prior era's efforts to advance a unified global vision. Rather than progressing toward a singular, cosmopolitan-led global order, the globe is witnessing a fragmentation into multiple Worlds. This disintegration is propelled by a substantial erosion of trust among major powers. The resultant securitization of relationships—once primarily economic or pragmatic—marks a shift from the liberal tenets of free markets and profit-driven globalization toward a paradigm where security considerations predominate, at the expense of global economic integration. Deglobalization, as it manifests, refers to the division of the globe into competing Worlds through the disruption of global institutions and processes in areas such as security, economics, and systems of meaning, with these realms converging at the World level. As a result, the center of gravity in international governance is shifting from global institutions to distinct Worlds, marking a fundamental redirection of the global order with far-reaching implications for international relations, economic structures, and geopolitical alignments.

The phenomenon of deglobalization has manifested as both a process and a project. As a process, it represents the natural consequence of the contradictions and imbalances generated by the previous era of intensified global integration. The advantages of globalization, which initially benefited Western powers to a greater extent, have gradually enabled emerging actors, particularly in the East, to challenge the existing global order (Buzan & Lawson, 2014) (Chivvis & Geaghan-Breiner, 2024). Concurrently, deglobalization has evolved into a conscious initiative undertaken by a multitude of actors, including both established and emerging powers.

For the Westerners, it represents an attempt to recalibrate the global system in their favor, establishing new boundaries and differential rule sets for insiders and outsiders. This shift in Western attitudes is exemplified by the evolving perspectives of prominent politicians, financial figures, and business leaders (Paul, 2023) (Komolov, 2020). For (re)rising powers, deglobalization presents an opportunity to establish autonomous spheres and reduce dependence on Western-dominated international system. In an effort to enhance their free-standing, these actors seek to construct parallel infrastructures, which serve as regional counterparts to global governance institutions, thereby expanding their sovereign zones of action (Gloria, 2024). The dual nature of deglobalization—as both an organic process and a strategic project—adds a further layer of complexity to the contemporary international landscape. This creates a dynamic environment in which the rules of engagement are in a state of flux, presenting both risks and opportunities for those endeavoring to navigate this shifting terrain.

Geopolitical Fragmentation and Conflict: From the "Global World" to the "Globe Dividing into Worlds"

The first pillar of the international system where we trace deglobalization as leading to the historical rupture process is the geopolitical landscape. It is undergoing a fundamental restructuring, characterized by fragmentation and the emergence of competing power centers. This shift marks a departure from both the post-Cold War era of American unipolarity and the more cosmopolitan vision of globalization, previously referred to as "Empire" (Okur, 2007). The current state of affairs reflects an abandonment of the path followed after the West's victory in the Cold War (Okur, 2008).

During the Cold War, the globe was primarily divided into rival parts and became the theater of the enduring conflict between the Western and Eastern Worlds, each based on distinct ideologies and organizations. The dissolution of the Soviet Union inaugurated a period during which the Western World strived to disseminate its system across the entire globe. This process is referred to as neoliberal globalization or hyperglobalization. However, the current trend of deglobalization suggests that the West is disengaging from this enterprise. Instead, it is attempting to redraw the territorial and ideological boundaries of the Western World and its allies. This new orientation can be attributed to two primary factors. The first is the gradual shift in the balance of power from the West to the rest of the globe, resulting in a total shift in favor of the latter under the rule-based liberal order. The second factor is the rising discontent stemming from various issues, such as the accelerated rate of immigration and the decline in well-paid, stable employment opportunities among Western populations as a consequence of globalization.

It is important to note, however, that although old positions have been left behind, the emerging rival Worlds currently lack the capacity for effective and unified action. In Western societies and among states, there is a notable divergence of opinion between those who advocate a more liberal outlook and those with a more nationalistic perspective, with neither group occupying a hegemonic position. Each group holds a distinct vision for the future. While they have shown some degree of unity in their stance against Russia in the context of the Ukrainian war, disagreements persist between the United States and Europe, as well as within Europe itself. These divisions are evident in discussions on economic policies, defense spending, and climate change.

Similarly, while the East shows increased solidarity among Russia, China, and other smaller players, it is not without its own internal divisions. The confluence of historical tensions, divergent regional interests, and varying approaches to global governance has created a complex web of relationships rather than a unified bloc. For instance, the growing partnership between Russia and China is constrained by their differing long-term strategic interests in various regions.

This internal fragmentation within both Western and Eastern spheres indicates that the system is not yet made up of tightly aligned poles but rather consists of multiple Wests and Easts. Nevertheless, the intensifying polarization driven by regional conflicts may help to mitigate these internal differences, thereby fostering greater unity within each side. The rise of security concerns and the intensification of conflicts have the potential to expedite this process of internal consolidation.

The West's reduced willingness to bear the responsibility of sustaining global institutions can be attributed to the recognition that its competitors also benefit from the system it has established. This shift in attitude is exemplified by events such as the Summit for Democracy, convened by Joe Biden, which aimed to redefine potential boundaries for the Western-led world order. At the same time, the rise of a "fortress mentality" regarding immigrant flows is reinforcing physical boundaries. The construction of border walls and the implementation of more stringent immigration policies in Western

countries reflect this tendency towards establishing more clearly defined and defended territorial limits (Winkelmolen, 2024).

In this context, several current and potential flashpoints are emerging that could further delineate the boundaries between rival Worlds of the future through violence. The ongoing war in Ukraine is a clear manifestation of this trajectory. Russia has challenged the post-Cold War order, while the West has supported Ukraine with unprecedented economic and military aid. Potential broader clashes in the Middle East, particularly amid ongoing Israeli attacks in Gaza, Lebanon, Iran and Syria, along with heightened regional tensions, represent another area where geopolitical fault lines are being drawn. This conflict is not solely a matter of local actors; it reflects broader antagonisms between major powers and their respective regional allies. Additionally, mounting tensions over Taiwan and Korea present further hotspots with the potential for dramatic escalation. A conflict over Taiwan would not only pit China against the United States and its allies but could also compel many nations to choose sides, thereby crystallizing divisions in the emerging multi-World order.

As tensions intensify and security concerns mount, internal differences within each World, particularly among those engaged in World-building projects, may be overshadowed by the imperative for unity against perceived external threats. The advent of simultaneous wars in multiple regions has the potential to precipitate a more pronounced disintegration of the once-globalizing system. Despite the long-standing debate over whether mutually beneficial economic ties can mitigate escalating geopolitical tensions, the war in Ukraine has shown that, in the context of military conflict, these relations can either be swiftly severed or repurposed as tools of geoeconomic strategy through the weaponization of finance, trade, and investment.

The Rise of Geoeconomics and Economic Nationalism

The second pillar, which is covered by international political economy, is undergoing a significant transition, marked by the rise of geoeconomics and a resurgence of economic nationalism. This shift represents a major departure from the globalization paradigm that has dominated recent decades, where economic integration and market-driven policies were prioritized. In this new landscape, states are increasingly using economic instruments as tools to advance their geopolitical objectives, and new forms of economic relations arise (Okur & Şahin, 2022).

The weaponization of economic interdependence has become a widespread feature of this new era. The U.S.-China trade war, which began in 2018, exemplifies this trend. As tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of goods were imposed, the average U.S. tariff on Chinese imports skyrocketed from 3.1% in 2017 to 19.3% by 2019. The global ramifications of this conflict have been substantial, with the IMF projecting a potential 0.8% reduction in global GDP by 2020 (Bekkers & Schroeter, 2020).

Indeed, this protectionist trend has been taken to a more radical dimension during Trump's second presidency; this orientation was reinforced by the implementation of a 10% baseline tariff on all imports, alongside punitive rates exceeding 60% against China in particular, and the introduction of a 'reciprocal tax' for other countries.

In this context, it is ironic to see that George Soros, long an advocate of globalization, has criticized investments of BlackRock in China, citing national security concerns over economic considerations (Soros, 2021). This stance marks a significant departure from the globalist paradigm, which prioritized individual interests and corporate profits over state needs. Soros' emphasis on national security over private profits demonstrates a surprising shift toward a statist perspective, particularly coming from one of globalism's most prominent promoters.

Similarly, Larry Fink, CEO of BlackRock, who has faced criticism from Soros, acknowledged the end of globalization as we know it, citing geopolitical events like Russia's invasion of Ukraine as catalysts for a global reassessment of economic dependencies and production strategies (Fink, 2022). Other business leaders, such as Ken Moelis, have echoed this sentiment, highlighting the trend towards nation-states prioritizing self-sufficiency in critical sectors like food and energy (Moelis, 2022). These statements reflect a remarkable shift in the thinking of Western elites. The emphasis on national security and self-sufficiency over the previously sacred principles of neoliberal globalization indicates a growing recognition of the challenges it presents.

At the same time, the deployment of sanctions as a foreign policy tool has escalated dramatically. For example, the freezing of an estimated $300 billion in Russian central bank assets, the exclusion of major Russian banks from the SWIFT payment system, and the imposition of personal sanctions against Russian oligarchs and officials have demonstrated how economic interdependence can be utilized in geopolitical conflicts (Bhala, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated trends towards reshoring, onshoring, friendshoring and supply chain nationalization. Prioritizing domestic production of critical goods, particularly in sectors deemed essential for national security has become a prevalent practice. The U.S. CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, allocating $52.7 billion for domestic semiconductor manufacturing, exemplifies this shift. Similarly, Japan's 2020 initiative providing $2.2 billion in subsidies for companies relocating production from China, and the European Union's ambition to produce 20% of the world's cutting-edge semiconductors by 2030, underscore the growing emphasis on "strategic autonomy" in key industries (Sutter, Sargent,Jr., & Singh, 2023). These policies mark a significant departure from the globalized production model that has dominated recent decades.

In trade, deglobalization is reshaping the economic terrain too. The proliferation of preferential trade agreements (PTAs) and mega-regional trade deals, coupled with the erosion of multilateral trade rules, is driving a significant shift towards the fragmentation and regionalization of international trade. Countries accounting for approximately 78% of global GDP are now members of mega-regional trade agreements, and PTAs are poised to cover about two-thirds of global trade in the near future. The impact of this shift is evident in the dramatic increase in global exports covered by free trade agreements, rising from 23% in 2010 to 34% in 2020. A significant proportion of the EU's and the United States' exports are covered by PTAs, with 81% of EU exports and 44% of U.S. exports falling under these agreements. Notably, just 8 bilateral trade relationships not covered by PTAs account for 15% of global trade, each representing 1% or more of it. These statistics underscore the argument that the global trading system is likely to fragment into regional blocs centered around World-leading powers or World-zones such as the U.S., EU, and China (Dadush & Prost, 2023).

Additionally, the financial flows are undergoing a transformation, with the appearance of new organizations that challenge the primacy of Western-led institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The New Development Bank (NDB), established by the BRICS countries in 2014, had by 2024 approved approximately 96 projects with a combined value of $32.8 billion (NDB, 2024). Similarly, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), initiated by China in 2016, had by 2024 garnered 109 approved members and committed $53.97 billion to 278 projects (AIIB, 2024). These institutions reflect a broader trend towards a more multi-World financial order, with emerging economies seeking to exert greater influence over global economic governance.

In the digital realm, the concept of sovereignty has taken on new significance. Countries are increasingly asserting control over their digital domains, viewing tech-leadership as crucial for both national security and economic competitiveness. China's Great Firewall and its ban on numerous Western technology platforms are stark examples of this trend. Russia's 2019 "sovereign internet"

law, which requires all internet traffic to be routed through state-controlled nodes, provides further illustration of this push for digital autonomy. The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and its efforts to create European alternatives to U.S. tech giants, along with India's 2020 ban on TikTok and other Chinese applications citing national security concerns, and the U.S. Congress's stance against them, all point to a growing fragmentation of the global digital domain with the rise of "Techno-Nationalism" (Capri, 2024).

These developments highlight the increasing role of states, particularly those with a World-building project or capacity, in shaping the digital economy. As countries seek to safeguard their digital borders and nurture domestic techno-industries, the once-borderless digital zone is becoming increasingly balkanized. This trend not only impacts the flow of information and services but also has crucial implications for transborder trade, innovation, and geopolitical relations.

Even the few examples above demonstrate that the ascendance of geoeconomics and economic nationalism is altering the fabric of the once-globalizing economy, pushing it toward deglobalization. As states increasingly use economic tools for geopolitical gain, prioritize domestic production, and assert control over their digital domains, the previously integrated global economy is fragmenting. The trend toward reciprocity among states is likely to accelerate and deepen this process. To compensate for losses in markets and economies of scale, World-building is beginning to appear more feasible than before. As this process gains momentum, it could become one of the key drivers of future World-building efforts.

Crisis of Liberal Meaning Systems and Values

The third pillar of the international system—meaning systems and values, which we observe to analyze the shift toward deglobalization in the direction of 'historical rupture'—is undergoing a deep transformation. The liberal internationalist ideology, which has long been a foundation of globalization, is now facing a severe crisis of legitimacy. This phenomenon has its roots in a number of factors, affecting both core Western states and other actors situated in non-core and peripheral tiers of globalization. Among these factors are rising inequality, persistent economic instability, and the failure of global institutions to effectively address transnational challenges, such as collective security, international justice, and ecology. Together, these failures have eroded faith in the promises of the globalization project in the eyes of the masses, if not all the elites.

The rise of popular-antiestablishment and nationalist movements across the globe stands as clear evidence of widespread discontent. From Brexit in the UK to the election of leaders like Donald Trump in the U.S. and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, these movements signal a growing disillusionment with the liberal order. Although some of those politicians lost elections after their victories, mainstream figures have retaken their posts by adopting aspects of the anti-establishment agenda. Deglobalizing policies are receiving growing support from both sides of the political spectrum, thereby gaining legitimacy and moving toward becoming the new normal.

The aforementioned erosion of support for liberalism is further evidenced by a corresponding loss of trust in international institutions. In response to the question of whether international organizations (IOs) should assume authority from national governments, a majority of respondents expressed opposition. Additionally, they expressed concern about IOs encroaching upon national sovereignty (Bearce & Scott, 2019). The 2017–2022 World Values Survey and European Values Survey (WVS/EVS), which covered approximately 90 countries and territories across all geographic regions, revealed that net confidence in the UN was positive in only about half of the surveyed countries and territories, with numerous instances of markedly low levels of confidence (Trithart & Case, 2023).

In the wake of the retreat of liberal internationalism, nationalist and popular anti-establishment ideologies have experienced a notable resurgence. These worldviews prioritize national sovereignty and cultural authenticity, while also espousing a pronounced skepticism toward global elites and institutions. The ascendance of such leaders and parties across the globe serves to exemplify this trend. In the 2022-2023 national elections, a record 32% of European voters cast their ballots for anti-establishment parties, marking a significant increase from 20% in the early 2000s and 12% in the early 1990s (Henley, 2023). These winds are also prevalent in non-Western regions of the globe. For example, in India, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) achieved a historic feat by winning consecutive majorities in 2014, 2019, and 2024. This marked the first time a party had done so in over three decades (Ruparelia, 2024).

The crisis in liberal meaning systems is intrinsically linked to the process of deglobalization, as it undermines the ideological foundations that have supported global integration and cooperation in recent decades. There is a reciprocal relationship between these dynamics, evident in the simultaneous rise of dissent both in core regions and in territories previously considered peripheral. This has fostered the emergence of competing World-visions. Intellectual debates on the crisis of the 'rules-based' international order, compounded by growing contradictions and significant credibility loss, are intensifying (Ikenberry, 2023). Amid mounting criticisms, the West's perspective is becoming increasingly exclusionary. Those shaping the post-global face of the Western World(s) appear to be attributing a wide range of issues—from climate change to gender debates—to new "standards of civilization" (Gong, 2002), which reinforce divisions between the inside and outside, and between "us" and "the other."

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East is the latest manifestation of this turmoil in the liberal meaning system. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's characterization of the conflict as "a clash between barbarism and civilization" in his much-applauded U.S. Congress speech (Netanyahu, 2024) epitomizes the "us" versus "other" dichotomy. South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) underscores the Global South's challenge to this narrative. The Western powers' continued support for Netanyahu, coupled with their reluctance to intervene or hold war crimes perpetrators accountable, has once again exposed the contradictions within the liberal order, deepening distrust in the moral authority of Western-led institutions and norms.

Gaza has become a mirror reflecting the selective application of human rights norms, the erosion of international law and its enforcement mechanisms, the growing divide between Western powers and the Global South on issues of global justice, and the challenge to universal values amid competing civilizational narratives. Current polls confirm that this failure has generated strong negative sentiments toward leading actors in the Western World(s), while boosting the credibility of powers that are (re)organizing Worlds, such as China, Russia, and Türkiye (ArabCenter, 2024).

In this context, leaders of World-building projects are promoting alternative concepts. China has advanced the notion of "community of shared future for mankind", though this vision has been the subject of criticism due to Beijing's repressive policies aimed at Sinicizing Islam (Davidson, 2023) and suppressing Uighur and Kazakh Turks (Chotiner, 2022). Russia has advocated for a "multipolar world order", which rejects U.S. hegemony but faces criticism over its actions in Ukraine and Syria. Despite their flaws, these mottos reflect the deglobalization trend and the expectations for a new future in different parts of the globe. Türkiye's emphasis on a world "bigger than the Five" expresses yet another Worldview, demanding change and empathizing with voices marginalized in the previously globalizing system.

The majority of these World-visions, with their universalist expressions, draw on value sets inherited from civilizations that were once central to the respective historical Worlds. As World-building projects gain momentum, we may witness more detailed declarations concerning the relationships

between meaning systems and the international order. However, before any set of values attains hegemonic status within a given World-zone, struggles among elites defending different value sets are likely to arise.

Ultimately, the process of deglobalization is profoundly reshaping all three pillars of the international system. The geopolitical landscape is becoming increasingly fragmented, marked by competing World-building projects. The international political economy is characterized by growing geoeconomic competition and economic nationalism. Meanwhile, the liberal meaning systems that underpinned globalization face a legitimacy crisis, challenged by resurgent nationalist ideologies and competing visions of international order.

Türkiye's Trajectory: From Lost World to World-building?

This section briefly charts the evolution of Turkish foreign policy, analyzing how Türkiye has managed the dual challenges of preserving its Anatolian heartland while grappling with the legacy of its Ottoman past and the possibilities for future World-building.

The focus of the initial years of the Turkish Republic was the consolidation of the nation-state within its Anatolian heartland. This period is marked by the metaphorical description, 'Anatolian Ergenekon,'[2] which represents a forced withdrawal from the historical World of the Ottoman era to a more defensible core territory (Kösoğlu, 2019).

It is, however, important to note that the early Republican leadership did not view the Lausanne settlement as unchangeable. Rather, it was regarded as a red line beyond which no compromise was acceptable. Moreover, there were continuous endeavors to alter specific stipulations in order to circumvent this red line when the opportunity arose. The Montreux Convention of 1936, which restored Turkish sovereignty over the Straits, and the incorporation of Hatay into Türkiye in 1939 exemplify this revisionist approach, constrained by the prevailing international order.

The foreign policy of Türkiye during this period was characterized by a delicate balancing act between the Eastern and Western political and diplomatic spheres. Meanwhile, there were efforts to maintain connections with the geography of the former Ottoman Empire, particularly in the Balkans, Caucasus, Middle East and beyond, with the people of the lost World, including those in the Caucasus and Turkestan (Okur, 2023). The Balkan Entente of 1934 and the Saadabad Pact of 1937 exemplify Türkiye's endeavors to cultivate regional collaboration and stability among former Ottoman territories. Beyond their immediate context, these initiatives were designed with the dual objective of establishing a buffer against potential threats from great powers while simultaneously preserving Türkiye's influence in its near abroad. Türk Eli as a peace zone, though not explicitly articulated in these terms at the time, can be understood as an underlying principle, at least in intent, in Türkiye's regional diplomacy.

The World-building nationalism employs two principal categories for the organization of the geography beyond the official borders of Türkiye. Such territories include those related to the Misâk-ı Milli[3] (National Pact) (Şentop, 2021) and other regions, primarily in the Caucasus, Turkestan, Balkans, and the Middle East. The Misâk-ı Milli can be viewed as a project born out of the pressures of a great defeat in World War I, aimed at achieving sustainable peace across all the territories of Türkiye's former World, which had been directly ruled by Istanbul for centuries, not just within its yet-to-be-delineated

[2] "Anatolian Ergenekon" alludes to the Turkic legend of Ergenekon, where Turks sought refuge in an isolated mountain valley after a devastating defeat, only to later re-emerge and reclaim their power. This metaphor likens the founding of the Turkish Republic to a period of strategic retreat and rebuilding within the Anatolian heartland.

[3] Misak-ı Milli was a set of six crucial resolutions adopted by the Ottoman Parliament on January 28, 1920. These resolutions stipulated the acceptable conditions for an independent Turkish state and addressed the status of territories beyond its proposed boundaries in the aftermath of World War I. The pact became a fundamental cornerstone of the Turkish War of Independence and subsequently played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye.

national boundaries. Sustainable peace, as used here, has three key elements: firstly, the establishment of fair contractual agreements in accordance with the stipulations of international law; secondly, the consideration of the humanitarian needs of affected communities; and thirdly, the pursuit of a long-term vision for the preservation of peace (Okur, 2023b).

In this way, the **Misâk-ı Milli** constitutes a foundational document (National Pact, 1922) that outlines the conditions under which the Turkish state seeks to pursue a future of lasting peace, not only for itself but also for its former citizens, now envisioned as friendly neighbors, whom Türkiye wished well and supported in achieving a bright future based on their free will. The proposed borders and principles are designed to facilitate a transition to a new order in the Middle East that does not perpetuate a memory of conflict in an era where national identities stand out. The document delineated the tenets that would facilitate coexistence with post-Ottoman states within the framework of a new World. By emphasizing the free decision of peoples regarding whether to pursue the path of establishing independent states, it established a legal framework for the countries that emerged in the territory of the Ottoman Empire in the 20th century. Given that, in certain regions where the Misâk-ı Millî advocated for independence, the issues of self-determination remain unresolved by the international community—such as in the case of Palestine—it becomes evident why this document continues to serve as a reference point in ongoing debates.

From the perspective of (re)World-building, when we consider territories beyond Türkiye's borders, we can identify three broad zones, each containing several sub-regions.

The initial area of focus is the Ottoman human-geography, extending from the Balkans to the Hejaz and North Africa. The fate of some of these territories was addressed in the Misâk-ı Millî, while the status of others was determined at an earlier point in time. The second area of interest is the Caucasus and Turkestan, which currently consists of Turkic republics and stateless Turkic communities. The third consists of diverse territories at various distances, potentially connected to Türkiye through identity ties, practical interests, or functional relations.

During the early years of the Republic and the Cold War, Türkiye began to recalibrate its relations with territories affected by the Misâk-ı Millî. The advent of the Cold War presented Türkiye with novel challenges and opportunities in its foreign policy orientation. The perceived threat from the Soviet Union, particularly Stalin's territorial and military demands on Türkiye as a price for an alliance in the immediate post-World War II period (FRUS, 1960), led Ankara to gravitate more firmly towards the Western World. Türkiye's accession to NATO in 1952 constituted a pivotal moment in its alignment with the West.

Nevertheless, Türkiye's incorporation into Western institutions during the Cold War was neither straightforward nor unchallenged. The relationship was marked by a persistent pattern of tensions and contradictions. Türkiye sought to leverage its geostrategic location to secure economic and military support from the West while seeking recognition for its interests in its historical World. Meanwhile, Turkish leaders consistently expressed frustration with unequal treatment and a lack of understanding of Türkiye's unique security concerns.

The Cyprus crisis of 1974 and the subsequent U.S. arms embargo revealed the costs of Türkiye's dependencies, prompting discussions on its true position within the Western World. During this period, there was a resurgence of interest in diversifying Türkiye's foreign policy options, including renewed engagement with the Middle East and attempts to improve relations with the Soviet Union.

However, a change of direction for the country was neither a desired outcome nor a viable option. Türkiye's incorporation into a sophisticated network of Western institutions and norms extended beyond the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to contain economic, educational, and cultural dimensions. A significant proportion of Türkiye's elite had received their education in Western institu-

tions or their Turkish counterparts, thereby creating a cadre of leaders and intellectuals deeply familiar with Western systems and World-views. This integration significantly impacted Türkiye's domestic and foreign policy orientations, frequently resulting in tensions between Westernizing impulses and more national perspectives.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the beginning of a new era for Turkish foreign policy, presenting both opportunities and challenges. It opened avenues for engagement with regions that had been largely inaccessible during the Cold War, including those that had once been part of Türkiye's historical World.

During this period, there was a notable resurgence of interest in Türkiye's connections with the newly independent Turkic states. The rise of them in Turkestan and Azerbaijan offered Türkiye the prospect of actualizing a form of the Türk Eli concept. Türkiye's initial enthusiasm for engagement with these regions was evident in the surge of diplomatic, economic, and cultural initiatives. In the preceding three decades, the most significant institutional outcome of World-building nationalism has been the establishment of the OTS in this region.

We observe that the activities surrounding the OTS shine to the extent that they align with the (re)World-building requirements mentioned in the relevant section above. The momentum gained following the Karabakh victory serves as a notable example of successful outcomes. At the bilateral and multilateral summits held after the victory, significant decisions were made in favor of greater integration. However, the implementation of some of these resolutions is still pending.

The current interplay of pull and push effects is visible in recent geopolitical debates. The Turkic World occupies a pivotal geographical position in the context of the most contentious geopolitical struggle of the 21st century. In light of the expected intensification of tensions and conflicts between major powers and rival World-building projects, the region, previously designated the "Turkic Belt" in another study (Okur, 2017), assumes particular significance. A potential conflict between the United States, its allies and Russia-China, their supporters could have considerable implications for China's maritime trade. This suggests that China will require a significantly expanded network of land transportation systems and communication infrastructure to facilitate the delivery of its goods to markets and to ensure the reliable supply of energy and raw materials. It is evident that the substantial investments in the construction of roads and pipelines in Asia, as part of the Belt and Road Initiative, should be viewed in this context. Among the routes connecting China's industrial zones with European markets, the one that is most likely to remain open for the longest time appears to be the Turkic Belt, which originates within China and reaches Europe via East/West Turkestan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Türkiye. The value of this route, which will be enhanced with opening of the the Zangezur Corridor, is more fully appreciated in light of the sanctions imposed in response to Russia's occupation of Ukraine, which have placed Chinese cargo transportation via the Russian route at risk. Despite the elevated tensions surrounding the Zangezur Corridor issue and the potential for renewed conflict, the possibility of a peaceful resolution, such as the construction of a 30-40 kilometer transportation tunnel, which would grant Azerbaijan sovereign rights for connecting Nakhichevan with its eastern territories, cannot be discounted (Okur & Şahin, 2022).

Similarly, India, whose population is expected to play a role comparable to that of China in the future of the global economy, also has a route to the Turkic Belt (Mohapatra, 2021). India, unable to access Asia's energy resources through its borders with Pakistan and China, is pursuing alternative ways. One of the most critical of these is the Iran-Caucasus-Russia route to Europe via Russia or Türkiye, which also intersects with the Zangezur Corridor. The second runs across Iran and Afghanistan to Turkestan. A third route is planned to reach Europe via the Persian Gulf, Iraq and Türkiye. The fourth is the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, which was announced at the G20 meeting (Das, 2024). This route

passes over or near Türkiye's waters in the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean. In the event of a real possibility of a confrontation between the West and China leading to a rupture, India's importance in the global supply chain is likely to increase. It would not be implausible if those seeking to encircle China simultaneously sought to render the Turkic Belt inaccessible to Beijing while facilitating access for Delhi.

These are merely illustrative examples, which allow to examine the implications of the geopolitical meaning of the World-building activities in the zone of the Turkic World in the short and medium term. These states are confronted with two possible courses of action. The first option is to deal with the geopolitical designs of the great powers alone, whose competition is intensifying to the point of near conflict. The second option is for the Turkic Belt states, which control the entire route, to unite, establish common policies, and take advantage of enhanced bargaining opportunities. The first option carries significant risks, as the great powers are likely to intensify their efforts to incorporate the route into their spheres of influence, given its growing geopolitical importance, while these countries face them alone, one by one. The clear benefits of the second option strengthen the rationale for engaging in the reorganization of the Turkic World.

Moreover, although it is beyond the scope of this article to elaborate in detail, this project offers a variety of opportunities beyond the geopolitical implications of the Turkic Belt's strategic location. The facilities, capabilities, complementary resources, and strengths or weaknesses of the states of the Turks are mutually reinforcing. The region is endowed with abundant natural and human resources, as well as robust societies with strong social cohesion, creating favorable conditions for accelerated development and increased prosperity.

In light of these benefits, it is possible to design hybrid strategies that manage risks. Examples of such strategies include 'Co-Worlding' and 'Roof Sharing.' Co-Worlding refers to the simultaneous presence of institutions from different Worlds within a single country. This approach empowers these countries by demonstrating that they have viable alternatives. Over time, as the influence of one World wanes, a newer and more robust World gradually assumes the responsibilities of the old one. Co-Worlding facilitates the emergence of new World-building projects by mitigating negative reactions from the established World’s leader.

Roof Sharing is another hybrid strategy. In this approach, overarching entities, such as the East and the West, provide a framework that accommodates multiple World-building projects. It involves organizing different Worlds around their unique institutions while sharing common infrastructure, access to markets, and technology, as well as standing together against competitors in global politics. In this strategy, it is crucial for the less powerful World to maintain internal coherence to preserve its independent identity while benefiting from the more powerful one as both a protective shield and a supplier of development resources.

While the developments, dynamics, and risk-aversion strategies that support the vision of World-building nationalism are encouraging, significant challenges remain. Despite the integrationist aspirations of a substantial portion of the population and certain political and bureaucratic circles, there is little support for the World-building initiative among influential segments of society, such as academia, business, and cultural elites. One reason for this is that the elites in all Turkic states, including Türkiye, have been educated and positioned with a mindset focused on integration into other Worlds. Their primary role has been to act as intermediaries, facilitating their country's absorption into a larger system they find appealing or in which they possess specialized knowledge. This allows them to gain prestige and status as representatives of a given World (Okur, 2023).

If the majority of elites in the leading countries do not genuinely support a World-building project, the likelihood of its success diminishes. Global crises and geopolitical transformations reaching

historical rupture levels might provide the necessary motivation to back such a project. However, articulating a coherent ideological framework for World-building vision—one that appeals to diverse constituencies both domestically and internationally—remains a significant challenge for Türkiye and its partners. A significant challenge in World-building nationalism is reconciling diverse, often conflicting ideological elements in a manner that resonates across Turkic lands and beyond. Historically, Islam provided an overarching framework that fostered both great civilizational achievements and power struggles for World-leadership among various centers. Consequently, there has been an intensification of discourse on the authentic interpretation of Islam as a meaning system, both within and outside its traditional spheres of influence. This dialogue intersects with Islam's engagement with various schools of thought, predominantly of Western and Eastern origin. These Western and Eastern ideological systems once gained prominence in regions now undergoing (re)World-building efforts and embroiled in novel geopolitical conflicts. Today, these areas have become arenas for dual intellectual contests: internal Muslim examinations of Islam, and exchanges between Islam and competing ideologies. These ideological engagements unfold against a backdrop of multifaceted crises at various levels of human experience, extending beyond geopolitical and identity issues. The outcomes of these complex intellectual confrontations and the eventual consensus to be reached by Turks will inevitably shape (re)World-building endeavors.

The economic difficulties faced by Türkiye and its partners restrict their capacity to project power and exert influence on the international stage. The establishment of a robust economic foundation is a prerequisite for sustainable World-building. Despite the scarcity of available resources, it is critical to the success of the project to increase initiatives aimed at instilling in Turkic individuals of all ages and educational levels, especially the younger generation, a sense of the tangible and intangible benefits of belonging to a broader community beyond their fellow countrymen. It is imperative that these gains are not solely related to security and welfare, but also contribute to fostering a pro-World vision that includes dimensions of good governance and justice.

Another serious problem is that the OTS, which represents a crucial stage in the institutionalization of the Turkic world, has so far only included independent states in its structure. In order to fully realize the potential of this World-building project, it is essential to consider mechanisms for extending interaction to stateless Turkic communities.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the Türk Eli initiative presents a potentially fruitful avenue for Türkiye and its partners in their World-building journey. By prioritizing peace, collaboration, and shared prosperity over domination or imperialism, this approach aligns with the needs and aspirations of potential partner countries. Additionally, it offers a flexible structure that can adapt to the evolving dynamics of the international system. The concept of Türk Eli as a zone of peace extends beyond the Turkic-speaking World to include territories with historical ties to Türkiye, such as parts of the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus, as well as adjacent areas, forming a secure belt around these regions and more distant but still linked lands with various kinds of relations and commonalities. This broader vision addresses the stability of these areas, which is crucial for Türkiye and its partners in preventing mass migration, terrorism, and crime resulting from ongoing conflicts, state failures, and the deepening of divisions and fault lines due to military interventions by outside powers and endless civil strifes. This inclusive approach to regional cooperation could be an effective means of addressing long-standing conflicts and tensions in Eurasia.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined Türkiye's and its partners' potential for World-building amid the upheaval of international relations, characterized by a historical rupture through deglobalization and the

emergence of rival power centers in the form of distinct Worlds. This significant transformation places Türkiye at a pivotal crossroads. The concept of Türk Eli, or Turkic Peace Zone, provides a framework for Türkiye's engagement with its historical and cultural connections, as well as its material capabilities and interests across Eurasia in this rapidly evolving landscape.

The Turkic World's unique historical and civilizational legacy, deep kinship ties, religious and cultural bonds, strategic geopolitical positioning, energy and natural resources, expanding technological and military capabilities, educated population, and shared interests in transportation and energy corridors form a solid foundation for realizing the Türk Eli vision. By leveraging these strengths, Türkiye and its allies can establish a zone of peace and prosperity, not in isolation, but by maintaining connections with other relevant powers and promoting regional integration. While Türkiye is well-positioned to play a leading role, the realization of the Turkic Peace Zone should involve a multi-centered approach, with other partners prepared to share responsibilities and initiatives to ensure sustainable success.

This vision faces several challenges, including complex geopolitical dynamics and the need to manage delicate relations with competing actors. However, through strategic initiatives like enhancing integration within the OTS, Türkiye and its partners have the potential to play a central role in shaping the future of Eurasia. By doing so, Türkiye can not only advance its national interests but also contribute to a more stable and prosperous future for the broader Eurasian region.



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Chapter 10

Eurasia in the Context of Cyber Intelligence

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Abstract

The advancement of cyber intelligence and its strategic significance, particularly within the Eurasian geopolitical context, is of great importance. As cyber threats become increasingly sophisticated and target military, economic, and civilian infrastructures, cyber intelligence has emerged as a critical tool for detecting, analyzing, and countering these digital threats. This study outlines the conceptual framework of cyber intelligence, highlighting its rapid, real-time processing and multi-layered operational structure, encompassing strategic, operational, and tactical levels. Focusing on Eurasia, the study explores the cyber capabilities of key regional players, including Russia, China, Türkiye, and Iran. Russia's cyber intelligence strategy is alleged to be evident in its hybrid warfare tactics, which include disinformation, espionage, and attacks on critical infrastructure, particularly Ukraine's energy sector. Meanwhile, China's focus is alleged to be on cyber espionage to secure its growing dominance in the digital economy through its Belt and Road Initiative while simultaneously strengthening its strategic position. Both countries emphasize expanding their cyber capabilities to protect their national interests and gain geopolitical leverage. This study also examines the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, in shaping both offensive and defensive cyber operations. These technologies are increasing states' ability to detect threats and respond to attacks with unprecedented speed and efficiency. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of international cooperation in cybersecurity, particularly through regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS, which facilitate joint defense strategies against evolving cyber threats. A comprehensive analysis of cyber intelligence in Eurasia highlights the need for enhanced cooperation and technological innovation to counter future cyber risks. Rapid advances in artificial intelligence and quantum computing are redefining the region's cybersecurity approach and forcing Eurasian countries to strengthen their cyber-defense mechanisms further to ensure regional stability.

Keywords Cyber Security · Cyber Intelligence · International Security · Eurasia · Artificial Intelligence

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Introduction

The cyber world has been at the center of global security structures since the beginning of the 21st century, and the concept of cyber intelligence has become necessary with the increase in threats to digital infrastructures. Unlike traditional military and intelligence methods, this new threat, which emerged with the proliferation of computer networks and communication technologies, has created a challenge with no borders and can be easily implemented even by non-state actors. While cyber security includes technical measures taken against these threats, cyber intelligence is a strategic tool that aims to detect and prevent these threats in advance.

Cyber intelligence is built on a cycle of information gathering, analysis, and action. Although this cycle is inspired by classical intelligence processes, the nature of the digital environment requires a more dynamic and rapid execution. As threats' source, type, and impact change rapidly, a rapid response to these threats is critical to ensure national security. Cyber intelligence has become an essential strategic tool, especially for nation-states, and therefore states have started actively using this field to protect their military and economic interests.

Cyber intelligence is a process used to identify, monitor, analyze, and prevent digital threats. Unlike traditional military intelligence processes, it can collect and process data more rapidly and must provide real-time information. The primary purpose of cyber intelligence is to detect threats such as cyber-attacks, espionage, cybercrime, and inter-state digital warfare in advance and to make defense mechanisms effective (Andress & Winterfeld, 2013).

Cyber intelligence operates at three primary levels: strategic, operational, and tactical. At the strategic level, it provides information on long-term cyber threats and the policies that should be taken to address them. This level is critical in determining national security policies and developing states' cyber defense capabilities. At the operational level, decisions are made on managing a particular attack or threat; intelligence at this level is essential for rapid and effective response, especially in times of crisis. At the tactical level, the focus is on specific attack techniques and countermeasures. This stage involves processes where technical experts are in charge and attacks are instantaneously responded to.

Digital espionage and cyber-attacks are among the main threats to national security, and cyber intelligence plays a critical role in understanding, predicting, and neutralizing these threats. For example, the Stuxnet attack on Iran's nuclear facilities in 2010 (Shalal-Esa, 2013) is considered one of the first large-scale attacks to highlight the importance of cyber intelligence. This attack showed how effective digital intelligence can be and what kind of threats exist in the digital world beyond traditional intelligence processes.

The scope of cyber intelligence is not limited to military threats. Commercial organizations and government agencies are also exposed to these threats. The attack on SolarWinds, one of the largest US federal agencies, in 2020 (Tidy, 2020) demonstrated how fragile global cybersecurity can be and how broad the scope of cyber intelligence must be.

Cyber threats have evolved with technology and become more complex over time. While simple viruses and worms against individual computer users were the basis of cyber threats in the early days, today, state-sponsored organized attacks, economic and military espionage attempts, ransomware attacks, and attacks against critical infrastructures constitute the main elements of this threat. The evolution of cyber threats has expanded rapidly, driven by technological innovations, and attacks using much more sophisticated methods have emerged (Rid & Buchanan, 2015).

During the 1990s, the typical threat types included simple viruses and worms. These were types of malware aimed mainly at individuals and small firms and were committed through the ordinary, widely used medium of e-mails. However, these became more sophisticated with the development of

the internet and interconnecting computer networks. From 2000 onwards, cyber threats were directed towards large corporations and governments instead of individuals. The attackers have targeted sectors like financials, energy companies, and government, as well as military systems.

Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs), which started in the early 2000s, are among the most evident paradigms of such evolution. As the name suggests, such attacks are highly complex and can remain undetected on the target network for a protracted duration with the sole purpose of stealing classified information. Often Relating to APTs, they are executed by authorities and aimed at attaining economic, political, or military power. Such threats are profound in countries like China, Russia, and North Korea (Roguski, 2020).

The qualitative development of big data and artificial intelligence technologies has also significantly affected the evolution of cyber threats. This evolution is significant in light of the increased use of artificial intelligence (AI) during 2023-2024, when many more threats driven by AI and machine learning technologies are expected (Okoli et al., 2024). Though these technologies make threats more and more complex and unpredictable, they also give rise to new technologies for enhancing cyber intelligence systems. Attacks enabled by these technologies can understand protection mechanisms and design and use them against attackers in record time. Further, attacks launched by the use of machine learning have led to the targeting of more extensive and more complex systems. Within this framework, it becomes evident that all defensive systems must cope with such advancements.

Eurasia is a geopolitical arena with energy resources and trade routes in the center of commerce. These states, like Russia, China, Türkiye, and Iran, constitute significant power centers in the broader Eurasian setting, and the competition for digital security among these countries is intensifying. The region's countries seek to enhance their defense and attack competencies while securing their networks from cyber attacks. Moreover, the trend of mounting attacks, particularly towards energy structures, shows the need to enforce cyber strategies in the area's security prescriptions. In recent years, grave threats to the energy and financial systems of the region have crystallized into large-scale cyber-attacks, showing a growing focus on vital system infrastructures (Mohanty et al., 2024).

The impact of cyber threats on Eurasia is not limited to relations between states. Relations between the government of Eurasian states are not the only focus of cyber threats. Even energy companies, banks, and other regional commercial organizations are threatened by such threats. Consequently, such cyber intelligence in Eurasia is not only an issue of state security but critically an issue of great economic and commercial concern. Russia and China, within the region, are boasting aggressively enhanced cyber capacities to establish preeminence over their countries in the same region.

In order to enhance its position, Russia is pushing forward with cyberattacks not only in the Eurasian region but also on the world stage. Cyberwarfare, such as attacks on Ukraine and Western elections, falls in line with cyber terrorists based in Russia aggressively escalating cyber operations (Jones, 2024). In contrast, China is mainly focused on acquiring the status of a superpower in the digital economy as part of the "Made in China 2025" initiative while highlighting activities associated with cyber espionage (Bateman, 2022).

Transformation of Cyber Intelligence in Eurasia: Key Actors and Their Roles

The role of the Eurasian region in cyber intelligence activities has become critical, especially over the last two decades since the increase in warfare in cyberspace. Countries in the region launch resolution options by state and non-state actors in cyber operations, contributing to international politics. A series of reforms accompanying the change of cyber intelligence in Eurasia has taken place

alongside the countries' aspirations to promote their cyberspace activities and enhance their regional political power projection. Countries like Russia, China, Türkiye, and Iran have become necessary cyber operations players.

Russia as a Cyber Power

Alongside conventional conventions, Russia has also incorporated cyberspace into its hybrid warfare and has expanded its cyber capabilities in the international arena. Hybrid warfare encompasses political warfare, disinformation, cyber-attacks, and even economic warfare within the regular scope of armed conflict. Under this framework, Russia executes various types of cyber operations classified as the 'gray zone', which are subversion or other military contention carried out without a formal war (Giles, 2016). These activities are mainly directed at Western nations and NATO members in furthering Russia's expansionist policies.

One example of Russia's effective use of its cyber power is its interference in the 2016 US presidential elections. This interference demonstrated that Russia could target democratic processes and influence outcomes through cyber operations. According to US intelligence reports, Russia's military intelligence service GRU and other state agencies organized various disinformation campaigns, spread fake news on social media platforms, and carried out cyber-attacks on election infrastructure during the election process (Greenberg, 2017). In addition, Russia's cyberattacks against Ukraine are also noteworthy (Reinhold, 2024). The 2015 BlackEnergy attack on Ukraine's electricity infrastructure demonstrated that Russia's cyber intelligence operations can extend to energy infrastructures (Stoddart, 2022). Russia's cyber operations became more prominent with large-scale cyber espionage attacks against NATO and Western countries in 2024 (Radu & Maftei, 2024). These operations, which have increased in recent years, increase threats to Western critical infrastructures.

Russia's use of cyber intelligence aims to gain a strategic advantage over the West. Through cyber espionage, disinformation campaigns, and attacks on critical infrastructure, Russia is consolidating its power in the international political arena and increasing its global influence. These operations weaken NATO and the Western world against Russia and serve Russia's strategic objectives.

China’s Cyber Power Strategy and Its Implications in Eurasia

The phenomenon extends to cyberspace, extending their national sovereignty while extending their international strategic objectives. Cyber Sovereignty refers to the policies employed in China to command cyberspace to advance internet-centered China and protect it from digital terrorism (Chang et al., 2023). In recent years, the country has made massive investments in digital infrastructure projects within the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) framework, which intends to establish solid digital power in Eurasia. In this regard, investments in digital infrastructure projects were further increased, and measures for cyber security were brought into this context (Wang et al., 2024). This attitude goes with the Chinese strategy of projecting its dominance over digital infrastructure in the Eurasian region by capturing further investments. Although the primary goal of the low-tech and smooth technology projects is to develop new economic and communication infrastructures in the region, the projects also have a secondary purpose of increasing regional armed political order under the influence of China and enhancing cyber political control springing from Canada's Chinese diaspora to the region.

China-based technology giants such as Huawei and ZTE have been involved in broadband digital infrastructure services in Eurasia as part of BRI projects. These organizations restrict terrestrial communication resources, expanding the nation's cyber supremacy. These investments, however, have raised fears that China can penetrate basic digital infrastructures existing in the region and increase its cybercrime activities. In particular, the Western world argues that companies such as Huawei and

ZTE are operating hand in hand with the government of China and thus can be clipped for espionage (Morris, 2021).

China's primary concern in cyber intelligence is economic and military information infiltration. There are numerous cyberattacks groups based in China that are organized into subunits to conduct commercial and industrial espionage against other nations and to seize intellectual assets. To illustrate, a Chinese hacker group known as APT10 has conducted cyber espionage activities against major US corporations and has sought to invest in their intellectual property rights (Kianpour, 2021).

China's cyber superiority is strategically viewed as a regional and global influence. The strategic urgency stems from China's seeking to dominate Eurasia interoperability, increasing its economic and military power through cyberattacks. This strategy reflects China's posture of increasing its control over the latter more through practitioners and expanding its influence as one of the cyber power players.

Türkiye and Iran's Emerging Cyber Capabilities

Türkiye and Iran are among the other key players enhancing their cyber intelligence capability in the Eurasian region. Both countries seek to influence regional power dynamics through strategic investments in cyberspace. Whereas Türkiye, a member of NATO, formulates its cyber security policies in collaboration with the West, Iran follows a more independent cyber strategy, particularly noted for its aggressive cyber operations.

Türkiye has recently taken necessary steps to develop indigenous software solutions and increase its cyber security capacity. Türkiye's cybersecurity strategy aims to develop both defensive and offensive capabilities, and cooperation with NATO forms part of this strategy. Türkiye also aims to increase its independence in cyber security by supporting domestic technology companies and the defense industry. Defense industry companies such as HAVELSAN and ASELSAN play an essential role in developing Türkiye's cyber security infrastructure (Tonkal & Daim, 2022).

Iran, on the other hand, uses cyberspace effectively for both offensive and defensive purposes. Iran was subjected to the Stuxnet attack, after which it rapidly developed its cyber capacity in 2010 (Shalal-Esa, 2013). Stuxnet was an alleged US and Israeli based attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, which led Iran to reshape its cyber security strategy (Sanger, 2012). After this attack, Iran adopted a more aggressive strategy in cyberspace and organized cyber-attacks, especially against the United States. Iran-based hacker groups carried out large-scale cyber-attacks against energy companies and government networks in the United States.

The cyber capabilities of both Türkiye and Iran have considerable effects on the regional power equilibrium. While Türkiye increases cooperation with NATO to enhance its defense strategy, Iran follows an independent advanced offensive action strategy. This strategy implies that both countries are no longer passive players in the cyber sphere but rather active contributors affecting the global power dynamics in the Eurasian region.

Profile of Cyber Threats in Eurasia

Eurasia's region is notable as one where cyber threats have increased globally compared to other parts of the world. The region is exposed to varying scales of cyber threats, such as government-sponsored cyberspace violence, malicious infrastructure like planned cybercrimes, and terrorist involvement in cyberspace. Cyber threats emanate from not only the states within the region but also from cyberspace or foreign terrorist organizations. The extent and nature of these threats often undermine the security of the digital structure of the countries in the region.

State-Sponsored Cyber Threats

State-sponsored cyber threats are widespread, particularly gravitating towards the region of Eurasia. Moreover, it is against such cyber aggression that military suppression is practiced, and large states, namely Russia and China, are noted for such cyber warmongering. Structural critical targets like infrastructures relating to energy and finance, public services, and elections are being attacked. One of the high-profile alleged state-sponsored cyberattacks in the Eurasian region was the BlackEnergy and NotPetya cyberattacks on Ukraine's energy sector. (CISA, 2022).

Ukraine faced a severe BlackEnergy cyberattack in December 2015, the main targeted goal of which was the country's energy infrastructure (McElfresh, 2016). This attack eventually led to power cuts, with over 230,000 consumers affected. Such an attack proved that cyber-attacks/sabotage orchestrated by the government are not only for information theft but have a physical demolition capability (Greenberg, 2018). Ukraine's financial and government infrastructures were targeted by the NotPetya attack in 2017 (Bellabarba, 2024), and the attack became a global phenomenon within a matter of weeks. Although NotPetya is said to have been promoted as a ransomware attack, the most brutal cyber warfare has sought to ravage Ukraine's budget. These cyber attack incidents indicate that Russia also has a digital warfare ability amid the cyber assaults that it carries out against Ukraine, hacking its digital networks to undermine military strategies (Greenberg, 2018).

Additionally, the constant cyberattacks on Ukraine, even in 2024, eloquently emphasize the issue of potential cyberattacks by states in Eurasia. Newer aspects of cyber warfare are brought about by escalating attacks on energy and finances (George et al., 2024).

In summary, cyberattacks sponsored by the states tend to weaken Eurasian countries' political, economic, and military systems. Russia has been particularly active in this sphere, especially in trying to outscore its opponents in internal and external politics. These attacks seek to further the goal of hybrid warfare, where no formal declaration of war is made, yet hostilities prevail. As countries in Eurasia seek to consolidate their defenses against such threats, the aggressor's posture and the policies in cyber-space have become more elaborate. How the attacks are meant to frustrate NATO and the West through Russia's strategic advantage exemplifies how the competition in cyberspace could bring instability to the region.

Cybercriminal Organizations and Cyber-criminalistics in Eurasia

Eurasia is one of the regions that plays a vital role in global cybercrime activities. Cybercrime organizations originating from Russia and Eastern Europe are prominent worldwide in cybercrime cases such as ransomware, data breaches, and identity theft. Hacker groups lead these organizations with advanced technical skills and often operate with state support, creating significant problems at the intersection of cybercrime and states.

Ransomware attacks are one of Eurasia's most common activities of cybercriminal organizations. These attacks rely on locking down a system or network and demanding a ransom payment to regain user access. Ransomware groups based in Russia, such as REvil and DarkSide, have carried out attacks against companies and governments on a global scale, demanding billions of dollars' worth of ransom (Greenstein, 2022). The activities of these groups have had severe impacts on the global economy and increased the need for international cooperation in the field of cybersecurity (Wood, 2024). In addition, cybercrime organizations operating in Eurasia drew attention to ransomware attacks against critical infrastructures in 2023 and continued to pose a significant threat to international cybercrime (Montana Seisdedos, 2023).

Some of these organizations serve the interests of states. By providing indirect support to such organizations, Russia aims to achieve strategic goals without using its name in direct attacks. This attitude enables states to carry out attacks through cybercrime organizations that they cannot carry out officially. In addition, these groups further strengthen the cybercrime industry with the revenues generated from illegal activities.

In summary, cybercrime in Eurasia has become a significant threat not only to individuals and companies but also to states. Cybercriminal organizations can carry out more sophisticated, large-scale attacks by cooperating with states. This cooperation allows states to avoid being held officially responsible for cyberattacks while allowing criminal organizations to operate with superior power. This situation further complicates cybersecurity threats in Eurasia and forces countries in the region to reconsider their defense strategies.

Terrorist Groups and Cyber Terrorism

Terrorist groups use digital platforms for both propaganda and operational activities. Terrorist groups use social media platforms as propaganda and radicalization tools, and the radicalization of young people in the digital environment and their participation in terrorist activities are rapidly increasing. This situation raises not only the threat of physical terrorism but also the risk of cyber terrorism.

ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) is one of the terrorist organizations that use digital platforms most effectively. ISIS has radicalized thousands of people through propaganda on social media and directed them to terrorist attacks (Conway, 2017). Platforms such as Twitter and Telegram are the main areas where ISIS has conducted its digital operations. ISIS has also engaged in cyberterrorism activities using digital tools and threatened to attack critical infrastructures.

Cyberterrorism can be considered the digital extension of physical terrorism. Through cyber-attacks, terrorist groups aim to damage critical infrastructures, create fear, and weaken governments. Cyber-attacks on vital infrastructures such as energy, water, and transportation are among the targets of terrorist groups. Cyberterrorism causes serious security vulnerabilities, especially in regions with weak state structures, such as Eurasia, and facilitates the spread of such threats.

Therefore, terrorist groups' use of digital space promotes radicalization in Eurasia and enhances the risks associated with cyber terrorism. This menace, along with several others, poses a significant risk not just within the region but to the world as a whole. The fact that terrorist groups can cross international borders and operate on cyber platforms indicates that there is a need to strengthen cyber security through international collaboration. In addition, the emergence of terrorist organizations in cyberspace requires nations to improve their defensive strategies in the information age.

Profile of Cyber Threats in Eurasia

Cyber threats, as stated above, are one of the most severe risk factors in Eurasia, but at the same time, they create opportunities for the states and institutions in this region. Other benefits that can be obtained from these relations, such as cooperation in the field of cybersecurity or from diplomacy, energy security, or infrastructure protection, will enhance the influence of Eurasia in the digital domain and bolster the region's national security.

Cyber Diplomacy and Cooperation of Eurasian Countries

The word cyber diplomacy refers to measures that are enacted in order to maintain the digital interrelations between countries as well as to create counter-cyber measures. The Shanghai Cooper-

ation Organization (SCO) is one of the most prominent institutional frameworks for cooperation in the Eurasian region. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was established in 1996 as the Shanghai Five, later becoming the SCO. It was established in 2001 as a regional grouping by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The SCO also solved security, economic, and cultural issues. Such concerns have become integral to the organization's activities in recent years. In order to improve the digital protection of the region, the countries are starting to build cooperative relations, and such relations are a kind of alliance in the form of mutual security guarantees for its members through the SCO (Chernobrov, 2022).

BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) is also a critical cooperation platform in the Eurasian region. By developing a common defense strategy against cyber threats, BRICS countries aim to have a more significant say in global cyber security policies. Russia and China aim to create a counterweight to the West through cyber diplomacy. At the BRICS Summit held in 2020, it was decided that cooperation on cybersecurity and data protection among member countries should be increased. In 2023, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS developed new cooperation in cyber-security and strengthened regional cyber defense capacities in Eurasia (Mitic, 2023). This cooperation is critical for international diplomacy, especially given the trans-regional nature of cyber threats.

Briefly, cyber diplomacy in Eurasia strengthens regional cooperation mechanisms and enables states to collaborate against cyber threats. The borderless nature of cyber threats renders the individual efforts of countries in the region insufficient and increases the importance of international cooperation. Platforms such as SCO and BRICS help states strengthen their cyber defense capacities while enabling the integrated execution of national security strategies.

Energy Security and Digital Infrastructure Protection Opportunities

The energy security of Eurasia is essential both for its countries and the world economy as a whole. It is one of the facts that a large percentage of the population's energy is used, and these are also the first modules of digital decoys that fall targets of cyber warfare. In Eurasia, the information technology revolution in the energy industry has brought cyber protection of energy assets and infrastructures to the forefront. Specifically, securing the digital power grids requires more extensive collaboration of the nations in the region. Countries like Russia and China have also established impressive cybersecurity structures and formed different partnerships for the safety of their energy systems (Overland, 2019).

Concerning energy security, it must be noted that the outsourcing of the protection of critical infrastructures is a good deal. The protection of critical assets is gaining momentum because of the usage of cyber intelligence. For instance, Russia and the People's Republic of China have cooperated in mitigating cyber crimes in their digital energy infrastructure while China has installed cyber systems in constructing energy projects to protect such energy assets in the Eurasian region (Overland, 2019).

Therefore, protecting energy infrastructures offers some great benefits to the countries in Eurasia. Using cyber intelligence combined with energy security to safeguard critical infrastructures from cyber threats is crucial. Such opportunities also increase the level of cybersecurity cooperation between countries in Eurasia and help establish common defense mechanisms. The ongoing digitalization of the energy sector is changing the dynamics of economic collaboration in the region towards a cyber-security paradigm.

Enhancing Regional Cyber Defense Capacities

Recognizing the importance of maintaining and developing cyber-defense capabilities in Eurasia has become essential to the national security strategies of political actors oriented on this region. All

the countries in the Eurasia region are concentrating more on countering cyber threats through public-private partnerships and global cooperation. The civil aspects of security, particularly in the form of public-private partnerships, are essential for developing an enhanced cybersecurity environment. Such actions help improve the state's overall cyberspace defense capacity and offer a more comprehensive approach to securing the cyber territory.

As for Eurasia, it is mainly Türkiye that serves as an example for enhancing these initiatives. The project promotes Türkiye's strengthening of its Cyber Defense, which rests on NATO participation and strategies achieved by local information security firms along with cooperation. Enhanced cyber defense in Türkiye is further boosted by localized centers' capacity to produce cyber security solutions and software. In this light, Türkiye emphasizes the cyber dimension in its national security policy because it serves as a model for the rest of the countries within the region.

On the other hand, international cyber defense cooperation is becoming commonplace for the countries of Eurasia. Europe and Eurasia benefit from such endeavors as addressing cyber threats within the additional context of cooperation beyond the region. Countries of the region develop their cyber security-friendly cooperation with the European Union (EU), which increases regional and local cyber defense capabilities and more sophisticated cyber defense measures. Joint projects and training programs implemented by the EU are an essential step towards strengthening the capacity of countries in the Eurasian region in the efforts to combat cybercrimes.

Therefore, it is essential to pursue improving the prevention of regional cyber network-centric threats and building a response strategy to cyber threats in Eurasia. Different approaches, such as public-private partnerships, allow for the growth of the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the strategic approach to security. Furthermore, such efforts help fight against the ill-defined and non-geographic concept of cyber threat. States in Eurasia are improving their cyber defense capabilities and strategies for protecting digital infrastructures through such cooperation.

Cyber Intelligence of Tomorrow: New Challenges and Solutions In The Territory of Eurasia

Significant progress is evident in the development of cyber threats and defense within the context of globalization and technological advancement. New technologies such as artificial intelligence or quantum computing create new solid capabilities in cybersecurity, but at the same time, they also create new risks. Eurasia has to brace itself against this new generation of rather alarming cyber threats and update its cyber defense strategies.

Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Cyber Intelligence

AI technologies have demonstrated their capability to strategically alter the landscape of cyber warfare, effectively repositioning the pieces on the chessboard for both offensive and defensive purposes. Thus, a fair amount of work has been done to examine how AI will be applied in crafting the future of cyber threats and what place it will occupy in the cyber security battle plans. The evolution in artificial intelligence has led to the emergence of more refined and quicker cyber offensives compared to the common ones. Malware powered with AI may prove to be more efficient in breaching the vulnerabilities of specific systems, thereby making it easier to penetrate the firewall (Brundage et al., 2018). The increasing sophistication of AI-based cyber attacks presented risks to critical infrastructure in 2024 (Mallick, 2024).

Particularly in the Eurasian region, state-sponsored computer attacks were more advanced and quicker due to the use of AI. Orchestrations of attacks can also be aided by AI containing cyber intelli-

gence, making the operation less prone to errors. For example, if there were AI trained in such attacks, 'robots' could conduct an analysis and execute an offensive against a target without the need for human intervention in real-time. Such attacks can result in significant economic and political turmoil in these countries, especially if the attacks are on critical infrastructure.

Artificial intelligence further meets expectations in the area of providing security for cyberspace. Cylance employs machine learning algorithms in its operations, which enables it to recognize unusual activity in systems and on the internet at an early stage (Barker, 2020). However, these technologies require constant upgrading to maximize AI's application in defense activities. Investing funds in the well-defined areas of development of countries in Eurasia can enable them to deploy emerging AI technologies in cyber security efficiently. Forming defense technologies combined with AI solutions has remained a core element of the cyber policies of nations like Russia, China, and Türkiye.

In conclusion it is estimated that cyber crimes will increase the use of AI technology in cyberintelligence operations in the coming times and strengthen defense structures. The countries in Eurasia, including Russia, might redirect more resources towards artificial intelligence to enhance their standing in the technology race in this arena. It is anticipated that developing systems that eliminate cyber invasions even more quickly and effectively will be among the foundations of the region's cyber security policy.

Quantum Computing and Next-Generation Cyber Threats

Of all the advanced technologies available, quantum computing is regarded as the most up-to-date and innovative converging technology likely to change the operational dynamics of current cybersecurity approaches. The most critical risk posed by quantum computers is their ability to render existing encryption techniques useless. It has been established that quantum computing technologies can neutralize techniques based on asymmetric encryption (Mosca & Piani, 2021). These developments warrant the need to revisit the existing methodologies and the environments concerning the field of cyber security.

In the Eurasian region, countries seeking to invest in quantum computer technologies will benefit significantly in protecting their cyberspace. China has become one of the leaders in that area, making considerable investments in quantum computing-developed devices. By developing quantum computers, China aims to enhance the existing systems of cyber defense to address emerging challenges. Furthermore, the development of quantum encryption technologies in China has stirred the interest of other states in the region and increased collaborative efforts (Overland, 2019).

As quantum computing has brought about its advantages, it also poses a significant challenge in securing cyberspace. This type of technology can reinforce cybersecurity systems. Still, Eurasian states must focus on countermeasures against such technologies and quantum attacks. It has been stated that the race concerning quantum computing appears to be shifting the strategic dynamics in the region and that countries will have to make substantial efforts to ensure they do not lag behind in this area.

Due to inspiring progress in quantum computing technology, it is now possible to alter how data is stored, which was previously considered watertight. Combatant states in the region can take many steps, such as familiarizing themselves with the technologies developed in quantum cyberspace. Research has revealed that investment in this area will not only translate to invincibility from attacks but will also herald a new generation of strategies against cyber security.

Future of Cyber Defense in Eurasia

The future of cyber defense strategies in Eurasia relies on international cooperation and regional strategic partnerships. The escalating complexity of cyber threats presents a significant challenge for countries to effectively address through independent national endeavors. International organizations such as NATO, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and BRICS underline the need for greater cooperation in cybersecurity. These organizations encourage the development of joint defense strategies to combat cyber threats (Chernobrov, 2022). At the same time, sharing cyber intelligence through these platforms enables early detection of threats and neutralization of attacks. Cyber intelligence plays a crucial role in quickly identifying the source of threats, especially in protecting critical infrastructures. As observed in Russia based cyber-attacks on Ukraine, regional intelligence cooperation makes it possible to quickly detect thought to be state-sponsored threats and take post-attack action (Azubuike, 2023).

Information sharing is also critical to strengthen the cyber defenses of states in the region. Information sharing between countries on the detection of cyber threats and the measures to be taken against these threats will contribute to the effective implementation of cyber security strategies. Cyber intelligence can be enriched not only through inter-state cooperation but also through partnerships with the private sector and academic institutions. Countries like Russia, Türkiye, and Iran are committed to international cooperation to develop more robust defense mechanisms against cyber threats. In this context, making cyber intelligence collection and sharing processes in Eurasia more integrated and collaborative will allow for more effective management of threats.

Additionally, training capabilities and enhancing training courses in human resources in the field of cyber and intelligence is the right step towards the future of cyber security in the entire Eurasian region. Providing cyber security practitioners with such competencies is critical for national security policies. Designated individuals are essential in identifying, evaluating, and communicating risks to the appropriate bodies. New training activities in the field of cyber security need to be created with the involvement of tertiary institutions, research industries, and private enterprises to boost the level of training for cyber security specialists and augment the region's ability to counter cyber threats. Thus, Eurasia may prepare better for future cyber threats, for example, in terms of the type of education and development of technology.

The phenomenon of cyber intelligence is also likely to assist in the enhancement of sophisticated technology adoption. In particular, artificial intelligence and big data technologies enable the rapid determination of malicious actions through cyberspace, necessitating nations' cooperation in using the data acquired by these technologies (Brundage et al., 2018). The creation of such infrastructure is less dependent on the factors that limit the information sharing between the member countries in the region and can help the countries strengthen their cyber efforts to enhance their infrastructure defensively towards the next cyber attacks.

The current trends in international cyber defense suggest that information exchange integration will be less likely to fail in Eurasia, more immunized against spillovers, and aim regional cooperation even deeper. That is why cyber intelligence is to be fully utilized in collaborative efforts to achieve a timely combat against and prevent threats. Proper implementation and operationalization of these collaborations will not only help mitigate cyber threat attacks but also enhance the speed at which cyber intelligence is gathered and disseminated. Similarly, it would be essential to boost cyber defense capabilities in the region by training professionals in cybersecurity and creating more training spaces. Enhanced collaboration in cyber intelligence sharing among nations and international organizations will contribute to enhancing the security and readiness of Eurasia in addressing evolving cyber threats.

Conclusion

With the development of cyber intelligence in the Eurasian region, the focus on the prevention and strategic actions against threats in cyberspace has become increasingly critical. The aggression within the region towards the defense of the digital infrastructure and the achievement of the necessity forces cyber intelligence into the core pillar. Here, cyber intelligence is no longer one of those tools that only work on defense but is also deployed against adversaries under offensive concepts. This state of affairs contributes a great deal to the development of domestic and international approaches and strategies on cyber security.

Cyber intelligence can also be seen as a competition in geopolitics between the Eurasian powers. Russia, China, Türkiye, and Iran are step by step, trying to position themselves in cyberspace by building cyber potential in the regional and global context. Such efforts help to understand the development of cyber warfare and how virtual struggle becomes multifaceted, especially concerning the West. Examples of this phenomenon include Russian based cyber attacks meddling in the US election and the Chinese acquisition of advancing technology such as 'the great firewall', to name a few. In Eurasia, based on the fact that cyber intelligence and all its components are dependent on the will of the state, actors within this region have taken bolder measures than other actors have.

However, the above-stated progress is wider than the work of single-state actors. Cyber security requires international cooperation. Organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization or BRICS support regional countries' plans to strengthen cooperation in the field of digital security. Such a response allows countries to enhance internal geostrategic defenses and global external unity towards cyber threats. Mechanisms of broader cooperation in the SCO acknowledge the fact that the cyber security risks cannot only be handled by states individually but in a multilateral context.

In analyzing Eurasia's geopolitical landscape, it becomes evident that significant insights can be gleaned regarding the development of cyber intelligence. To begin with, as cyber threats become more sophisticated, so will the requirement for more advanced cyber intelligence. However, the development of technologies such as artificial intelligence and quantum computers will forge new roads and cause new risks in cyber security. The application of AI technology in both the prosecution of cyber warfare and the defense thereof may result in new threats, new degrees of defense, and higher levels of autonomy in defense mechanisms. As such, Eurasian states will increase their resources to combat cyber threats by creating AI-enhanced cyber defense systems in the region.

Quantum computing is seen as a threat to many conventional cryptography methods. This technology could, however, render most of the encryption in use today ineffective, which would be a disastrous scenario for most, including critical systems. Governments in the region cannot afford to wait and react to these threats as they arise; they must proactively take decisive actions and develop strategies to mitigate the impact of such technologies by also developing quantum computing capabilities. Failing to do so could pose serious risks to the interconnected networks within the region.

However, the measures that the states in Eurasia have undertaken concerning cybersecurity have been viewed as not purely defensive but also as a contribution to their national advance. The key to adequate protection of cyberspace is energy security. The region's countries are advised to employ cyber intelligence to enforce their energy infrastructure. In this situation, the security of digital infrastructures is not only of economic dimension but also of military or political importance. Plans of cyberattacks toward such energy structures would endanger energy security in a region or the world, prompting the Eurasian countries to change their digital safety approaches and policies.

Lastly, an additional aspect where one may expect the increasing importance of cyber intelligence in Eurasia in the future will seek to enhance state cooperation in the region. In order to enhance

national security in the digital age, it is essential to improve the level of information exchange between the countries in the region and establish common cyber defense capabilities. Such collaboration will, in particular, be critical in the systematization of the attacks and prevention of cyber threats. Simultaneously, making it possible for states to respond to cyber threats more effectively will also assist in formulating regional security policies on a more solid basis.

As a conclusion, cyber intelligence is essential in security matters, geopolitical rivalry, and relations among countries in Eurasia. Countries in the region are recommended for a noteworthy collaboration and directing energies to strengthen the region's arms against cyber terrorism. The growth of the range of cyber threats means that these countries need to enhance their capability for cyber intelligence. Furthermore, the rise of new technologies in the region will create opportunities and new threats; hence, expanding the scope of cyber security in Eurasia will rely more on inter-regional cooperation and strategic alliances for the foreseeable future. Hence, in the future, cyber intelligence in Eurasia is expected to help determine balances of security and relations within the region.

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Chapter 11

Analysis of Russian Foreign Policy Using Classical, Structural, and Neoclassical Realism Theories, Including the Hegemonic Stability Theory

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Abstract

This paper offers a detailed analysis of Russian foreign policy using Classical, Structural, and Neoclassical Realism, along with Hegemonic Stability Theory. It explores how these theoretical frameworks help explain Russia's international behavior, particularly its relations with global actors and international organizations. From a Classical Realist perspective, Russia sees the state as the primary actor in international relations, with power as the ultimate goal. Its cautious engagement with international organizations and foreign investors reflects its preference for state sovereignty over external influences. This is particularly evident in its strict legislation against NGOs, which Moscow perceives as potential threats to state autonomy. Russia's use of the UN and OSCE to advance its national interests, including vetoing actions like U.S. military interventions, further illustrates its adherence to Classical Realist principles. Structural Realism highlights Russia's behavior in an anarchic international system, where power dynamics dictate state actions. Russia's participation in multilateral organizations like the SCO and BRICS+ can be understood as efforts to counter U.S. hegemony and NATO expansion. Initially focused on security cooperation, the SCO allows Russia to collaborate with China while maintaining influence over Central Asia. This structural balancing is vital for Russia to preserve its great power status despite its declining global influence since the Soviet Union's collapse. Neoclassical Realism offers insights into how domestic factors, such as political leadership and economic interests, shape Russia's external policies. This is particularly evident in its leadership within the CSTO, the CIS, and the EAEU, where Russia uses economic integration to maintain regional dominance. The paper also discusses how Russia's interventions in post-Soviet regions like Ukraine and Georgia reflect a combination of domestic pressures and external security concerns, aligning with Neoclassical Realist principles. Hegemonic Stability Theory complements these realist perspectives by explaining Russia's efforts to challenge the U.S.-dominated global order. Despite economic challenges and limited global influence, Russia seeks to create a multipolar world through alliances in Africa and Asia, balancing the dominant U.S. power. In conclusion, this analysis shows that Russia's foreign policy is deeply rooted in realist thought, with its strategic decisions reflecting a complex interplay of power politics, domestic interests, and efforts to reshape the international order.

Keywords Realism · Neorealism · Neoclassical Realism · Hegemonic Stability Theory · Russian Foreign Policy

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Introduction

The Russian Federation's foreign policy, bearing the weight of historical decisions, has been a significant force in modern international relations. Despite the challenges of contemporary integration and the shadow of US hegemony after the Cold War, the Russian Federation's position as one of the largest economies in the world and its ability to provide nuclear and raw materials have made it a key player in the international system. The realistic approach to global affairs provides an intriguing way of examining Moscow's foreign policy amid globalization and integration processes.

The essay aims to examine the foreign policy of the Russian Federation in the context of different realist approaches, such as neorealism, classical realism, and neoclassical realism. It distinguishes between the structural realist approach, as developed by Waltz, and revanchist rivalry approaches, especially Robert Gilpin's hegemonic stability theory, conflicts when discussing neorealism. This distinction highlights that realism is not always a unified approach in international relations, as different strands focus on various aspects of the theory. However, all realist theories share fundamental assumptions. Therefore, the essay addresses common theses in each realist approach when discussing the external politics of the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation exemplifies a country historically embracing traditional practical concepts in its foreign policy. Constraints imposed by modern energy distribution and the lack of productivity in the international system have led to a gradual, cautious, and consistent foreign policy approach in Russia, characterized by more neo-realistic and neoclassical practices.

When delving into the intricacies of Russia's foreign policy, it is imperative to grasp the profound significance of classical realism. This methodological approach is a cornerstone in comprehending Russian foreign policy's intricate nature, emphasizing the state's needs and power. While structural realism provides valuable insights into the structural constraints of Russia's foreign policy, it falls short of fully elucidating the dynamics and subtleties of Russian external interference. The theoretical frameworks of hegemonic theory and neoclassical realism have made significant strides, showcasing the evolving nature of state power, enhanced adaptability in global economic organization, and strategic considerations for Russian foreign policy.

Russian Foreign Affairs and The Classical Realism View

Russia's foreign policy is a testament to the fundamental tenets of classical realism. It underscores the pivotal role of the State in global relations, the prioritization of power objectives, the autonomous nature of the state, external policy, and the significance of power in international politics (Donnely, 2006). From the Russian standpoint, foreign relations epitomize the classical, pragmatic view of the state as the primary global actor. Other entities, such as foreign organizations and transnational corporations, are deemed secondary and less significant. International affairs revolve around the interactions between sovereign states. Moscow adopts a cautious stance towards the effective operation of international NGOs and foreign investors within the country. Despite the evolution of Russia's economic cooperation with external partners, its stance remains wary of unregulated activities within Russia, and the Russian state views autonomous foreign entities as potential risks.

The stringent legislation on NGOs adopted during the Putin presidency is one of the most illustrative examples. The need for a rigorous and invasive monitoring procedure on the NGO register is established by stating the state's need to defend against money laundering, militant organizations, and international spy groups using NGO coverage. Financial regulation of their activities, procedural hurdles, and needless paperwork have primarily restricted the independence of the NGOs inside Russia. Foreign investors in Russia face challenges, particularly those still susceptible to Russian economic

interests in energy and raw materials. For instance, the BP-TNK oil joint venture between British and Russian companies encountered issues when Russian authorities tried to control the firm. This was done through British management's visa problems and spy accusations. (Donovan, 2008)

The Russian approach to operating within international organizations aligns with classical realism. Russia has utilized these tools to benefit from the efforts of other countries while avoiding involvement in what it considers its domestic affairs. The Russian approach to the United Nations, especially since the end of the Cold War, indicates this significantly. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Russia has been able to block international authorization for certain US military operations, such as in the case of the Iraq war (The Guardian, 2008). Furthermore, Moscow's approach to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is noteworthy. Russia has consistently seen the OSCE as the foundation for all future pan-European political and security arrangements since the early 2000s (Morozov, 2005), which gives Moscow an absolute veto over all of its decisions.

At the same time, Russia serves as an excellent example of a basic classical pragmatic theory regarding foreign affairs—anarchy and the resulting priorities of the state. No central global power can impose laws on the democratic state system, so the foreign system operates anarchically. In the context of Russia, the focus is on national priorities, which serve as the primary benchmarks for the success of every sovereign state's foreign policy. This approach has also prevented Russia from engaging in insincere international cooperation. This perspective is evident in various official government documents, including the theory of external politics and the security principle of Moscow. (Russian Federation, 2013; 2014; 2021)

The unpredictable nature of global politics means that each state's foreign policy is self-serving, and every state should prioritize its own safety and interests. Key aspects of Russian foreign policy include a lack of trust in other actors and using rhetoric to defend Moscow's legitimate interests against outside attacks.

A state's military capabilities are crucial as they reflect the practicality and chaos of the world. Therefore, a state's strength, especially its military power, relies on the success of its external policies. This demonstrates the government's commitment to expanding its influence and military strength, which remains a top priority for many traditional realists (Elman, 2007).

The state's military strength has significantly influenced Russian foreign policy. Russia has strategically used its nuclear arsenal as a deterrent, posing threats to deploy weapons of mass destruction in the Kaliningrad territory and Belarus while the US prepares missile defense in central Europe. Despite economic challenges, Russia has continued modernizing its conventional military capabilities. This is evident from the repeated flights of Russian strategic bombers in Canada and the USA, as well as their recent demonstration visits to Russian territories. Russia has showcased its military power in unconventional and sometimes peculiar ways, always with a strategic purpose. According to classical realism in international politics, foreign relations involve dominating other nations, conflicting with significant powers, engaging in zero-sum games, or controlling areas. Moscow has maintained this approach in its external relations. Since the Cold War, Russia has been mindful of its political standing and has used rhetoric about reclaiming its 'rightful place' in global relations. (Gomart, 2008)

Russia expects the US, the EU, and other foreign allies to recognize and address its legitimate interests through joint councils and common meetings. Russia has not stopped its efforts to strengthen the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), an area it sees as within its sphere of influence in the post-Soviet region. The recent conflicts in Georgia, Crimea, and Ukraine showed Moscow's readiness to use military power to maintain its dominance, regardless of international consequences. The Kremlin remains resistant to any foreign intervention, especially from the US (Chadwick et al., 2024).

Moscow's External Policy and The Structural Realism Paradigm

The structural realist approach is crucial in understanding Moscow's external policy. This approach, which underscores the role of instability in international relations and the impact of state structures on external affairs, provides a clear theoretical framework. Waltz's strategy, which focuses on the structure of the international system rather than on individual countries and their internal politics (Waltz, 1993), is particularly relevant in this context. It views the international system's structure as the primary determinant of state behavior on the world stage (Elman, 1996).

Walt's balance of threat theory, a modification of Waltz's balance of power theory, offers a nuanced perspective on state interactions. It separates power from threat, providing a more comprehensive understanding of state behavior. In the balance of power theory, states would balance against others whose military capabilities were increasing, assuming that greater power reflected offensive intentions. However, according to Walt, states do not necessarily balance against others increasing in power; they display offensive intentions against threats (Walt, 1997).

During the Cold War, there was much interest in using foreign politics to explain the division of power between two main groups. Realism was the dominant approach, with discussions focusing on defensive and aggressive perspectives related to military and foreign policies. Defensive realism prioritizes protecting the state without seeking to use force while emphasizing cautious communication with other states. On the other hand, offensive realism suggests that in a world without a central authority, states aim to increase their relative power (Mearsheimer, 1990), including military strength, to thrive in such an environment. (Taliaferro, 2000)

The collapse of the USSR and its subsequent failure had a significant impact on the philosophy of structural realism. It highlighted the theory's limitations in accurately predicting and facilitating peaceful transitions in the global order. This contrasted with the predictions of Kenneth Waltz, who anticipated a more cataclysmic confrontation during the Cold War (Waltz, 1979). With the challenges of structural realism in anticipating the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Erik Jones emphasized that the internal factors leading to the Soviet disintegration were not accounted for in structural realism (Jones, 2009). According to William C. Wohlforth, the collapse of the USSR was not solely due to the decline in Soviet relative power but also because of the loss of confidence in the Soviet elites (Wohlfort, 1994).

Hence, given Russia's proficiency in foreign policy and refusal to accept its current position, realist theory seems to provide a less alarming explanation for the complexities of international affairs in the post-Cold War era. Moscow's strong opposition to the international community's stance, its ambitious global aspirations, and its position post-USSR become evident when observing the Russian Federation's external interventions. After the end of the Cold War, the Russian Federation has shown opposition to US policies. It has accused the US of establishing a global hegemonic authority and suggested a new multipolar system to showcase its legitimacy. Russia's strong disagreement with NATO's intervention in Kosovo and the US's actions in Iraq highlights the fact that Russian objections have been disregarded and its right to be a co-decision maker in global relations has been denied (Oldberg, 2007). But its growing role, especially with China through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and BRICS+ , and its new initiatives in Africa create new challenges to US hegemony.

In addition, structural realism fails to accurately depict the nature of the international system. It neglects to consider domestic factors such as elected leaders, internal political structures, economy, and state ideology. In the case of Russia, this shortcoming seems to stem from a combination of post-Soviet nostalgia and its historical status as one of the world's most effective states. However, this theory also overlooks Russia's economic potential, and this oversight has contributed to a sense of stagnation following the end of the Cold War on a global scale. Politics in Moscow have always been influenced by

a strong central government and Russia's focus on maintaining influence over its neighboring countries (Goble, 2016). This is evident from the centralization efforts during Vladimir Putin's presidency and the recent conflict with Ukraine and Georgia. The foreign policy of the Russian Federation has been marked by strategic and ideological challenges, making it difficult for structural realism to analyze their systems of interpretation accurately.

When we analyze Moscow's ambitions and its resistance to American imperialism, structural realism offers an exciting framework for understanding the constraints placed on Russian foreign intervention after the Cold War. The collapse of the USSR limited Moscow's ability to exert influence globally, confining its role to a regional rather than global player. Despite Russia's assertive propaganda and protests regarding its position on foreign affairs, it is no longer the dominant superpower it once was. Structural realism often emphasizes the tendency of dominant players to control other actors in the system. Moscow asserts its efforts to participate in global decision-making processes. However, it is also true that the influence of the US and China as prominent players in the system cannot be equated with Russia's political, military, or financial capabilities (Korolev, 2022).

The concept of structural realism has helped analyze the distribution of power within the international system. The expansion of NATO raised concerns for Russia as it extended American influence in Europe and brought American political power closer to the Russian border. Another issue is Russia's positioning between the United States and post-Soviet Central Asia, especially Afghanistan. When Vladimir Putin encountered U.S. military bases in the region, it became clear to Moscow that the American presence undermined Russia and its international interests in the previously shared sphere of influence (Kanet & Homarac, 2007). However, the consequences of this US strategy led to a different outcome, ultimately allowing Russian influence in Afghanistan after its withdrawal.

The structural realism framework for Moscow's long-term goals will encounter significant challenges due to the complexities of Russia's foreign policy. There are notable disparities between Russia's relatively modest role in global affairs, its increasing influence at the regional and EU levels, and its ambitions for a more prominent global role. Structural realists, especially offensive structural realists, may propose strategies to strengthen Moscow's position. However, they face difficulty pinpointing the driving forces behind Russian policies beyond the international context (Toft, 2005).

The relationship between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Russia can be best understood through structural realism. Structural realism emphasizes the international system's role in shaping states' behavior, focusing on the distribution of power rather than internal politics. This theory aligns well with how Russia positions itself within the SCO.

Structural realism sees the international system as an anarchic environment where states must maximize their power to guarantee survival (Waltz, 1979). Russia's participation in the SCO is a strategic move in response to the shifting power dynamics in Eurasia. The SCO provides Russia with a means to counter U.S. hegemony and NATO expansion while handling its intricate relationship with China.

The SCO was established in 2001 with a primary focus on security cooperation, particularly in combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism. Over time, its scope has widened to include economic, political, and military collaboration, positioning it as a counterbalance to Western alliances (SCO, 2024). Through the SCO, Russia aims to extend its influence in Central Asia, historically considered part of its sphere of influence. The organization allows Russia to work with China while preventing Chinese dominance in the region.

The involvement of Russia in the SCO can be explained by structural realism as a means to maintain its great power status (Mearsheimer, 2007). Despite recognizing China’s increasing influence, Russia utilizes the SCO to protect its regional interests, ensuring its position as a key player in shaping Central Asia's political and security landscape. The multilateral structure of the organization enables Russia to

exert influence without directly challenging China, aligning with neorealism's emphasis on balancing power in a multipolar world.

According to structural realism, states operate in an international system characterized by anarchy—no overarching authority is above the state (Layne, 1994). In this context, Russia's participation in BRICS+ can be seen as a strategic move to balance against Western-dominated institutions like NATO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank. As a declining global power after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia seeks to counterbalance U.S. hegemony and the unipolar global order (Johnson-Calari et al.,2024). BRICS+, as an alternative multilateral grouping, offers a platform where Russia can amplify its influence, form alliances with other emerging powers, and promote a multipolar world order that better aligns with its national interests.

In structural realism, the concept of balancing is crucial. This is where states form alliances to counter more powerful states or coalitions (Snyder, 1984). Russia sees BRICS+ as a balancing mechanism that helps prevent the domination of any one state, particularly the United States, in global affairs. The collective economic and political strength of BRICS+ allows Russia to promote its interests on the world stage without confrontation with Western powers. Moreover, structural realism highlights that Russia's engagement with BRICS+ is not based on ideological alignment but on pragmatic concerns of maintaining power and ensuring security within the anarchic global system. Within BRICS+, Russia has aligned itself with other member states with shared goals of reforming international institutions to reflect the interests of emerging markets. For example, BRICS countries have consistently advocated for reforms within the IMF and World Bank to provide developing countries with more significant influence. Following unsuccessful negotiations, BRICS took the initiative and established the New Development Bank to solve the ongoing financial crisis and credit system (Prinsloo, 2023). Russia's participation in such efforts underscores its desire to reshape the global order to reflect a more multipolar system in which power is more evenly distributed and less centered on the West.

Russia also sees BRICS+ as an economic opportunity to foster deeper trade relationships and counter the effects of Western sanctions, particularly following its annexation of Crimea in 2014. Structural realism emphasizes how economic and military power are intertwined (Mearsheimer, 2014); Russia's economic ties within BRICS+ enhance its overall geopolitical strength and resilience against Western economic pressures.

Russia's Foreign Policies and Hegemonic Competition

Hegemonic competition theorists, such as Robert Gilpin, highlight the importance of the global system and analyze international affairs based on its dynamics (Gilpin, 1986). They also recognize the system's ability to change dynamically, which contradicts the principles of structural realism (Feng & Ruizhuang, 2006).

Gilpin explains how hegemonic war can lead to structural transformation, resulting in unequal and differentiated power growth among states within the regime. He mentions that a consistent authority structure in society does not necessarily disrupt structural equilibrium, but even a slight shift in power allocation can have an impact (Gilpin, 1988). The regime's structure remains stable until the fundamental interests of the leading power are threatened by excessive rising power due to economic, political, technical, or any other changes. In this sense, the primary role of a second strong state within the regime is to challenge the status quo and contribute to conflict as its strength grows and the leading power weakens (Gilpin, 1988).

The US and the USSR were the two main competitors during the Cold War. Since the USSR's fall, the USA's dominance has been firmly established. It is unlikely that Russia will emerge as a new challenger to the US in the short term. Instead, it will likely seek more cooperation with China against

this unbalanced status quo. Moscow is not actively pursuing imperial ambitions, and it faces challenges such as financial instability, reliance on oil and gas, and worrying demographic trends. The invasion of Ukraine indicates that Russia is still defining its sphere of influence as a regional power. However, this does not necessarily mean that it would undermine other parts of the world as potential targets for further actions, especially in Africa, particularly the Sahel region (Nissen, 2024).

Russia's intervention in the Sahel reflects its strategy to expand its geopolitical influence in regions traditionally dominated by Western powers like France and the United States. As Russia aims to increase its global power and status, it is expanding territorially and politically into regions like Africa, where Western dominance is weakening. In the Sahel, Russia's use of private military contractors (PMCs) such as the Wagner Group and its increasing military and diplomatic ties with countries like Mali can be considered part of a broader strategy to undercut Western influence and establish itself as a major player. Russia's involvement in the Sahel comes with significant economic and military costs, particularly as it seeks to maintain long-term influence and secure economic benefits such as access to natural resources (Ramani, 2021). According to Gilpin's theory, these costs might eventually outweigh the benefits, potentially leading to overextension and the erosion of Russia's power over time.

According to Krasner's theory of "organized hypocrisy," great powers often disregard principles of sovereignty to serve their interests, particularly in regions with weak or unstable governments (Krasner, 1999). Krasner would consider Russia's involvement in the Sahel as an instance of organized hypocrisy, where Russia overlooks traditional ideas of sovereignty to further its agenda. By offering military assistance, such as arms deals and mercenary forces, to governments in Mali and other Sahelian countries, Russia involves itself in the internal affairs of these nations while rationalizing its actions to promote stability and sovereignty.

Krasner's framework explains how Russia manipulates international sovereignty norms to strengthen its position. For example, Russia provides military and political support to authoritarian regimes in the Sahel, helping them maintain power in exchange for loyalty and resource access. This enables Russia to expand its influence while undermining the independence of these states under the guise of respecting sovereignty (Lebovich, 2024).

Kennedy argues in "The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers" (1987) that empires and great powers decline when they spread their military and economic resources too thin, especially by getting involved in costly foreign ventures that deplete their domestic resources (Kennedy, 1987). From Kennedy's point of view, Russia's participation in the Sahel could be seen as part of a broader trend of military overextension. Despite its re-emergence as a global player, Russia's interventions in various conflict zones, including Syria, Ukraine, and now the Sahel, place significant economic and military burdens. Kennedy would contend that Russia's strategic objectives in the Sahel, such as securing access to resources, increasing diplomatic influence, and undermining Western powers, come with a high cost that could result in imperial overreach. Over time, Russia's financial commitments to military engagements in Africa might outweigh the strategic benefits, especially considering the instability of governments and economies in the Sahel. Moreover, the involvement of Russian private military companies (PMCs) in the region may further strain Russia's resources, adding to domestic economic pressure and potential political repercussions (Sandor, 2024). Kennedy's theory implies that while Russia might enjoy short-term benefits from its Sahelian interventions, such expansion risks pushing its capabilities to the limit, potentially leading to decline.

Hegemonic stability theory remains a relevant framework for analyzing Russia's position and involvement in contemporary international relations. As we move into the 21st century, Moscow should prioritize these external factors. Additionally, a more dynamic international structure would better reflect Moscow's foreign intervention compared to the statistical philosophy of a systemic realistic

approach. Despite the fluid changes in global relations, Moscow's foreign policy will continue to be based on classical conservative foundations.

Russian Foreign Affairs and the Optics of Neoclassical Realism

The comparison between neorealism and neoclassical realism is discussed within contemporary realism. Neorealism focuses on interpreting an institutional system, while neoclassical realism takes a state-level approach to foreign policy analysis (Rose, 1998). However, some neoclassical realists fail to recognize that external (structural) and internal (domestic) influences must be analyzed separately. They aim to understand a state's foreign policy by considering both the international structure and domestic factors, which could either strengthen or weaken the influence of systemic determinants (Kitchen, 2010).

The significance of domestic factors, mainly according to classical realism, and the challenges leaders face when deciding on a state's foreign policy have been somewhat referenced. However, neoclassical realists focus more on the state's perception of power and the motivations of its adversaries. They also consider the government's ability to rally public support for short-term objectives and adjust to shifting national aspirations and priorities. Additionally, they acknowledge the possibility of limited cooperation among member states under specific conditions (Legro & Moravcsik, 1999).

In contrast to other philosophies, the neoclassical approach critiques the questioning and opposing of a normative realistic perspective. However, it assists in understanding Russia's foreign policy by providing an analytical framework for examining the structural factors that influence state external policy. Given the diverse interest groups involved in Russian domestic policy, such as military lobbying, oligarchs, the raw materials industry, and different ruling class factions, interpreting Russian foreign policy without considering its local determinants can be challenging.

Neo-classical realism is useful for understanding the various roles played by Moscow. At different times, Moscow considers Russian interests in its relationships with world leaders such as the USA, leaders of the European Union, and even in dealings with CIS states. Russia is particularly concerned about the impact of globalization on its economy and society, which has limited its competitiveness in global economic development. As a result, Moscow has not been actively involved in broader international interaction. It has mainly focused on traditional, realistic foreign policies, especially its "politically responsive" economic sectors like oil and commodities (Sakwa, 2007).

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is a regional military alliance led by Russia. It includes post-Soviet states such as Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan (CSTO, 2024). We can use the neoclassical realism framework to understand why the CSTO is vital for Russia. Neoclassical realism considers external factors (like the anarchic international system) and internal factors (such as political leadership, state capacity, and national interests) to explain a state's behavior.

Neoclassical realism expands upon structural realism by recognizing that domestic factors affect how states react to the limitations and opportunities presented by the international system (Lobell et al., 2009). In Russia, the CSTO is critical for several reasons linked to external security issues and internal dynamics, such as the leadership's aspiration to maintain influence over the post-Soviet region.

From a neoclassical realist perspective, Russia's main reason for maintaining the CSTO is its security concerns and the need to control its surrounding geopolitical area. The CSTO allows Russia to coordinate security policies in a region crucial for its national defense. It is a buffer against threats like terrorism, regional conflicts, and NATO expansion (Tsygankov, 2012). By formalizing security cooperation with former Soviet republics, Russia ensures stable borders and collective defense against external threats, particularly from the West or Islamist movements in Central Asia.

Neoclassical realism emphasizes the significance of power distribution in the international system and includes Russia's leadership's interpretation of external threats and opportunities. The CSTO serves as Russia's counterbalance to NATO, and Moscow sees the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe as a direct threat to its security interests. Through the CSTO, Russia solidifies its military presence and influence in its neighboring regions, preventing NATO from expanding its influence into the former Soviet sphere (Monaghan, 2017). Russia's leadership, particularly under Vladimir Putin, considers the maintenance of the CSTO to be crucial in safeguarding the country's long-term geopolitical position.

Neoclassical realism highlights how domestic politics and elite perceptions influence a country's foreign policy (Rose, 1998). For Russia, maintaining control over the post-Soviet region is a strategic necessity and is tied to national identity and historical legacy. The Russian leadership sees the CSTO as part of its broader strategy to reaffirm Russia's status as a significant power and to prevent the decline of its influence in the area. Russian leaders have consistently worked to maintain the country's dominance in Eurasia, and the CSTO serves as the institutional framework for projecting this influence in a coordinated and legitimate manner.

Neoclassical realism underscores the role of the CSTO in maintaining order within allied states. Russia has effectively utilized the CSTO to ensure stability in its neighboring nations, recognizing that instability could directly impact Russia. For instance, Russia has leveraged CSTO mechanisms to help resolve political crises in member states like Kyrgyzstan. By promoting stability among its CSTO partners, Russia aims to mitigate the risk of political turmoil, such as color revolutions or extremist uprisings, which could threaten its own regime's security.

Russia sees Armenia's membership in the CSTO as crucial for maintaining its influence in the South Caucasus, a region necessary for its geopolitical interests. However, Armenia's conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh has strained this relationship. Armenia is seen as an essential ally for Russia in the South Caucasus, providing a strategic military base through the 102nd Russian military base in Gyumri. Through the CSTO, Russia maintains influence in Armenia, countering the influences of other powers like NATO and Iran However, Russia also maintains robust economic, energy, and political ties with Azerbaijan. In this context, the CSTO serves as a crucial platform for Russia to ensure that countries like Armenia and Azerbaijan do not succumb to the influence of other powers such as NATO or the European Union (Bellamy, 2024).

During the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, Armenia sought support from the organization. Russia played a more active role than the CSTO but took a measured approach. Moscow helped broker a ceasefire between Armenia and Azerbaijan but refrained from direct involvement on Armenia's behalf. This cautious stance led to questions in Armenia about the CSTO's effectiveness in defending its members against external threats. Russia's approach can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, Azerbaijan holds significant strategic importance for Russia, especially in energy and trade, making it essential for Russia to maintain balanced relations with Armenia and Azerbaijan. Secondly, the conflict occurred in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh rather than on Armenia's recognized territory. This complicated the CSTO's potential involvement, as the treaty only requires defense against external aggression on a member's established territory (CSTO, 2012).

After the war, Armenia expressed frustration with the CSTO and Russia’s perceived lack of support during the conflict. This dissatisfaction triggered debates within Armenia about the value of CSTO membership and Russia’s reliability as an ally. Nonetheless, Russia has worked to manage Armenia’s grievances by deploying peacekeepers to Nagorno-Karabakh and maintaining its military base in Armenia, signaling that it still views Armenia as a strategic partner within the CSTO framework. However, this process did not go well because Russian peacekeepers withdrew from Nagorno-Karabakh (Osborn & Bagirova, 2024), and Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan declared his intention to leave the CSTO with

the following statement: "We will go out. We will decide when to exit" (Armenpress, 2024). In addition, there was a high-level joint meeting between Armenia, the US, and the EU to maintain the resilience of Armenia (EU, 2024a), along with some high-level US visits to Armenia (US Embassy, 2024). In response to these deteriorating developments, Russia offered Armenia the possibility of remaining in the CSTO and promised economic relations for domestic and external control in the region (Sputnik, 2024).

The CIS was founded in 1991 and serves as a regional platform for Russia to maintain political, cultural, and economic ties with former Soviet republics. From a neoclassical realist perspective, Russia's involvement in the CIS is driven by structural and domestic motivations. The CIS allows Russia to influence the post-Soviet space without directly confronting the West. Structurally, the CIS serves as a mechanism for Russia to maintain regional hegemony and counterbalance the influence of external powers like NATO and the European Union (Tsygankov, 2012). Russia views the CIS as a soft power tool to ensure political loyalty among its neighboring states, thereby preventing them from drifting into the orbit of Western alliances (Ambrosio, 2016).

Internally, Russia's leadership sees the CIS as essential for preserving its historical and cultural ties with the former Soviet republics. Russian leaders, particularly under Vladimir Putin, viewed the dissolution of the Soviet Union as a loss of geopolitical status. The CIS provides a means of maintaining a semblance of the former Soviet empire's influence (Monaghan, 2017). This reflects the importance of national identity in shaping Russia's foreign policy choices under neoclassical realism.

The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) was established in 2015 to create a single market among Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia. Russia has been the primary driving force behind the EAEU, as it sees it as crucial for consolidating its economic and geopolitical influence in the region. The EAEU allows Russia to strengthen its regional economic influence and counterbalance the European Union and China's Belt and Road Initiative (Shakhanova & Garlick, 2020). According to neoclassical realism, Russia uses the EAEU to ensure that its neighboring states remain economically dependent on Moscow, thereby preventing them from integrating too closely with Western economies or China. This economic leverage helps Russia secure its geopolitical dominance in the post-Soviet space.

The EAEU is closely linked to Russia's goal of boosting its global standing and maintaining its position as a significant power. Russia's leadership sees the EAEU as a means of advancing a multipolar world order in which Russia holds a central role. Establishing an integrated economic bloc strengthens Russia's ability to act as a dominant force in the region. It presents a vision of a "Greater Eurasia" that competes with Western and Chinese influence (Monaghan, 2017). This aligns with neoclassical realism's emphasis on how internal political dynamics impact foreign policy decisions.

Neoclassical realism emphasizes the link between foreign policy and internal regime stability. Russia's leadership uses the CIS and the EAEU to validate its domestic authority. It is a protector of Russian-speaking populations and a guarantor of regional stability. For example, Russia has portrayed its leadership within the CIS and the EAEU as essential for defending ethnic Russians in neighboring states, which helps to bolster domestic support for Putin's administration (Tsygankov, 2012). Furthermore, the EAEU's economic integration serves Russia's domestic economic objectives by opening markets and reducing reliance on Western economies. This has become particularly important after Western sanctions were imposed between 2014-2024 (EU, 2024b).

Conclusion

Understanding Russia's foreign policy can be challenging due to the complex interplay of various factors. This includes historical remnants from the Cold War era and the Soviet Union and ongoing domestic political and economic transformations. However, the realist perspective in international relations offers a practical framework for understanding Russia's foreign activities within the context

of current globalization and integration processes. Fundamental principles of classical realism have consistently shaped Russia's foreign policy, focusing on the state's interests, influence, and military capabilities. This has remained unchanged in the post-Cold War dynamics of international affairs, making classical realism the primary instrument for explaining Russia's external policy.

The study of Russian international intervention should not only consider a classical realist viewpoint but also consider globalization and regional integration processes. Despite being hesitant and slow, developments in Russian foreign policy have had to consider the constraints placed on the state by the current power distribution in the world order since the Cold War, even though Moscow has lost much of the dominant role of the former USSR. Structural realism is a critical way to understand these changes as it focuses on the international community, but none of these theories fully capture the complexity of Moscow's external actions.

Due to the limitations of its previous political and military strategies, Russia has relied more on its economic and natural resource capabilities than solely on military power. This has led to the emergence of neorealist and neoclassical realist theories as valuable tools for analyzing the changing dynamics of state control and adaptability in the international arena. Neoclassical realism is particularly noteworthy as it highlights the significance of domestic foreign policy considerations in Russia, considering the influence of various domestic actors and the features of Russian politics. Both neorealism and neoclassical realism offer valuable insights, with the latter showing increasing explanatory power. It should be noted, however, that these theories remain firmly grounded in the tradition of classical realism when applied to Russia's external policy.

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Chapter 12

Russia's Desire for a Cordon Sanitaire

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Abstract

The tensions between Russia and Ukraine have escalated significantly since 2014. In November 2013, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych's refusal to sign the planned partnership agreement with the European Union triggered protests in the capital, Kiev. In February, Yanukovych fled the country, and shortly thereafter, Russia annexed Crimea. These processes intensified the strain between the two countries. In 2020, the Russian military occupied Mariupol. In 2021, an agreement was signed between Russia and Germany for the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. However, the project faced opposition from the US and Ukraine also protested it. In 2021, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky prepared a plan to withdraw Russian troops. However, Russia rejected it and took a tougher stance against Ukraine. Also in 2021, US President Joe Biden stated that they would strongly oppose Russia's invasion. These statements angered Russia and led to a more aggressive posture against Ukraine. The war that began on February 24, 2022, with the invasion of Ukrainian territories by the Russian Federation's army, represents one of the peak moments of tension between Western powers and Russia, a tension that has persisted for over a century. Since the early 20th century, Western powers have sought to encircle Russia, particularly aiming to establish a cordon sanitaire through allied forces in the west. This concept of a cordon sanitaire was realized by the Soviet Union through the Warsaw Pact after World War II. Despite the Soviet Union's dominance over Eastern Europe and the establishment of a cordon sanitaire composed of allies, it disintegrated in 1991. Thus, it appears that controlling either the heartland or the rimland alone is insufficient for the survival of a state.

Keywords Mackinder · Spykman · Kennan · Heartland · Rimland · Russia · Ukraine · strategy · cold war, USA

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Introduction

A 'Cordon Sanitaire' is a structure desired by all states to guarantee their own security. It would be natural to consider Türkiye's apprehension about being surrounded along its Syrian border or the United States' concerns about encirclement in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans as part of the ordinary course of affairs. However, when it comes to Russia in international relations, the concept of a cordon sanitaire raises eyebrows among Western powers. In this study, we aim to highlight that the geostrategic approaches centered around the United States and the United Kingdom fundamentally revolved around encircling Russia and/or the Soviet Union. These approaches were established entirely in opposition to the USSR. In this context, while the path followed by the West may serve as a guide for formulating a Turkish geostrategy, it is crucial to emphasize the need for comprehensive, accurate, and up-to-date data as the foundation for creating such a strategy. The significance of this study lies in its potential to illuminate the cognitive framework necessary for the development of Turkish geostrategy.

Russian Federation: The State with the Largest Geographical Area in the World

French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte stated that a state's politics are determined by its geography. However, Spykman succinctly argued that geography alone cannot determine a country's foreign policy. He emphasized that many other factors play a role in shaping foreign policy and that finding correlations between a state's foreign policies and the materials that shape them is the task of social scientists (Demir, 2020: 4-5).

Prior to the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Russian Empire was an integral part of Europe and frequently engaged in conflicts with neighboring states. However, following the Revolution, the Soviet Union emerged as a significant threat to Western powers, prompting the development of security strategies aimed at encircling it. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), established in 1917, was an expansive state covering over 22.3 million square kilometers, stretching from Europe to East Asia, and accounted for one-sixth of the world's landmass. Although Russia remained the largest country by landmass after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, it has become increasingly concerned with Western powers encircling it. This concern is fueled by its vast natural resources and human capital, which continue to make it a key player on the global stage.

The concept of a cordon sanitaire in geopolitics refers to the creation of a security buffer zone around a dominant state or entity, aimed at limiting its influence and control over neighboring territories. The establishment of such a zone is often seen as a way to prevent or delay conflict between rival powers. In this context, a cordon sanitaire can be viewed as a 'buffer zone' that serves to maintain regional stability. However, it is important to note that the creation of such a zone can also have unintended consequences. These may include further entrenching divisions and animosities between rival powers. If one side wishes to remove the buffer zone, they can take steps to do so, potentially leading to increased tensions and conflict in the region.

In this study, the following assumptions are made:

- The primary cause of Russia's war against Ukraine is Ukraine's position as a buffer state between Russia and the West. By joining NATO, Ukraine has been transformed into a pawn for Western interests.
- A state that demands a cordon sanitaire in international relations fears the expansion of the opposing side.

In this context, the concept of a cordon sanitaire is advocated by Russia. Therefore, Western capitalism is considered the independent variable, while Russian interference in Ukraine is the dependent variable. The study will first focus on the historical background of the cordon sanitaire concept and then analyze why Russia demands a buffer zone when it intervenes in Ukraine.

The fundamental hypothesis of the study is that while geopolitics refers to the examination of the effects of geography (both human and physical) on international politics and international relations, for Western powers, when it comes to the Soviet Union, the sole objective has been the struggle to prevent the spread of the Soviet Union and/or communist ideology. Today, it is the attrition strategy employed by Western capitalism to impose its conditions on Russia, which it cannot penetrate on its own terms.

The Historical Background of Cordon Sanitaire - Intermarium

It is thought that the influence of the revolution and the radical left movements that emerged in Europe played a role in the development of the concept of a cordon sanitaire between the Soviet Union and Western capitalism. In particular, the 1918-1919 radical political movements in Europe have been noted as follows:

- The establishment of revolutionary governments and the outbreak of civil wars, as seen in Finland,
- Widespread strikes, including one involving over 750,000 workers in Austria.
- The defeat of the "Reds" by the "Whites" in Finland.
- Mutinies within the German navy, followed by the suppression of the Spartacist uprising in Berlin in 1919 by right-wing Freikorps (a paramilitary organization composed of demobilized soldiers).
- The assassinations of Liebkneckt and Rosa Luxemburg.
- The establishment of Heimwehr, a nationalistic semi-militarized organization, in Austria.
- The founding of the Hungarian Soviet under Bela Kun's leadership.
- The creation of the Comintern (The Third International).
- The establishment of the first Italian fascist movement.
- The declaration of a Soviet government in Bavaria, which was then overthrown by the army and Freikorps, followed by the destruction of the Slovak Soviet, the Czech, Yugoslavian, and Romanian-backed overthrow of the Hungarian Soviet, and the destruction of the Slovak Soviet.
- The establishment of a socialist worker's union with armed forces in Austria, known as Republikanische Schutzbund (Bahçe, 2010).

It can be interpreted that these movements represent the growing rumblings of a socialist revolution in Europe. According to Hobsbawm, the only way to deal with revolutionary Russia after World War I was to encircle it with an anti-communist states' cordon sanitaire (Hobsbawm, 1995: 32). Additionally, it is believed that the rise of radical left-wing movements also contributed to the support of right and nationalist policies in Western capitalism.

Geopolitical Theories: Analysis and Practical Applications

Intermarium Strategy

Halford Mackinder theorized that a cordon sanitaire of small democratic states would guarantee stability in Europe after World War I. Mackinder encouraged policymakers at The Versailles Conference

to create a buffer zone between Germany and Russia in order to reduce the risk of closer cooperation between these two European powers, thus ensuring future stability in Europe (Kučerová, 2020: 115). The Intermarium strategy, which has its roots in Poland's history, aimed at creating an alliance system between the countries located between Germany and Russia, including Poland. Another plan of the Polish President Josef Pilsudski at that time was Prometheus. The essence of this plan was to support independence movements within Russia, assuming that Russia was Poland's enemy. (Demir, 2020: 433). "In a memorandum presented by Pilsudski to the Japanese Foreign Minister in July 1904, this situation was summarized as follows: 'Russia only appears to be a unified state; in reality, there is no unity. The lack of unity, which is the country's weakness that all of Russia's enemies should target, is the Achilles' heel of its power' (The Evolution and Implementation of the Intermarium Strategy, 2019: 2)." Moreover, Pilsudsky believed that the continued independence of Poland could be secured if Russia was weakened through the secession of Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine and the subsequent establishment of a federation (Ištok, Kozárová, & Anna, 2021: 320-321).

Map 1

Intermarium Region of Central and Eastern European (Demir, 2020: 52)



The Intermarium Plan envisioned by Piłsudski involved creating an alliance system in the territories between the Baltic Sea, the Adriatic Sea, and the Black Sea, referred to as "Third Europe," acting as a united barrier against Germany and the Soviet Union (Demir, 2020: 430). Although there is no consensus on the exact composition of the cordon sanitaire, countries mentioned include Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, etc. (Aleksandrovna Yashkova, 2024). In practice, the attempt to encircle Russia and/or prevent it from advancing was first made by Germany and Austria-Hungary in November 1916 when they competed with each other for Poland's support, resulting in the declaration of an independent Polish kingdom on Russian territory inhabited by ethnic Poles (Fabry, 2010). Halford Mackinder attempted to encourage policymakers at the Versailles Conference to create a buffer zone between these two European powers, thereby reducing the risk of close cooperation between Germany and Russia. He theorized that this so-called cordon sanitaire of small democratic states would guarantee stability in Europe. The newly emerged democratic regimes of these states would provide protection against the authoritarian regimes of Germany and post-1917 chaos-ridden Russia, respectively. (Kučerová, 2020).

Italian Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando, in one of the Versailles Conference meetings on January 21 1919, stated that Bolshevism could be defeated if similar measures were taken against its spread in Europe, because isolating Bolshevism meant winning, and later in March 1919, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau also supported this view (Алексеевна Яшкова, 2024). The objectives of the cordon sanitaire targeted against the USSR were essentially to ensure the physical destruction of those carrying socialist ideology, actively instill nationalism in the consciousness of the masses as a countermeasure to the spread of Bolshevism, and prevent the revolution in the USSR from merging with a possible revolution in Germany. In addition, these countries were to form a balance against a disarmed Germany

in Eastern Europe. Anglo-French politicians tried to create a single military-political bloc in Eastern Europe from the Barents in the North to the Black Sea (Мельтюхов, 2012).

The Secret Protocol (USSR-Germany)

The first breach in the 'cordon sanitaire' occurred in 1920 when V.I. Lenin signed a peace treaty with Estonia, referring to it as a 'window opening to Europe' (Алексеевна Яшкова, 2024). Essentially, the determination of the borders between Poland, Ukraine and Belarus with the Riga Treaty signed between Poland and the USSR on March 18, 1921 eliminated the applicability of the intermarium plan (Ištok, Kozárová, & Anna, 2021: 322). Subsequently, non-aggression agreements were signed with Poland and Finland in 1932. Fascist Germany's rapprochement with the Franco regime initiated the collapse of the "cordon sanitaire". In the 1930s, the small allied states not only decided to normalize relations, but also supported France's proposal to accept the USSR into the League of Nations at the beginning of 1934 (Алексеевна Яшкова, 2024: 3). The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact or the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, signed on August 23, 1939, was established.

The secret protocol determined that in the event of a territorial and political reorganization of the regions belonging to the Polish State, the boundaries of the spheres of influence for Germany and the USSR would approximately follow the Narev, Vistula, and Sana rivers. Additionally, the question of whether an independent Polish state should be maintained and what its borders should be would be clarified through future political developments (Rumyanna, no date)

Following this secret protocol, Germany invaded Poland on September 1 and the USSR invaded Poland on September 17. In the period of 1942-1943, the British government developed plans for the creation of various federations consisting of small countries in Central, Southeastern and Northern Europe under the control of the West. Especially to establish a Danube Federation. Prime Minister W. Churchill called for isolating Soviet Russia from Western Europe by creating a cordon of 'states that vehemently hate Bolshevism.' However, after the Second World War and its consequences, the USSR's neighbors became mostly friendly states instead of a hostile cordon sanitaire, leading to the establishment of a world socialism system (Алексеевна Яшкова, 2024). Thus, the intermarium plan failed.

Containment of Russia After World War II

After World War II, the West, especially the USA, developed a strategy to contain the Soviet Union in order to continue its global hegemony. For this purpose, the Heartland theory, which British geostrategist Mackinder began to develop in 1904; Spykman's Rimland Theory and the views of policy-making diplomat George S. Kennan were taken as basis. Mackinder's theory was essentially prepared for the struggle between sea powers and land powers. According to Mackinder; "Whoever rules Eastern Europe rules the Heartland; whoever rules the Heartland also rules the World Island. Whoever rules the World Island rules the world" (Yadav, 2024). As a region, the Heartland is demographically superior to all geographical units and has greater resources. Therefore, it forms the strategic core of the Eurasian land mass.

Halford Mackinder elaborated on the Heartland Theory in his work "The Geographical Pivot of History" (1904). He introduced the concept of the Heartland/Pivot Area and divided the world into three geopolitical regions;

- He identified the Volga-Siberia-Himalayas-Arctic Ocean region as a potential strong center (Heartland) for a land power seeking global domination,
- Germany, Austria, Türkiye, India and China that will surround this center are the Inner Crescent,

- England, South Africa, Australia, USA, Canada and Japan can be expressed as the Outer Crescent surrounding this outer crescent.

Influenced by Alfred Mahan's concepts of Eurasian core, landpower and seapower, Mackinder focused on Germany and Russia, which he considered as land powers that could threaten Britain's global hegemony. As a great naval power, Great Britain was the most important power that could prevent threats from the Central Zone/Heartland with its naval bases located on the coasts of the Eurasian continent. According to Mackinder, the most critical area within the Central Zone/Heartland was Eastern Europe, specifically the Germany-Poland axis. Therefore, he envisioned the creation of a buffer zone between Germany and the USSR in order to prevent Germany or Russia from pursuing expansionist policies. Mackinder's concept of the World Island; According to Mackinder, who evaluated the world as a unified ocean system and a large land mass consisting of the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, whoever rules Eastern Europe will rule the Heartland, whoever rules the Heartland will rule the World Island, whoever rules the World Island will rule the World (Demir, 2020: 187-188).

Map 2

Strategic regions according to Mackinder's Heartland theory (McCoy, 2016: 979)



According to Mackinder, through the railways in Eurasia, the power dominating the Heartland could expand outward and control the coastal region. As Mackinder stated, preventing a power (the Soviet Union) from organizing the Heartland and Eurasia and ultimately gaining unlimited access to the sea was the main goal of the naval forces. Geopolitical views on US foreign policy have largely taken place within this framework. Seeing the post-war US-Soviet conflict as a large-scale naval power-center conflict can also be evaluated as remaining loyal to Mackinder (Gerace, 2007: 351). Another important work in the development of the containment of the Soviet Union after World War II was the article titled "Sources of Soviet Conduct" written by American policy-maker and diplomat George S. Kennan in July 1947 and published in Foreign Affairs magazine.

Briefly, the main points were;

- The foundation of Soviet power was based on the struggle against external enemies, and in this context, it was important for the Soviet Union to maintain the concept of a besieged Russia with the enemy lurking beyond the walls.
- Russia, unlike the Western world in general, was still by far the weaker side.
- Soviet policy was extremely flexible, and the Soviet society might ultimately harbor deficiencies that could weaken its overall potential.
- The United States should engage in a strict containment policy wherever the Russians encroach upon the interests of a peaceful and stable world, and should apply force against constantly changing points in Soviet policy to control the Soviet Union (CVCE, 2015).

It is assessed that this strategy might also be influenced by Spykman's Rimland theory (Demir, 2020: 472). Contrary to Mackinder's views, Spykman's Rimland theory emphasized the importance of controlling the coastal edges of Eurasia or the Rimland for global power (Raissi, 2023).

The Greatest Fear of the USA: Encirclement

Spykman's views are based on two fundamental conflicts. The first is between sea power and the heartland region. The second is the conflict between the independent power in the rimland and the sea power and heartland power (Gerace, 2007: 347). According to Spykman, "The security and independence of this country (The USA) can only be protected by a foreign policy that makes it impossible for the Eurasian landmass to have an overwhelming dominant power in Europe and the Far East (Spykman, The Geography of the Peace, 1944: 59-60). Spykman states that the dominant model of power distribution in the rimland determines the concern of the USA about being encircled, and this has become a possibility four times. Accordingly:

- France's appeal to the Holy Alliance in the reconquest of Spanish colonies (The USA responded with the Monroe Doctrine),
- The possibility of Germany winning after Russia's defeat in World War I,
- The possibility of Japan becoming the dominant power in the Far East with Europe's withdrawal from Asia (The USA responded by fully participating in the war),
- The Germany-Japan alliance that emerged from 1940 onwards (The USA responded by fully participating in the war),

As seen, The USA develops two types of reactions to the threat of encirclement. Similar to a primitive human's fight or flight response, it either isolates itself or chooses to fight. This essentially shows that in the relationship between the encircler and the encircled, the encircler is the independent variable and the encircled is the dependent variable. In this context, the party engaging in the cordon sanitaire initiative is in the determining position.

Brzezinski states that the Soviet Union's attempt to control Eurasia continued on three central strategic fronts (Western Europe, the Far East, and Southwest Asia) and that a fourth front was established in Central America, where the US-Soviet conflict continued (Gerace, 2007:350). In his work "The Grand Chessboard," Brzezinski viewed Europe as a democratic stronghold and foresaw that the relationships Europe would establish with Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia would ensure this region's commitment to democracy (Brzezinski, 1998: 59). Brzezinski, who stated that the political momentum of Europe's unification was based on three main motivations, essentially plays a role in better understanding current US policies.

According to Brzezinski, the political momentum of Europe until the 1990s was driven by three main factors:

- Memories of the two devastating world wars,
- Desire for economic recovery,
- Vulnerability to the Soviet threat (Brzezinski, 1998: 60).

It is thought that the US is currently recreating the political momentum of Europe's unification by constructing the "Russian threat" instead of the Soviet threat. Moreover, the role Brzezinski foresaw for Europe as a democratic stronghold has undergone significant erosion. Far from binding Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia to democratic principles, Europe itself is on the verge of becoming a continent where ultra-nationalist, anti-democratic parties are rising. Therefore, it can be said that it has become impossible for Europe to fulfill the role Brzezinski envisioned after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

US Containment Policy During the Cold War

The US containment policy against the Soviet Union was initiated by American diplomat George S. Kennan's analysis, written in February 1946 and commonly known as the "Long Telegram." Kennan was tasked with explaining why the USSR opposed the World Bank and the IMF, elucidating Soviet methods, and advising on the appropriate US response. Subsequently, in 1947, Kennan elaborated on the containment policy in an article titled "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" published in the journal Foreign Affairs (Krugler, no date). Kennan's writings constituted the decisive first step in establishing the political balance of power in Europe (Miscamble, 1992: 73).

During the period of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, which involved the reconstruction of Europe, the views of policy-making diplomat Kennan can be summarized as follows:

- The primary impetus behind Soviet policy was the Kremlin's imperative to legitimize its regime and Stalin's ambition to justify his rule.
- In this context, the Soviet Union was expected to pursue an expansionist policy.
- Soviet foreign policy was characterized by being neither schematic nor adventurous, eschewing fixed plans and unnecessary risks. It was not swayed by the logic of reason but was highly responsive to the logic of force.
- Soviet foreign policy typically withdrew when confronted with an adversary possessing sufficient power and a clear willingness to employ it
- The United States had two primary objectives concerning the Soviet Union: first, to diminish Moscow's power and influence to a level where it no longer constituted a 'threat to the peace and stability of the international community'; and second, to effect a fundamental transformation in the 'theory and practice' of Soviet international relations.
- The principal component of US policy towards the Soviet Union should be the sustained, patient, yet resolute and vigilant containment of Russia's expansionist ambitions.

Following his writings, Kennan was appointed head of General Marshall's Policy Planning Staff (Miscamble, 1992: 28). The 1948 report by this team can be summarized as follows:

- They possessed approximately 50% of the world's wealth, but only 6.3% of its population.
- This inequality was particularly pronounced between themselves (the US) and the peoples of Asia.
- In this situation, they should not become the target of envy and resentment.
- Their primary task in the coming period was to design a model of relations that would allow them to maintain this position of inequality without harming their national security.
- To achieve this, they needed to abandon all sentimentality and wishful thinking (Report by the Policy Planning Staff, no date).

From the end of World War II until the 1970s, there was no significant change in geopolitical theory. The resurgence of geopolitics occurred through US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. During this period, the US experienced the defeat in Vietnam, the oil crisis emerged, and the Shah of Iran was overthrown in 1979. It was at this point that the Soviet-Afghan War came into play.

Was the US' Afghan Trap Real?

In a January 1998 interview with Le Nouvel Observateur, former US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski revealed that:

- According to the official version of history, CIA assistance to the mujahideen began in 1980, after the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan. However, in reality, President Carter signed the first directive for covert aid to the opponents of the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul on July 3, 1979.
- On that day, he wrote a note to the president, indicating that he believed this aid would provoke a Soviet military intervention.
- The administration acknowledged that it had "deliberately increased the probability" of Soviet intervention and considered the covert operation to be an excellent idea, expressing no regrets.
- He stated that they had lured the Russians into the Afghan trap.

On the day the Soviets officially crossed the border, he informed President Carter that they now had the opportunity to give the USSR its own Vietnam War, which ultimately led to the dissolution of the Soviet empire (Tobin, 2020: 237)[1].

Post-Cold War Containment Policy

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, US Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz led the publication of a Defense Policy Guide. According to this guide, the key points are summarized as follows:

- The new objective of the United States was to prevent the emergence of any potential global rival (New York Times, 1992)
- The United States would strive to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources, under consolidated control, would be sufficient to generate global power
- The United States aimed to establish and maintain a new order that would persuade potential rivals that they need not assume a larger role or adopt a more aggressive stance to protect their legitimate interests
- In non-defense areas, the interests of advanced industrial countries should be sufficiently considered to deter them from challenging US leadership or attempting to overthrow the established political and economic order.
- Mechanisms to deter potential rivals from assuming a larger regional or global role should be sustained.
- Addressing sources of regional conflict and instability should be approached in a way that enhances respect for international law, limits international violence, and promotes the spread of democratic governance and open economic systems. This includes ensuring access to Persian Gulf oil, curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, combating terrorism and threats to US citizens from regional or local conflicts, and addressing threats to US society from drug trafficking.
- The strategy should be reoriented to prioritize the prevention of the emergence of any potential global rival.
- The most effective strategy to integrate East-Central European countries with the West and stabilize their democratic institutions involved facilitating their participation in Western political and economic organizations. This included ensuring their earliest possible membership in the European Community and expanding NATO liaison."

[1] The article states that Brzezinski did not acknowledge sending a note claiming that secret aid would lead to Soviet intervention.

As can be inferred from the above statements, in the post-Soviet era, the United States developed its security strategy to maintain its hegemony in international relations, with its primary concern being the emergence of a geopolitical entity in the Eurasian region that could potentially challenge its dominance.

At this point, it is beneficial to consider Brzezinski's work, "The Grand Chessboard." Brzezinski succinctly argues that:

- Ukraine is a geopolitical pivot: Its existence as an independent state helps transform Russia, preventing it from becoming a Eurasian empire. Without Ukraine, Russia could still strive to regain imperial status, but it would primarily be an Asian empire.
- Russia cannot be a European power without Ukraine.
- Ukraine can be part of Europe even without Russia.
- Ukraine's decision to align with Europe is pivotal for Russia's future, determining whether Russia will be part of Europe or remain a Eurasian entity, neither fully European nor Asian, mired in "near abroad" conflicts.
- The United States is now the arbiter of Eurasia, and no Eurasian issue can be resolved without American involvement or contrary to US interests (Brzezinski, 1998: 71-194).

In conclusion, it is evident that the US continues to pursue these policies to prevent the emergence of a rival in Eurasia.

Russia's Foreign Policy and the Ukraine Issue (Blizni Zarubezni)

From 1991 to 2021 (2024), Russia's foreign policy can be divided into six phases:

- Pro-Western diplomacy (1991-1995)
- Multipolar diplomacy (1996-2000)
- Great power pragmatism (2001-2004)
- Neo-Slavism (2005-2008)
- Stability and cooperation diplomacy (2009-2013)
- Great power diplomacy (2014-present)

Despite these different periods, certain approaches in Russian foreign policy have remained consistent:

- Russia maintains its status as a great power.
- National security is a priority for Russia.
- Russia seeks international influence.
- Russia aims to sustain and shape international mechanisms to its advantage.
- Russia places significant importance on economic diplomacy.

In addition to these enduring characteristics, Russia has also acquired new features in its foreign policy. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Eurasianism re-emerged. Neo-Eurasianists argue that Russia is a continental power with a mission to oppose the maritime (Atlanticist) civilization led by the United States, to rebuild the "Great Eurasian Empire," and to create an equal Slavic-Turkic alliance and an Orthodox-Muslim alliance (Liu, 2022). The inclusion of the phrase "to comprehensively and effectively protect the rights, freedoms, and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and organizations abroad" in Russia's "foreign policy concept" document dated March 31, 2023, also explains the rationale behind the Ukraine War (Ashby, 2023).

In this context, Ukraine holds significance for Russia in two main aspects. Firstly, Ukrainians are important to Russians due to their shared history as Slavic brothers. Secondly, Ukraine is geopolitically indispensable for Russia. Ukraine serves as Russia's western border and lies on the route of trade networks, particularly energy pipelines. At this point, Russia has clearly demonstrated that it will not allow Ukraine to Europeanize and will not tolerate a hostile government in Ukraine.

The Process Leading to the Ukraine War

On November 21, 2004, the second round of the presidential elections was held in Ukraine. Among the candidates, Viktor Yushchenko was pro-Western, while Viktor Yanukovych was pro-Russian. The election results announced that the pro-Russian candidate supported by Leonid Kuchma, Viktor Yanukovych, received 49.42% of the votes, while Yushchenko received 46.69%. Yushchenko claimed that there was electoral fraud in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and called for demonstrations in Kyiv. As a result of these demonstrations, the Ukrainian Supreme Court decided to hold a re-run of the elections on December 26, 2004. In the re-run elections, the pro-Western Yushchenko won. However, in the elections held on January 17, 2010, Yanukovych won with 50% of the popular vote. During Yanukovych's tenure, the Ukrainian government decided to suspend an association agreement with the EU, leading to months-long public protests in central Kyiv starting on November 21, 2013. As a result of these events, the pro-Russian Yanukovych fled the country. The pro-Western government that replaced Yanukovych received a $27 billion commitment from the IMF. The U.S., through mechanisms such as USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), supported anti-government movements. In December 2013, Victoria Nuland, the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs and a long-time advocate of regime change, stated that the U.S. government had spent $5 billion since 1991 to promote "democracy" in Ukraine (Fair Challenging Media Bias Website, 2022, https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2013/dec/218804.htm). Following these events, Russia supported the Russians living in Ukraine who wanted to join Russia (Coynash, 2019). Incidents occurred in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions as well as in Crimea. Consequently, on February 25, 2014, pro-Russian groups stormed the Crimean Parliament, pressing for a referendum on Crimea's independence. In the referendum held on March 16, 2014, Crimea decided to join Russia. On March 18, 2014, Crimea was annexed by Russia. The Luhansk and Donetsk regions declared their own republics. Russia announced its recognition of these republics on February 21, 2022. On February 24, 2022, Russian forces entered Ukraine.

Russia's Request for a Buffer Zone

As a result of the 1943 Yalta Agreement, the Soviet Union (USSR) established its dominance over Eastern Europe, thereby creating a cordon sanitaire with the support of its allied nations. Stalin and his successors deemed this necessary following the German invasion. A similar buffer was also established with the Central Asian states in the east. Post-Soviet Russian governments sought to maintain relations with these now-independent republics through the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). However, the invasion of Georgia, the war in Ukraine, and the annexation of Crimea led to Georgia's withdrawal from the CIS and Ukraine's departure from its associate membership.

As previously mentioned, Russia does not accept a unipolar world dominated by the United States. By the end of 2021, Russian President Putin asserted that the geopolitical status quo in Europe needed to change. Putin aimed to create a cordon sanitaire between Russia and the West. This buffer zone, referred to in Russian as Bliznee zarubezhne (ближнее зарубежье), would extend from Poland to Bulgaria, effectively encompassing the former Warsaw Pact territories excluding East Germany. In this zone, no foreign troops would be stationed, thereby weakening the U.S. presence in Europe (Cox, 2023)

Conclusion

When the Soviet revolution occurred, Western powers initially sought to prevent the USSR, which created a zone inaccessible to capitalism, from posing a threat to them. Consequently, following World War I, they struggled to dominate Eastern Europe (Mackinder) or, if not, to control the surrounding territories (Spykman). As a result of this struggle, the Soviet Union, through the Warsaw Pact it established around itself, dominated Eastern Europe and emerged victorious. However, the USSR's victory and dominance over Eastern Europe did not prevent its collapse in 1991. Therefore, neither Mackinder's assertion that the hegemon is the one who controls the "heartland" nor Spykman's claim that the hegemon is the one who controls the "rimland" holds true. Today, as long as the Russian Federation, which possesses the world's largest geography, remains undivided, it has the potential to challenge the United States, leveraging the technology and natural resource reserves inherited from the USSR. This situation is nothing but the realization of the Russian nightmare that Western powers have feared since the early 20th century. Russia, which does not allow Western capitalist investments to enter and exploit its natural resources, is now paying the price by waging war with Ukraine, a Western state. However, just as during the Soviet era, Russia seeks a cordon sanitaire around itself to protect against Western intervention. Despite the strong historical ties between Russia and Ukraine, the efforts of Western powers have led them to a state of war with each other.

Taking into account the historical and contemporary strategies and tactics employed by both Western powers and Russia, the situation can be succinctly summarized as follows:

- Western powers will never allow Russia, as a major power, to be cornered to the point of resorting to nuclear weapons.
- In this context, the only solution for Western powers may be to facilitate Russia's internal instability and/or exhaust it with a war that will gradually weaken it.
- Consequently, Western powers are employing a attrition strategy that ensures Russia cannot benefit from the resources in the territories it has gained during the conflict with Ukraine. This situation is prompting Western powers to indirectly incentivize Russia to escalate its use of violence against Ukraine.
- Given the evolving dynamics of capital accumulation, Western powers increasingly rely on Russia's abundant natural resources. Consequently, the ongoing tension between Russia and Western nations can only find resolution when an agreement is reached regarding Russia's integration into the "Western" capitalist system.

As seen in the text, without much effort to conceal it, Western powers have taken the borders of the USSR, which they considered an enemy, as the heartland. Under the guise of 'geostrategy', the entire West and NATO engaged in a struggle against the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War era, despite the cordon sanitaire around the USSR. Today, the Russian Federation is experiencing the most challenging days of the ongoing struggle for hegemony since the Soviet era. The most important lesson to be drawn from this is that Turkish geostrategy formation should prioritize analyzing the world based on Türkiye's own geographical position, rather than according to other states' priorities.

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Chapter 13

The Rise of Strategic Partnerships in the 21st century: The Case of Sino-Saudi Relations

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Abstract

The number of strategic partnerships has proliferated in the post-Cold war period and the term has become an established feature of diplomacy. Although the emphasis on multilateralism gained prominence in terms of discourse in the post-Cold War period, it is seen that bilateral partnerships are on the rise within the flux of a current international conjuncture. Among the most noteworthy cases, Saudi Arabia-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) exhibits the increasing focus on pragmatic and shared interests - rather than common values - as the key constitutive elements of their relations and hence, reflects a kind of transition in international system. As a rising global power, China seems to be keen on deepening its relations with Saudi Arabia, which occupies an invaluable geopolitical position in energy security, within the framework of the Belt and Road Iniative (BRI). On the other hand, Saudi Arabia's desire to diversify its relations as a regional power, which has a historically deep-rooted relations with the US, and a determination to attract investments during the newly launched reform process, are effective in improving its relations with China. Still, the questions especially rise on the points of why these two countries, with their distinct social structures, ideologies and foreign policy preferences engage in strategic partnership and in which direction they will mature this relationship in the future. This chapter is designed to address the rise of strategic partnerships with a special emphasis on the policy priorities and ambitious projects of Saudi Arabia-China relations. In this context, the reasons for preferring bilateral form of alignment, the characteristics of strategic partnerships as a popular diplomatic toolkit in transitioning international system, the case of Sino-Saudi relations under the framework of this alignment model, and lastly, the possible effects of this relationship in a wider region constitute the subject of this study.

Keywords Saudi Arabia · China · Strategic Partnerships · Partnership Diplomacy · Alignment

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Introduction

In response to the transforming dynamics of the post-Cold War era, states increasingly search for new models of alignments to facilitate cooperation and to further their interests. Since conventional system of multilateral cooperation proves insufficient for states to realize their agendas, then states increasingly prefer bilateral solutions such as strategic partnerships to promote their own terms. In this respect the Sino-Saudi relations, which have transformed from having a marginal significance to a comprehensive strategic partnership, represents a prominent case to discuss the degree states utilize the partnership diplomacy.

The Sino-Saudi relations have seen tremendous growth since the establishment of the official diplomatic ties. The relations have not simply progressed but more importantly, upgraded into a level of comprehensive strategic partnership to denote one of the highest position in their hierarchy of international relations. The flexible and pragmatic structure of the CSP seems well-suited for the partners to realize their visions and to fulfill their foreign policy goals. Especially, the synergy between the Vision 2030 and the BRI offers variety of prospects for a deepening CSP. Furthermore, it carries the potential to produce geopolitical consequences by reinforcing China's global influence and expanding Saudi Arabia's regional role.

This study begins with assessing the context of the strategic partnerships with an effort to understand the underlying reasons for states to prefer bilateral arrangements. In the second part, the rapid development of the Sino-Saudi relations is discussed within the context of the dynamics of the international structure, key drivers and expectations of the parties. In the last section, a strategic outlook on the possible implications of the Sino-Saudi CSP is provided from the perspective of Türkiye, the Middle East and the Central Asia. Given the insufficiency of conventional forms of alignments, the case of Sino-Saudi CSP vividly illustrates the salience of strategic partnerships as a pragmatic diplomatic instrument for states to realize their visions, utilize their interests, and expand their roles in world politics.

A Popular Diplomatic Toolkit: Strategic Partnerships

As of 2024, more than 100 strategic partnerships (SP) have been signed across Asia-Pacific region whereas China has forged over 23 global SPs with countries ranging from Djibouti to Iran and 41 Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships (CSP) with countries ranging from Mongolia to Saudi Arabia (Bhole, 2023). These numbers indicate a change both in the conduct of diplomacy and among the conventional instruments of international relations. In fact, in parallel to the fluid atmosphere of international relations, new inter-state alignments with fewer partners evolve and constitute the reality of the 21st century diplomacy. States utilize these channels to facilitate cooperation, and in this respect the newer forms of alignment such as strategic partnerships have become one of the core practices to manage complex problems. As an umbrella concept alignment encompasses broad range of subjects and in practice, these arrangements can shift from issue to issue. States can align with different sets of partners on variety of subjects without giving strict commitments. Since states increasingly prefer these bilateral arrangements, then it becomes highly necessary to understand both the underlying factors and the context of these structures.

Why do states prefer Bilateral Arrangements?

It is possible to discuss on several factors to explain why states increasingly prefer bilateral arrangements rather than broad-based, highly institutionalized multilateral structures. In this vein, increasing number of SPs can be argued among one of the states' responses to the shifts in the configuration of international system. More closely, the characteristics of this notable shift can be discussed under; from

unipolarity to contested power distribution[1] and from alliances to alignments and from multilateralism to bilateral or minilateral frameworks (Cooper, 2023, p.2). Under the factors of dynamic rise of China with a global leverage, and the erosion of the US credibility and reliability in terms of global governance, the international system seems to shift from a unipolar order, still with controversies in labeling the newly emerging system. In this grey period, states appear to search for greater autonomy by diversifying their links with different partners.

In traditional sense, the Cold War period has been dominated by the political-security concerns of the two poles which have been narrowly reflected in the structure of the alliances. By definition alliance entails a formal or informal collaboration of states for the (threat of) use of military force, against actors external to the alliance (Rynning and Schmitt, 2018, p.654). Alliances primarily include military dimension and require high degree of commitment and trust. Therefore, under current circumstances, instead of accepting the rigid structure of alliances states highly welcome the flexible and pragmatic models of alignments which offer them chances to deepen their collaboration with different countries on variety of topics. In this vein, it is not surprising to see Saudi Arabia as a rising regional power and one of the US historical allies to turn for new partners to materialize its vision and projects without the restrictions of the US orders.

In this new international environment, conventional system of multilateral cooperation which is mostly dominated by the Western powers is in retreat. In the face of complex global problems such as rising inequalities, it has become more difficult for states with variety of interests to utilize these multilateral structures in achieving their goals. Besides, since multilateral institutions proved to be functional in the service of Western liberal world order, the rise of "other" powers which are enthusiastic to promote their own terms encouraged the demand for bilateral solutions. In this regard, with their stress on sovereignty and identity, states become more receptive to bilateral solutions which can rely on pragmatic and flexible channels in tackling a particular problem. Nevertheless, it is still possible to question whether partnerships with rising powers such as China can result in imposition of another type of yoke on partner states. In this respect, one of the primary examples constitute the Chinese-Sri Lankan SP. The conditions created under the framework of the SP, such as the context of the Chinese investments and Sri Lanka's increasing debts to that country have transformed their relations into a fashion of asymmetric dependency. Many argued that China has utilized the SP as an instrument of influence while undermining Sri Lanka's sovereignty and security. In fact, the questions of associated costs and actual benefits of the SP remained controversial on the Sri Lankan side. Therefore, to be able to grasp the dynamics of the transforming international system it is necessary to understand the structures states choose to build on their collaborations. In this regard, before embarking upon analyzing the core of the Saudi-Chinese CSP, next part examines the conceptual discussions on the strategic partnerships.

Strategic Partnerships

In the post CW period, strategic partnerships have gained wide currency and constituted one of the newest and prominent form of alignment in international politics (Wilkins, 2012). As states have

[1]The fierce discussions on the nature of the system structure continues as of today. On the one hand, proponents of the unipolarity stress on the material capabilities of the US as a leading global power with its military preponderence, economic influence and technological prowess. For instance, Brooks and Wohlforth (2023) claim that despite shocks and crises and a change in the nature of the US unipolarity (since they characterize the current period as "partial unipolarity"), it still comprises the unipole. They stress that the US continues to dominate the world order with its extraordinary power elements compared to other states. On the other hand, those critics of unipolarity argue on the decline of the American power amid rising China and especially BRICS countries. The proponents of multipolarity underline the notion of diffusion of power from a superpower to rising powers with a special emphasis on economic, social and political conditions rather than military power. Ashford and Cooper (2023) have characterized this emerging distribution of power as a system of "unbalanced multipolarity".

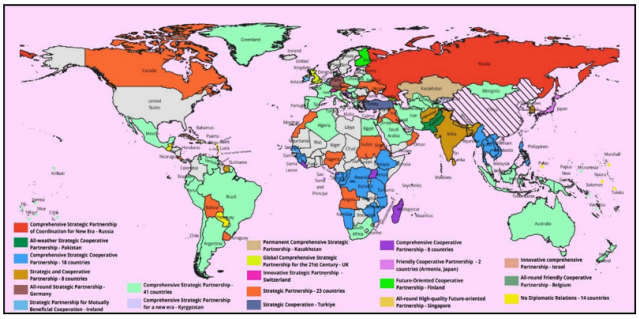
departed from the alliance paradigm, the SP's have been embraced by many actors of the international politics to denote close relationships which, in fact, have varied over different levels (Tyushka and Czechowska, 2019, p.11). Despite the surge in the usage of the term, the definition of the SP is still contested in the literature. Nevertheless, it is still possible to shed light on the common features of the SPs based on their structures and context.

Michalski and Pan (2017) define strategic partnership as a form of bilateral engagement between two actors with the aim of forging a privileged bilateral relationship. Compared to coalitions and alliances as different forms of alignment, SPs are different from both of them since coalitions are ad-hoc and temporary in nature whereas alliances mostly include military obligations (Wilkins, 2008, pp.359-360). Other distinctive features of SPs encompass; common interests as the basis of the relationship, goal-oriented nature and more flexible structure. SPs are primarily based on common interests rather than shared values. They are conceived as vehicles to attain specific material foreign policy goals rather than binding partners to broad ideological commitments. Since no "enemy" state is identified within the framework of SPs, they are not threat-driven and thus structured around certain goals. As the global power shift and diffusion of power necessitate a more flexible form of alignment, the flexible structure of SPs offers greater incentive for the states to attain higher degree of autonomy and opportunity to diversify their channels of collaborations (Wilkins, 2008, pp.360-361).

The patterns of SPs represent different aspects of collaboration for different actors. Mostly, the SPs present a significant alternative channel both for the small states and emerging powers to diversify their collaborations and to leverage their position. Even in some cases, SPs can be employed among the instruments of hedging to manage the risks and costs and to promote multiple policy options without antagonizing other states. In this regard the example of Sri Lankan-Chinese SP, which can be discussed under the motivations of Sri Lanka to maximize benefits from China without alienating but still offsetting the pressure of India, can be given. Some scholars also study Saudi-Chinese CSP on the basis of the hedging strategy both from Saudi Arabian and Chinese perspective. With a view to realize the Vision 2030 and modernization projects, Saudi Arabia capitalizes on partnership relations with China especially on the areas of investment, infrastructure and techno-scientific innovation while carefully engaging with the US on defense issues (Munassar, 2023). In this respect, Saudi Arabia's dual strategy to forge global partnerships without alienating its long-term ally US is discussed under the examples of hedging strategy. On the other side, some studies also discussed on China's partnership diplomacy under the framework of hedging strategy. China's enthusiasm to bolster its relations with Saudi Arabia by carefully scrutinizing and avoiding the risks of; alienating Iran, challenging the US as well as becoming entangled in the regions complex problems are argued under China's hedging strategy (Garlick and Havlova, 2020, p.83).

Map 1

China's Global Partnerships at All Levels



Source: Bhole, O. (2023)

Apart from the hedging strategy, China has in fact adopted partnership diplomacy on a global scale. It has established partnerships at different levels ranging from "all-weather partnership" with Russia and Pakistan, "strategic partnerships" with Azerbaijan and Georgia to "friendly cooperative partnership" with Armenia and Japan (Shiriyev, 2024). Among the types of the partnerships, CSP indicates one of the highest level of partnerships that underlines the significance of the partners for China's vital interests and foreign policy goals. China's pattern of strategic partnership basically revolves around forging privileged bilateral partnerships and utilizing material and strategic opportunities the collaboration offers (Michalski, 2019, p. 10). China builds on a network of strategic partnerships with a vision of strengthening its global power status, bolstering its commercial position, expanding the reach of the BRI and deepening its strategic leverage.

The Sino-Saudi Relations: from a Marginal Significance to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

The blossoming relations between China and Saudi Arabia have come a long way in a short time. Despite the fact that Sino-Saudi relations do not have a long diplomatic history, the relations have transformed from having a marginal significance to a comprehensive strategic partnership in the post-Cold War period. The parties have demonstrated a great deal of enthusiasm to develop their relations and substantial progress has been reached in variety of areas, such as in energy and financial sectors.

The CSP is especially significant in realizing the goals of each party. While China utilizes the CSP with a view to expand the geography of the BRI and its sphere of influence, Saudi Arabia perceives it as an opportunity to diversify its economy and materialize the Vision 2030 project. On the basis of their regional and global role, the partners posses range of ambitions which have also found reflections in the design of the CSP. So, to be able to discuss on the possible implications of the CSP, this part analyzes the essential features of the CSP with a special focus on the expectations of the partners.

The Context of the Sino-Saudi Relations

Since the establishment of the official diplomatic relations in 1990, the Sino-Saudi relations have undergone a rapid progress and upgraded into a level of comprehensive strategic partnership that ranks among one of the highest positions in their hierarchy of international relations. The Saudi-Chinese CSP reveals one of an examples of states' responses to the transitioning world system. In an era of complex global challenges and heightened competition, rather than being restricted by the rigid structure of alliances, both of the parties choose to build their collaborations around economic concerns within a pragmatic and flexible structure.

In a brief historical context, while the Sino-Saudi relations have been restricted on the basis of ideological differences and the policies of opposing camps during the Cold War, the 'under the table negotiations' and 'clandestine trade' which have developed especially in the 1980's have paved the way for the establishment of the official relations in the 1990 (Cengiz, 2020, p.7). Between the years 1991-1998, the relations have grown steadily with more than 16 high-level visits and increasing contacts, including King Abdullah's, then Crown Prince, visit to China in 1998. In a reciprocal visit, the Chinese President Jiang Zemin has visited Riyadh in 1999 as the first ever Chinese leader to visit the Kingdom. The visit produced the conclusion of a strategic oil partnership between the two countries which was functional both in the development of a collaboration in the energy sector and making Saudi Arabia the top oil supplier to China in 2002 (Tamimi, 2022, pp.140-141). The year 2006 marked a significant point in Sino-Saudi relations with King Abdullah's visit to Beijing. As the first ever Saudi king to visit China, his trip has resulted in five agreements that included closer energy collaboration. Three months later, President Hu Jintao reciprocated a visit to Riyadh and expanded the scale of collaboration with

additional agreements on the areas of energy and security. Afterwards, the year 2009 saw another state visit to Riyadh by the President Hu Jintao. The reciprocal high-level visits and the developing relations did not only exhibit the significance of expanding ties between the parties but have also produced durable outcomes in the spheres of broadening economic relations, increasing energy cooperation and heightening collaboration in security issues such as in combating terrorism, military visits and maritime piracy (Tamimi, 2022, p.141). At its early stages of Saudi Arabia's dual strategy, the Saudi Kingdom enthusiastically embraced the terms of developing a geo-economic partnership with China while sustaining its strategic relations, especially in the defense sector, with the Western powers.

Saudi Arabia's dual strategy of maintaining strategic ties with the West while developing relations with the East, particularly China, has further developed and produced considerable results in the second decade of the 21st century. Under the framework of the Look-East Diplomacy, Saudi high-level visits to China continued and reciprocated by Beijing. The visits facilitated the ties in energy and economic sectors, diversified the areas of collaboration and paved the way for a higher level of cooperation. In this respect, the parties have agreed to elevate the status of their relationship to comprehensive strategic partnership in 2016 with the end result of the CSP agreement in 2022 (Saudi Press Agency).

Several steps have been taken to institutionalize the Sino-Saudi CSP. As a consultation mechanism High Level Joint Committee (HLJC) has been established and Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have been appointed as the co-chairs. The HLJC and the six sub-committees are not only designed as an instrument of steering cooperation but also to act as a mechanism of policy-coordination between the BRI and the Vision 2030. China's global initiative of BRI entails large-scale infrastructure and development projects that seeks to connect Asia with Africa and Europe through maritime (Maritime Silk Road) and land (Silk Road Economic Belt) routes. Saudi Arabia was among the first countries to participate the BRI who sees the initiative as an important opportunity to materialize its ambitious project of Vision 2030 which encompasses modernization projects, diversified economy and a vibrant society. While the BRI is expected to serve for underlining China's international identity as a global power, Vision 2030 can be instrumental in reinforcing Saudi Arabia's increasing regional role that goes beyond the region.

The synergy between the BRI and the Vision 2030 plays one of a vital role in the development of the CSP. The scope of the two ambitious projects reflects the extent of their mutual interests as well as their need for growing collaboration in order to materialize their visions. In this respect, the two sides have signed a 'harmonization plan' between the BRI and the Vision 2030 with a view to accelerate the pace of the projects and to further the degree of cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022). China has also unveiled a cooperation priorities agenda under the Vision and Actions document, which is useful in assessing the framework of its bilateral relations and collaboration. In this vein, the five policy priorities of the Vision and Actions document can be functional in analyzing the extent of the harmonization and implementation of the BRI and Vision 2030 (Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, 2017).

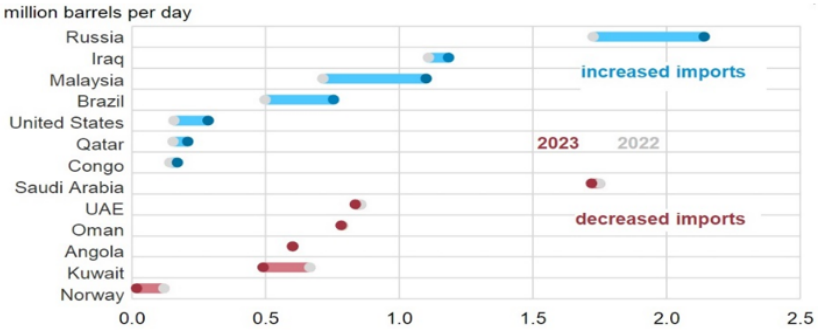
The Vision and Actions document essentially highlights five specific goals for partnering states in BRI, which are; policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bonds. Under the *policy coordination*, communication mechanisms and multi-level intergovernmental macro policy exchange are urged. In these high-level visits, variety of agreements and Memorandum of Understandings (MoU) which include diverse sectors of energy, mining, oil, petrochemical plants, renewable energy and e-commerce have been signed (Fulton, 2020a, p.11). The foundation of the HLJC and the six sub-committees as well as high-level visits are instrumental in facilitating the policy coordination not only between the BRI and Vision 2030, but also for a functioning framework of the comprehensive strategic partnership. Under the priority area of *facilities connectivity*,

partners are expected to improve connectivity of their infrastructure connection plans and technical systems. Starting from 2007, China continued to expand its infrastructure and construction projects in Saudi Arabia and the Kingdom received the highest level of construction volume across 61 BRI countries in 2023 (Nedopil, 2024, p.11). Some of the examples of Chinese infrastructure and transportation construction projects that have been launched in Saudi Arabia encompass; Chinese investments in Jazan city for port and industrial park construction, China Railway Construction Corporation's adit tunnel project for Saudi NEOM City and Chinese digital infrastructure investments in Saudi digital transformation under the Vision 2030.

Unimpeded Trade priority includes expansion of new areas of trade, improvement in trade structure and promotion of trade balance between the parties. Trade in the energy sector is historically essential to the Sino-Saudi collaboration. As the world's largest oil importer in 2023, China is the largest recipient of Saudi oil and Saudi Arabia has ranked as the second crude oil supplier to China (US Energy Information Administration, 2024). Not only this but today the scope of the collaboration goes beyond fossil energy to include green low carbon energy. Saudi Arabia has received 19 percent of the Chinese green energy investment in BRI in 2023 and the collaboration has expanded to include the development of technological and industrial capacity of renewable energy projects in solar and wind energy (Nedopil, 2024, p.16). One of the primary examples of China's investments include Silk Road Forum (SRF)'s acquisition of the %49 of the Saudi Arabia's ACWA Power Renewable Energy Holding (ACWA Power RenewCo)(Power Technology,2020). In addition to energy, trade stands at the core of the bilateral relations which continuous with an accelerated pace. Over the years, the volume of bilateral trade has grown tremendously to exceed $100 billion in 2023 and China has become Saudi Arabia's largest trading partner (Yang, 2024). In general trade rates, while China's exports include electronics, consumer goods, construction and industrial materials, Saudi Arabia's 90% of exports and nearly 87% of the total revenues are restricted to oil and petrochemical exports (Yu, 2024, p.132). Despite high revenues, this single-commodity structure reveals a kind of vulnerability for the Saudi economy. In this vein, Saudi Arabia aims to utilize the synergy between the BRI and Vision 2030 to diversify its economy, to expand the areas of trade and to reduce its dependence on oil.

Figure 1

Crude Oil Imports to China from Top Trading Partners (2022-2023)



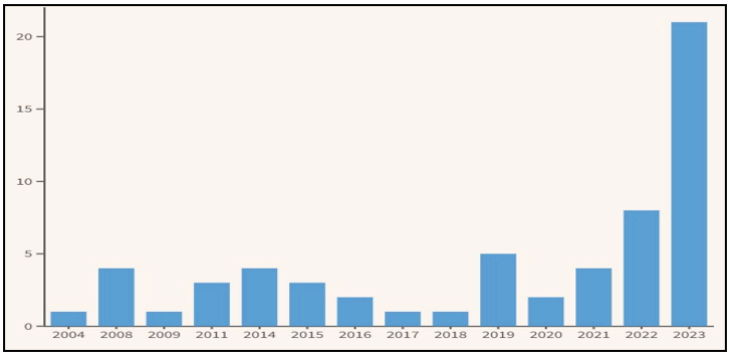
Source: US Energy Information Administration (2024)

The priority in *financial integration* aims to deepen integration in financial cooperation, establishment of financing and investment systems, and coordination in currency. In parallel to growing importance of the BRI infrastructure projects, Chinese investments have grown substantially and it has become one of the largest sources of the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Saudi Arabia. While the Vision 2030 offers new investment opportunities to diversify the economic agenda, the realization of both the Vision 2030 and the BRI targets still require more steps for trade financing, infrastructure

financing, insurance services and currency settlement services (Chen and Han, 2019, p. 14). The developments such as the establishment of the first office of National Commercial Bank of Saudi Arabia in Shanghai in 2013, the opening of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China in Riyadh in 2015, the establishment of joint investment fund by Saudi Arabia and China, and the signing of a bilateral currency swap agreement worth of $7 billion are among the prominent examples for financial integration.

Figure 2

The Rise of Chinese FDI in Saudi Arabia (2004-2023)



Source: Crawford (2023)

The *people-to-people exchanges* involve the expansion of exchanges and growing collaboration in the areas of culture, education and media to promote public support for the initiative and the bilateral relations. In this respect, Sino-Saudi partnership has encouraged people to people contacts through several practices. For instance, Saudi Arabia is included in China's list of destinations for group travel, personnel exchanges have been deepened and the range of opportunities under educational exchanges have been proliferated. While the Chinese language is included in the curricula of Saudi Arabia's public schools and universities, the Arabic language is being taught in 44 Chinese universities (Vaidya, 2023). With a view to encourage cultural diversity of the Vision 2030, a total of 174 Saudi students, including 131 scholarship recipients, are enrolled in Chinese universities in 2022. In turn, Saudi Arabia has provided 477 annual scholarships for Chinese students at Saudi universities (Ministry of Education, 2022). All of these complementary priorities and respective practices represent a holistic approach in the realization and development of the Sino-Saudi CSP. The synchronization of the visions of the partners seems to be promising in the long run. Still, the future of the relations will be affected by the realization of mutual expectations and the transforming dynamics. To be able to assess the future of the relations and the implementation of the CSP, the next part will focus on the expectations of the partners as well as the dynamics that can be affective in the long run.

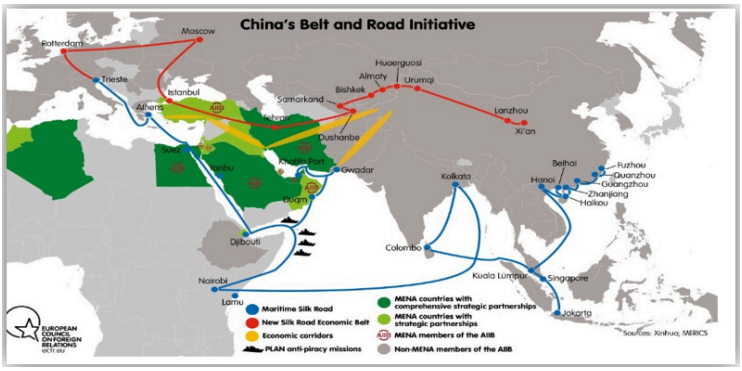
Expectations of the Partners

The Sino-Saudi relations have transformed from a short-term, limited type of oil and trade-based relations to a long-term, diversified structure of a strategic partnership. Despite the fact that the energy and trade issues still play a vital role in the relations, a spillover effect has enlarged the context of the relations to encompass diverse areas of partnership. In the post-Cold War era under the context of the Sino-Saudi relations, the meaning of the term 'strategic' has transformed from a restricted agenda of political and military issues to a more pragmatic context to encompass long-term, sustainable and uninterrupted flow of relations. Under this framework, the expectations of the parties have reconfigured and played a determinant role in the development of relations.

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao has once defined comprehensive strategic partnership as a multilayered, all-dimensional collaboration to cover economic, politic, scientific, technologic, and cultural fields that is conducted both by the governments and non-governmental groups on equal-footed, mutually beneficial and win-win basis. For Jiabao the term 'strategic' means long-term and stable cooperation which transcends the differences in ideology and is not subjected to the impacts of individual events (Fulton, 2019, p.34). Under the context of energy security, establishing a reliable partnership with the top oil supplier will not only safeguard Beijing's energy interests but it can also strengthen China's posture against the US by the possibility to limit Washington's capability to influence energy flow to China in a crisis or war (Tamimi, 2022, p.142). China perceives Saudi Arabia as a pivot state in the region and its overall weight is significant from the perspective of China's expanding economic ties, foreign policy and influence. Pivot state means a regional comprehensive power which acts as a hub in the partnership network of China in the region (Sun, 2022, p.302). Saudi Arabia's geo-strategic location is vital in the conduct of BRI both in geographic and economic terms. Neighboring to eight states, Saudi Arabia is located in the central position in the Middle East with a coastal access to Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Given the potential choke points of Straits of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb, Saudi Arabia can offer logistic options across the peninsula via alternative land and maritime routes in the case of a limited access to global energy markets (Fulton, 2020a, pp.6-7). Saudi Arabia can play a pivotal role in the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa) for China's initiatives and continuous economic transactions. The Kingdom is not only significant from the perspective of China's energy and economic security but its diplomatic (especially with its strong position in the Muslim World) and economic outreach can also play a powerful role in expanding the scope of the BRI to other geographies. Therefore, Saudi Arabia's geo-strategic position offers the options of a continuous and secure oil supply together with growing economic and social ties through the advantages of expanding landscape of the BRI.

Map 2

China's Belt and Road Initiative



Source: European Council on Foreign Relations (2019)

By expanding its partnerships with pivot states such as Saudi Arabia, China does not only aim to secure its economic and energy interests but also seeks to expand its influence and diplomatic prestige to a wider strategic landscape. China's increasing connection with the region through multitude of ties and without targeting a third country also reinforces the legitimacy of its foreign policy targets and instruments. China's discourse of non-interference offers numerous opportunities for those states that face harsh criticisms in their relations with the West. In this respect, China's emphasis on mutual respect and domestic sovereignty was warmly welcomed by Saudi Arabia at a time when George W. Bush administration was propagating democracy promotion in the Middle East (Fulton, 2020b, p. 6). China represents an enthusiastic and pragmatic global partner without conditions on human rights and

with variety of stakes to materialize the Vision 2030. Rather than being bound by the issues of human rights, Saudi Arabia primarily expects to find a long-term partner to realize its Vision with huge volume of investment, funding opportunities, infrastructure expertise and high-tech knowledge.

From the perspective of Saudi Arabia, China firstly stands as a prominent partner for guaranteeing the long-term demand for oil. While China's long-term oil demand makes it an attractive market, it also responds to the Kingdoms' need to diversify its economy by diverse areas and instruments of collaboration. In the areas of energy, the relationship goes beyond the buyer-seller framework with Saudi Aramco's increasing investments in petrochemical projects in China (Suratman, 2024). Not only this, but with a view to alleviate the dependence on a single-commodity, the Kingdom also looks for alternative sectors of renewable and nuclear energy. In this vein, increasing number of joint projects in renewable energy such as Sino-Saudi joint ventures in building solar power plants in Saudi Arabia is remarkable (Reuters, 2024). In the case of Riyadh's consideration of nuclear energy, China responds positively to build nuclear power station in the Kingdom, whereas the US side insists on placing curbs on the use of nuclear technology (Al-Atrush, 2023).

The synergy between the Vision 2030 and the BRI seems promising both for diversification of Saudi economy and realization of its projects. China stands as a vital investment and trade partner of Saudi Arabia and thus offers new investment and financial opportunities as well as high-tech support to diversify economy and materialize Vision 2030. China offers its expertise on digital infrastructure and has the capacity to facilitate the construction of smart cities under Saudi Vision. Under the context of Sino-Saudi partnership, the components of Saudi's expectations can be realized without conditions on the issues of human rights but under the rising suspicions of its historical ally, the US. While all the economic, energy and high-tech opportunities can satisfy the Saudi Vision 2030, still these fell short of guaranteeing Saudi's critical security concerns in the region. On the one hand, the Chinese option brings an opportunity to hedge between the two global powers and to designate a more autonomous and robust politics that will be more independent from the influence of the West. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia continues to be one of the most prominent partners of the US and security needs of the Kingdom still depends on the US security architecture. Although the US plays the role of a predominant arms supplier to Saudi Arabia, China's arms transfers to the Kingdom has increased approximately 400 % between the years 2016-2020 as compared to the period between 2011-2015 (Ali, 2022). In parallel to the developing Sino-Saudi relations in the defense sector, the US side has lifted its ban on offensive weapon sales to the Kingdom, as well as reaching the final stage of concluding a comprehensive defense agreement with Saudi Arabia (Ali, 2024). Since China seems to be incapable of providing security in the region, the US will likely to remain a vital security partner of the Kingdom for the near future. Therefore, at this stage rather than taking provocative actions, a balanced approach between the two global powers and carefully managed relations can produce beneficial results from the perspective of Saudi foreign policy.

Strategic Outlook: The Possible Implications of the Sino-Saudi CSP

The trend of catalyzing the ties between Saudi Arabia and China implies far reaching consequences that go beyond the Middle East to the Central Asia. It is seen that Saudi Arabia, as a rising regional power in Türkiye's nearby geography, has recently made a serious breakthrough and diversified its collaborations through number of projects. The partnership relation with China is important in terms of understanding both the degree of affecting Saudi Arabia's role as a regional power and the extent of expanding China's sphere of influence as a global power. Not only this, but also the enlarging geography of the collaboration is noteworthy. Since Saudi Arabia and China deepen their collaboration by embarking on variety of joint projects in Central Asia, such as energy projects in Uzbekistan, then the scale of cooperation is also significant from the perspective of engagement in the Central Asian

geopolitics (Lucente, 2024). In this part of the study, the possible far-reaching implications of the Sino-Saudi CSP are discussed under the framework of Türkiye, the Middle East and the Central Asia.

Türkiye

With its geo-strategic location and dynamic economy Türkiye stands as an important regional power that can play a significant role in the BRI. The ambitious projects of BRI and Türkiye's Middle Corridor offer a high potential to promote range of opportunities through trans-continental transactions. With a view to facilitate economic development and further areas of collaboration, Türkiye continuous to develop the links such as between the Silk Road and Turkish seaports in the Black Sea and Mediterranean (Colakoğlu, 2019). In this respect, the issues of the development of the BRI in Türkiye's near geography and the position of Saudi Arabia both in the BRI and in its relations with China are closely related with Türkiye's long-term regional policy and its relations with China.

Saudi Arabia's geo-strategic location and its significance within the Middle Eastern politics occupy one of a primary place in discussing the Sino-Saudi CSP. Situated in Türkiye's near geography, Saudi Arabia plays the role of an ambitious regional power which has the capacity to expand its influence beyond the Middle Eastern geography. In this respect, while Saudi Arabia's collaboration with a rising global power China can facilitate its economic development and increase its influence, a well-played hedging strategy between the two global powers can further leverage its position in and beyond the region.

Under the context of transforming international system and volatile regional dynamics, enhancing Sino-Saudi relations can multiply Saudi affect through strengthening its pivot role in the region. Since Türkiye also stands as another prominent pivot state in the region, China's rising interest in Saudi Arabia, its investment and other funding opportunities for the Vision 2030 can be instrumental in turning Saudi Arabia into a major pivot state in the region. In this respect, Türkiye can consider Sino-Saudi CSP under the conditions of diverse strategic collaborations and accelerating competition in the region.

The Middle East

Saudi Arabia is a significant regional actor in the Middle East both through the factors of geostrategic location, economy, oil and its position in the Muslim World. The development of relations under the realization of joint projects can offer economic prospects not only for bilateral relations but also for the other states in the region. This can provide an opportunity for Arab states to diversify their economies and escape from chronic vulnerabilities.

In the context of transforming dynamics of international system, China increases its ties with the region which is visible in the number of partnerships. China has already established strategic partnership relations with Iraq, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar while it has established comprehensive strategic partnership with Iran and United Arab Emirates. Therefore, China effectively taking the advantage of this new type of relation as an instrument to reinforce its economic interests not only with Saudi Arabia but with the region as a whole. In the long run, this process can produce increasing Chinese economic stakes and influence, more roboust economies of the region and more autonomous polices independent of the Western influence. With the opportunity of diversifying their partners, investment and trade, the Arab states can strengthen their economies which in turn can reinforce multiplication of foreign policy choices. By reducing their dependencies on the West, these states can take more autonomous decisions in the long run.

The Central Asia

Under the framework of Central Asian politics, the increasing collaboration between Saudi Arabia and China reinforces controversial questions on the nature of their investments and projects. Since the region is historically dominated by Russia and China both politically and economically, then Central Asian states are eager to capitalize on alternatives to reduce their reliance on these two states and to diversify their economies as well as their partners. In that vein, while Saudi Arabia offers the opportunity to diversify their partnership on the one hand, its increasing collaboration with China and their joint projects in Central Asia can rise the questions on the dynamics and the limitations of partnership with regard to Chinese stakes on the other hand.

Some argues that the possible increase of Saudi influence in the Central Asian landscape can be welcomed by China to some extent. Expansion of Saudi presence can be instrumental in undermining the influence of the West and Türkiye, and in maintaining unchallenged relations with the major powers in the region (Panfilova, 2023). From another point, under the geopolitical calculations of China, whether it can try to change the investor behavior in the Middle East and constrain their influence in the Central Asia through its investment and partnership policies stands as a significant question to be asked. Especially, since Saudi Arabia's oil industry received nearly 70% of Chinese investment in the Gulf between 2020-2023, making Riyadh particularly susceptible to Chinese retaliation in any case (Dinçer, 2024), then the depth and the vulnerabilities of this relationship can mean possible consequences for the region and Saudi Arabia's policies.

Conclusion

In recent years, the Sino-Saudi relations have taken a significant way to transform from a one-dimensional bilateral relation to a structure of comprehensive strategic partnership. The Sino-Saudi relations is symbolical to understand the states' response to changing dynamics and context of the international system. As a new form of inter-state alignment, the number of strategic partnerships has increased profoundly and states highly utilized partnership diplomacy to realize their interests and to maintain greater degree of autonomy in their patterns of relations.

Rather than being restricted by the rigid structure of alliances, states prefer to rely on more pragmatic and flexible channels of partnerships in the post-Cold War era. In the absence of identification of any "enemy" and with an increasing focus on attaining specific material foreign policy goals, the strategic partnerships become well-suited to respond to global power shifts and diffusion of power. In the 21st century, under the context of Sino-Saudi CSP the term "strategic" goes well beyond to encompass the expanding areas of collaboration in economic, energy, digital, cultural, and other areas to offer long-term, interest-based relations with a stress on states sovereignty and identity. As opposed to the contested functions of Western-oriented multilateral institutions and conditions, bilateral solutions under different levels of partnerships become more attractive to states.

The transformation of the Sino-Saudi relations to CSP reveals the level of significance attached to the bilateral relations and mutual interests by both parties. Despite their diverse social structures, ideologies and foreign policies, their pragmatic and goal-driven approach facilitates the progress in the CSP. With a special focus on the projects of BRI and Vision 2030, the structure of the CSP both enlarges by diversification of collaboration and deepens by the mechanisms that are established to institutionalize the relations. Partners mutual expectations are instrumental in both realizing their own agendas and in deepening the scope of the collaboration. Under the context of the Saudi Arabia's geo-strategic location and pivot role in the region China utilizes the CSP with a view to extend the geography of the BRI and its sphere of influence. By partnering with a rising global power, China, Riyadh aims

to guarantee a long-term market for its oil, diversify its economy, benefit from a Chinese high-tech expertise and materialize the Vision 2030. In their foreign policy goals, while the expansion of the BRI can reinforce Chinese identity as a global power, the Vision 2030 can be instrumental in reinforcing Saudi Arabia's increasing regional role that goes beyond the region.

The Saudi-Chinese CSP can have further strategic implications in the long run. From the perspective of Türkiye, the developments in its near geography are significant under the context of regional dynamics. As a pivot country it can evaluate increasing Sino-Saudi collaboration from the aspects of diverse strategic collaborations and accelerating competition in the region. For the states of the region, increased Chinese presence through the instruments of partnerships can offer alternative prospects to the region. The expanding areas of collaboration can contribute to the development of the economies and can facilitate the escape from chronic vulnerabilities and dependencies in the long run. By offering alternative visions, investment, and trade opportunities this process can result in strengthening their economies and proliferate foreign policy choices. However, still the security architecture of Saudi Arabia and the region depends on the US and China seems reluctant and incapable to play this role in the near future. Therefore, while becoming a strong partner in the region China still falls short of responding to the most vital dynamics of the region. Lastly, China increasingly plays an active role in the Central Asian landscape and the Sino-Saudi CSP can have some implications in the long-run. On the one hand, increasing Saudi stake through joint projects can be instrumental in undermining the influence of the West and Türkiye in the region. On the other hand, whether Chinese investments in the Kingdom can play an instrumental role in influencing Saudi engagement in the region can be discussed as another issue. Since the conventional forms of alignments are transforming to respond to the volatile structure of the international system, then diverse strategic instruments under new partnership structures in expanding geographies can play a more influential role in the future of relations.

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Chapter 14

Türkiye Shanghai Cooperation Organization Relations

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Abstract

This study examines Türkiye's relations with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), its founding purpose, development, and strategic importance for Türkiye. Founded in 2001, the primary purpose of the SCO is to ensure security, economic cooperation, and regional stability among member states. Shaped in line with the goals of combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism, the SCO also provides a platform to promote economic development. In 2012, Türkiye joined the SCO as a dialogue partner and accelerated its efforts to improve cooperation with the organization. Türkiye's relations with the SCO offer significant opportunities for cooperation, particularly in energy security, trade, and regional security. While Türkiye's NATO and European Union (EU) membership processes with the West continue, it is also seen as pursuing a balancing policy in its relations with the SCO. The study analyzes the challenges Türkiye faces in its relations with the SCO, mainly how Türkiye can position itself as an independent actor in the face of Russia and China's leadership in the organization. Türkiye's efforts to join the SCO and its strategic goals in this process may open the door to deeper cooperation in the future. Türkiye's relations with the SCO have not only been limited to security and trade but have also created the potential for cooperation in large-scale projects such as China's Belt and Road Initiative. Under this initiative, Türkiye aims to become a key actor in economic development projects by acting as a strategic bridge between East and West. In conclusion, the SCO offers significant potential for Türkiye as a multifaceted foreign policy tool, and these relations are predicted to strengthen further.

Keywords Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) · Turkish Foreign Policy · Security Cooperation · Economic Cooperation · Energy Security

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Introduction

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) represents a model of regional cooperation with the capacity to influence global power dynamics, which has received significant attention in the field of international politics in the 21st century. Initially established in 1996 by the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Russian Federation (RF), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, the SCO became an official international organization in 2001 with the inclusion of Uzbekistan. The organization is designed to promote strategic partnerships among its member states in various fields, particularly in the areas of security, economic, and energy cooperation. The rise of the SCO as a counterweight to the dominance of the United States (US) and the West, especially in the post-Cold War international order, has increased its importance in global affairs. Türkiye's relationship with the SCO reflects a multifaceted process that has evolved over many years. Despite its long-standing historical and strategic relations with Western countries, Türkiye has recently sought to strengthen its ties with the organization. In particular, the difficulties encountered during membership negotiations with the European Union (EU) have led Türkiye to seek alternative avenues for regional cooperation. In this context, the SCO offers an opportunity for Türkiye to rebalance its relations with the West and move towards multilateral diplomacy.

This study analyzes the opportunities the SCO provides within Türkiye's current foreign policy preferences and strategic objectives by comprehensively addressing whether the SCO can be an alternative for Türkiye. In addition, Türkiye's relations with the EU and how the SCO can be a counterweight in these relations will be evaluated, and the reasons behind Türkiye's interest in multilateral cooperation will be examined in detail.

This study will discuss the historical development of the SCO and its place among regional organizations in line with the sources in the literature. Türkiye's relations with the SCO and the diplomatic and economic ties it has established with this organization will also be detailed. Another critical point of the research is to analyze the effects of the SCO's security policies, especially on counterterrorism and regional stability. In this context, the aim is to examine Türkiye's relations with the SCO and Western institutions such as NATO and the EU and to discuss how Türkiye conducts a balanced policy between these organizations. Türkiye's efforts to maintain its relations with the West and develop cooperation with the East will be analyzed in the context of the SCO.

The study consists of three main parts. The first part will discuss the history of the SCO, its institutional structure, and its relations with the member states. In the second part, Türkiye's relations with the SCO will be detailed in the economic and political context. In the last part, Türkiye's relations with the EU and the SCO will be compared, and the advantages and disadvantages of these two international organizations for Türkiye will be discussed.

Historical Development of The Shanghai Cooperatıon Organization

The Establishment Process of the SCO

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was established as a regional security and cooperation platform arising from the necessity to restore the balance among the great powers in the post-Cold War period. The roots of the SCO can be traced back to the "Shanghai Five" launched in 1996 (Örmeci and Kısacık, 2021: 5). This framework, which includes China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, was born primarily as a platform to enhance border security and increase mutual trust (Aydın, 2024: 51). The main objective of the Shanghai Five was to address border disputes between member states, facilitate the reduction of military forces in border areas and advance security cooperation (Lynch & Helms, 2024: 27). The Shanghai Agreement signed in 1996 between China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan

and Tajikistan marked the first steps towards regional security cooperation. It aimed to restrict military operations in border areas and promote coordinated responses to security threats. It also reflected Russia and China's efforts to stabilize Central Asia and reduce Western influence in the region (Bilek, 2022: 27). In response to the power vacuum created by the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), a security-oriented cooperation was established between these two countries (Şensoy, 2018: 42). The official institutionalization of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization took place with the accession of Uzbekistan in 2001. At this point, the Shanghai Five became a broad organization that included security, economic, and cultural cooperation. The establishment process of the organization resulted in the signing of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Agreement on 15 June 2001 (Akın, 2024: 26). This newly created structure set its goals as ensuring regional security, combating terrorism, promoting economic cooperation, and contributing to regional development (Shanghai Cooperation Organization, 2001).

Institutional Structure and Functioning of the SCO

The institutional framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is based on various mechanisms designed to promote cooperation among member states and achieve common goals. At the forefront of these mechanisms is the Council of Heads of State, which serves as the organization's highest-level decision-making body. This council meets annually to determine the strategic goals and policies of the organization (Bilek, 2022: 32). Moreover, the Council of Heads of State is responsible for making important decisions regarding the expansion of the SCO and the inclusion of new member states (Alakbar-Zada, 2023: 1847). Another vital component of the institutional structure is the Council of Heads of Government. This council provides a forum for the prime ministers of member states to consider cooperative initiatives in economic cooperation, trade, and other sectors. The Council of Heads of Government plays a vital role in making decisions on developing trade relations, financing infrastructure projects, and strengthening energy cooperation among SCO member states (Şensoy, 2018: 47; Alakbar-Zada, 2023: 1847).

The Council of Foreign Ministers is essential to the SCO's institutional framework. This council determines the organization's position on international affairs and enhances diplomatic cooperation among member states. Moreover, it coordinates the organization's interactions with other regional and international bodies (Bilek, 2022: 34).

The Regional Anti-Terrorism Agency (RATS) is the foremost institution for security cooperation within the SCO. Established in 2004, this agency facilitates the sharing of intelligence and operational cooperation among member states to address issues related to terrorism, separatism, and extremism (Abdullah, 2019: 76). The operations conducted by this agency enhance the ability for collective action against security challenges in the region and strengthen the SCO's overall effectiveness on security issues.

Expansion of the SCO and Relations between Member States

Since its establishment, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has aimed to develop and expand its relations with various regional nations. The inclusion of India and Pakistan as full members in 2017 led to the expansion of the organization's geographical reach in the Asian continent and thus increased its global influence (Akin, 2024: 33). This integration of India and Pakistan has shifted the SCO from a framework primarily focused on Central Asia and the Sino-Russian partnership to one that includes South Asia (Bilek, 2022: 36).

The SCO's enlargement strategy represents a significant progress towards the organization's goal of increasing its influence on the global stage. In this context, Iran was accepted as a new member

of the SCO at the meeting held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on September 17, 2021, bringing the total membership to nine. In addition, Egypt, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia were granted dialogue partner status (Akın, 2024: 26). During the 23rd Summit of the SCO Council of Heads of State, Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia participated as observers, while Turkmenistan present as a guest country. As a result, the organization's total number of member states increased to nine, including China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan (Sputnik Global, 2024).

Map 1

Map of member, observer, and dialog partner countries in the SCO (Sputnik Global, 2024)



Common interests heavily influence interactions between member states as prominent members of the SCO, China, and Russia are considered the organization's primary catalyst countries. China has been strengthening its presence in the SCO, primarily through its investments in energy security and infrastructure initiatives in Central Asia (Bilek, 2022: 39). Russia, on the other hand, is trying to increase its military and political influence in the region by emphasizing the security aspect of the SCO (Akın, 2024: 35).

The Evolution of the SCO as an Alternative Power Center Against the US and the West

The SCO's establishment and development were shaped mainly to create a counterweight to the West. In particular, the US military interventions in Central Asia and the Middle East and Western attempts to expand its influence in these areas have increased the importance of the SCO, which was established under the auspices of China and Russia. In this framework, the SCO aims to counterweight the US military presence in the region.

The US intervention in Afghanistan in 2001 and the establishment of military bases in Central Asia mark essential turning points in the SCO's security strategy. During this period, SCO member states united, intending to reduce the US military presence in the region and create a collective defense mechanism against foreign interventions (Bilek, 2022: 41). One of the critical steps taken by the SCO to achieve this goal was the closure of the US military base in Uzbekistan in 2005 (Altundağ, 2016: 108).

The SCO serves as an alternative cooperation platform against the US dominance in the global economic system. One of the most important economic initiatives undertaken within the SCO is the China-led Belt and Road Initiative (Şensoy, 2018: 53). This project aims to establish a comprehensive trade and infrastructure network spanning Asia, Europe, and the Middle East and to create a counterweight to Western economic supremacy. In this context, the SCO has emerged as a power center that challenges the West in both security and economic fields (Akın, 2024: 39).

The SCO countries account for more than 30 percent of the global economy as measured by purchasing power and play a significant role in global defense spending. At its founding in 2001, SCO countries represented less than 17 percent of the world economy. Since then, they have made significant progress in economic growth, largely thanks to China's leadership. They account for more than 15 percent of global trade and can potentially exceed $2 trillion in foreign direct investment stock, putting them in a position to exert significant influence on the world energy market under the guidance of Russia and Central Asian countries (İstikbal, 2019).

Relations Between Türkiye and The Shanghai Cooperatıon Organızation

Historical Development of Relations between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Türkiye

Ethnic components are essential in establishing and maintaining Türkiye's relations with the Central Asian Republics. During the USSR period, Türkiye could not develop adequate relations with the Central Asian Republics due to this country's closed governance model. In the power vacuum that emerged after the dissolution of the USSR, Türkiye had the opportunity to establish easier ties with these countries; however, relations could not reach the desired level. This state of affairs is because Russia, with its Commonwealth of Independent States-like structures in the region, created an environment where the outside world could not easily integrate into the region, although not as much as the USSR. Over time, both Russia and China have made significant progress in the political and economic spheres, while the Turkic Republics have gained more awareness of state-building processes and foreign policy. Moreover, the SCO has evolved significantly since its inception, emerging as an influential entity within the international system. For Türkiye, the SCO is an avenue for interaction with the Turkic Republics and an essential platform for cooperation with a prominent organization in the international systemic structure.

The SCO operates through a framework that includes Member States, Observer States, and Dialogue Partners. In 2011, Türkiye applied to join the organization as a "Dialogue Partner". This application was approved during the Leaders' Summit held on June 6-7, 2012. As noted by the SCO, countries recognized as dialogue partners do not have the authority to ratify any decision. Dialogue Partner status represents the first stage of cooperation with the organization. Dialogue partners can attend specific meetings, share their perspectives, and essentially function as a consultative arrangement (Özalp, 2019: 3451).

Türkiye's interest in the SCO has increased in the context of its problems in its relations with the West, especially the bottlenecks in the EU membership process. While the SCO offers Türkiye the opportunity to establish closer economic and political cooperation with the East, it also serves as a balancing platform against the West (Bilek, 2022: 45).

Türkiye is increasingly developing its relations with the SCO, especially regarding energy cooperation and trade. Türkiye's interactions with Russia and China allow it to assume a more influential position within the SCO. However, Türkiye's NATO affiliation and solid strategic links with Western countries require a carefully balanced approach in its interactions with the SCO.

Türkiye's Approach to the SCO and its Strategic Position

In 2012, Türkiye became a "Dialogue Partner" of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, marking the beginning of a transformative phase in its foreign policy outlook. Especially in the 2000s, the slowdown of the European Union (EU) membership process and the uncertainties in relations with

Western countries led Türkiye to seek alternative strategic alliances (Şensoy, 2018: 55). Türkiye's efforts to increase its interaction with the SCO were influenced by both expectations of economic cooperation and the idea of establishing new partnerships that address regional security concerns (Akın, 2024: 42).

In addition to Türkiye's difficulties in its relations with Western countries, the country's geopolitical position plays a vital role in Türkiye's interaction with the SCO. Positioned as a critical nexus within Eurasia, Türkiye has a strategic location where it can develop strong links with both Western and Eastern countries (Bilek, 2022: 50). This geopolitical position allows Türkiye to develop deeper and deeper relations with SCO member states, especially in trade, energy, and security issues.

Throughout its accession process to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Türkiye has demonstrated a careful balancing approach. While maintaining its relations with Western institutions such as NATO and the European Union, it also demonstrates a critical foreign policy strategy by strengthening its ties with an Eastern-based organization such as the SCO. This approach can be interpreted as an attempt to strike a balance that enables Türkiye to cooperate with Western and Eastern powers within a multipolar global framework (İstikbal, 2020: 302). Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that Türkiye remains committed to its desire to achieve full membership in the SCO, which is expanding under the auspices of Russia and China, and emphasized that NATO and the SCO should not be seen as mutually exclusive options and that Türkiye would not abandon one in favor of the other (BBC, 2024). Türkiye's SCO membership would provide Türkiye with unprecedented strategic and geopolitical leverage if it is seen as a complementary relationship rather than a substitute for its commitments to the EU and NATO. In addition to its historically essential and deep-rooted relations with the EU and NATO, Türkiye also shares historical and cultural ties with the Turkic states. It is also developing economic ties with China and positively advancing trade, economic, and diplomatic ties with Russia. This membership could represent a significant advance for Türkiye's foreign policy. Being part of both NATO and the SCO would enable Türkiye to serve as an effective geopolitical bridge (Eren, 2022: 14).

Türkiye's Economic Relations with the SCO

Economic relations between Türkiye and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are essential to Türkiye's strategic partnership with the organization. The SCO has placed a significant emphasis on initiatives that promote economic cooperation among its member states, facilitating various partnerships, particularly in the areas of energy trade, infrastructure investments, and trade development (Şensoy, 2018: 57). Türkiye aims to improve its relations with SCO member states by focusing on energy security. To this end, cooperation has been established with countries such as Russia, Kazakhstan, and China on energy trade and infrastructure projects (Bilek, 2022: 52). Between 2019 and 2023, Türkiye's exports to SCO countries increased by 85%. Moreover, it is projected that by 2023, the share of exports to these countries will account for about 10 percent of Türkiye's total exports (Davut, 2024).

Given Türkiye's significant dependence on foreign countries for energy imports, increasing energy cooperation with SCO member states is seen as a vital strategy for ensuring energy security (Akın, 2024: 45). Importing natural gas from Russia is essential for Türkiye's energy supply security and working together within the SCO framework will further solidify this partnership (Şensoy, 2018: 60). Similarly, developing relations with China in the areas of trade and infrastructure projects offers significant opportunities to help Türkiye achieve its economic development goals.

Türkiye's trade relations with the SCO are not limited to energy. According to data from the last five years, Türkiye's trade volume with SCO member countries has been increasing rapidly, and economic relations with these countries have an important place in Türkiye's foreign trade balance (Bilek, 2022: 54). Trade relations with China offer great economic potential for Türkiye. China has become one of

Türkiye's largest trading partners, and the trade volume between the two countries has increased significantly in recent years.

Economic interactions between Türkiye and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are critical in promoting infrastructure projects and regional development efforts. In this context, cooperation with Türkiye under China's Belt and Road Initiative is of significant importance. This initiative represents a vast infrastructure development linking Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, with Türkiye acting as an essential transit hub (Yıldırımçakar, 2019: 150). In addition to improving Türkiye's transportation and logistics infrastructure, the Belt and Road Initiative also enables the diversification of trade routes.

Türkiye's Security Cooperation with the SCO

One of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's (SCO) primary objectives is to promote regional security, which Türkiye seeks to advance through cooperation with the SCO to address security threats in the region. The SCO's security cooperation focuses mainly on combating terrorism, extremism, and separatism. Türkiye aims to increase its effectiveness in addressing these challenges by participating in the security cooperation frameworks established by the SCO (Tümer, 2021: 321).

The Regional Anti-Terrorism Agency (RATS) serves as a key institution for counterterrorism efforts within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Within the framework of RATS, Türkiye aims to build strong partnerships with SCO member states in areas such as intelligence sharing and operational cooperation (Shanghai Cooperation Organization, 2017). The importance of this cooperation has increased, mainly due to the civil war in Syria and the security challenges along Türkiye's borders. Cooperation initiatives with SCO member states are essential in Türkiye's overall counterterrorism strategy. Moreover, SCO security cooperation includes joint military exercises to mitigate cross-border threats. As an observer, Türkiye participates in these exercises together with SCO member states and closely follows regional security strategies (Bilek, 2022: 58). Such exercises enable member states to improve their military capabilities and respond to cross-border challenges in a more coordinated manner.

Türkiye's NATO and EU Membership and SCO Relations

An important factor influencing Türkiye's interactions with the SCO is its continued membership in NATO and the EU. Türkiye has adopted a dual strategy of maintaining its commitment to the Western alliance while at the same time strengthening its ties with Eastern countries. In this context, Türkiye's commitment to NATO necessitates a careful balancing approach in its relations with the SCO (Akın, 2024: 52). Framed around military defense and security cooperation, NATO membership not only strengthens Türkiye's relations with the West but also imposes constraints on security cooperation with the SCO (Bilek, 2022: 60).

Türkiye's 2015 airplane crisis with Russia highlighted the challenges Türkiye faced in its efforts to strengthen its ties with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) while maintaining its relations with the West as a NATO member. The incident highlighted the fundamental need for a balancing approach in Türkiye's foreign policy strategies. Following this event, Türkiye sought to normalize its relations with Russia while adhering to its commitment to the Western alliance (Yeltin and Işık, 2017: 46-47, Taşlıcalı Koç, 2024: 65-77).

A similar scenario can be seen in Türkiye's relations with the European Union. The prolonged deadlock in EU accession negotiations has led Türkiye to explore alternative cooperation platforms like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The uncertainties surrounding the EU accession process have necessitated the expansion of diversity in Türkiye's foreign policy strategies (Eminoğlu and Demir, 2018: 136). This framework considers The SCO an essential alternative cooperation platform for Türkiye. In

response to these challenges, Türkiye has adopted a strategy to strengthen its ties with multilateral platforms such as the SCO while simultaneously avoiding altogether severing its ties with Western countries. In conclusion, Türkiye's balance policy demonstrates its determination to develop a multilateral and multipolar approach to foreign relations.

The Future Of Türkiye's Relations With The SCO'a

Türkiye's relations with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have continued to develop in recent years and have become essential to Türkiye's foreign policy strategy. Türkiye pursues a multilateral foreign policy within the framework of its NATO membership and relations with the EU and has strengthened its relations with the SCO. This section will assess the future of Türkiye's relations with the SCO regarding potential opportunities, challenges, and strategies.

Membership Process

Türkiye first applied to the SCO 17 years ago, but the People's Republic of China vetoed this request. Later, the issue of SCO membership was raised during the visit of then Türkiye Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Russia in 2007. The "Dialogue Partner" status, which Türkiye applied for in March 2011, is a status in which Türkiye cannot participate in the decision-making process within the SCO. Technically, Türkiye will not be able to intervene in the SCO's decision-making processes unless it leaves this status and becomes an observer or full member (Abdullah, 2019: 119-120).

During the expansion process of the SCO, while Pakistan and India were accepted as full members, Türkiye was vetoed because of Türkiye's NATO membership. The countries that make up the SCO, when considered an organization that opposes NATO regarding security, want to keep Türkiye away from NATO membership. Therefore, it is considered that Türkiye's ability to obtain full membership status in the SCO depends on Türkiye's withdrawal from NATO membership, the suspension of its EU membership, and especially the future development of Türkiye-China relations (Khaleqı and Oghli, 2021: 113)

Due to Türkiye's close relations with the West and its NATO membership, the SCO member states did not welcome Türkiye's request to join the SCO. Türkiye's NATO membership is seen as an obstacle to joining the SCO. In this case, for Türkiye to become a full member of the SCO, it should leave NATO and stop its EU membership. It is predicted that Russia and China, decision-makers in the SCO, may support Türkiye's full membership only if these conditions are met (Akın, 2024: 62).

Potential for Economic Cooperation

Türkiye's economic relations with the SCO have the potential to deepen further in the future. The SCO has attracted significant interest as a platform that promotes cooperation among member states in the fields of energy, trade, and infrastructure projects (Bilek, 2022: 90). Türkiye has the opportunity to develop strong cooperation with SCO member states on energy security and economic development.

Although Türkiye's relationship with the SCO is relatively new, its direct ties with member states go back centuries. Its historical ties with the Turkic Republics are significant in some arguments regarding the economic, political, and cultural advantages of rapprochement with the SCO. Improving Türkiye's relations with the SCO, which includes economically growing countries such as China and India, will help Türkiye gain access to new markets (Sagbansua and Can, 2011: 82; Işık, 2016: 153).

According to World Bank data for 2023, the combined GDP of SCO member states accounts for 32.4 percent of global GDP. Of this, 26.6 percent belongs to China and India. According to 2024 data, the member states account for more than 40 percent of the world's population, a quarter of the world's territory, and a quarter of global GDP (Haberrus, 2024).

Cooperation and joint projects among member states further strengthen the SCO's strong position in the global economy. In particular, large-scale projects in energy, transportation, trade, and other fields have increased the SCO's role in the global economic balance.

In the field of energy, Türkiye's relations with Russia, Azerbaijan, and other countries are of great importance in terms of energy supply security. Türkiye has a strategic location on energy transmission routes, making it an essential actor in the field of energy security (Şensoy, 2018: 82). Moreover, cooperation with Central Asian countries offers opportunities to increase Türkiye's access to energy resources and expand trade volumes (Akın, 2024: 80).

Türkiye's relations with SCO member states are gradually strengthening in the field of trade. The increasing trade volume between Türkiye and China has created significant economic opportunities for Türkiye (Bilek, 2022: 92). Türkiye's participation in the projects carried out within the framework of China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative will be an essential step in strengthening economic cooperation.

Türkiye has strong production capabilities in the agriculture and food sectors. It wants to expand agricultural trade with SCO member countries and realize mutual investment projects. Russia and Central Asian countries, in particular, have great potential to import agricultural products from Türkiye. At the same time, Türkiye can improve its capabilities in this field by cooperating with SCO countries to share agricultural technology and expertise.

Türkiye's recent progress in the defense industry offers potential for cooperation with SCO member states. Türkiye has significantly succeeded, especially in producing drones and unmanned fighter jets. These technologies can be seen as an opportunity to develop defense cooperation with SCO member states. Moreover, Türkiye's defense industry cooperation with Pakistan shows that similar projects can be carried out with other SCO member states.

Developing economic cooperation with the SCO provides Türkiye with essential opportunities but also some challenges.

Opportunities

Big Market: SCO member states provide Türkiye with a considerable market. Access to large economies such as China, India, and Russia could allow Türkiye to increase its exports.

Investment Opportunities: Türkiye has the potential to attract significant investment from SCO member countries. Investments in SCO countries, especially in infrastructure, energy, and technology, can contribute to Türkiye's economic development.

Trade Diversification: Cooperation with the SCO can serve Türkiye's strategy of diversifying its export markets. This way, Türkiye can reduce its dependence on Western markets and gain a stronger position in Asian markets.

Challenges

Relations with the West: Türkiye's evolving economic relationship with the SCO requires a careful and balanced policy on how it will affect its trade and investment relations with the West. Türkiye's trade volume with the EU and the US is more significant than with SCO member states. It is crucial for Türkiye to ensure that these relations are not jeopardized.

Political and Geopolitical Factors: Türkiye may sometimes face political and geopolitical challenges in developing economic cooperation with the SCO. In particular, Russia's and China's dominance among SCO members may create a situation incompatible with Türkiye's interests.

Security Cooperation and Partnerships

Another critical aspect of Türkiye's relations with the SCO is security cooperation. The SCO provides an essential platform for member states to combat terrorism, extremism, and separatism. In this context, Türkiye has the opportunity to cooperate with the SCO to jointly respond to regional security threats (Akın, 2024: 84).

Türkiye has been fighting the PKK terrorist organization since the 1980s. In addition, the presence of the YPG and the rise of DAESH after the Syrian civil war have created significant security threats for Türkiye in the region. At the same time, after the July 15, 2016 coup attempt, the fight against the FETÖ organization has become one of the priorities in Türkiye's security policy. In this context, Türkiye's increased security cooperation with SCO member states, especially Russia and China, may provide new possibilities and opportunities in the fight against terrorism.

Türkiye-Russia security cooperation has become increasingly prominent in recent years, especially in the Syrian crisis. Although the two countries have sometimes clashed over their interests, they have managed to cooperate against terrorist threats, especially in northern Syria. Strengthening security cooperation within the SCO could help deepen these partnerships.

As one of the two most powerful countries in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China has the potential to improve its security relations with Türkiye. China has taken strict measures against separatist forces and terrorist organizations within its borders and has effectively used the SCO's counterterrorism mechanism. As Türkiye faces similar security threats, it may prefer to strengthen cooperation with the SCO in this area.

Türkiye seeks cooperation with SCO member states in the fight against the Syrian civil war and terrorist organizations such as the PKK. Institutions such as the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) can provide essential support mechanisms to ensure Türkiye's national security (Şensoy, 2018: 85).

Türkiye aims to play a more active role in security by sharing intelligence through RATS (Bilek, 2022: 94).

In the future, Türkiye and the SCO can cooperate on security in the following main areas:

Counterterrorism and Border Security: SCO member states are strengthening their cooperation on counterterrorism and border security. Türkiye's cooperation with the SCO in this field can enable it to combat terrorist threats more effectively, especially on the Syria-Iraq border. In this context, organizing joint operations and exercises can increase Türkiye's effectiveness in the fight against terrorism.

Cyber Security: The SCO also cooperates in cyber security. Cyber attacks have become a threat exploited by states and terrorist groups. Türkiye can increase its capabilities by sharing its cyber security knowledge and technology with the SCO.

Combating Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime: SCO member states also cooperate in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime. Türkiye can fight organized crime more effectively by initiating joint projects with the SCO in this field.

Challenges Faced

Türkiye may also face some challenges in developing relations with the SCO. First, Türkiye's strong relations with NATO and the EU may impose some constraints on more profound engagement with the SCO (Akın, 2024: 90). Although the SCO is not seen as a direct competitor of NATO, Türkiye's participation in a platform dominated by non-NATO powers such as Russia and China could lead to cooperation with NATO's strategic rivals. This delicate situation would force Türkiye to implement a multifaceted

foreign policy that balances security cooperation with NATO and the SCO. This situation also points to the difficulties Türkiye may face in its EU accession process (Akın, 2024: 67).

Moreover, the balance of power within the SCO may also put Türkiye in a difficult position. In particular, Türkiye may have difficulty positioning itself as an independent player in an organization dominated by China and Russia. To overcome this situation, Türkiye needs to develop strategies to increase its role and influence within the SCO (Bilek, 2022: 101).

Future Vision

The SCO has two main geopolitical axes: Russia and China. Central Asian countries and India seem closer to the Russian axis, while Pakistan and Iran are closer to the Chinese axis. It is predicted that Russia may invite Türkiye to become a full member to maintain the power balance within the organization. The SCO is an important international organization that aims to promote stability and security in Eurasia. Relations between Russia and Türkiye are strengthening in the SCO context, and Turkish energy, transportation, and trade projects support this cooperation. Türkiye's position and future in the SCO will become an essential factor affecting Eurasia's political and economic balance. The SCO's position in the global economy and Türkiye's relationship with the organization will play an essential role in future international dynamics. (Haberrus, 2024).

Relations between Türkiye and the SCO have the potential to deepen further in the economic and security fields in the future. Türkiye aims to become a more effective player in regional cooperation through the SCO and develops various strategies for this purpose (Şensoy, 2018: 92). Strengthening Türkiye's ties with the SCO will help ensure regional stability and will increase the country's influence on the international stage.

In conclusion, Türkiye's strategic priorities include relations with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which China and Russia lead, cooperates in a wide range of areas ranging from counterterrorism to joint investment in Central Asian energy, and has rapidly completed its institutionalization. Türkiye could be an observer or a full member of such an organization, which has the potential to become a global powerhouse due to its geopolitical position as a bridge between East and West and its orientation towards the West. If this happens, it will help Türkiye to implement effective and balanced policies in its relations with the United States and the European Union. In addition, the geo-cultural structure of the Caucasus, which is within the SCO region, will enable Türkiye to play a role in this geography in a very short time (Çoğal, 2024).

Therefore, the relationship between Türkiye and the SCO will enter a multifaceted development process in the future. Türkiye can gain a stronger position in the SCO by building economic opportunities, security cooperation, and strategic ties. This process is expected to strengthen Türkiye's balancing role in the international arena and contribute to regional cooperation.

Conclusion

This study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of Türkiye's relations with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, its historical development, economic and security dimensions, and comparisons with other regional organizations. Türkiye aims to cooperate with the West and the East to create a strategic balance in a multipolar world order where international relations are becoming increasingly complex. In this context, the SCO is becoming an essential alternative cooperation platform in line with Türkiye's foreign policy objectives.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a security and economic cooperation organization established in 2001. It was established to combat terrorism, separatism, and extremism in

Central Asia and to promote economic cooperation. Member states take a stricter stance against regional threats by sharing intelligence on security issues and organizing joint operations. At the same time, the expansion of the SCO and the accession of large countries such as India and Pakistan have increased the organization's influence and strengthened its role at the global level. In 2012, Türkiye joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a dialogue partner, marking a new direction for Türkiye's foreign policy. Türkiye's engagement with the SCO offers significant opportunities for energy security, economic development, and regional security. In particular, Türkiye's geopolitical position makes it an essential player in relations with the West and the East.

In the energy sector, Türkiye's relations with Russia and Azerbaijan are crucial for energy security. Türkiye has the capacity to strengthen energy cooperation with these countries through the SCO and take important steps to ensure energy supply security. At the same time, the deepening of trade relations with China contributes positively to Türkiye's foreign trade balance.

Another critical aspect of Türkiye's relations with the SCO is security cooperation. Türkiye has the opportunity to cooperate with the SCO to tackle regional security threats jointly. However, Türkiye's strong ties with NATO and the EU may impose some constraints on more profound engagement with the SCO. This balance requires a complex structure in Türkiye's foreign policy strategy. Moreover, the balance of power within the SCO may also put Türkiye in a difficult position. In particular, Türkiye may have difficulty positioning itself as an independent player in an organization dominated by China and Russia. Therefore, Türkiye needs to follow a careful and balanced policy to protect its national interests and become an influential player in regional security.

The relationship between Türkiye and the SCO is expected to deepen in the future. Partnerships in economic cooperation, energy security, and regional security are the main components of Türkiye's foreign policy strategy. Türkiye aims to strengthen cooperation with the East while maintaining relations with the West. In this process, increasing the effectiveness of Türkiye's relations with the SCO will not only help maintain regional stability, but will also help increase Türkiye's influence in the international arena. Türkiye will become an essential economic player in the future thanks to its developing relations with SCO member states in energy security and trade. In this context, Türkiye's relations with the SCO will remain essential to its future foreign policy strategy.



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Chapter 15

Eurasian Security from the Great Game to the Dark Game: Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations

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Abstract

It has been assessed that the destabilization of Afghanistan and Pakistan, which have geopolitically important locations in the region for Eurasian security, has long been beneficial to major powers outside the area. The Britain-Russia conflict that began with the Great Game evolved into the Dark Game with the USA, USSR, and China during and after the Cold War. Instead of these two countries building their future, it has become a policy for them to be constantly destabilized by any major power. For this reason, it is considered important for both countries to move away from chaos, transform the structures that produce instability, and mutually ensure their security. It has been determined that it is possible for both Pakistan and Afghanistan to realize that acting together for Eurasian security is not a choice but a necessity and to engage in politics.

Keywords Afghanistan · Pakistan · Great Game · Eurasian Security · Power Vacuum

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Introduction

The Eurasian region has both rich natural resources and a geopolitically important position. Due to these characteristics, it constitutes an important competitive region for great powers such as Russia, the USA, and especially China, which are powerful but need excessive resources. On the other hand, the Cold War seriously affected the peripheral regions known as the Third World.

This study mainly addresses the importance of improving Pakistan-Afghanistan relations in terms of Eurasian security. In this context, it focuses on the extent to which the policies of great powers and regional powers towards Afghanistan affect the stability of the region. The contribution of the study to the literature is that it provides a new perspective on how good relations with Pakistan can contribute greatly to regional security and peace if disproportionate external interventions are not made in Afghanistan.

The first part of the study is A Historical Perspective on Pakistan-Afghanistan Relations and focuses on the historical perspective and effects of destabilization in Afghanistan. The second part addresses Afghanistan-Pakistan relations in the Eurasian security architecture and evaluates the contributions of developing good relations to regional peace.

A Historical Perspective on Pakistan – Afghanistan Relations

Although there are many similarities in cultural, social, and religious terms, it is not possible to say that Pakistan and Afghanistan have developed permanent and good relations. (Altaf et al., 2022: 53) Pakistan, whose first years of independence were difficult, was the center of attention of its great rival India, Western and Eastern blocs during the Cold War. However, despite this interest, Pakistan felt isolated in the international environment. In addition to border disputes with Afghanistan, it perceived threats from China and the Soviet Union. Pakistan, which had been expecting support from Islamic states for a while, began to develop good relations with the West, especially the USA, in 1952 in order to escape its isolation in the international relations. Following the American military aid that began in 1954, memberships of SEATO and the Baghdad Pact came. However, membership in the Baghdad Pact led Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia to accuse Pakistan of being involved in an anti-Arab movement. (Gupta, 1995: 210-216) It is possible to say that Pakistan's search for a position for itself in the following periods has continued to this day.

In Pakistan, where the population growth rate is high, many people cannot meet their basic needs, which threaten the social security of the country. (İnaç and Amini, 2024: 145) In Afghanistan, it can be said that the nation-building process has not been successful due to the diversity, heterogeneity, and unifying actions of ethnic groups like Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek, Turkmen, Baluch and other groups. (İnaç & Ahmed, 2022: 54) In addition, it has been determined that disproportionate interventions of foreign powers disrupt institutional balances in the state, as well as causing all kinds of infrastructure to be destroyed and efforts to be wasted.

After the Soviet invasion, the US intervention caused the problems in Afghanistan to grow rather than be solved. In 2015, the Kabul administration and the Taliban in Pakistan came face to face for the first time for official peace talks. (Boone, 2015) The US and the Kabul administration were at a stalemate; however, since the Taliban continued to advance in the country, it could be said that the Taliban had psychological superiority. In addition, the Taliban did not willingly participate in the peace talks but was persuaded by Pakistan. (Latif, 2020) The US withdrawal from the region has caused a power vacuum in Afghanistan. It was thought that regional powers and great powers primarily Russia and China, would fill this power vacuum. However, today it can be said that Afghanistan has various security problems and states are waiting for an actor who is ready to gain external legitimacy by establishing internal

legitimacy. Since this has not yet happened, it cannot be said that actors who do not want to take a big risk have taken any concrete steps to fill the vacuum. (Erol and Kaya, 2021: 439) This region, where conflicts of interest are intense, has been the place where many civilizations have collapsed throughout history.

The feudal and tribal structure of the region, unstable economies, and heterogeneous cultures has hindered the improvement of relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the strengthening of political institutions, and the development of the countries. At this point, the fragmented structure of the Afghan society, consisting of different ethnic groups, and the nature of the polarization brought about by this structure have also led to groups that have received support from different third parties entering into a multi-dimensional internal struggle. (Nagra et.al., 2019: 57-66)

Britain, one of the world's largest imperialist powers, controlled the entire Indian peninsula in the 19th century. During this period, another colonial power, Tsarist Russia, destroyed the Central Asian khanates and became a neighbor of today's Afghanistan. Thus, Afghanistan became a battleground between the two empires. However, none of the great powers could dominate this region. Therefore, Afghanistan was accepted as a buffer zone between the two sides.

The Influence of Great Powers – Dark Game

The fact that Afghanistan is a transit area and has rich mineral resources has attracted the attention of industrialized countries, and a system has been designed to create chaos when necessary to maintain their control over the region. (Thaher, 2019: 1855) Located between east-west Asia and the Persian Gulf - Indian Ocean, Afghanistan (Karacasulu, 2011: 35) was the region where Britain and Russia tried to establish superiority over each other in the 19th and 20th centuries. The main geopolitical motivations of the great powers are as follows: Britain's motivation to maintain its colonial influence, China's economic motivations such as regional investments, and the US's motivation is to increase its influence in the region.

Both Britain and Russia have found governments or opposition groups close to them in Afghanistan. This situation has led to an atmosphere of chaos and conflict in the country. This game played in Afghanistan, which was the scene of competition between Britain and Russia until World War I, was called the “Great Game.” Afghanistan, which gained its independence in 1919, was attacked and occupied by Russia in 1979 and by America in 2001. These developments have led to the deterioration of the political, economic and social structure in Afghanistan and the deprivation of basic human rights of the Afghan people. (Görgen, 2022: 387)

During the Cold War, Soviet Russia supported the Kabul government against the Taliban because it was concerned that the mujahideen movements in Afghanistan would spread to the Central Asian republics. Pakistan, Britain, Saudi Arabia, and the US also supported the Taliban against the Soviet-backed Kabul government. (Görgen, 2022: 415) After the Soviets withdrew, Afghanistan became even more unstable, and after a quarter of a century, the US intervened. The US wanted to have a great effect on the political and economic management of the country it occupied and tried to strengthen the Central Asian part of the "Greater Middle East Project". (Kalaycı, 2015: 105) With the coalition established under the leadership of the US, the number of countries trying to influence Afghanistan has increased considerably. With the inclusion of great powers and regional powers into the equation, it has been evaluated that the “Great Game” has now evolved into a “Dark Game”. These political moves, defined as the Dark Game, are attempts to feed off the region's instability. In this way, such a region is created where the interests of great powers clash in an endless cycle.

When examined historically, it can be seen that the British rule in India had the largest army in Europe with an army of 155,000 soldiers. (Johnson, 2014: 6) Until 1947, when Britain withdrew from India,

Afghanistan was a classic buffer state. This characteristic came to the fore again in the middle of the Cold War. In other words, this country was also considered a "holding out zone" where the great powers tried to keep each other away. (Mclachlan, 1998: 82) For Britain, Afghanistan was a region of strategic importance in protecting and defending India. (Tekin, 2021: 117) On the other hand, with the collapse of Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire, political uncertainty arose in Central Asia. During that time, Britain tried to take advantage of the power vacuum and gain an advantageous position in the region. (Ahmad, 1979: 176)

Apart from Russia and Britain, it can be said that the countries that have created external influence on Afghanistan are primarily the US, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. These countries have also provided support for the emergence and strengthening of the Taliban. When the Taliban took over Kabul in 1996, the countries that recognized the new regime were Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. (Karakaya &Nazari, 2022: 153)

Britain

After Alexander the Great and the Mongols, Great Britain also attempted to conquer Afghanistan three times but was unsuccessful in any of the wars known as the Anglo-Afghan Wars. (Saikal et.al., 2004: 18) One reason why the Britain tried to improve their relations with Afghanistan was their concern that they might lose their colonies in Asia if the Turks and Afghans in Central Asia allied with Russia. (Cöhce, 2000: 105) According to Britain, Soviet policy in Asia aimed to break the British influence in the region, as it was the main obstacle to the world revolution. This goal would be achieved by separating India from the empire. The most suitable place to undermine the foundations of British rule in India was Afghanistan. (Adam, 1967: 147-149)

Afghanistan, located on the northeastern border of the colonial empire that Britain focused on, was seen as a geography that needed to be conquered by the British. (Waylet and Jack, 2004: 169) When Britain departed from the Indian subcontinent in 1947, it left behind two countries (India and Pakistan) with border problems in many regions. For example, the former territories of Afghanistan, which had previously been annexed to India, were given to Pakistan. As a result, the fate of the Pashtun people has been separated and this problem couldn't be solved because of the Durand Line. (Tanin, 2005: 92) In addition, as part of the Great Game, the Afghans' weakening of the Durand Line issue turned out to be a powerful force in this lack of solution. (Nazari & Progonati, 2023: 144). Considering that Afghanistan's current border was prepared without the ratification of the Afghan people and state, it is thought that the Durand Line, which was determined as desired by the British, paved the way for an unending hostility between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Pashtun issue has become very important for Islamabad, which is looking for ways to counter the Afghan regime's attitude towards Pashtuns in Pakistan. (Rubin, 1992: 62) It can also be said that the reason for Pakistan's ongoing border disputes and problems with both Afghanistan and India is the policies pursued by imperialist states in the region. (Görgen, 2022: 420)

Russia

Russia was intensely active in the 19th century not only in Britain's aims in India but also in response to its interests in Asia in general. (Arghandawi, 1989: 274) However, Britain was trying to prevent an important country like Afghanistan from falling into Russia's sphere of influence. In return, Russia wanted to use this country as a base to continue its Bolshevik propaganda in India. (Sareen, 1981: 139) During the Soviet period, efforts to develop relations with India came to the forefront. Because it was thought that India would be an important ally in the USSR's policy of balancing the USA in particular. On the other hand, it was believed that having close relations with India would help the USSR in gaining

the sympathy of the Third World. (Pant, 2013: 2) In the beginning, the USSR opposed direct military intervention in Afghanistan. However, its concern about losing a country it had brought to its side and the US settling in the region was seen as a major security threat. In addition, the USSR continued its historical policy of reaching warm seas during this period and wanted to use its geographical proximity to the Persian Gulf to gain influence over the region and energy resources. (Karakaya & Nazari, 2022: 147)

In the first years of his rule, Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan acted together with the USSR against Pakistan and Iran, and in 1974, he adopted a hostile attitude towards the two neighboring countries by approving the USSR's "Collective Security Plan" for the Asian continent. (2022: 146) In the early stages of the Cold War, the side that the USSR supported on the India-Pakistan line was India. (Alım, 2022: 1713) During this period, Pakistan also tried to develop good relations with the United States because the Soviets had good relations with non-Pashtun groups in Afghanistan. (Khushi, 2018: 1-10) After the Cold War, Russia began to see Pakistan as an important actor, especially in fighting against terrorism, and this began to affect the dynamics of the region during the US invasion of Afghanistan.

During the eight-year invasion, the US and Pakistani intelligence agencies aimed to train and equip non-state actors for jihad against the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and the border regions of Pakistan, and it is considered that this contributed to the emergence of the mujahideen movement in Afghanistan. (Williams, 2008: 41) However, to understand Russia's position between India and Pakistan, regional and international dynamics need to be taken into account. Pakistan is important for Russia because it is on the security route extending from Central Asia to South East Asia. On the other hand, India is important for Russia's aim to dominate the multipolar world order. (Alım, 2022: 1722)

The United States

It would be right to say that the US's close interest in Afghanistan began during the Cold War. The US, which supported the mujahideen during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, tried to position the Taliban in a different place in the years after the Cold War ended. The US initially considered the Taliban as a force with which it could pursue its interests in the region, and therefore sympathized with it and did not attach any importance to its origins. (Çınarlı, 2016: 12) On the other hand, the military cooperation of the USA with Pakistan during the Soviet invasion period brought India closer to the Soviet Union. (Borer, 1992: 344-346)

An important factor that keeps the US in the region with its long-term interests is the project it is carrying out here. The main goal of this project is to unite the region centered on Afghanistan and including Pakistan and India in the south under the coordination of the US with the independent Central Asian Republics of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan, and to create a predictable structure in the region in terms of politics, economy, and security, to cooperate in every field and to ensure that Central Asia opens up to its southern neighbors. (Starr, 2005: 10)

There are various reasons why the Afghan people have started a full-scale resistance against the US and multinational forces after September 11. The most important of these reasons is the bombardments by the US and multinational forces in 2001 alone, which killed over a thousand civilians, as well as the human rights violations and massacres committed by their local allies during the invasion of Afghanistan. (Maley, 2020: 62) Pakistan was one of the most trusted actors in the operations carried out by the US in Afghanistan. However, its relations with Pakistan began to deteriorate and the Washington administration claimed that Pakistan was destabilizing Afghanistan. (Thomas, 2021: 23)

After the US invasion The Taliban took control of the capital city of Kabul on August 15, 2021. (Ismail, 2021: 50) However, when the US withdrew its troops from the region, it left behind a country whose political, military, and economic systems had collapsed. (Sanati, 2011: 94-99) In this period, despite the efforts of the Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara minorities that the US had supported for many years, the

US prioritized its national interests and withdrew from Afghanistan. (Şen, 2022: 93) There are many reasons for the failure of the US and multinational forces in Afghanistan. These include the weakness of the US-trained troops, the rivalry of interest groups, the freedom-loving structure of Afghan society, Afghanistan's geographical conditions, and the increasing poverty caused by the coalition forces' failure to implement radical economic reforms. (Kuchins et.al., 2009)

The return of the Taliban has had significant impacts on countries such as Pakistan, Iran, and Tajikistan, and has also strengthened the narrative that American hegemony is weakening. (Şen, 2022: 96) The US withdrawal from Afghanistan has removed one of the most important obstacles facing China regionally. (Erol and Kaya, 2021: 426) It is possible to say that there is increasing concern that Russia's influence in the region will increase along with China's. (Keçeci, 2022: 83) At this point, as the reasons why the US invaded Afghanistan are thought, it can be seen that there is a difference between the real reasons and the official justifications. Because the USSR's declaration of bankruptcy and withdrawal from the international arena left NATO without an "other", and NATO defined a new enemy for itself with the Harmel Doctrine declared in 1993. (Özkan, 2023: 187)

China

During the Cold War, China defined the United States as an imperialist power trying to dominate China and tried to adjust its relations accordingly. (Yufan & Zhihai, 1990: 94-100) China has kept its distance from the invasions of Afghanistan. However, it has made regular agreements with Pakistan in line with the US project to support the Afghan resistance, provided weapons and ammunition to the Afghan resistance, and continued to be the main supplier country until 1984. (Yousaf & Mark, 2001: 25-30) Later, it accepted that the US had the right to retaliate for the September 11 attacks, but did not support the long-term presence of this country in Afghanistan. (Ludwig, 2013: 400-402) China's increasing interest in Afghanistan after 2001 also stems from the aim of accessing raw material resources and new trade routes for the development of its western provinces. Therefore, Beijing wants security and stability in Afghanistan due to the volume of investment it has reached in Afghanistan. (Erman, 2019: 170)

China wants to secure its interests in the region by establishing an important corridor with Afghanistan similar to the trade route it developed with Pakistan. In this way, it wants to ensure the security of the Afghanistan part of the transitive east-west entrances and projects that China is trying to develop. Therefore, from China's perspective, Afghanistan's stable situation and the eventual success of the energy and transportation-based infrastructure projects it has developed in South and Central Asia can be attributed to Afghanistan's key role. In this respect, it is seen that China has made important statements regarding its desire to extend the economic corridor developed between China and Pakistan within the framework of the Belt and Road Project to Afghanistan. Today, the Wakhan corridor extending between Tajikistan and Pakistan also constitutes one of the geographical sources of the importance that the Beijing administration attributes to Afghanistan. (Erman, 2019: 160)

China was the first country to send 200 million Yuan worth of emergency humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. Therefore, Beijing has become an important ally for the Taliban in mining and economic development. China aims to increase its influence by establishing close relations with the Taliban to ensure its security and protect its gains in the region. (Şebin & Kılıçoğlu, 2023: 399)

Influence of Regional Powers: Interest-Based Politics

When the interventions of India and Pakistan in Afghanistan are considered based on interests, Pakistan wants to keep its border with Afghanistan secure due to the Kashmir issue it has with India, while India considers Pakistan's training of radical Afghans and their use in the region as a threat.

It can even be said that the regional rivalry between India and Pakistan is an important factor in the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan not being resolved. (Öztop et.al., 2021: 120) In addition, Pakistan perceives Afghanistan as a savior area that provides depth against the Indian threat. Pakistan has seen Afghanistan as a component of India's policy. Afghanistan, which is trying to get rid of instability, is an area of power struggle for both Pakistan and India. (Çamkerten, 2020: 21) This is unlikely to improve because the India-Pakistan conflict is one of the major geopolitical tensions that persists in the international political arena. (Paul, 2005: 4) Therefore, the struggle between India and Pakistan over Afghan territory is visible.

The Pakistan-Afghanistan border is the homeland of the Pashtuns and this border, drawn by Britain in 1896, was imposed on Afghanistan with the agreement made in 1919. (Wahab & Youngerman, 2007: 258) Moreover, during the Soviet Union invasion, 6.2 million Pashtuns who led the resistance against the invasion in Afghanistan were forced to migrate to Pakistan. (Clements & Adamec, 2003: 200) The bases of Pakistan's Afghanistan policy are to prevent the formation of an independent Greater Pashtunistan, which includes the Pashtun ethnic population in Pakistan and geographically includes the northwest of Pakistan, and to reduce India's influence and impact on Afghanistan. (Çamkerten, 2020: 1) In addition to ethnic issues, regional powers such as India and Iran have special interests in vital areas such as energy, which perpetuates the conflict of interests. (Kalaycı, 2015: 103)

India

Pakistan has long considered that India is using Afghanistan's territory against itself. (Altaf et.al., 2022: 53). It can be said that India's foreign policy is based on the principle of "anti-Pakistanism". On the one hand, it aims to develop strategic and commercial relations with Russia, Iran, and Central Asian countries, and on the other hand, it aims to prevent these countries from approaching to Pakistan. The reflection of this policy in Afghanistan has been to prevent the formation of a government close to Pakistan in this country and, if possible, to ensure the formation of a government hostile to Pakistan, or at least distant from it. (Çınarlı, 2016: 12)

Before the Soviet invasion, preventing the rapprochement of Afghanistan and Pakistan, the two Muslim countries in the region was one of India's primary goals. The possibility of Pakistan establishing good relations with the Central Asian states as well as Afghanistan and forming a Muslim bloc is another possibility that India is quite concerned about. One of the reasons for this is that Afghanistan is the most important route in terms of India's trade and energy connection. (Çınarlı, 2016: 103) However, the consideration of Pakistan and India in the Afghanistan conflict area is due to the fact that these two countries are the most affected by the regional dynamics, and the level of analysis is limited to the regional scale. (Öztop et.al., 2021: 106)

After the end of British rule in the region, India took advantage of the border dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan on the Durand Line and made efforts to keep the idea of "Pashtunistan" alive in order to unsettle Islamabad. (Rubin & Siddique, 2006: 7) India, which has taken a series of policy measures that will have a significant impact on regional dynamics, has prioritized increasing its role in training Afghan forces, ensuring greater policy coordination with states such as Russia and Iran, and reaching out to all segments of Afghan society. India's current policy has been influenced by the fact that the Afghan peace process concluded with the agreement with the Taliban, and therefore the New Delhi government has a limited role in the peace negotiations. (Chand & Ahmad, 2020: 75-81) India is trying to compensate for Pakistan's Kashmir policy in Afghanistan by developing policies that will ensure that the central government in Kabul is against Pakistan at all costs. (Öztop et.al., 2021: 119) India's rivalry with Pakistan is one of the factors for Afghanistan's entry into the South Asian region.

Opposition to Pakistan is one of the reasons why India and Afghanistan maintain good relations with each other. (İnaç & Amini, 2024: 151)

Iran

During the Cold War, cooperation between Iran and Pakistan was supported by the US, as it did not want them to be under Soviet influence. Under these conditions, both countries became closer through political and economic ties. (Pant, 2009: 43) In geopolitical terms, Iran played the leading role in Afghanistan, along with Pakistan, before September 11. During the Mujahideen period, the internal actors of Afghan politics covered a wide spectrum between these two countries. (İnaç & Amini, 2024: 143) Iran is a historical neighbor of Afghanistan, but it is also a country that tries to expel the regime and also there is a large scale migratory movement between these two countries. Although its influence seems low when compared with the great powers, Iran, which is one of the regional actors using ethnic and sectarian policies, has a considerable influence on Afghanistan.

Pakistan

Pakistan's relations with its neighbor Afghanistan are complex for historical and political reasons. Pakistan played a significant role in Afghanistan's struggle against the Soviet Union by equipping and organizing some of the Mujahideen. After the defeat of the Soviet Union, Pakistan facilitated the movement in Afghanistan by providing support to the Taliban. (İnaç & Amini, 2024: 150) On the other hand, Pakistan has used its religious identity effectively in the construction of the nation-state and has managed to keep the country united against India, which was defined as the “other”, especially during the independence period. (Çamkerten, 2021: 231) Although Pakistan has a multilingual and ethnic, yet non-homogenous social structure like India, the religious factor is quite effective in governance. (Vorys, 2015: 26-30)

The withdrawal of the British from South Asia and the emergence of Pakistan as a new independent state have led to several problems. While Pakistan has disagreements with Afghanistan over Pashtunistan and the Durand Line, it has also disagreements with India over the Kashmir issue. In this context, Pakistan's insecure approach towards Afghanistan and India and occasional conflicts have negatively affected bilateral relations. (Nazari & Progonati, 2023: 133) Since Pashtuns are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan and have ruled Afghanistan since 1747, the Afghan government approaches the Durand Line issue within the framework of Pashtun nationalism. (Khan & Wagner, 2013: 20)

After the communist coup in Afghanistan in April 1978, the inclusion of this country in the circle of Socialist countries with the "Brezhnev doctrine" brought Pakistan closer to the West and made it almost a strategic ally of the West in the region. For this reason, Pakistan supported the mujahideen groups resisting the communist regime in Afghanistan and the subsequent Soviet invasion and undertook the sharing of the aid provided to the Afghan resistance by some anti-communist countries, especially Western countries, among the groups. (Burget, 2013: 61)

Pakistan, known for its support for Afghan radicals during the USSR invasion, also enabled the Taliban's first roots to sprout among the Pashtun tribes on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. (Johnson and Mason, 2008: 41-77) Support for the mujahideen groups that began with the invasion of the Soviet Union has become a tradition and a policy over time. Pakistan, which makes a distinction in the concept of terrorism, does not give any names to the structures that include Pakistani radicals such as Al-Qaeda, while it names external groups as "terrorists" and groups that clash over the Kashmir issue as "freedom fighters". (Çamkerten, 2020: 11)

The conflict among the mujahideen is one of the factors that negatively affect Afghanistan. After the withdrawal of the USSR, this situation created a power vacuum and the continuation of the civil war. No direct foreign aid was seen in the conflicts between the mujahideen, but Pakistan openly intervened to continue the civil war. (Karakaya & Nazari, 2022: 151) The mujahideen groups that operated and fought in Afghanistan during the Soviet invasion were trained in madrasahs in Pakistan, the number of which was approximately 900 in 1971 and reached 8,000 in 1988. (Sullivan, 2007: 98) At the end of this process, Pakistan suddenly became the staging and transit center for Saudi-financed, US-supplied, and Pakistani-trained Afghan mujahideen. (Gökırmak, 2011: 17)

Since its establishment, the Pakistani state has had problems with Afghanistan over the Durand Line and the Pashtunistan issue. To prevent Afghanistan from bringing this issue forward more strongly, Pakistan may have tried to indirectly fuel some instabilities in this country. (Burget, 2013: 66) The foreign policies of Afghanistan and Pakistan in South Asia are influenced by many factors in the region. Security issues, border problems, and other common issues are considered as important issues affecting the relations between the countries. (İnaç & Amini, 2024: 141)

The Taliban, who left the region after the US invasion, began to organize in Pakistan in 2007 and began to rise again in Afghanistan in 2014. At this point, considering the failure to achieve the targeted stability in Afghan territory and the re-emergence of the Taliban, the role played by Pakistan comes to the fore. (Schofield, 2011: 46-48) However, Pakistan's decision to support the coalition in 2001 was motivated by the desire to prevent India from gaining an advantage, to provide security, to provide political support on the Kashmir issue, and to achieve economic prosperity. (Khan, 2004: 124)

The Kashmir issue with India is a driving force in determining Pakistan's Afghanistan policy and therefore its support for the Taliban. (Rashid, 2010: 186) Because many people have argued that it is not possible to resolve the Taliban issue without Pakistan. (Karakaya & Nazari, 2022: 160) However, the Afghan migration that started with the Soviet invasion in 1979 has negatively affected Pakistan in every sense. Although it has been seen that the Afghan people migrated for different reasons, the common point of these are generally socio-economic problems and security reasons. Especially in the migration wave that occurred with the harsh policies implemented by the Taliban until the period of 1996-2001, which was the period of Taliban protection, Pakistan avoided repeating the tolerance of the first wave of migration, the period of 1979-1988. (Aytun, 2022: 2-8) Those who migrated to Pakistan took the initiative in the war against the Soviets and returned to their homeland after the war by supporting the Taliban. (Şen, 2022: 87) Pakistan's domestic and foreign policy has been affected by internal conflicts in Afghanistan, ethnic and religious issues, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the war, and the US intervention after 9/11. (Aytun, 2022: 14) Relations between Iran and Pakistan have become increasingly important due to their interests in Afghanistan. (Gökırmak, 2011: 7)

The Importance of Afghanistan-Pakistan Relations in the Eurasian Security Architecture

Due to its geostrategic location and its importance during the Cold War, Pakistan is one of the most important actors in the region. (Altaf et.al., 2022: 53) It can be argued that a power that dominates the region where Pakistan is located, despite its unfavorable climatic conditions and lack of some resources, will gain superiority in the Eurasian region and that a power that dominates this area can dominate the world continent. (Oğuş, 2024: 77) Afghanistan, on the other hand, is a country with a high level of experience in invasion and a tradition of failing invaders in conflicts that may occur in the region in question. Invaders cannot hold on to these lands for long. (Gökırmak, 2011: 29) Pakistan and Afghanistan have significant problems, but these problems are of a type that both states can solve by coming together. It has been assessed that unless external interventions are prevented, both states

will continue to spend their full potential in chronic instability processes. Afghanistan's failure and Pakistan's slowness in development have a negative impact on Eurasian security.

Afghanistan is no longer just Afghanistan due to the radical transformation it has undergone since 1979. This country has now begun to be associated with concepts such as occupation, civil war, terrorism, and poverty. (Erman, 2019: 162) It seems very difficult to establish a nation-state under the conditions prevailing in Afghanistan. Because its society has not established its identity it seems quite difficult to establish a modern central political organization. Three important elements create Afghan society: tribalism, geography, and Islam. The people, under the influence of clerics and tribal leaders, have adopted jihadist culture as a religious obligation to resist any kind of external intervention. This is the reason why the people reacted to NATO intervention in a similar way to the British or Soviet occupation. (Aytun, 2022: 13) In addition, Islam was perceived as a nationality by the state in Afghanistan and used strongly for nation-building and internal integration. While Islam was used as a tool for national unity internally, it was used externally to gain support from Muslim countries against India, the Soviet Union, and, at times, the United States. (Çolakoğlu, 2007: 62-79)

Two important events that took place in 1979, the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, brought about many important changes in world politics. Pakistan ceased to be a peripheral state and became a very vital country for both the West and the Islamic world. This increased Pakistan's importance in world politics far beyond its real political and economic power. Having lost Afghanistan and Iran, the US rediscovered Pakistan. (2007: 66) While the Western states tried to prevent Russia from expanding in the Near East and the Middle East by holding Afghanistan, they also tried to disrupt Iran's expansion policy in the southeast. Afghanistan is in the middle of Central Asia, the Caspian-Caucasus, and the Middle East. This position means a high potential for policy and trade as the need for oil and gas increases around this country. Because these energy resources had to be transported either by pipelines or on land/rail to be offered to the global market. This situation led to a further increase in the importance of Afghanistan, which has a strategic location. (D'Souza, 2011: 2-4)

The collapse of state authority in Afghanistan has led to similar results in Pakistan. In particular, the Pashtuns, who are separated by artificial borders, have begun to take action. This situation has been clear in the federally governed tribal region that Pakistan cannot control; the region has become a gathering point for terrorist organizations and anti-state activities. Although Afghanistan and Pakistan are very close to each other in terms of culture, language, religion and geography, relations between the two countries have generally been Pakistan, which was also the biggest supporter of the establishment of the Taliban with the support of the USA after the Soviet invasion, was the first state to recognize the Taliban government in 1996 and even tried to persuade some other states to recognize the Taliban. The weariness brought on by war and constant instability is an important factor in the people's acceptance of the Taliban. Although it is possible to say that Pakistan was successful in its Afghanistan policy until September 11, the radical Islamist policies pursued by the Taliban have restarted the migration wave. In this context, Pakistan's stance on Afghanistan backfired and it paid a heavy price for its policy by experiencing a migration wave caused by the Taliban. With September 11, the US established some order in the country, but it could not stop the flow of refugees to Pakistan. (Aytun, 2022: 15-21)

Due to its geographical location, one of the characteristics most often attributed to Afghanistan is being a "bridge state". (Erman, 2017: 417) Afghanistan, which has been invaded by many states throughout history, is still the scene of external interventions today. Located at the center of the Near East, Far East, Middle East, Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf, Afghanistan has become a region where political and economic instability is experienced and is the focus of major states due to its strategic location. (Görgen, 2022: 421)

In the mid-1960s, Pakistan had one of the most successful economies in the developing world. At that time, it had the highest export growth rate in South Asia, but due to political instability, implementation of policies, economic injustice and constant conflict with India, its economic growth is currently even less than Bangladesh. (İnaç & Amini, 2024: 147) Afghanistan, which has an important strategic position in the Eurasia, provides an advantageous situation for the country as it is close to Kazakhstan, which has oil, iron, copper, lead and coal resources; Kyrgyzstan, which has gold, mercury, uranium and coal reserves; Uzbekistan, which has natural gas, silver, zinc and coal basins; and Tajikistan, which has natural gas and oil reserves. (Roux, 2001: 140-144)

Afghanistan, in its current form, consists largely of mountains and has less abundant underground resources than its neighboring countries. Despite this, there are other features that reveal Afghanistan's importance to great powers. Some of these important features are; its geopolitical proximity to the three great nuclear powers, Russia, India and Pakistan, and its location on the strategic transit route for the transportation of resources, which are densely located in the Caspian region, to the Indian Ocean, which prevents Russia from accessing the open seas due to its strategies to reach the south, which is one of its main goals. (Özsavaş Atay, 2016: 22-24)

While the free market economy is globalizing the world, it would not exclude the Central Asian region. It is this expanding and deepening capitalist globalization that brought the Silk Road, which created new commercial expectations in the region, to the agenda. (Kalaycı, 2015: 99) No matter how important Afghanistan is in terms of its underground resources, energy resources and strategic location, it is considered that it will not be able to benefit from these opportunities unless it can ensure security and stability. (Güdül & Raof, 2020: 38) The reality that requires rich Western countries to provide more aid to Afghanistan is that a country where terror and war exist can create risks for other countries and easily transfer them. (Cordesman & Burke, 2012: 72)

Afghanistan not only shares a 2640 km border with Pakistan, but also has cultural, socio-economic and religious commonalities. (Altaf et.al., 2022: 54) There is a strategic railway project between Pakistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan that will connect Central and South Asia. It is important for Pakistan and Afghanistan to achieve stability in order to develop with such projects. (Ismail, 2021: 50-53) Is Afghanistan doomed to instability in order to maintain balance among competing global and regional powers in Central Asia? (Güdül & Raof, 2020: 15) This question is noteworthy. Also 1% increase in foreign aid received reduces economic growth by % 0,29. According to the results, all three countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq) need to reduce their external dependency in order to increase their economic growth. (Farahmand & Akiş, 2024: 14)

Conclusion

It has been determined by developments and occupations in different regions that the bipolar world system was tried to be transformed into a unipolar one after the US declared victory after the Cold War. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, some major powers, especially China and Russia, insisted on a multipolar system. It is clear that the major powers that follow politics according to these principles are trying to re-establish a new order together with other regional powers they influence. It is evaluated that the influence of the actors, especially in the regions between Russia and China, has increased and will increase, especially as the center of power has shifted from the West to the East.

It has been assessed that the reason why the policies pursued by Pakistan and Afghanistan are not sufficiently known or effective until today is that they have entered the sphere of influence of one of the great powers in the bipolar world. It is thought that the policies that produce instability are not due to internal structures, but rather due to direct external interventions or external powers exploiting internal structures. Therefore, both states have important duties. If these two states determine their

own policies and can determine regional policies focused on common interests with good neighborly relations with the other, they will be able to contribute to Eurasian security to a great extent. One way to achieve this is to protect internal structures against external influences and prevent them from becoming useful.



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Chapter 16

Ethnic Diversity and Linguistic Conflict in the Russian Federation

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Abstract

The Russian Federation with its multi-ethnic structure has a significant role in the history of world politics and expanded into vast geographies. Within its territory, various ethnic groups, total of 193, speak dozens of different languages from the Indo-European, Altaic, and Ural language families. This diversity has been shaped over centuries, beginning with ancient migrations, the formation of principalities, and the expansionist act of the Russian Empire. During the Soviet era, issues of ethnic and linguistic diversity were subjected to systematic institutionalization, such as the establishment of autonomies and the development of national languages and cultures. Today, this legacy serves as both a source of richness and a chain of challenges for modern society. This study, therefore, examines the ethnic diversity of Russia and the linguistic conflicts within the Russian Federation. Following an analysis of the country's regional, political, and administrative structure, its ethnic composition, and the official language, ethnic diversity and local languages are explored within a constitutional framework. Subsequently, population censuses from the Soviet Union to the present are utilized to comprehend its ethnic and linguistic diversity. The findings reveal significant threats such as the assimilation of minorities, loss of languages, and the tendency for ethnic diversity to be more prone to conflict.

Keywords Ethnic Diversity · Russian Federation · Population · Language Problems · Culture

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Introduction

The Russian Federation consists of republics, krai (territory,), oblast (province, region), cities of federal importance, autonomous okrug (region), autonomous oblasts. According to the article 65 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, it comprises 24 republics, 9 krais, 48 oblasts, 3 federal cities, 1 autonomous oblast, and 4 autonomous okrugs (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1993/2020a, Article 69). The number of the republics which increased to 22 after the annexation of Crimea, reached to 24 following the referendum held between 23-27 September 2022 regarding Donetsk and Luhansk regions joining the Russian Federation. Similarly, through the referendum process, the number of oblasts, which was 46, reached 48 with the inclusion of the Ukrainian regions of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson into the Russian Federation. As of the latest data, the total area of the Russian Federation is 17,151,442 km² (Consulate General of Russia in Basra Iraq, n.d.b). Furthermore, as of January 1, 2023, it has a population of 146,447,400 (Vinogradova, 2023). The length of the territory of the Russian Federation is approximately 4,000 km from north to south and nearly 10,000 km from west to east. The total length of Russia's borders is 60,933 km, of which 38,808 km are maritime borders (Consulate General Of The Russian Federation In Rio De Janeiro, n.d.c). To the southeast, Russia shares land borders with North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea); to the south, it borders China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. To the southwest, it shares borders with Ukraine, and to the west, with Belarus, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, and Norway. The Kaliningrad region shares land borders with Lithuania and Poland. To the north, Russia is bordered by the Barents, Kara, Laptev, East Siberian, and Chukchi seas of the Arctic Ocean; to the east, it has borders with the Bering Strait, Bering Sea, Sea of Okhotsk, and Japan Sea. To the south, it borders the Black Sea, and to the west, the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Finland (Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, n.d.d).

The political and administrative structure of the Russian Federation has a unique style. According to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, "The Russian Federation -Russia is a democratic federative law-governed state with a republican form of government." The bearer of sovereignty and the sole source of power of the Russian Federation is its multinational people. The President of the Russian Federation is the head of state (Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, n.d.e). The state power in the Russian Federation is exercised based on the separation of legislative, executive, and judicial powers. The legislative, executive, and judicial authorities are independent (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 2020, Article 10.f). In the Russian Federation, state authority is practiced by the President of the Russian Federation, the Federal Assembly (the Federation Council and the State Duma), the Government of the Russian Federation, and the courts of the Russian Federation (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 2020, Article 11.g). Article 94 of the Russian Constitution states that the Federal Assembly, the parliament of the Russian Federation, is the representative and legislative body of the Russian Federation. The first paragraph of Article 95 indicates that the Federal Assembly consists of two chambers: the Federation Council and the State Duma. The second paragraph states that the Federation Council includes two representatives from each constituent entity of the Russian Federation—one representative from the executive branch and one representative from the legislative branch. The third paragraph specifies that the State Duma is composed of 450 deputies. The first paragraph of Article 96 states that the State Duma is elected for a term of five years (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 2020, Article 94, Article 95, Article 96.ğ). The federal units have their own legislative and executive bodies. The only condition is that the Constitution and the Agreements must comply with the Constitution of the Russian Federation (Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, n.d.h).

Russia is multilingual country; its population speaks more than 150 languages. The official (state) language throughout the Russian Federation is Russian. All peoples of the Russian Federation are

guaranteed the right to preserve their mother tongue (Embassy Of The Russian Federation In The Federal Republic Of Germany, n.d.i). In this regard, according to Article 68, paragraph 2 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation; Republics have the right to establish their own official language. They are used in the state bodies, local self-government bodies and state institutions of the republics together with the state language of the Russian Federation (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 2020, Article 68.ı).

The Russian Federation is one of the multi-ethnic countries in the world. According to the 2020 census, there are 193 ethnic groups, concentrated in different geographical regions of Russia, particularly in Siberia, the Far East and the Caucasus. Russians are the largest ethnic group, making up about 80% of the total population. Other major ethnic groups include Tatars, Ukrainians, Bashkirs, Chuvash and Avars. This diversity leads to important dynamics in the social, cultural and political spheres, and relations between ethnic identities play a decisive role in shaping the social structure of Russia. The 2002 census confirmed that the Russian Federation is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. After scientific interpretation of the initial data, it was concluded that more than 193 ethnic groups live in the country (Shilov, 2012). According to the censuses, the population of 6 ethnic groups exceeds 1 million (in 2010 this number was 7). These are the following: Russians 105,579,179, Tatars 4,713,669, Chechens 1,674,854, Bashkirs 1,571,879, Chuvash 1,067,139, Avars 1,012,074 (Narody Urala, 2023).

Recognition of Ethnic Diversity in the Constitution

The Constitution of the Russian Federation recognizes the diversity of ethnic groups and cultures as an important part of national identity and guarantees the rights and freedoms of all citizens regardless of their ethnic origin. In this context, the Russian Constitution articulates its perspective on ethnic diversity in Article 3, Paragraph 1, stating, "The bearer of sovereignty and the only source of power in the Russian Federation is its multinational people" (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 2020, Article 3.j). Article 5, Paragraph 3 further states, "The federal structure of the Russian Federation is established based on the integrity of the state, the unity of state power, the distribution of powers and responsibilities between the bodies of the Russian Federation and the bodies of federative units, equality, and the right of peoples to self-determination" (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 2020, Article 5.k). For managing federative units that are not superior to each other and have different administrative structures spread across a vast geography but are centrally dependent, a set of fundamental principles has been developed. One of these principles is that local governments must act within the framework of the principles and norms established by the center. In this regard, the self-governance and development of federative units under the control of the central constitution have been supported. This support is regulated by the Constitution of the Russian Federation and organized based on the interests of the country. According to these regulations, the republics have their own constitutions and legislation. The krais, okrugs, oblasts, cities of federal importance, autonomous oblasts, and autonomous okrugs have their own charters and legislations (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 2020, Article 5.l). The constitutions, legislations, and charters established by the republics and other federative units must comply both with the Constitution of the Russian Federation and its state interests. Additionally, Article 17, Paragraph 1 states, "The rights and freedoms of humans and citizens in the Russian Federation are recognized and guaranteed in accordance with the universally accepted principles and norms of international law and this Constitution" (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 2020, Article 17.m). Article 19, Paragraph 3 of the Constitution provides equality to all citizens irrespective of language, religion, or race. The first paragraph of this article states, "Everyone is equal before the law and in court." The second paragraph asserts, "The state shall not restrict the rights of citizens on the basis of gender, race, nationality, language, origin, property and official status, place of residence, attitude towards religion, beliefs, membership in public associations, and other circumstances." The third paragraph states, "Men and women shall have equal rights and freedoms

and equal opportunities for their implementation" (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 2020, Article 19.n).

The first paragraph of Article 26 grants ethnic groups the right to determine and express their nationality. "No one shall be obliged to determine and indicate their nationality," it states. The second paragraph imposes that "everyone has the right to use their native language and freely choose the language of communication, education, teaching, and creativity" (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 2020, Article 26.o). Article 69 addresses the rights of minorities and the founding ethnic origins. The first paragraph of Article 69 states, "The Russian Federation guarantees the rights of indigenous minority peoples in accordance with the universally accepted principles and norms of international law and international agreements of the Russian Federation." The second paragraph articulates, "The state maintains the cultural identity of all peoples and ethnic communities in the Russian Federation and guarantees the preservation of ethno-cultural and linguistic diversity." The third paragraph affirms, "The Russian Federation provides support to compatriots living abroad regarding the exercise of their rights, the protection of their interests, and the preservation of the entirety of Russian cultural identity" (The Constitution of the Russian Federation, 2020, Article 69.ö).

Ethnic Diversity in the Russian Federation

The expansionist policies of the Russian Empire led to the emergence of a large geography where different ethnic groups coexisted. This process increased Russia's ethnic diversity and brought together many different peoples. Bolshevik leader Lenin developed a solution-oriented approach called "Resolution on the National Question" in the early years of the Soviet Union to manage this diversity in response to ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious crises. The Soviet government attempted to allow ethnic groups to express themselves through a federal structure, autonomous republics, and linguistic rights. However, this solution process faced numerous challenges and led to ethnic tensions. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation adopted a more homogeneous structure in terms of ethnic diversity. Ethnic tensions and uprisings in the Russian Federation increased as a result of a significant social, political, and economic transformation process after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. To manage these processes, the protection of social, cultural, religious, and linguistic rights of non-Russian populations and the effective management of these differences became important national policies established by the state. Population censuses were seen as an important factor in formulating the state's national policies. The methodology of the population censuses conducted in the Soviet Union was examined and related data was gathered, by doing so new methods that would provide more modern and detailed functions for future censuses were employed.

In the population census conducted by the Soviet Union in 1989, 128 "nationalities" were recorded, while this number increased to over 150 ethnic groups in 2002 (Демоскоп Weekly, n.d.p). This increase is primarily related to the methodological changes regarding the identification of major and minor ethnic groups. The compilation of lists of ethnic groups has a long history, dating back to the activities of The Commission for the Study of the Tribal Composition of the Population of the Borderlands of Russia in the 1920s. One of the main tasks of this commission was to determine which groups lived in the country and under what names. Before the 1959 census, the Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences prepared a “List of the Peoples of the USSR,” which included the main (most well-known) names as well as possible response options for the survey. This practice continued in the Soviet censuses of 1970, 1979, and 1989 (Tishkov, 2010.r). After the establishment of the Russian Federation, the first census was planned for 1998 but was postponed to 2002 due to the economic crisis. The responses to the question “What is your nationality?” were evaluated based on feelings of belonging, language, and religion, and the list prepared by the Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences in 1959 was expanded and updated. Russian anthropologist Sergey Sokolovsky, in his article titled “Ethnic

Identity in Population Censuses: Classification Principles and Approaches" stated that the updated list, compared to the 1989 census, was broader and based on methodological principles that took into account modern ethnic processes, the needs of national policy and educational administration, the liberalization of census tools and methods, the correction of some deficiencies in previous censuses, and the overcoming of outdated approaches they were based on (Sokolovskiy n.d.s). In censuses conducted after 2002, transitions between ethnic groups among individuals have been observed. Another reason for these changes in ethnic diversity is the alteration in individuals' responses to the question "What is your nationality?"

Dmitry Dmitrievich Bogoyavlensky, Russian political scientist, examined this disparity in his article "Ethnic Structure of the Population and Language Proficiency" and noted following information: "There is a group of individuals with ambiguous or variable ethnic identities. The individuals in this group can change their ethnic identity declarations in population censuses." Ethnologists refer that phenomenon as "ethnic identity change". This behaviour is common among the people of mixed ethnicities. For instance, among Northern peoples, the children of mixed families may state the nationality of their mother in one census and their father in the other. Even in the next census, they may change their previous statement again. Such changes particularly common in children born from the marriages of indigenous and non-indigenous people. D.D. Bogoyavlensky also gives some information on administrative pressures during the census. According to him, "The identities of some ethnic groups may sometimes be excluded from classification systems." This situation may be explained with the examples of Bashkir's and Tatars' population in Bashkortostan. People in this group has been recorded in various population census sometimes as Bashkirs sometimes as Tatars. This shift has occasionally been accompanied with the information and administrative pressures that seen clearly (Bogoyavlensky, 2018). In the article "New and Unrecognized Ethnic Categories in the Context of Population Censuses in Russia" written by Russian ethnologist and historian S. V. Cheshko, it is stated that ethnic structures cannot be clearly defined through political impositions, pressures, and attempts at manipulation. Cheshko argues that all these processes hinder the objectivity of scientists who are supposed to prepare a list of ethnic identities. According to S. V. Cheshko, neither the old bureaucratic procedures based on "traditionalist" theory nor the latest conceptual approaches sufficiently reflect the ethnic structure of Russian society and the dynamics of its development. For this reason, ethnonymic self-awareness can be considered the only objective and reliable criterion in identifying ethnic communities (Cheshko, 2013).

Demoscope Weekly, which examined the demographic process of the Soviet Union and Russia, recorded the population of people whose ethnic sense of belonging as Russians is 99,591,520; the total population is 170,557,093 in USSR according to the population census which held in 1939 (Demoscope Weekly, n.d.ş) That ratio of Russians to the total population can be expressed as 58.39%. According to the data of the censuses conducted in 1970, 1979, and 1989 Russian ethnicity appears to be almost half of the country.

Table 1

Major Energy Sources and Their Shares (%) in Global Energy Supply

Year	Total Population	Russians	Proportion of Total Population
1939	170,557,093	99,591,520	58,59%
1970	241,720,134	129,015,140	53,37%
1979	262,084,654	137,397,089	52,42%
1989	285,742,511	145,155,489	50,79%

After the establishment of the Russian Federation, the first census was conducted in 2002. In 2002, the number of people identifying their ethnic affiliation as Russian was 115,889,107, while the

total population was recorded as 145,166,731. According to the census conducted in 2010, the number of people who identified themselves as Russian was 111,016,896. The total population in 2010 was 142,856,536 (Rosstat, 2010) As recorded, according to the 2020 census, the total population of the country was 147,182,123, and the population identifying as Russian was 105,579,179.

Table 2

Russian Population and Its Share of Total Population in Post-Federation Censuses

Year	Total Population	Russians	Proportion of Total Population
2002	145,166,731	115,889,107	79%
2010	142,856,536	111,016,896	77%
2020	147,182,123	105,579,179	71%

In light of all this data, the questions "Who are the ethnic groups other than the Russian nationality, and how many ethnic groups live in the Russian Federation?" arise. The data obtained from the censuses provides a clear numerical answer to the ethnic diversity present.

Table 3

Number of Ethnicities and Ethnic Groups in Russia According to Censuses

Years of Censuses	1897	1926	1939	1959	1970	1979	1989	2002	2010	2020
Total Ethnic Groups	104*	175	99	121	122	123	128	182	193	193
Sub-Ethnic Groups								40	48	49
Supra-Ethnic (Main) Groups								140	145	145

*It was determined based on the ethnic origin language diversity found in 1897.

The demographic structure of the country from the establishment of the Soviet Union to the present has been studied, and the data on ethnic diversity from censuses conducted up to 2010 have been compiled and tabulated in a publication by the National Research University Higher School of Economics' Institute of Demography, authored by political scientist Dmitry Bogoyavlensky. According to Table 3, 128 ethnicities were reported in 1989, 182 in 2002 and 193 in 2010. The most prominent of the aforementioned methodological changes is the elaboration of ethnic groups as sub-ethnic and supra-ethnic groups. In an interview with the news portal Russkaya Gazeta, Russian ethnologist Valery Tishkov explained the reasons behind the creation of sub-ethnic group and supra-ethnic group categories, emphasizing four key points. The first is that some groups could not find their ethnic affiliation in the list created for the census and wish to register themselves as a separate nation. Attempts to register as a distinct nation increased after the adoption of the law supporting indigenous minority peoples. Another important point is to capture a clear picture of local ethnic diversity through the census. A further key point is to prevent political pressure and fraud in population censuses (Tishkov, 2010.t). V. Tishkov highlighted two crucial points while evaluating the sub-ethnic and supra-ethnic groups in the research conducted by the Vishnevsky Institute of Demography on Russia's demographics. The first is that sub-ethnic groups are aware of their distinctiveness from the "main" ethnic groups. As an example, he mentioned the Iron Ossetians and Digor Ossetians ethnic groups, which are divided into sub-groups based on their religious beliefs: Irons are predominantly Orthodox Christians, whereas Digors are mostly Muslims. The second important point is that the Russian Federation's population, as of its establishment, does not match the ethnic affiliations of its citizens as they were in 1989. Therefore, it is essential to create a detailed ethnic structure map through the population census (Tishkov, n.d.u) .

Sub-groups of some ethnic groups were formed by taking into account factors such as language, religion, customs and traditions, and sub-groups were reflected in the census with separate data. In

order to better understand all these explanations, the following examples are significant. Before the 2002 census, Avars appeared as a single ethnic group, while in the 2002 census, 14 sub-ethnic groups were separately recorded within the Avars. One of these is the Archins. The Archins are a small community who speak the Archin language, which belongs to the Lezgian branch. Therefore, the Archin people have no direct connection with the Avars aside from living together. Andis, Akhvakhs, Bagvalals, Bezhtins, Botlikhs, Ginukhs, Godoberins, Gunzibs, Tindals, Khvarshins, and Chamalals, although they preserve their dialects, cultures, and languages, have been classified as sub-ethnic groups within the Avar ethnic origin. The same applies to the Tatars. The Tatars, recorded as a single ethnic group in 1989, were categorized into three separate subgroups in 2002: Astrakhan Tatars, Kryashens, and Siberian Tatars. In the 2010 census, Mishars were also added to the mentioned sub-ethnic groups. Therefore, today, Tatars are categorized as Tatar, Mishar Tatars, Siberian Tatars, Kryashens, and Astrakhan Tatars. In the 2010 census, the subgroups Adjarians, Ingilos, Lazes, Mingrelians, and Svans were listed separately as subgroups of the Georgian ethnic identity. In the 1989 census, the Dargins appeared as a single ethnic group. The Kaytaks and Kubachins were reflected in the population data as two subgroups of the Dargins in the 2002 census. Another example is that in the 1898 census, the Telengits, Tubalars, and Chelkans were not found, while in the 2002 census, the Telengits, Tubalars, and Chelkans were classified as separate ethnic origins. In 2010, the Telengits, Tubalars, and Chelkans were reclassified as subgroups of the Altai peoples. Another ethnic group classified is the Kurds. Before the 2010 census, Kurmanjis were classified as a separate subgroup; however, with the 2010 census, they were categorized as a subgroup of the Kurds. The Karagash community, which was not mentioned in the 2002 census or earlier, was included in the category of subgroups of the Nogais in the 2010 census. The Setos, which were not recognized as an independent ethnic group in previous censuses, were accounted for as such in the 2010 census. In addition to these differences, the 2010 census also included data for individuals who identified their ethnic affiliation as Pakistani, Pamiri, Macedonian, Bosnian, English, or Croatian. The number of major ethnic groups remained unchanged in the 2010 and 2020 censuses; however, a subgroup was added in the 2020 census. The Alutor ethnic group was included as a subgroup of the Koryaks.

According to Table 3, the number of sub-ethnic groups, which was 40 in 2002, has been identified as 48 in 2010 and 49 in 2020. Table 4 presents the major ethnic groups and their sub-ethnic groups. The most populous ethnic group, Russians, has two sub-ethnic groups. The second largest ethnic group with a significant sub-ethnic population is the Chechens. The Avars are the third ethnic group with a sub-ethnic group that has a large population. Among the sub-ethnic groups, the largest population belongs to the "Казаки" (Cossacks), while the second largest population is "Мордва-эрзя" (Erzya). The third place is identified as Кряшены (Kryashens).

Table 4

Sub- Ethnic and Supra-Ethnic Groups and Their Populations According to the 2020 Census

Ethnicities	Population
Аварцы (Avars)	1,012,074
Андийцы (Andis)	16,758
Арчинцы (Archins)	1,693
Ахвахцы (Akhvakh)	5,282
Багулалы (Bagvalals)	14
Бежтинцы (Bezhtins)	6,890
Ботлихцы (Botlikhs)	3,788
Гинухцы (Ginukhs)	630

Годоберинцы (Godoberins)	2,172
Гунзибцы (Gunzibs)	2,363
Дидойцы (Didoys)	14,881
Каратинцы (Karata people)	7,343
Тиндалы (Tindals)	1,161
Хваршины (Khvarshins)	827
Чамалалы (Chamalals)	91
Алтайцы (Altaians)	78,125
Теленгиты (Telengits)	2,730
Тубалары (Tubalars)	3,620
Челканцы (Chelkans)	1,290
Армяне (Armenians)	946,172
Черкесогаи (Circassian Highlanders)	12
Греки (Greeks)	53,972
Греки-урумы (Greeks-Urum)	12
Грузины (Georgians)	112,765
Аджарцы (Adjarians)	166
Ингилойцы (Ingilos)	247
Лазы (Lazes)	94
Мегрелы (Mingrelians)	391
Сваны (Svans)	24
Даргинцы (Dargins)	626,601
Кайтагцы (Kaytags)	37
Кубачинцы (Kubachins)	559
Кеты (Kets)	1,088
Юги (Yug people)	7
Коми (Komi)	143,516
Коми-ижемцы (Komi-Izhemtsi)	4,748
Коряки (Koryaks)	7,485
Алюторцы (Alutors)	96
Курды (Kurds)	24,657
Курманч (Kurmanj Kurds)	4
Латыши (Latvians)	8,516
Латгальцы (Latgalians)	371
Марийцы (Mari people)	423,803
Горные марийцы (Mountain Mari)	14,077
Лугово-восточные марийцы (Eastern Meadow Mari)	101
Мордва (Mordvins)	484,450

Мордва-мокша (Moksha)	11,801
Мордва-эрзя (Erzya)	50,068
Немцы (Germans)	195,256
Меннониты (Mennonites)	5
Ногайцы (Nogais)	109,042
Карагаши (Karagash Nogais)	218
Осетины (Ossetians)	485,646
Осетины-дигорцы (Digor Ossetians)	1,361
Осетины-иронцы (Iron Ossetians)	323
Русские (Russians)	105,579,179
Казаки (Cossacks)	50,490
Поморы (Pomors)	2,232
Татары (Tatars)	4,713,669
Астраханские татары (Astrakhan Tatars)	29
Кряшены (Kryashens)	29,978
Мишари (Mishars)	787
Сибирские татары (Siberian Tatars)	6,297
Тувинцы (Tuvans)	295,384
Тувинцы-тоджинцы (Todzhin Tuvans)	7,278
Финны (Finns)	7,778
Финны-ингерманландцы (Ingrian Finns)	571
Чеченцы (Chechens)	1,674,854
Чеченцы-аккинцы (Akkins)	54
Эстонцы (Estonians)	7,859
Сету (Setos)	234

Additionally, there is a significant number of individuals who marked their ethnic affiliation as "Other" or did not specify it in the census. Looking at Table 5, the number of those who did not specify their ethnic affiliation was 1,460,751 in 2002, which increased to 5,629,429 in 2010. By 2020, this number had risen drastically to 16,594,759. Those who could not find their ethnic origin on the census form chose the "Other" option, which was marked by 1,393,685 individuals in 2020. The census was conducted online for the first time in 2020. Due to it being the first time, there were disruptions, and experts believe that it was primarily due to methodological failures in the census or a weak information campaign (Guryanov, 2023). According to the survey results from the Levada Center, an analysis center, the report indicated that participation in the census was significantly low. The report revealed that 49% of the survey respondents stated that census officials did not reach out to them, 21% believed that participating in the census was not meaningful, and the remaining respondents were unable to participate due to not being present at their place of residence or having issues with internet access. Sergey Zakharov, Deputy Director of the Vishnevsky Institute of Demography at Higher School of Economics' University, and Elena Churilova, Research Fellow at the International Laboratory for Population and Health Research at Higher School of Economics' University, identified two major problems from the Levada Center' survey results. The first is the lack of training and insufficient preparation of census officials. The second

problem is people's reluctance to voluntarily provide information about themselves (Levada Center, 2021). Additionally, Yevgeny Andreyev, Leading Researcher at the Center for Demographic Research, described the results of the 2021 census as “not perfect” but noted that in terms of accuracy, it was not significantly worse than the 2002 and 2010 censuses. On the other hand, independent demographer and former Rosstat employee Aleksey Raksha assessed this census as “highly flawed” and unusable (Manuzina, Kopytok, Alena&Vitovt, 2024)

The distinction of the 2020 census is that it also identified the number of people who refused to specify their ethnic affiliation and those who did not see themselves as belonging to any ethnic origin.

Table 5

Number of People Who Did Not Specify Their Ethnic Origin in the Censuses

Years	2002	2010	2020
Those who marked their ethnic affiliation as "Other"	42,980	66,938	1,393,685
Those who did not specify their ethnic affiliation	1,460,751	5,629,429	16,594,759
Those who refused to answer the ethnic affiliation question	-	-	1,393,685
Those who stated they have no ethnic affiliation	-	-	542,201

According to the data provided by the 2020 census, the number of individuals who specified their ethnic origin as “Other” and then described their ethnic identity or the group to which they have affection. As Table 3 clearly shows 1,151,631 people identified themselves as Rossiyane, Rossiyanin, Rossiyanka (Росссия́не россия́нин, росссия́нка). Philologists, ethnologists, and sociologists have increasingly discussed the terms Rossiyane, Rossiyanin, and Rossiyanka recently. These terms have been known since the early 16th century (Petrov, 2016). Rossiyane and its other two interchangeable terms can be described as anyone from Russia, any citizen of Russia, and Russian. According to the Dictionaries and Encyclopedia on the Academic; the term, Rossiyane, is defined as the all inhabitants of Russia, belonging to this Eurasian nation, regardless of their ethnic origin (Akademik, 2002). Among those who selected "Other," 54,821 individuals identified themselves as Dagestani. Those identifying as Dagestani have been categorized as Derbent residents, Kızılyurt residents, Makhachkala residents, Nah-Dagestanis, and Tsumadinsky. The third-largest group is Mestizos, a term used to describe individuals who carry characteristics of two or more ethnic origins, effectively identifying them as mixed-heritage individuals, or as hybrids. Believers of major religions such as Christianity and Islam stated their faiths as they believe that ethnicity cannot be considered alongside religious affiliation. Slavs, on the other hand, have been categorized as Baltic Slavs, Eastern Slavs, Western Slavs, Northern Slavs, and Ancient Slavs, with a total of 18,030 individuals identified.

Table 6

Respondents Who Answered "Other" to the Question "What Is Your Nationality?" in the 2020 Census (Number of People)

İdentification	
Russian Citizen, Rossiyane	1,151,631
Dagestani	54,821
Mestizo	18,344
Slavs	18,030
Christians	11,448
Muslims	10,118

According to the data provided by Rosstat, The Federal State Statistics Service of Russia, concerning the 2020 censuses, Russian ethnicity with a number of 105,579,179, is the largest population in the Russian Federation (Rosstat, 2022). Following them are the Tatars, Chechens, Bashkirs, Chuvash, and Avars. Table 4 provides the population of ethnic groups based on data from the 2020 census. Table 5 lists ethnic groups in the Russian Federation with population ranging from 500,000 to 1,000,000. Table 6 presents ethnic groups with populations ranging from 300,000 to 500,000.

Table 7

Six Ethnic Groups with a Population Over 1 million in the 2020 Census

Ethnic Group	Population
Russian	105,579,179
Tatar	4,713,669
Chechen	1,674,854
Bashkir	1,571,879
Chuvash	1,067,139
Avar	1,012,074

Table 8

Ethnic Groups with a Population Between 500,000 and 1,000,000 in the 2020 Census

Ethnic Group	Population
Armenian	946,172
Ukrainians	884,007
Dargins	626,601
Kazakhs	591,97
Kumyks	565,83
Kabardian	523,404
Ingush	517,186

Table 9
Ethnic Groups with a Population Between 300,000 and 500,000 in the 2020 Census

Ethnic Group	Population
Lezgins	488,608
Ossetians	485,646
Mordvins	484,450
Yakuts	478,409
Azerbaijani Turks	474,576
Buryats	460,053
Maris	423,803
Udmurts	386,465
Tajiks	350,236
Uzbeks	323,278

In the Russian Federation, “малочисленные народы” (Malochisleni Narod), or “few peoples”, comes to the forefront as a multi-layered concept. This term refers the peoples among Russia’s various ethnic communities whose numbers are less than 50,000 who independently maintain their cultural, linguistic, and social identities. A differentiating characteristic of these peoples is that they reside in the regions traditionally inhabited by their ancestors. These groups sustain their traditional ways of life, livelihoods, and crafts, and they identify themselves as independent ethnic communities. Russian Federal State Information System "Unified Portal of State and Municipal Services”, or commonly referred *Gosuslugi*, has identified 47 supra-ethnic and sub-ethnic groups (Gosuslugi, n.d.ü). Table 10 combines the data of Table 8 with the 47 ethnic groups defined by the Russian Federal State Information System and the 2020 census data.

Table 10
Indigenous small ethnic groups and Their Populations According to the 2020 Census

Abazas	41,793
Aleuts	34,576
Alyutors	97
Besermians	2,036
Vepsians	4,534
Vodians	99
Dolgans	8,157
Izhorians	210
Itelmens	2,596
Kamchadals	1,547
Kereks	23
Kets	1,088
Koryaks	7,485
Kumandins	2,408
Mansi	12,228

Nagaybaks	5,719
Nanai	11,623
Nganasans	687
Negidals	481
Nenets	49,646
Nivkh	3,842
Oroks (Ulta)	269
Orochis	527
Sámi	1,530
Selkups	3,458
Setu (Seto)	234
Soyots	4,368
Taz	235
Telingits	2,730
Teleuts	2,217
Tofalars (Tofa)	719
Tubalars	3,620
Tuvans (Tojdins)	7,278
Udege	1,325
Ulchi	2,217
Khanty	31,467
Chelkans	1,290
Chuvans	900
Chukchi	16,200
Chulym	382
Shapsugs	1,914
Shors	10,507
Evenks	39,226
Evens (Lamut)	201
Ents	1,657
Eskimos	7,859
Yukaghirs	1,802

Language Issues in the Russian Federation with its Multi-Ethnic Structure

The last decades of the 20th century were marked by growing trends of ethnic revival and this phenomenon was reflected in many studies on language policy and the development of national languages (Sokolova, 2021). The fact that federal units prioritize local languages while not giving

equal importance and attention to Russian language education has sparked the need for updates in the language policy of the Russian Federation. Russian President Vladimir Putin emphasized that the reduction of Russian language lessons in schools in Russia is unacceptable and cannot be overlooked, stating, "For us, Russian is our state language and the language of international communication. Nothing can replace it. Russian is the natural spiritual backbone of our multi-ethnic country. Besides, he stated that everyone living in Russia should know Russian (Interfaksa, 2017). Following these statements and understanding, legislative changes were employed and the number of teaching hour in Russian Language and Literature were increased (Gordeev, 2023). This situation has sparked the debates on the representation and teaching of local languages in the Russian Federation. These discussions extend beyond the quality of the legal regulations in the current language policy to include the theoretical and methodological foundations, content, objectives, and implementation methods of language education (Borgoyakov, 2017).

Rosstat, The Federal State Statistics Service of Russia, has determined there are 369 languages throughout Russia, based on the data of 2020 census (Rosstat, 2022, Table 4). Of these, only 155 are considered to be living languages in Russia (Tkachev, 2024.v). According to the 2021 census, it was found that five languages have completely disappeared and one language has entered a “sleeping” state. These languages are: Aleut, Kerek, Ainu, Sirenik, and Yug. Additionally, the Orok language has been classified as a "sleeping" language. These data were revealed in an analysis conducted by the Linguistic Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Tkachev, 2024.y). In an article published in the international scientific journal named Young Scientists Journal, philologist Elena Petrovna mapped out the languages that are extinct or on the verge of extinction. According to her study, the following languages are at risk or disappearing: Votic Language, Krymchak Language, Godoberin Language, Shok Language, Tofa Language, Chulym Language, Ket Language, Forest Nenets (Neshan) Language, Tundra Nenets Language, Karelian Language, Tundra Yukaghir Language, Evenki Language, Southern Yukaghir Language, Itelmen Language, Negidal Language, Oroch Language, Nanai Language, Udege Language, Orok Language, Ulch Language, Nivkh Language, Alutor Language, Naukan Yupik Language (Kazakova, 2023). Researchers Irina Shirmanova and Anastasia Kokourova analyzed data from the 2020 census and wrote an article titled “There Are More Than 30 Languages in Russia's Republics That Could Be Used on Equal Terms with Russian, But Most Are in Decline—Here's Why.” According to their analysis, based on the EGIDS (Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale) language vitality scale, a language is considered “doomed to extinction” if its youngest speakers belong to the elderly generation. For instance, the average age of Karelian speakers was found to be 64. Karelians shifted to Russian long ago, and only a few elderly speakers use the Karelian language in real communication. Children and young people barely know the language (Shirmanova, Kokourova, Irina&Anastasia, 2023). In the age and language usage chart prepared by the researchers, Udmurt, Komi, and Chuvash also appear as languages significantly preferred by older generations. In the report titled in “List Of Languages Of Russia And Their Vitality Statuses” published by the Russian Academy Of Sciences Institute Of Linguistics, 15 languages were listed as extinct. According to the report, the following languages disappeared by the 20th century: Aleut, Middle Mansi, Taz (Tazovsk), Oroch, Bikin Nanai, Kerek, Sirenik, Inupiaq, Yug, Kamassian, Sakhalin Ainu, Soyot, Southern Mansi, Khanty, Kuril Ainu (Koryakov, Davidyuk, Kharitonov, Evstigneeva, Syuryun, 2023)

Table 11, created based on data from the 2020 census, provides information about the number of people who speak a particular language and the number of people who use that language in daily life. When interpreting the language policy of the Russian Federation according to Table 11, the speaking rates of local languages are at a critical threshold. For example, the ratio of the number of people using Tatar in daily life to the total Tatar population is only 61%. When calculating the ratio of the number of people who speak Tatar to the total population, it is only 69.18%. Therefore, approximately 7% of the

people who know Tatar, actively use it as a second language in their daily life. Additionally, about 31% of the Tatar population does not speak Tatar at all. The same aplies for Bashkir, too. The ratio of those who speak Bashkir in their daily life to the Bashkir ethnic population is only 59.85%. The ratio of those who speak Bashkir to the total Bashkir population is just 69.08%. Therefore, 10% of those who know Bashkir do not speak it, while 31% of the Bashkir population does not speak it at all. Almost the same rates are valid for Chuvash. The proportion of those who use Chuvash in their daily lives is 58%, while the proportion of those who speak Chuvash is 65.61%. The percentage of those who speak Chuvash but actively prefer another language in their daily life is around 7%. 35% of the Chuvash population does not use Chuvash at all. These rates are even more striking for the Dargin ethnic group. Only 55.27% of Dargins use Dargwa daily, leaving 43% entirely detached from the language. Similar figures apply to the Avar ethnicity. The proportion of Avars who use the Avar language in daily life is 61.35%, while the percentage of Avar speakers within the total Avar population is 64.65%. An important note should be mentioned for Ukrainians. According to the 2020 Russian census, 884,007 individuals identified their ethnic affiliation as Ukrainian. The percentage of those who use Ukrainian in their daily life compared to the Ukrainian population is only 23%. However, the proportion of those who identify as Ukrainian and know Ukrainian, using, when necessary, is 70.93% of the population.

Some ethnicities have successfully taught their native languages to younger generations, resulting in a better standing when calculating their proportion of the total population. The most prominent of these are the Chechens, whose population exceeds one million. The ratio of those who speak Chechen to the Chechen population is 89.18%. The proportion of those who use Chechen in their daily life compared to the total population is 87%. Similarly, the proportion of Kabardian speakers within the total population is 86%, while 83.28% of the Kabardian Circassian population speaks Kabardian in daily life. For the Tuvan population, 83.57% use the Tuvan language in daily life, while 85% of Tuvans are Tuvan speakers overall. An important detail is that the proportion of those who know and use Russian differentiates positively.

Table 11

Most Spoken Languages, Daily Users of Languages, and Total Populations According to the 2020 Census

Language	Number of Speakers (Persons)	Number of Daily Users (Persons)	Population
Russian	134,319,233	132,317,159	105,579,179
Tatar	3,261,155	2,917,685	4,713,669
Chechen	1,493.748	1,461,100	1,674,854
Bashkir	1,086.423	941,377	1,571,879
Chuvash	700,222	619,902	1,067,139
Avar	654,363	620,943	1,012,074
Ukrainian	627,106	208,854	884,007
Armenian	508,127	397,44	946172
Kabardian	450,276	435,901	523,404
Kumyk	400,746	385,229	565,83
Sakha (Yakut)	377,722	363,096	478,409
Dargin	362,156	346,337	626,601
Ossetian	344,907	332,068	485,646
Ingush	333,151	326,635	517,186

Buryat	306,857	285,778	460,053
Azerbaijani Turkish	291,484	227,307	474,576
Lezgin	287,878	272,996	488,608
Karachay-Balkar	274,038	256,075	351,315
Kazakh	265,703	188,479	591,97
Mari	258,722	228,678	423,803
Udmurt	255,877	222,786	386,465
Tuvan	252,953	247,875	295,384
Uzbek	228,962	156,146	323,278

The use of Russian language in official institutions and within the communication of ethnic groups serves as a significantly unifying factor for reasons such as homogeneous distribution of the population and the multi-ethnic structure of the Russian Federation. However, this situation also brings challenges regarding the teaching and learning of local languages. For instance, in the Republic of Bashkortostan, although Bashkir has the status of a regional official language, its place in the educational curriculum is quite limited. As of 2023, Bashkir language education is restricted to only 1-2 hours per week, while the average weekly duration of Russian language classes varies between 4-6 hours. (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bashkortostan, 2023). Another demonstration of this issue is the lack of interest from students of different ethnic backgrounds in the local languages taught in the federal units. For example, in the Republic of Tatarstan, the Tatar population is 52.21%, while the Russian population is 39.32%. The mandatory Tatar language education applies for everyone, regardless of ethnicity. Therefore, the fact that Russians and individuals from other ethnic backgrounds are obligated to learn Tatar language raises crucial discussions. Some segments of society that views the requirement for Russians to learn local languages in federal units as an imposition. In May 2015, representatives from some federal units of the Russian Federation, such as Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Buryatia, and Komi, along with various Russian, Orthodox, and other communities, sent a letter to Moscow stating that the state of the Russian language in schools in the republics is poor, that it is taught only at a basic level, and that this situation has occurred as a result of the emphasis on teaching the local languages of the republics (Gylman, 2015). The President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin states at the Council for Interethnic Relations held in Yoshkar-Ola Forcing *a person to learn a language that is not their mother tongue is as unacceptable as reducing the level and hour of Russian teaching.* He stated that he wants to draw the excess attention of regional leaders of this matter. This instability creates handicaps for the long-term preservation and development of local languages, while it raises concerns the continuity of cultural diversity. Another issue is the representation and preservation of local languages. The demands of communities with a sense of ethnic identity for the representation and preservation of their mother languages are being exploited by local nationalist groups, who are politicizing these issues. This exploitation is perceived by the state authority as actions rising separation, which leads to a distant approach towards to the representation and preservation of local languages. Eventually, the number of speakers of some local languages has significantly decreased, and the extinction of others has become inevitable.

According to the 2020 census, the rarest mother languages whose speakers fewer than ten are Yuit, Gabon, Yug, Kerek, and Icelandic. Moreover, only one person has identified Yuit, the language of the Asian Eskimos, as their mother tongue. The number of speakers of this language is only two. The Yuit language, Yug (a Yeniseian language), Kerek (from the Chukchi-Kamchatkan language family), and many other minority languages in Russia are at risk of extinction. According to the Institute of Linguistics of

the Russian Academy of Sciences, the number of living languages in Russia is currently estimated to be 155, while 15 languages belonging to minority groups have become extinct, with 10 of those lost in the last 35 years (Koryakov, Davidyuk, Evstigneeva, Syuryu, 2023)

Conclusion

The dissolution of the Soviet Union left major problems to its successor, the Russian Federation. After the period of the establishment of the Russian Federation, it did not have sufficient qualified human resources to overcome economic issues, sociocultural problems, separatist movements, nationalist chauvinism and the problems posed by ethnic diversity. President Boris Yeltsin, on one hand, encouraged the republics to "take as much sovereignty as they could," while on the other hand, he was forcing the republics that wanted to determine their own destinies to accept the federal constitution. Even after the republics adopted the federal constitution, the accumulated societal discontent, hatred, poverty, fatigue, lack of education merging with undisciplined governance occurred as judicial cases against those who were linguistically, religiously, culturally, and ethnically different. In response to increasing cases, “The Formation of Attitudes of Tolerant Consciousness and Prevention of Extremism in Russian Society” was signed on August 25, 2001. The search for solutions caused by ethnic diversity revived during Vladimir Putin’s era. Meetings, seminars, legal legislations that aim social peace expanded and detailed in scope. With the following perspective that “any ethnic group that is not taken into consideration becomes a problem itself,” a methodological change in the census was applied and this understanding led to the formation of sub-ethnic groups. This methodological approach has revealed 193 ethnic origins in the Russian Federation. The transparency and accuracy of population censuses from 2002 to the present depend heavily on having an adequate number of census officials and their proper training. Increasing the salaries of census officers will significantly reflect on the results, ensuring they work sufficiently and correctly. Simplifying and making the online census process more user-friendly is crucial for improving participation rates. Creating informative videos about online censuses for television, series, and news by the unit responsible for the census will increase participation. Additionally, if the relevant authorities research to understand why some individuals do not wish to disclose their ethnic affiliations, this could lead to more accurate policies that directly impact census results.

Even though analyses and studies have been conducted on those who identify their ethnic affiliation from the past to the present, it is seen that the number of those who do not express their ethnic identity has recently reached 16 million. The ratio of those who do not indicate their ethnic identity in the total population is 11%, placing them the largest group after the Russians.

On the other hand, it can be observed that the local populations with fewer than 50,000 people are decreasing gradually due to the inadequacy of efforts and regulations concerning the representation and preservation of them. Additionally, with the declining birth rate across the country, there are already clear signs that some local communities may face extinction in the recent future. Current birth rate of 1.41 in the Russian Federation has impacts not only on the local communities with small numbers but also on other ethnic groups with populations exceeding 1 million. Particularly in federal units, the demographic shifts between Russians and local ethnic groups significantly affect the administrative structure and future of those republics. In this regard, the improvement of Rosstat (specifically of the population planning unit) and the training of its staff are extremely crucial. This unit must have a presence even in the most remote corners of the country and organize relevant initiatives. Seminars emphasizing the importance of family, children, and parental roles in society should be held more frequently. It would also be beneficial for the Ministry of Education to integrate lessons on this topic into elementary, middle, and high school curricula. Ensuring equal improvements in the well-being of all people living in the Russian Federation will have a positive impact on birth rates. Additionally,

working conditions for women, maternity leave policies, and financial support during maternity leave should be significantly improved. Most importantly, a specialized population planning strategy should be implemented for ethnic groups at risk of extinction.

The teaching and speaking of local languages in Russia has reached critically low levels, as can be seen in the aforementioned tables. Despite the widespread use of Russian in the public sector, along with the fact that the language of education and instruction is Russian, and the comprehensive arrangements made for teaching Russian, there has not been a similar sensitivity shown regarding the representation, protection, teaching, and speaking of local languages. In recent years, with local languages slowly entering a process of extinction, the likelihood of preserving native languages is emerging more strongly, especially in areas where the local population is greater than that of the Russians, particularly in the administrative structure. This situation raises an awareness for an important issue concerning the preservation of linguistic diversity and illuminates that more comprehensive policies need to be developed for the future of local languages. As it is clearly shown in the tables, ethnic communities with national consciousness have higher rates of preserving and speaking their native languages. Chechens, Tatars, Circassians, and Tuvans are a few examples of these. It is essential to simplify the bureaucratic process for establishing unions/organizations aimed at developing languages, teaching cultures, and preserving them, regardless of nationality. Additionally, providing financial support to these organizations is an important factor in increasing trust in the central government. On the other hand, it will be crucial for the administrators of federal units to be knowledgeable about the language and culture of local populations, and to have sensitivity to their concerns, as this will be an important factor in resolving issues.

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