BRIQ
Belt & Road Initiative Quarterly

The Road to International Security

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⚜ Principles of Publication

At a time when US ambitions for a unipolar world order have lost their appeal, a new order is taking shape thanks to the multipolarization of world politics and the acceleration of cooperation between developing countries, rejecting the globalism of imperialist states. Under these conditions, the new agenda of global cooperation should respond to the needs and aspirations of developing countries seeking joint development and solidarity under the guidance of public-driven projects. In particular, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) -put forward in 2013 by Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China- provides a suitable opportunity and a sound foundation for the implementation of this new agenda of global cooperation.

BRI is an epoch-making move to re-implement the concept of the Silk Road, which dates back 2,000 years, to a time when China was immensely contributing to global prosperity and the development of trade and cooperation. The revival of this concept entails a much more comprehensive approach that also incorporates rail and sea transport, and digital systems.

BRI proposes to bring together over 60 countries across Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America –together accounting for nearly half of the world's gross domestic product– for prosperity and development at the initiative of China. Unlike the Western-centered world order, BRI seeks peaceful collaboration for improving global trade and production towards common goals for humanity. It firmly rejects crude imperialist exploitation. Two thousand years ago, the Silk Road was a conduit for the flow of gunpowder, spices, silk, compasses and paper to the world. Today, it offers artificial intelligence, quantum computers, new energy and material technologies, and space-age visions to developing countries. In addition, the New Silk Road provides incentives and opportunities for the development and implementation of bio-economic schemes in stakeholder countries against the threat of climate change and other environmental threats that bring the entire ecosystem to the brink of extinction.

Turkey has a significant role –real and potential– in accelerating South-South cooperation. Turkey is conveniently located as Asia's farthest outpost to the West. It assumes a critical position as a pivotal country on BRI's North-South and East-West axes. However, China's development and BRI's contribution to the future of humanity have remained to a large extent underrecognized and superficially evaluated in Turkish academia, media, and politics. This is mainly because Turkey's academics, media professionals, and policy makers have been observing China using Western sources. In the same manner, China and BRI's other potential partners have been viewing Turkey through a Western lens.

BRIQ has committed itself to developing an in-depth understanding of the present era, with a particular emphasis on the new opportunities and obstacles on the road to the New Asian Century.

BRIQ assumes the task of providing direct exchange of views and information among Chinese and Turkish academics, intellectuals, and policy makers. In the meantime, this journal will serve as a platform to bring together the intellectual accumulation of the whole world, especially developing countries, on the basis of the Belt and Road Initiative, which presents a historic opportunity for the common future of humanity.

BRIQ is also devoted to publishing research and other intellectual contributions that underline the transformative power of public-driven economies, where popular interests are upheld as the basic principle, ahead of individual profit. The fundamental tasks of BRIQ are to demonstrate how BRI can contribute to the implementation of this public-driven model, and to help potential BRI partners -including Turkey- to realize their real potential.

BRIQ stands for the unity of humanity and a fair world order. It will therefore be a publication for the world's distinguished intellectuals, especially those from Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas: the defenders of a new civilization rising from Asia on the basis of peace, fraternity, cooperation, prosperity, social benefit and common development.

⚜ Submission Guidelines

BRIQ features a broad range of content, from academic articles to book reviews, review essays, interviews, news reports, and feature articles.

The Editorial Board can issue calls for papers for special issues and invite authors to contribute manuscripts; however, it also welcomes unsolicited submissions.

Submissions are invited in English or Turkish. All submissions are to include a short biography (150-word limit) and should be sent as Microsoft Word attachments to briq@briqjournal.com Articles or other content that have been previously published or are under review by other journals will not be considered for publication.

BRIQ follows American Psychology Association (APA style, 6th edition, https://www.apastyle.org) and uses American English spelling.

BRIQ applies a double-blind review process for all academic articles.

Academic articles should be between 5000 and 9000 words in length, including abstracts, notes, references, and all other content. Please supply a cover page that includes complete author information, and a fully anonymized manuscript that also contains an abstract (200-word limit) and five keywords.

Book reviews should not exceed 1,000 words; review essays covering two or more works can be up to 3,000 words.

News reports consisting of brief analyses of news developments should not exceed 1,500 words; feature articles combining reporting and analysis can be up to 3,500 words.

Please contact the Editorial Board for interview proposals.

EDITORIAL

"The world is becoming less Western!" This observation was featured in the 2020 Munich Security Report, issued by one of the most prominent forums of the Atlantic System. This forum conveys the most recent and critical changes to the global security environment in the presence of world leaders.

A superficial concept named "Westlessness" is introduced in the report, and the report states that Western liberal values are no longer valid. Similarly, the 2019 report had portrayed the main challenge to international security as consisting of "a reshuffling of core pieces of the international order". The problem was associated with a "leadership vacuum in what has become known as the liberal international order ". The bottom line is that these developments caused a great deal of ambiguity in the global security environment.

European states have been discussing options to pursue an independent policy from the impositions of the United States (US), ambiguously revising their approach to Russia, China, Iran and Turkey in particular, and the relations with Asia and Latin America in general. In parallel with the advancement of multipolarity in the world, it appears that a power shift has been occurring from the Atlantic to Asia. After September 11, 2001, the doctrine of the "global war against terrorism" and the attempts to actualize the war can well be interpreted as an effort to prevent the emergence of multipolarity. In the geography extending from Africa to China, virtually all developing countries have increasingly suffered terrorism that exploits ethnic separatism and religion since the beginning of the 2000s. Moreover, governments in several countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria have been overthrown by US or NATO-led foreign interventions. The countries subjected to foreign interventions have either been fragmented or driven into chaos.

This situation leads to the strengthening of a new tendency of cooperation among developing countries in both economic and security affairs. One could observe that the effort to jointly respond to common threats has improved among developing countries that were in rival camps before 1991. Countries that are targeted by the Atlantic Front are able to protect and to strengthen their national states to the extent that they succeed in solving problems among themselves. A strong case in point is the Astana partnership formed by Turkey, Russia, and Iran during the Syria crisis, which marks perhaps the most successful and fruitful example of such cooperation attempts.

In order for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to turn into a success story, it is imperative to provide security along the routes that form the New Silk Road, i.e. the backbone of BRI.

Therefore, cooperation in the field of security has inevitably an important place in the agenda of BRI. The realization of such cooperation –as is envisaged in the Belt and Road Initiative– will not only create a safe environment for individual countries taking part in this cooperation, but will also provide international security as a global common good.

While security concerns are also growing in developed countries, BRI stands out with the greatest potential to ensure trust among nations.

FİKRET AKFIRAT
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ABSTRACT

This article explains China's response to the conflict in Sudan and South Sudan through its cautious involvement to protect its practical interests in this region. Beijing has made great efforts to improve conflict resolution in Darfur and South Sudan and has attempted to adopt a new paradigm for constructive engagement and creative mediation. Its response to the conflict in Sudan and South Sudan is driven by the dilemma of protecting national interests and shaping its great power identity, along with adhering to the principle of non-interference. This article also analyzes China's national interests in the region and its relevance to China's response to conflict and participation tools. It puts forward a new concept of 'creative mediation' to explain China's participation in multilateral security affairs and engagement in conflict resolution. Moreover, the article explores how such a creative mediation is compatible with China's principle of non-interference.

THE HISTORY OF CHINA-SUDAN RELATIONS goes back the Ancient Silk Road linking Sudan's eastern ports to trade with the Middle East. The relations flourished between the 10ᵗʰ and 15ᵗʰ centuries. Diplomatic relations between the two states began in January 1959. Sudan was the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to recognize the People's Republic of China (PRC). Before the 1989 military coup, there was a positive image between the rulers, people, and elites of Sudan regarding China's contributions to the rapprochement and development of Sudan. During this period, China provided Sudan with developmental assistance, which amounted to $ 95.6 million and contributed to the establishment of the textile industry and the construction of roads, bridges, and hospitals in Sudan (Large, 2008). Sudan also actively contributed to bolster China's strategic interests in Africa and the Red Sea.

Following the military coup in 1989, Sudan's domestic affairs had gone through three notable phases that have had a major impact on Sino-Sudanese relations: (1) The military Islamist regime; 2) The Darfur crisis in 2006 and the Chinese response; 3) South Sudan's independence in 2011. Since 1989, China had been keen to strengthening its relations with the new Sudanese regime to break the international isolation imposed by the United States and its allies. More importantly, Beijing became a net importer of oil products in 1993, and a net importer of crude oil in 1996. Since then, the new situation has required the adoption of a "going out" strategy to searching for energy, investment in oil and gas. In 1994, Sudan invited China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) to conduct a preliminary survey on Sudan's oil sector. President Al-Bashir's visit to Beijing in late 1995 had resulted in an agreement to provide low-interest soft loans to Sudan and signed an agreement to finance oil development in Sudan. Subsequently, CNPC started operations in Block 6 (Al-Mamas of Kordofan and South Darfur), and in late 1996, other oil companies were also discovered. At the beginning of March 1997, oil exploration operation started in South Sudan, CNPC signed a cooperation agreement with Petronas, Talisman (then Arakis) and Sudapet to develop three oil blocks and share investment risks (Abdelbagi, Siti-Nabiha&Shahbudin, 2013). China's

economic expansion in Sudan had also broken the international isolation imposed by the international community on Khartoum in the pretext of "supporting terrorism and human rights violations in Darfur and South Sudan". On August 12, 1993, the US State Department designated Sudan as a "state sponsor of terrorism" (U.S. Department of the Tresuary, 2017). Khartoum also viewed Beijing as an attractive political and economic partner. The relation between China and Sudan was mutually beneficial: Sudan made rapid strides in the development of its oil industry, and China gained important test points for the technical development of its oil-owned companies, which were technically lagging behind major international oil companies. China had played a significant role in the re-orientation of Sudan's foreign economic relations toward 'Asia'. The top export destinations of Sudan are the United Arab Emirates ($1.71B), China ($611M), Saudi Arabia ($600M), India ($426M); the top import origins of Sudan are China ($2.34B), the United Arab Emirates ($972M), India ($834M), Saudi Arabia ($638M) and Russia ($636M) (OEC, n.d.).

China's mediation endeavors reflect its cautious measures to maximize its economic interests and minimize its political venture.

However, The Darfur crisis in 2005 put China's national interests and national identity in a quandary between adhering to the doctrine of non-interference and safeguarding its national interests in Sudan on one hand, and international pressure on Beijing and strengthening its national identity as a responsible power in the international community on the other hand. The International community had criticized China's policy in Sudan and argued that the oil relations between the two countries had supported and encouraged the Sudanese government to carry out "genocide" in the Darfur region: Sudanese government used oil revenues to buy weapons and killed dissidents in Darfur, and thus China indirectly supported the killing of people in the region.

China saw a political solution as the only way to address the crisis and began to use its influence in the United Nations to pressure the Sudanese regime to accept the deployment of hybrid UN-African Union mission forces. Beijing also began to keep itself away from being deeply involved in Sudan's internal affairs and opened the door for the international community to punish the Khartoum government for its assumed attempts to assassinate the Egyptian President. Beijing allowed the passage of three UN Security Council resolutions against the Khartoum government, resolutions 1044, 1054, 1070, which included imposing a kind of diplomatic threat and pressure on Sudan. China also played a mediator role between Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), which resulted in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. On 9 July 2011 South Sudan became the newest country in the world, and China immediately announced its recognition of the new country and established diplomatic relations with South Sudan.

It is apparent that China seeks economic benefit in Sudan and South Sudan, thus it is hard for China to shy away its political responsibility for conflict resolution, albeit reluctantly. China's mediation endeavors reflect its cautious measures to maximize its economic interests and minimize its political venture.

1. The Concept of China-Styled Creative Mediation in International Conflict Resolution

There are two types of protecting states' overseas interests: one is the use of force by a state without the consent of the host state, and sometimes under the authorization of the UN Security Council, to protect its national interests that are facing multiple threats. The second one is the use of diplomatic tools, based on the consent of the target state and under the authorization of the UN Security Council such as mediation, constructive involvement, indirection engagement, and consultation with a state concerned. Creative mediation diplomacy is based on the right of protecting overseas interests under the international law and the consent of the host states. The diplomatic tools of China's creative mediation diplomacy are based on the types (strategic political, security, economic and ideological) and degrees (vital, major, survival) of national interests in Sudan and South Sudan, along with adhering to the doctrine of non-interference in other's internal affairs.

Western academics have made significant contributions to understanding the mediation theory and its dynamics, terms, methodology, and mediators and adversaries (Bercovitch, 1991a; Bercovitch, 1991b). Mediation is an extension of negotiations where the conflicting parties accept the involvement or assistance of external parties without breaking international law or the state's sovereignty, or a low-cost and flexible strategy, legitimately and creatively adopted by external security actors and international organizations. The success of mediation depends on the experience and efficiency of the mediator and successful judgment on the conflict from all directions. Therefore, the mediation process often fails to manage and resolve the conflict. It is a complex process with rarely positive results. Conflicts can easily escalate into wars as a result of the mediator's calculations and motives. In a way, any external actors may become a formal or informal mediator.

Bercovitch divides the mediator into three categories: individuals, countries and institutions (organizations). The international mediator aims to influence or change the conflict system through its resources and diplomatic tools. These resources illustrate the behavior and strategy of the mediator, which include good offices, creative conciliation, mediation, constructive engagement, negotiation, and arbitration (Bercovitch, 1996; Bercovitch&Houston, 1996). Ravan also introduces six types of resources or so-called "rules of influence":

Reward Resources: the ability of the mediator to provide tangible covenants and benefits to the warring parties such as the form of economic assistance.

Coercion Resources: the threat of the mediator to withdraw mediation or punish one or both parties such as the use of his economic influence to force the warring parties to conflict resolution.

Referent Resources: the use of shared identity or ideologies between the mediator and the conflicting parties.

Expertise Resources: The mediator's experience and superior ability to manage and resolve conflict.

Information Resources: The ability of the mediator to disclose valuable information that leading to the changing outcome of the conflict.

Legitimacy Resources: Legitimate resources are linked to the internal values of the parties which the mediator has the right to change or influence the conflict.

Table 1: Differentiating Chinese and Western Mediation Diplomacies

	Western Mediation Diplomacy	**China's Creative Mediation Diplomacy**
Mediator's Interests Involved	Security and Strategic Interests	Commercial and Political/Diplomatic Interests
Attitudes of Mediators	Proactive	Selective on a case-by-case basis
Positions	Dominating	Participating
Roles of Mediators	Leading	Following
Mediation Process	Agenda-Setting	Agenda-Revising
Resources that Mediators Commit to	Major Resources	Minor Resources
Primary Goals	Conflict Resolution	Conflict De-Escalation

Source: Sun & Zoubir, 2016: 240.

The choice of these resources also depends on the nature of the conflict and warring parties, the characteristics of conflict management and methods of conflict management. It also links to the type and degree of mediator's interests in the host state. When the ongoing conflict threatens the mediator's interests, the mediator has a defensive attitude, and even it engages in joint mediation (for example, Russia, Iran, and Turkey cooperation in the Syrian crisis). There are also two types of mediators: A negative mediator interferes to spread more chaos or to forge security alliances with one of the warring parties in order to harm the interests of other external actors or other mediators; a positive mediator seeks to conflict resolution to protect his interests and enhance international peace and security and reduce the consequences of acute conflicts. While private motives are usually related to the reduction of the indirect effects of the mediators such as trade disturbances, refugee flows are threatened their commercial interests in a troubled country. Besides the interest-based approach, humanitarian concerns or human rights are also an important factor that leading the mediator to strengthen its status or national identity in the international community. A positive mediator is supposed to be neutral and proposes a just solution and uses his influence and international prestige to push the conflict process towards an effective position and influence on the warring parties to accept a settlement and negotiation.

Sun and Zoubir (2018) argue that China takes a proactive mediation in conflict resolution in order to protect its security and political interests. Unlike what it has done in the North Korean nuclear issue, Beijing adopts Quasi-Mediation Diplomacy in the Middle Eastern and African security issues to protect its economic and strategic interests. China's approach in Sudan and South Sudan has provided all warring parties with economic assistance, trade concessions such as lower tariffs on imported goods, and invited the leaders of all parties to visit China and in some cases provided military assistance to reach an agreement between the conflicting parties. Beijing also has used economic clout and international status to compel warring parties that don't want to resolve the conflict.

This study introduces a new concept of "creative mediation diplomacy" to understand China's involvement in the conflict resolution

of Sudan and South Sudan and asserts that this concept has undergone gradual steps, including indirect participation, cautious participation, negotiation, and multilateral participation. These steps are determined by the type and degree of China's interests in the region. Moreover, the variables and characteristics of the nature of the conflict and the warring parties, the characteristics of conflict management (the degree of conflict) also affect the tools of its mediation diplomacy. Even though this concept shows the evolution of China's non-interference policy without adhering to the main principles of this very policy, the debates over China's dynamic approach in conflict resolution still raises many questions whether or not the dynamic process of Chinese engagement in conflict resolution still adheres to the principle of non-intervention, especially China's growing overseas interests, the increasing participation in UN peacekeeping missions in strategic regions and new concepts and calls in the new era regarding a community with a shared future for humankind and forging a new international system based on multilateralism and win-win strategy.

2. China's Creative Mediation Diplomacy to Settle the Darfur Crisis in Sudan

Following the Cold War, China-Sudan relations have been characterized by steady expansion of trade and investment, especially in the energy sector. The CNCP has become the largest foreign investor in Sudan's oil sector and acquired the largest overseas projects. Chinese private small businesses have also entered the Sudanese market and invested in various sectors, such as agriculture, beverages, shoemaking, and enterprise creation. According to the United Nations, China accounts for 64% of Sudan's trade volume.

Between 1990 and 2006, Sudan's oil exports to China increased from 266,126 to more than 6.5 million tons. In 2005 and 2006, China imported 47% of Sudan's total oil production (UN Comtrade Database, 2007). However, China's economic interests had been affected by the volatile security environment in Sudan. In 2004, the rebels abducted Chinese citizens and sent them to the southern part of the country, which had driven Beijing to engage in Sudan's conflict resolution. China's engagement in the Darfur crisis had undergone gradual phases of its creative mediation diplomacy in line with the evolution of non-interference principle.

• *Passive Participation*

At the beginning of the Darfur crisis, China did not respond directly or pay much attention to the crisis. The Sudanese government convinced Beijing that the crisis was just an internal chaos and the army could control it. The international community saw this internal chaos as "genocide" and denounced the regime's crimes in Darfur. China supported the Sudanese government against external intervention and stressed the respect for state sovereignty and non-interference in Sudan's domestic affairs. For example, China resisted the UN-planned sanctions to adopt a US-backed resolution of imposing sanctions on Sudan (Human Rights Watch, 2015). Chinese representatives at the United Nations portrayed Darfur's crisis, not as genocide but as domestic violence over natural resources involving the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). China called on the United Nations to provide financial assistance to the African Union (AU) peacekeeping mission in Sudan (Large, 2011).

• *Double Mediation*

China's engagement in the Darfur crisis had undergone a shift from passive participation to

active engagement and multilateral mediation between the Sudanese government and the international community to persuade Khartoum to accept a joint agreement and deployment of peacekeepers. In April 2004, after the Sudanese government signed the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement and rebel movements withdrew from Darfur, the Sudanese government allowed AU peacekeeper to deploy as a monitoring mission in Darfur (AMIS) (De Waal, 2007). The opposition stressed that China backed the Khartoum government and viewed the crisis as an internal affair of the government in Khartoum. Following the incident, the Chinese government sent an assessment mission led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which included representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and CNPC and recommended new measures to conflict resolution. China also supported United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) to play a role in planning the 2010 referendum that determining Darfur as an autonomous region. Since 2006, Beijing gradually stepped up its efforts to persuade the Sudanese government to accept UN Resolution 1706.

> **China used creative legitimate mediation to persuade the Sudanese government to conflict resolution and called for political dialogue and consultation, rather than hard political tools such as sanctions and military interventions.**

Beijing considered that a neutral position or friendly relations would undermine the chances of steady progress towards peace and security in Darfur. It adopted a strategy of "influencing without interference", which was based on respecting state sovereignty, pushing for private persuasion and continuous consultation. This was reflected in its support of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs) in Darfur, which ran counter to President Bashir's wishes in particular. In addition, Chinese representatives and senior aides had formally criticized the policies of the petrified Sudanese regime undermining the settlement of the crisis and stressed the mandatory recommendations to conflict resolution. Then Chinese President Hu Jintao sent a message to Bashir that China backed UN Resolution 1706 and expressed his willingness for the Sudanese government to accept the hybrid UN-African Union peacekeeping force during his visit to Sudan in February 2007 (Embassy of People's Republic of China in the Republic of Estonia, 2005). In other words, China's efforts had focused on persuading the Sudanese government to accept the deployment of the UN-African Union hybrid peacekeeping mission and encouraging mediation actors and international organizations to urge opposition groups to engage in negotiations with the central government. Because of the lack of contact with opposition groups, the Chinese government has paid much attention to the Sudanese government, not as neutral as it is a commitment to the policy of non-interference.

• *Creative Mediation Diplomacy*

China persuaded the Sudanese government to accept UN resolutions and became more intelligent and proactive in exerting pressure on Khartoum. Sudan regime rejected any replacement of African Union troops by UN troops, as well as the invitation to attend the special meeting of the Security Council. China used creative legitimate mediation to persuade the Sudanese government to conflict resolution and called for political dialogue and consultation, rather than hard political tools such as sanctions and military interventions. China had dispatched 275

engineering troops, 100 transportation troops, and 60 medical personnel for the UNMIS; and 315 engineering troops for the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

China's attempts have succeeded to persuade Khartoum to join the meeting table at the high-level consultation on the situation in Darfur at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa on 16 November 2006. The UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan also proposed the deployment of a hybrid African Union-UN peacekeeping force and 22,000-strong policeman. However, the Sudanese position was stubborn and rejected the plan. When President Omar al-Bashir arrived in Beijing for the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Forum, Chinese President Hu Jintao formally called for peace and security in Darfur. He also sent a message to the Sudanese government that Beijing supported and respected Annan's plan (UN News, 2006).

He also proposed four principles for conflict resolution: respecting Sudan's sovereignty, maintaining local stability in the region, upholding political dialogue and coordination on the basis of equality, and strengthening the constructive role of the AU and UN in the crisis (Pen, 2007). China has decided to provide 40 million Renminbi (RMB) in aid to the Darfur region. 'China's diplomacy has gradually changed from conveying the message to active persuasion and working with the international community (China Daily, 2007). In April 2006, Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister and Special Envoy Zhai Jun visited the continent and made good efforts to persuade Khartoum to accept the Annan plan. China stressed that the root of the crisis is the development issues. For this reason, China urged the Sudanese government to implement the development plan and reformed its economic plan. Additionally, the international community called to provide financial assistance to Sudan.

A group of 165 Chinese peacekeepers were preparing to leave for South Sudanese capital, Juba from Zhengzhou, the capital city of central China's Henan Province, on Sept. 11, 2018. (Xinhua)

The US and Western countries launched horrific campaigns against China to boycott 'China's Olympics and decided to impose further restrictive measures on Khartoum. In May, Chinese Ambassador Liu Guijin visited some African countries and talked with the Sudanese government, the Arab League, the African Union, and many Western countries to reach some common views for conflict resolution. Since 2001, China abstained eight times of 22 UN Security Council resolutions on Darfur crisis. In June 2006, the Chinese government provided modest aid to Darfur, including donations of $ 3.5 million to the AMIS (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to UN, 2008).

Some observers and academics have argued that Beijing abandoned the doctrine of non-interference and its mediator role in Darfur, which marked a change to its traditional foreign policy. However, China's creative mediation diplomacy in Darfur's conflict resolution is encompassed by multilateralist efforts. In this perspective, with the consent of Sudan, peacekeeping forces was deployed under the joint authorization of the UN and the AU. Beijing stressed the role of the Sudanese government in cooperation with

the UN and the AU and underscored the task of the African Union. Morover, China provided assistance to the AU and used its economic influence to force Sudanese government to conflict resolution. In 2011, China also welcomed the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, which was signed between the Sudanese government and the Liberation and Justice Movement in Doha and commended the ongoing efforts of the Qatari government and the Arab League. China was the first country outside Africa to deploy a 315-member multi-function engineering unit for a hybrid (United Nations-African Union Mission UNAMID) peacekeeping operation in Darfur. UNAMID is the second-largest peacekeeping mission around the world after United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), with more than 20,000 troops, military personnel, police and personnel of various nationalities, an estimated $ 1.4 billion for 2014 (UNAMID, n.d.). These steps prove that China's creative mediation diplomacy in Darfur conflict resolution led to some developments in its non-interference policy, but without prejudice to the basic principles of this policy, which are based on respect for Sudan's sovereignty. It did not seek to change the regime and bring chaos in the country.

On 10 July 2017, UNAMID has announced the launch of a plan to reduce the number of its military by 44% and the police by 33%. The target for ending the mission is 30 June 2020 (United Nations, 2017). China provided the missions with four Mi-17 helicopters which are mainly tasked with 24-hour air patrol, battleground reconnaissance, transport peacekeepers, evacuation of rescued personnel and air supplies provision. So far, the Chinese helicopter contingent to Darfur has carried out 636 sorties, rescued more than 280 people and delivered 3,800 passengers, 220 tons of cargo, 16.6 tons of dangerous goods such as weapons and ammunition (Yang, 2019).

On 12 December 2018, China has dispatched 100 blue helmets to take part in a one-year peacekeeping mission in Darfur. In July 2019, the 140 soldiers of the 2nd China Medium Utility Helicopter Unit (CMUHU02), has awarded UN peace medals (Sudan Tribune, 2018a). They have helped to establish UNAMID's infrastructure, including the construction of camps, the construction of protective fences and guard towers, carrying out community projects in Darfur, most notably the development and maintenance of Nyala airports in South Darfur and Al-Da'een in East Darfur.

In June 2019, the UN Security Council split over the withdrawal of a peacekeeping force deployed in Darfur between Europeans and Africans who demanded a suspension, while China and Russia supported the continuing of the mission. Since 2018, the political landscape in Sudan has dramatically changed after the Sudanese military removed Omar al-Bashir from his position as President of Sudan. Before the handover of power to the transitional government, some European members have pointed to the situation of Sudan and the absence of a government at the time, but China and Russia stressed that the internal crisis is only the responsibility of Sudan state.

China's gradual steps of creative mediation diplomacy toward the Darfur crisis was mainly driven by strategic economic and political interests. China's diplomacy has focused on reconciling between short-term gains with the long-term stability in Sudan and the expectations of other actors. China recognized that the escalating vio-
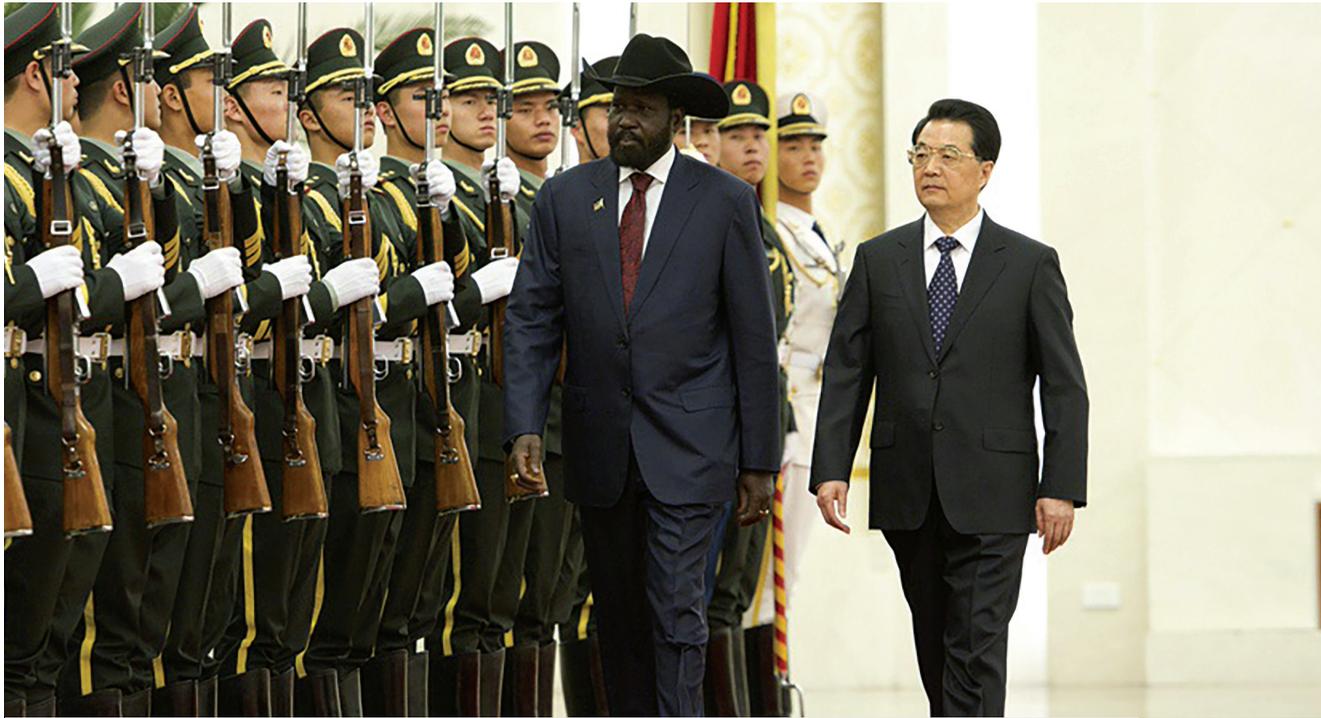
Chinese President Hu Jintao welcomes South Sudanese President Salva Kiir Mayardit at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, April 24, 2012. (Xinhua)

lence would jeopardize its economic interests in Sudan and the potential of Darfur unrest could reach South Sudan after peace has been settled, as well as China's oil interests which stretching across Chad, Libya, and Ethiopia throughout the threats of refugees and rebels from Darfur. Therefore, Darfur's stability was embedded in regional security. China's respect state's sovereignty and refusal intervention in Sudan had led the harsh criticism of western against this policy. In this direction, Western countries launched a big campaign to boycott the Beijing Olympics, which raised China's concerns about its national identity in the international community. China did not adopt a unilateral position or isolate itself from the international community. In other words, its mediation was based on cooperation with the international community and participation in multilateralism efforts.

3. China's Creative Mediation in South Sudan's Cessation

China has been keen to portray itself in the African continent as an economic partner; however, the conflict between South Sudan and Sudan has pushed Beijing to increase engagement in Horn of Africa's security affairs. The reason lies in its growing interests in the region and enhancing its great power diplomacy with the Chinese through its participation in the UN peacekeeping operations in the continent. In fact, China had been engaging in friendly exchanges with South Sudan in the 1970s when China decided to send the first medical teams of agricultural experts to help South Sudan. In January 2005, China was one of the mediators between North and South Sudan during the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which ended 22-years

of civil war, and paved the way for a referendum for South Sudan's independence. In March 2005, a high-level SPLM delegation paid an official visit to Beijing, which considered the first official contact between two sides. In February 2007, during President Hu Jintao's visit to Sudan, he met Vice President Salva Kiir and invited him to Beijing to discuss the common cooperation and development projects (Zhang, 2011).

> **The Chinese government has adhered to its traditional doctrine of non-interference and acknowledged the appropriate and legitimate role of the central state in maintaining state unity.**

In September 2008, China opened its consulate in Juba and then started diplomatic relations with South Sudan, which allowed China to strengthen direct channels of communication with the Government of South Sudan, having gained independence from Sudan on 9 July 2011 as the outcome of a 2005 agreement. The Chinese government respected the results of the referendum and was one of the first countries in the world to recognize the new country. In July 2011, Jiang Weixin, China's Minister of Housing and Urban-rural Development, attended South Sudan independence celebrations as President Hu Jintao's special envoy who sent a congratulatory message to President of South Sudan and established diplomatic relations with the country (Munene, 2019). In April 2012, South Sudan President visited China, and the South Sudan Embassy in Beijing hosted the first investment forum between Juba and Beijing to identify investment and trade opportunities. Oil has been very important in the wealth-sharing protocol between North and South Sudan. The

CPA asserts the respecting of existing contracts and granting South Sudan 50 percent of all oil revenues produced in the southern oil areas. The Chinese government has adhered to its traditional doctrine of non-interference and acknowledged the appropriate and legitimate role of the core state in maintaining state unity. By avoiding political fragmentation, it has accepted the importance of political stability and refused external interference that supports "regime change." However, Sudan's internal situation was suffering from the weakness of the central government to exercise effective control over its full jurisdiction and the state's sovereignty, which led to armed conflicts in Darfur and South Sudan. The CPA transformed the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) into a national unity sharing power with the central government. This agreement enabled China to begin the process of negotiation and communication with South Sudan. Political communication between China and the SPLM was extremely sensitive because of 'China's political, economic and military support to the central government in Khartoum in wartime and its refusal to deal with the SPLM. However, the two sides have found pragmatic interests that have opened the door for enhancing mutual needs and prospects for mutual benefit.

4. China's Creative Mediation between Sudan and South Sudan Conflict

Oil is a vital commodity for both Sudan and South Sudan, but the two countries have not agreed on what the south should pay as transit fees to send its oil exports through northern ports. Therefore, oil production faced political turmoil both inside and outside South Sudan. The 2012 Oil Revenue Sharing Agreement was primarily used by Sudan to ease economic pressure, was halted by a dispute over the value of

using oil pipelines and led to the closure of the pipeline to South Sudan, which was producing 350,000 barrels per day (Sudan Times, 2017).

In January 2012, the Government of South Sudan made a radical decision to close the oil pipelines and relations between two sides had sharply deteriorated to the extent that in April 2012 the increased cross-border tensions with an SPLA attack on the Heglig oil field. The oil facilities were severely damaged and production ceased for more than a month, aggravating the economic crisis in Sudan and South Sudan. On September 27, 2012, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and South Sudanese President Salva Kiir signed a series of agreements for conflict resolution, which set relatively low transit fees of $ 1 per barrel, while processing and transport charges were close to commercial rates. In addition, a $ 3.028 billion was a transitional financial arrangement payable to Sudan over a period of three years and a half is transferred at a rate of $ 15 per barrel of oil shipped from Port Sudan (United to End Genocide, 2012).

However, the September 2012 agreement was not immediately implemented, because Sudan wanted to see a significant improvement in the security situation of the borders. Ultimately, this dilemma was addressed and oil production in South Sudan resumed in April 2013. In September 2013, South Sudan's President Salva Kiir visited Sudan for a summit to resolve disputes and promote cooperation. The summit led to significant improvement in relations between the two countries. However, Sudan and South Sudan's security landscape has transformed from inter-State conflicts to intra-State conflict. Sudan has experienced uprisings as a result of deteriorating economic conditions, and a civil war in South Sudan also erupted in 2013.

China attaches great attention to the region's stability and peace due to its overseas interests

and citizens. South Sudan had used its new sovereign political influence to pressure China National Petroleum Corporation and its partners to bolster Juba's position in negotiations with Sudan over pipeline fees. Despite the development of good relations between the Government of Southern Sudan (GRSS) and Beijing, China was involved in disputes over oil transit charges between Sudan and South Sudan, threatening oil supplies between the two countries. China has been seeking to maintain good relations with the two countries since South Sudan declared independence from the north, but the disputes have tested China's ability to balance the two countries. China called both sides for implementing the agreement and sent its former special envoy to Africa, Liu Guijin, to solve the disputes between two governments over transit fees between oil shipments that threatening oil-supplies. South Sudan authorities expelled the head of China-Malaysia oil company Petrodar and accused Chinese oil companies of helping Sudan seize South Sudan's oil, which was exporting oil through a Petrodar pipeline.

SPLA also abducted twenty-nine Chinese citizens working in Sinohydro for the construction of a highway. The decision of shutting down oil production had led to a large deficit in oil-dependent economy revenue and GDP in Sudan and the government's sudden loss of more than 90 per-cent of oil revenues. The decision also resulted in a series of interconnected crises experienced in the economy and in financial, security, political and humanitarian areas in South Sudan. In March 2015, Juba requested a reduction of the financial outcome of oil transit due to the decline in world crude prices below $ 30 a barrel, but Sudan refused this request, which was also suffering an economic crisis. In December 2016, the oil ministers of Sudan and South Sudan

held talks in Khartoum upon the revision of the southern oil transit fees (Sudan Tribune, 2016).

South Sudan's production fell from 350,000 barrels per day (BPD) after independence to 150,000 BPD due to the eruption of the country's civil war in December 2013 between President Salva Kiir and rebels led by his former deputy Riek Machar. Sudan and South Sudan signed a number of agreements, including an oil agreement in 2012 in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, sponsored by high-level African mediation. In September 2017, Khartoum signed an agreement with South Sudan to reactivate the stalled oil fields in the south, where both parties agreed that Khartoum would provide technical assistance and electricity supply to oil fields in the south (Sudan Tribune, 2018b). In August 2019, South Sudan's oil minister revealed that his country increased oil production by 6000 barrels, bringing the total production to more than 180 thousand barrels per day, pointing out that the increase was achieved after the country resumed oil production in blocks 1 and 2 in the manga field, which was closed six years ago due to insecurity in the northern parts of the country (Sudan Tribune, 2019).

5. China's Creative Mediation in South Sudan's Civil War (2013-2019)

China saw itself as a newcomer in the South Sudanese conflict resolution. Its investment and protection of its nationals became a part of China's response to the conflict from mid-December 2013. Bilateral trade between China and South Sudan reached $ 534 million in 2012; more than 140 Chinese companies registered in South Sudan, including energy, engineering, telecommunications and infrastructure (Xinhua, October 8, 2013), as well as more than 23,000 Chinese residents was in South Sudan before the civil war

(African Development Bank Group, 2013). Chinese companies and workers have been robbed, kidnapped, and faced with minor crimes and property threats. Chinese officials discussed whether the withdrawal in favor of its national interests or the losses will harm its interests abroad. The Chinese leadership has recognized that the Libyan experience and the decision of abandoning oil fields and other investments were a big mistake.

> **China's resources are economic influence, humanitarian aid, and peacekeeping. Beijing has benefited from its political and economic influence in South Sudan and succeeded in bringing the government and the rebel group to the table.**

South Sudan's economy is heavily dependent on oil revenues. In turn, the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), one of the largest oil companies in the world, controls around 40% of the two main oil consortia in the country (Kuo, 2017).

Therefore, China used its economic influence as a coercion resource for its creative mediation diplomacy in order to pressure the Government of South Sudan to protect oil fields and cease hostilities and implement a ceasefire. Chinese participation can also be considered as a responsible initiative to safeguard the future of South Sudan's economy and security in cooperation with international and regional organizations. China's resources are economic influence, humanitarian aid, and peacekeeping. Beijing has benefited from its political and economic influence in South Sudan and been successful in bringing the government and the rebel group to the table.

Following the outbreak of the South Sudan civil war, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, during his visit to Saudi Arabia, in December 2013, underlined that China would make efforts to sustain peace and security negotiations between the South Sudan government and rebel groups (Wang, 2013). In January 2014, Wang Yi met with representatives of the two conflicting parties of South Sudan in Ethiopia, asserted the importance of South Sudan's stability and developing economy, and called the Government of South Sudan and the rebel group to immediately cease fire and activate peace talks to end the wave of conflicts (Wang, 2014). In August 2014, China put forward a four-point solution to end the civil war and subsequently supported the engagement of the IGAD. In January 2015, Beijing held a meeting in Khartoum, which included South Sudan's warring parties, Ethiopia, Sudan and IGAD, which was an attempt to solve the differences between Sudan- South Sudan relations as a result of Sudan's support of South Sudan's rebels.

Leader of the female peacekeeper unit of Chinese peacekeeping infantry batallion to South Sudan; Yu Peijie sings songs with local children in Juba, South Sudan, on April 30, 2018. (Xinhua)

Beijing has asserted its commitments to protecting oil infrastructures and integrating its economic interests with Sudan and South Sudan. China called the regional organizations to discuss conflict resolution. A case in point is the UN and AU Peace and Security Council communiqué in May 2011, which stopped the attempts of external actors to interfere in the conflict between Sudan and South Sudan in Abyei.

Since the outbreak of the civil war, Beijing has provided military support to the Government of South Sudan to defer the rebel group and secure oil facilities. According to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, the GRSS has received Chinese arms supplies, worth some $46.8 million from China North Industries Group (NORINCO). The rebel group has destroyed some of the oil installations and threatened to attack and destroy other facilities. China has sought to protect oil facilities in the troubled Greater Nile region through negotiations with the rebels and the government and provided financial support to secure the oil infrastructure. Military support has provoked much controversy and doubts about China's mediation in South Sudan's conflict resolution. In September 2014, the reported statement of the Chinese embassy in Juba stated that Beijing would stop the remainder of its arms deal and the Chinese Foreign Ministry has also announced that Beijing would dispatch a full infantry battalion to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) (Zhao, 2014). Ambassador Zhong Jianhua arrived in Kenya to attend a special IGAD session on South Sudan on December 27, 2013, and also visited South Sudan and Ethiopia afterwards and asserted that China seeks to maintain peace talks and request the continued production of oil facilities and the protection of Chinese nationals and investments in turbulent

areas. In July 2018, South Sudan's president has signed a peace agreement with rebels during the IGAD summit (United Nations, 2019). China has urged parties to fast-track its implementation and end the conflict in the region. The Chinese Embassy in South Sudan said: "Beijing supports efforts to restore peace and stability in South Sudan and sincerely hopes that relevant parties in South Sudan will be able to leave their personal problems and focus on the interests of the people, establish peace, abide by and speed up the implementation of the peace agreement and achieve lasting peace in the region." (China Daily, 2019). Since the outbreak of civil war in Juba, China has provided at least $49 million of humanitarian assistance, with $10 million to the World Food Programme (WFP), other food and medical assistance aid (FOCAC, 2018a).

From the perspective of human rights, China has made visible and effective contributions. For example, Beijing has built a Juba Training Hospital and an outpatient and emergency center. In February 2017, the two sides have signed an agreement to develop the Juba Hospital and renovate the Care Mayardit Women's Hospital in the South Sudanese city of Rumbek. This agreement is part of a $ 33 million medical assistance, which was pledged by the Chinese government to improve South Sudan's health sector. In 2017, China has donated 100 million RMB worth the food for emergency humanitarian aid to South Sudan and contributed 5 million USD to WFP for a quick response of emergency to South Sudan.

In September 2018, At the meeting with President Salva Kiir on the sideline of the FOCAC Beijing Summit, President Xi Jinping announced that the Chinese Government would provide South Sudan with emergency humanitarian aid worth 100 million RMB (FOCAC,

2018b). In January 2019, The WFP welcomed a $7 million contribution from Beijing to support and maintain food assistance in South Sudan. In April 2019, the two sides signed two infrastructure development agreements, which included a grant to the South to rehabilitate the Gore River Bridge and build a 1.48-kilometer road linking the bridge to Wau (Al Ain, 2019). China has also provided a grant to develop and modernize Juba Training Hospital, the country's largest public health facility. As a result of these investments, Juba has announced to triple the amount of oil to the Export-Import Bank of China to support road construction projects linking the capital and other cities.

China has also played a prominent role in peacekeeping operations in South Sudan. For example, in December 2015, China has sent 700 troops to the UNPKOs in South Sudan, the first battalion to a peacekeeping operation. It has also deployed 350 peacekeepers in South Sudan- including medical staff, engineering units, and liaison officers, which provided medical assistance to both local refugees and peacekeepers, besides the provision of logistics support to international humanitarian organizations.

Conclusion

This paper introduced the new concept of "creative mediation diplomacy", which reveals China's involvement in the conflict resolutions of Sudan and South Sudan. This mediation is based on diplomatic resources (economic influence, China's role in the United Nations, development and military aid, and multi-cooperation efforts) to address the conflict and bring the conflicting parties to the negotiating table and reach a peaceful solution. This is geared to protect China's interests in the region and adheres to the basic principles of non-interference policy.

This mediation has gone through gradual steps, or the so-called meditation tools, which are also determined by the degree and type of China's interests in the region. China's mediation combines pragmatic mediation or private mediation that focuses on protecting its huge investment and Chinese citizens, with general mediation that includes resolving the dispute to maintain the two countries' economies and providing a regional security environment in the Horn of Africa. China's involvement in Africa's security issues constitutes a dynamic process that is linked to its national interests and national identity. Its diplomatic tools are related to variables and characteristics of the nature of the conflict, warring parties, and the degree of conflict. Therefore, the creative mediation diplomacy in Sudan and South Sudan has adhered to the basic principle of China's non-interference policy, which is closely linked to its national interests. It has relied on multilateralism, (regional and international) efforts, participation in UN peace-keeping missions, political dialogue, and consultation, among others.

Despite a few minor exceptions – including the way China has engaged with all the conflicting parties by using coercive resources to compel the Sudanese government to settle the conflict and providing military aid to protect oil installations–, Beijing has mostly adhered to the fundamental principles and the doctrine of "non-interference in others' affairs", which aims to respect the target state's sovereignty instead of seeking to topple the regime or spread creative chaos. Chinese mediation assumes a dynamic process that is closely linked to Beijing's type and degree of interests abroad and the type and degree of conflict among the conflicting parties. Therefore, major factors that exerted noticeable effect on this process included the broader changes taking place in the African continent, the international community, and the policies of other external security actors in the region, along with China's growing interests in Africa. As a new comer in the Horn of Africa, China's creative mediation is experimental, and it will be increasingly implemented in a cautious manner. ✍

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Re-Envisioning Non-Traditional Security in a Multi-Polarizing World: The Case of the SCO[*]

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century is witnessing the shattering of unipolar politics in the international system. The notion of a multi-polar world order and the idea of generating a more equitable system thus gain greater acceptance in international and regional cooperation platforms. A strong case in point is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). This article uses content analysis and process tracing by focusing on the SCO's treaties, declarations and other documents. The research aim is to reveal how the SCO reframes international security away from traditional understandings. Despite being widely depicted as a security-based organization, the SCO offers a much more comprehensive perspective into international cooperation by addressing its economic, cultural and energy-related aspects. This perspective defies traditional understandings of security constrained to military concerns. The SCO showcases non-traditional approaches to international security predicated on the complementarity of security and economy. This can be deduced from the fact that the insecurity of strategic trade routes arrests international development and renders the regions situated near strategic routes vulnerable to terrorist, separatist and extremist activities. Not surprisingly, these activities are part of the SCO's main agenda of struggle. In this respect, one could argue that the SCO has strong potential to advance the global struggle against terrorism, while enabling international development via economic cooperation. My analysis also suggests that the SCO's non-traditional approach to international security is strongly predicated on the notion of multipolarity, which is portrayed as the sine qua non of global peace and prosperity.

Keywords: Economic security, multi-polarity, mutuality, SCO, security

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FROM THE LAST QUARTER OF THE 20TH century onwards, the world has witnessed unprecedented transformations in political, social and economic areas. These transformations have been challenging us to rethink some of our foundational assumptions about security, which has gained a deeper international dimension under globalization beyond military concerns. Contemporary understandings of security favor much more inclusive and international perspectives that prompt us to address the military dimensions of security alongside its economic, energy-related, cultural and environmental dimensions. These dimensions also entail the rise of unconventional threats such as arms, drugs and human smuggling, religious fundamentalism, and terrorism as well as the intensification of regional cooperation efforts such as intelligence sharing, economic aid and diplomatic initiatives (Caballero-Anthony, Emmers & Acharya, 2016).

Following the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the United States, now freed from its perception of communist threat, regarded itself as the sole master of the international realm and developed a new security conception that favors a unipolar world order and military interventionism (Gürcan, 2019/2020). Within this framework, it focused its efforts on fighting terrorism (Islamic terrorism in particular) with the aim of expanding the reach of its military interventionism on a planetary scale. Yet, this design only lasted for about ten years and faced strong opposition from Asian powers. A strong case in point is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

> **Despite being widely depicted as a security-based organization, the SCO thus offers a much more comprehensive perspective into international cooperation by addressing its economic, cultural and energy-related aspects**

This article uses content analysis and process tracing by focusing on the SCO's treaties, declarations and other documents. The research aim is to reveal how the SCO reframes international security away from traditional understandings. Content analysis is a popular technique often used in textual analysis and relies on "coding based on research aims in order to enable a systematic categorization" (Gökçay, 2019/2020: 58). In turn, process analysis uses logical inferences to reveal decisive historical developments that shape social phenomena (Gürcan, 2017; Tutan 2019/2020). My analysis suggests that, despite being widely depicted as a security-based organization, the SCO thus offers a much more comprehensive perspective into international cooperation by addressing its economic, cultural and energy-related aspects (Aris, 2009; Song, 2014, Gürcan 2019a, Gürcan 2019b, Gürcan 2019/2020). This perspective defies traditional understandings of security constrained to military concerns. The SCO showcases non-traditional approaches to international security predicated on the complementary of security and economy. This can be deduced from the fact that the insecurity of strategic trade routes arrests international development and renders the regions situated near strategic routes vulnerable to terrorist, separatist and extremist activities. Not surprisingly, these activities are part of the SCO's main agenda of struggle. In this respect, one could argue that the SCO has strong poten-

tial to advance the global struggle against terrorism, while enabling international development via economic cooperation. My analysis also suggests that the SCO's non-traditional approach to international security is strongly predicated on the notion of multipolarity, which is portrayed as the sine qua non of global peace and prosperity.

Revisiting the Literature on International Security

The literature provides two competing understandings of security: traditional/conventional versus non-traditional security (Swanström, 2010). The traditional understanding, originally adopted by realist theories, restricted national security to military threats, which is why this understanding primarily focuses on issues such as military power, defense, research and development enterprises, national security and nuclear policies (Walt, 1991). This traditional security understanding dominated by realist theories regarded states as actors seeking to maximize their power within a zero-sum system (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). However, this framework seems to be failing in fully explaining the 21st century's key challenges.

Richard Ullman (1983) indicates that the classical approach to security should be questioned, because that national security cannot be restricted to military elements. In this vein, he asserts the importance of providing securing for the environment, economy and trade in ensuring national security. At the end of the Cold War, this idea marked an important step forward in advancing nontraditional understandings of security. Indeed, the end of the Cold War as well as that of the arms race between the Eastern and Western Blocs may have reduced the weight of military elements in international security (Miller, 2001; Swanström, 2010). Consequently,

the non-traditional security approach engages in a multidimensional analysis of security and posits that security does not merely involve military threats but also incorporates different dimensions such as economic, environmental and energy safety on a global scale. This being said, some observers adopting the non-traditional view abandoned the state-based understanding of security based on an idea that changing dynamics in globalization has weakened states by rendering national boundaries less and less important (Buzan, Waever& De Wilde, 1998). However, the world is still too far from a truly globalized system where national boundaries are insignificant, given that domestic and foreign policies are still being determined by states. In contemporary capitalist international relations, nation-states continue to play a decisive role in formulating local policies as well as in regulating international trade and competition (Desai, 2013; Gürcan 2019b; Pratschke, 2015). Accordingly, the multidimensional character of international security does not necessarily lessen the importance of nation-states. On the contrary, the newly emerging aspirations of contending nation-states to build a multipolar world order is also part of non-traditional security. Here, the concept of world order is understood as a global governance system that institutes international cooperation led by a state or groups of states (Gürcan 2019/2020).

> **As a security-based organization adopting a nation-state-based non-traditional security approach, the SCO's attitude of anti-interventionism reveals its distinct status from hegemonic security organizations serving to preserve the unipolar system.**

Non-traditional security predicated on the declining importance of nation states seems to provide intellectual support for hegemonic theses that legitimize foreign interventions. Particularly, the US is known to have taken advantage of similar "humanitarian" concepts in legitimizing its military interventionism after the 9/11 (Gürcan, 2019/b). In the literature, this finds its counterpart in the idea of establishing "regime security" (Koblentz, 2013), which paves the way for an interventionist stance. Regime security postulates that states designated as "authoritarian" have a natural inclination to use biological and chemical weapons towards local separatist elements. Therefore, regime security must be preserved by mobilizing interventions against these "authoritarian" states (Koblentz, 2013). This theory seems to have two major problems: The first problem involves its broad definition when conceptualizing the term "authoritarian", which reflects a strong liberal-democratic bias. The second one is the portrayal of local separatist elements as inherently "democratic". This approach, also adopted by Buzan (2008), serves to legitimize support for separatist activities and interventions that violate the principle of sovereign equality of states.

My analysis below suggests that the SCO situates itself in opposition to the hegemonic world order by reference to a nation-state-based understanding of non-traditional security. As opposed to Western hegemony represented by global governance instruments such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, the SCO mobilizes nation-states to oppose Western hegemony and lay the ground for a multipolar world order via alternative institutional mechanisms (Gürcan 2019b). As a security-based organization adopting a nation-state-based non-traditional security approach, the

Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit 2019.

SCO's attitude of anti-interventionism reveals its distinct status from hegemonic security organizations serving to preserve the unipolar system (Gürcan, 2019a, 2019b). Moreover, as regards the SCO's non-traditional security approach, the present article reveals this organization's multidimensional goals of economic, environmental and energy security along with military security constitute. The remainder of this article will discuss the SCO's historical formation, goals and operations in order to fully grasp these above-mentioned features.

"The Shanghai Five", commonly accepted as the extension of mutual military and security negotiations between Russia and China since the end of 1989 (Yuan, 2010: 855; Bekcan, 2012: 74), was initially formed on April 16, 1996 via a treaty among Russia, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and China signed in Shanghai (Koppel, 1996). With the inclusion of Uzbekistan in 2001, this initiative was renamed as the "Shanghai Cooperation Organization". The founding treaty was signed in 2002 at the meeting of the SCO's Heads of State in St. Petersburg. It was then brought into force in September 2003 (SCO, 2003a). The

SCO's institutionalization was initiated with the formation of the organization's permanent structures in the Moscow Declaration by Heads of States of SCO held in May 2003 (SCO, 2003b). Since 2004, new member statuses (i.e. observer member, dialogue partnership) have been incorporated, which served to expand the organization. The SCO's enlargement process, starting with Mongolia's acceptance into observer membership, was followed in 2005 by that of India, Pakistan and Iran (Norling & Swanström, 2007: 429). In 2017, India and Pakistan were accepted to full membership (SCO, 2017a). In 2019, the number of the organization's observer members was extended to Mongolia, Iran, Belarus, Afghanistan. Currently, the SCO involves dialogue partners such as Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey and Sri Lanka.

The SCO and International Security

The first article of the SCO's foundational treaty designates the organization's founding members while the second article states its goals. Stressing mutuality, the organization puts its goal as follows:

improving cooperation in various areas such as politics, economics, science, technology and culture; providing security and stability; and striving to build an equitable international political-economic order (SCO, 2001a). In addition, member states agree to closely cooperate to apply the Shanghai Treaty to their struggle with terrorism, separatism and extremism. In this treaty, parties agreed to cooperate in conformity with their national law as well as to prevent terrorist, separatist and extremist activities as defined in the first article (SCO, 2001b). Within this treaty's framework, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) has been founded for combating terrorism, separatism and extremism, portrayed as the "three evils". In this scope, common operation guidelines have been designated and a RATS headquarters has been founded in Uzbekistan's Taskent city.

> As clearly inferred from numerous meeting declarations underscoring the need for a multipolar world order, the organization's genuine attitude reflects an opposition to foreign interventionism and the continuity of nation-states rather than an orthodox rejection of globalization by itself.

At the SCO's Heads of States meeting in 2002, the SCO's foundational treaty was signed with the aspiration that the 21st century would be based on collective solution mechanisms and the organization would foster cooperation among member states in an emerging multipolar system of international relations. It was emphasized that the organization is not a structure founded against any state, group or bloc (SCO, 2002). The SCO is not part of any polarization; rather it is merely a reaction to the unipolar sys-

tem globally imposed by hegemonic powers. As clearly inferred from numerous meeting declarations underscoring the need for a multipolar world order, the organization's genuine attitude reflects an opposition to foreign interventionism and the continuity of nation-states rather than an orthodox rejection of globalization by itself. The following statement published after the 2002 meeting of the SCO's Heads of States clearly instantiates the above-mentioned perspective:

"Globalization and national interests of states are not mutually exclusive, but rather mutually complementary structural elements of an emerging world order. The international community needs to elaborate a new type of security concept based on the principles of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation, conducive to a radical weakening of the factors undermining security and to the eradication of sources of new threats" (SCO, 2002: 3).

The SCO's security dimension focuses on terrorist activities, as the region predominantly harbors elements that are part of non-state actors threatening regional security. Member states are indeed surrounded by terrorist, separatist and extremist activities. Afghanistan, the region Andican in Kyrgyzstan, the Kashmir region between India and Pakistan, Xinjiang-Uygur Autonomous Region in China are regions that both harbor intense fundamentalist and separatist activities and constitute the routes for trade, petrol and natural gas lines. Thus, security efforts for reflecting the traditional understanding of mere military elements do not offer any long term solution for the region.

The 2002 Declaration also emphasizes the need for tackling security based on a nin-traditional approach. It refers to the various dimensions of security that have to do with economy, energy, the environment, culture and health, be-

sides military challenges. In this perspective, it is possible to argue the SCO attempts to preserve the principle of sovereign equality of states and lay a concrete ground for a nation-state-based understanding of non-traditional security. An important point to emphasize in this understanding is that in case of a regional conflict, the SCO is to adopt an anti-interventionist method based on the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs instead of the Western "responsibility to protect" (R2P) doctrine (Aris, 2012). Adopting this former doctrine, Russia and China refused many UN solutions pioneered by the US as part of the UN Security Council. For example, they blocked or abstained from the 2006 Sudan and 2011 Libya peacekeeping operations. In the case of the SCO, SCO member states provide an alternative method by upholding the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs. As such, instead of peacekeeping operations, the organization focuses on intelligence sharing within RATS and a strong diplomatic and political cooperation (Aris, 2012: 452-453; Gürcan, 2019a, 2019b).

> **Accordingly, the SCO Business Council and Interbank Consortium have been formed and charged with the execution of the organization's development and infrastructure projects.**

Although, the SCO's economic dimension has been present since it was founded with the intention of improving cooperation among member states, more concrete steps in this area have been taken since 2009 via treaties among member states. In this respect, the 2008 economic crisis also revealed the necessity for multilateral cooperation to overcome the negative

effects of global crises in the future (Gürcan, 2019a, 2019b). In line with this need, economic development has been emphasized for the provision of regional security (SCO, 2009: 1, SCO, 2011:1). Accordingly, the SCO Business Council and Interbank Consortium have been formed and charged with the execution of the organization's development and infrastructure projects. That is, while the SCO Business Council attempts to coordinate development projects via investments, the Interbank Consortium executes coordination among member states' banks to finance infrastructural investments (Gürcan, 2019a, 2019b).

The 2013 Heads of State meeting pointed to the need for building transportation roads among member states, which will serve for faster development and is geared towards enhancing the competitiveness and attractiveness of international and regional transportation corridors. Relatedly, greater cooperation was planned to build international transportation roads and to establish new generation logistic centers (SCO, 2013). In 2014, member states signed a treaty for creating favorable conditions for international highway transportation and agreed on inaugurating six different roads (SCO, 2014). The operation of these roads is not only expected to increase the trade volume among member states but would also serve the development of cities located near the highways. These six roads outlined in the treaty are expected to be opened after 2020:

1- Barnaul - Veseloyarsk (Russia)/ Auyl (Kazakhstan) - Semey - Bakhty (Kazakhstan)/ Bakhtu (China) - Tacheng Airport - Kuitun - Urumqi.
2- St. Petersburg - Orenburg - Sagarchin (Russia)/ Zhaisan (Kazakhstan) - Aktobe - Kyzylorda -Shymkent - Taraz - Almaty - Khorgos (Kazakhstan)/ Horgos

(China) - Urumqi – Lianyungang.

3- Urumqi - Kashgar - Karasu (China)/ Kulma (Tajikistan) - Murghab - Khorog - Dushanbe (Vahdat).

4- Urumqi - Khorgos (China)/ Korgas (Kazakhstan) - Almaty - Taraz - Shyimkent - Konysbaeva (Kazakhstan)/ Yallama (Uzbekistan) - Chinaz.

5- Kant - APT "Ak-Tilek" (Kyrgyzstan)/ Karasu (Kazakhstan) - Taraz - Shyimkent - Kyzylorda - Aktobe - Zhaisan (Kyrgyzstan)/ Sagarchin (Russia) - Orenburg - Saint Petersburg.

6- At-Bashy - Torugart (Kyrgyzstan)/ Turugart (China) - Kashgar - Urumqi - Lianyungang.

SCO map: Green: members; Light blue: observers; Dark blue: dialogue partners.

The SCO's 2025 development strategy was designated based on the prediction that the coming era will witness important changes to the international relations system, including the constitution of a new multipolar world system. Considering the interdependent relationship between security and well-being, the importance of economic development for ensuring a stable regional security towards a new world order was underlined (SCO, 2015).

At the 13th SCO Heads of States meeting, Xi Jinping indicated the Belt and Road Initiative shares the same goals as the SCO. He suggested synchronizing the SCO's treaties towards creating transportation and logistics roads and facilitating trade and investment with the Road and Belt Initiative in the name of enhanced regional development (Xi, 2017: 399; Gökçay, 2019/2020; Gürcan, 2019/2020; Koray, 2019/2020; Tutan, 2019/2020; Yi, 2019/2020). The significance of this suggestion stems from the fact that the current members of the Belt and Road Initiative make up 65% of world population and 40% of global gross domestic product (Kaptan, 2019: 31; Şahin, 2019: 102). Positively responding to China's demand, Rashid Alimov, then General Secretary of the SCO, stated in an interview to CCTV2 that the relationship between the SCO and the Belt and Road Initiative would significantly serve the organization's future and accelerate member states' development via enhanced regional cooperation (SCO, 2017b; Şahin, 2019). This synchronization process is expected to improve economies of regional states and thus weaken elements disrupting the region's stability. In line with the SCO's Development Strategy emphasizing the relationship between economic well-being and security, the Belt and Road Initiative is to be seriously considered for the SCO's future prosperity (Sadovnikova et al., 2019).

In 2017, with full membership of Pakistan and India, the third largest economy following the US and China, the SCO has become Eurasia's most important organization. Its cooperation aims encompass a broad region ranging from Arctic area in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south, from Kaliningrad in the west to Li-

anyungang in the east (Alimov, 2018: 116). In 2016, the gross domestic product in the organization grew by 4.84% reaching two times the global average. In 2018, with eight members, the SCO reached one fourth of the global gross domestic product. Member states are regularly increasing their foreign currency and gold reserves amounting approximately to 4 billion US dollars (Alimov, 2018: 117). Additionally, considering that member states' population constitutes one half of the world's total, the organization's regional and international importance becomes more apparent.

With India's membership, the International North-South Transport Corridor Project (ISTC) aiming to connect India and Russia via highways, sea and railroads was also incorporated into the SCO's scope. This project can be advanced via regional states' coordination in upholding the SCO's treaties for "Facilitating Access to Trade Routes" (Alimov, 2018: 120; Hillman, 2017). The project is indicated to dovetail nicely with the Belt and Road Initiative. Both the Belt and Road Initiative and the International North-South Transport Corridor interconnect the SCO geo raphy and therefore will importantly contribute to socio-economic development via diversifying member states' economic tools and transportation routes.

The SCO geography also possesses considerable importance for member states in terms of energy security. This geography includes a proximately 25% of world's petroleum reserves, more than 50% of natural gas reserves, 35% of coal reserves, and half of the known uranium reserves. In other words, the SCO geography is located at a highly significant spot for the world's energy supply. Both energy demanding countries (China, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Pakistan, and Mongolia) and the providing countries (Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Iran) are SCO members which, in turn, will deepen the organization's cooperation in this area (InfoSCO,

2015). In this respect, with the aim of proposing projects in terms of energy and exchanging ideas, the SCO Energy Club was formed as an advisory mechanism. It does not serve any function in terms of project implementation yet, but it provides the ground for bilateral or multilateral cooperation (Mastepanov, 2017). Although the Energy Club remains at the level of consensus, it is a useful enterprise to ideologically and culturally foster Eurasianism (Gürcan, 2019a: 74).

The SCO also installs cooperation mechanisms among member states in the area of health. This reveals that the organization does not only regard member states' development in terms of economy, but also forefronts a socio-economic framework advancing social development. In accordance with this, member states declared their willingness to firmlu cooperate in the area of health, particularly in combating epidemics (SCO, 2018). As from January 2020 onwards China has been facing such an epidemic, and also benefiting from member states' support in terms of material and technical aid to combat the new Corona virus (SCO, 2020). Although the epidemic is still not yet fully prevented, emergency interventions are being efficiently implemented. Upholding the "Shanghai Spirit", regional states do not leave each other in isolation regarding threats in military, economic, health and energy areas and continue to cooperate for enhanced development and mutual benefit.

Finally, another dimension underlying the SCO's security provision encompasses cultural matters. In this respect, the SCO Youth Council founded in 2009 may be regarded as an important step for the future of regional cooperation. Additionally, this step may also contribute to goals for realizing a new multipolar international system. While SCO's member states struggle against "three evils" in the region, the Youth Council encourages the creation of a bet-

ter future, promoting the physical, mental and spiritual development of younger generations in order to provide the sustainability of regional security (Kazakh TV, 2019). Moreover, by means of new youth networks established by the Council, the impact of youth groups led by the North's nongovernmental organizations via color revolutions may also be constrained (Gürcan, 2019a:75)

Conclusion

In the new millennium, the changing world oder has also shaped the content of the security concept. As the contemporary era does not merely involve military threats, the provision of security is not viable through solely undertaking military enterprises. Security can only assume a sustainable existence when considered along its dimensions related to economy, politics, the environment and culture. The Western interventionist perspective, although recognized as valid in the post-modern literature, also tackles the multidimensional assessment of security and the need for reducing military elements' weight in an individualistic context. Thus failing to thoroughly interpret current developments, it serves the preservation of a unipolar world order and ignores the principle of nation states' sovereign equality, despite the fact that nation-stares are still among the major players in global politics. The present article introduced the SCO as an exemplary case of non-traditional security based on the principle of the sovereign equality of nation-states.

Within the framework of the nation-state-based understanding of non-traditional security, the SCO stands out by its struggle against the most salient threat elements in the region, that is, the "three evils" (terrorism, separatism, extremism). In doing so, it addresses the military, economic, energyrelated and cultural aspects of international security. Aiming to cooperate in all

of these areas, the SCO particularly emphasizes two points regarding mutuality and non-interference in domestic affairs: Respecting the principle of nation states' sovereign equality in the struggle against security threats, the SCO refuses to get involved in activities that might entail interventions to states' internal affairs. As such, it is only engaged in combating threats which may undermine regional security and states' existence. By this token, the SCO predominantly focuses on other dimensions of security striving to preclude the rise of threats. Employing an analogy about human health, one might argue the SCO aims to bolster the immune system to prevent disease.

Trying to empower the emerging multipolar system, the SCO tries to approach military topics in relation with economic, cultural, energy and environmental issues (Gürcan, 2019a, 2019b). Hence, in its efforts to install regional safety, it tries to build a system based on the win-win principle rather than following a zero-sum structure. In order to fully realize this system discursively adopted via several treaties, the organization is to accelerate the implementation of its declared intentions. In the age of nation-states, conflicts will be commonly occurring around states' individual interests. Yet, these interests may be welded into enhanced cooperation on the grounds of win-win principles. From the view of the SCO members, for example, there is a common threat against regional security, which is rooted in terrorist, separatist and extremist activities. Damages that might stem from these activities would not be restricted to countries where terror activities take place, but would also impact the whole region. Since the region is currently interconnected via trade and energy routes, consequences of terrorism would be destructive for all countries. A much-needed multidimensional cooperation environment for preventing this destruction is being forged

by the SCO. The organization has the necessary material ground to enable both regional and international socio-economic development and the constitution of a multipolar world order. ♨

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The Middle Eastern Security Dilemma and Its Impact on China's Belt and Road Initiative

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ABSTRACT

World peace cannot be attained without ensuring Middle Eastern security. This being so, the present article focuses on current security issues in this region, with special attention to the following questions: What is the current security situation in the Middle East? What are the causes of the security dilemma in the Middle East? What kind of negative impact may the Middle East security have on China's Belt and Road Initiative? And what does China propose to resolve the security dilemma in the Middle East?

THE MIDDLE EAST IS A REGION ENDOWED with a strategic geographical location, rich natural resources, areas of fertile land, and a vibrant civilizational legacy. However, since the early 20th century, this region has been center stage for political violence and military confrontation. The severity of Middle Eastern insecurity is perhaps incomparable to any other region on the planet. One thing is certain: world peace cannot be attained without ensuring Middle Eastern security. However, Middle Eastern peace requires not only the active engagement of local populations, but also the concerted efforts and wisdom of the international community.

On November 27–28, 2019, the Middle East Security Forum, hosted by the China Institute of International Studies, opened in Beijing for two days with the theme "Security in the Middle East under the New Situation: Challenges and Prospects". Nearly two hundred influential Chinese and foreign officials and scholars attended this conference to discuss solutions to hotspot issues, negotiate over security cooperation plans, and seek for strategies of stable development. This was the first time that China had held a high-level forum on Middle Eastern affairs with "security" at the forefront. This demonstrates how China's interest in Middle Eastern security issues has recently widened, evolving from a merely economic perspective to a more comprehensive one that equally values economic and security-driven issues (Boyi, 2020).

Given the relevance of the Middle East for world peace, this article focuses on current security issues in this region, with special attention to the following questions: What is the current security situation in the Middle East? What are the causes of the security dilemma in the Middle East? What kind of negative impact may the Middle East security have on China's Belt and Road Initiative? And what does China propose to resolve the security dilemma in the Middle East?

The Current Security Situation in the Middle East

Middle Eastern politics were turbulent in the final days of 2019. On December 27, China, Russia, and Iran held a joint military exercise in the Gulf of Oman. This was an unusual development: it marked the first time in the 40 years since Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979 that these countries had engaged in a joint military exercise. This event, especially in the context of tightening U.S. sanctions on Iran, was clearly intended to support Iran (Chenjing, 2019). On December 29, the U.S. military conducted a large-scale air attack on the 35th and 36th Brigade bases of Iraq's pro-Iran Popular Mobilisation Force, killing more than 20 Iraqi militiamen and triggering a popular demonstration in front of the U.S. Embassy in Iraq (Hui, 2020). In the early morning of January 3, 2020, Major General Qasem Suleimani, commander

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi meets with foreign guests attending the Middle East Security Forum in Beijing, capital of China, Nov. 27, 2019. (Xinhua/Li Xiang)

of the Quds Brigade, affiliated with the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards, was assassinated by U.S. drones, which led to the escalation of the conflict between the United States and Iran (Shichun, 2020).

These events signalled the beginning of a new round of large-scale anti-Americanism in the Middle East. After its defeat in Syria, it seems that the United States is likely to lose in Iraq again. Although the above-mentioned incidents have exacerbated the conflict between the United States and Iran, if thetimeline is extended, the security situation in the Middle East has changed significantly since the Arab Spring in 2011.

Indeed, the security situation in the Middle East is generally cooling down and is now controllable to a certain extent; resolving conflicts through political means has become a trend. Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, China has proposed not to fight, but to solve issues politically; but no one has paid attention to China's

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voice. Even many Arab countries complained and criticized China, arguing that China chose to continue to support the Assad government. Eight years have passed now. Although the wars in Syria, Libya, and Yemen are still ongoing, they cannot be regarded as purely civil conflicts: they have evolved into proxy wars, which have also negatively affected the internal political and economic security of these countries. At present, all parties are growing weary of these confrontations and are willing to seek to de-escalate the situation.

Among them, Iran is facing severe economic difficulties due to extreme pressure from the United States, and domestic protests have repeat-

edly erupted. Saudi Arabia has caused strategic overdrafts through its involvement in regional warfare, and the Jamal Khashoggi incident has negatively impacted on its international image. Israel has fallen into persistent political rigidity because of repeated domestic elections and failures to form a cabinet. Turkey has been playing a strong role and taking a tough stance on many issues such as oil and gas drilling in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Syrian civil war, the Libyan civil war, and the Qatar Crisis; but domestic political and economic challenges have put tremendous pressure on the Erdogan government. Meanwhile, the United States has no intention of going to war with Iran; rather, it hopes to reap the benefits of intensifying the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Therefore, all parties are willing to ease the situation.

Second, the United States still dominates the Middle East; it is still the most prominent factor affecting the development of the situation there. Those studying the current characteristics of the power game in the Middle East have commented that the United States is reducing its strategic investment in the area, while Russia has increased its influence on the Syria issue and deepened its cooperation with regional powers. This opinion can be summarized as "the United States withdraws and Russia moves forward", which evokes the beginning of a "post-American era" (Long, 2020).

The relative decline of global U.S. influence is a fact (Gürcan, 2019; Gürcan, 2019/2020), but it should not be regarded too simplistically, especially in the Middle East. Frankly, the current US-Russian power competition in the Middle East can be summed up as "U.S. retreating but not weak, Russia advancing but not strong". Although the U.S. is making a strategic withdrawal

from the Middle East, it is still the most powerful external power in Middle Eastern affairs: the withdrawal will be a long historical process. Russia will continue to return to the Middle East, but mainly at the tactical level; it does not fully dominate the Middle East at the strategic level due to its weak economy. For the foreseeable future, "America is strong and Russia is weak" is still the basic scenario in the Middle East (Zhongmin, 2020).

Third, the status of regional powers in the Middle East continues to rise; they will become important pieces on the Middle Eastern chessboard. Before the Arab Spring, the countries of the region could not be fully independent, but with the withdrawal of U.S. power, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Israel have begun to challenge U.S. hegemony, although Egypt has been left behind due to the coup d'état and economic decline. The first four regional powers have played a greater role in the hot issues in the Middle East, even more so than the big global powers. They have begun to fill the power vacuum and compete for the dominance of the regional order.

The eye of the Middle Eastern storm is Iran. Since the Iraq war in 2003 and the Arab Spring that began in 2010, Iran's strength has increased prominently. The rise of Iran will inevitably lead to confrontation with other countries in the region, especially Saudi Arabia. The problem is, there is no single power that can unite all the countries in the Middle East. In the past, there were traditional Arab-nationalist powers like Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. But Iraq has now been brought down by war, Syria has been divided since 2011, and Egypt has been severely hit since the 2011 revolution. Therefore, only Saudi Arabia can engage in blocs (Shaoxian, 2020). The Middle East has returned to the chaos of a century ago.

Protesters try to set fire to the outside fence of the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, Iraq on Dec. 31, 2019. (Xinhua/Khalil Dawood)

Fourth, non-traditional security issues such as terrorism, refugees, energy, and cyber-attacks have become more prominent. To deal with each of these issues in turn: the Middle East is not only a victim of terrorism, but also a breeding ground. Although the Islamic State has been severely weakened in recent years, the roots of the thoughts leading to terrorism have not been eradicated, and returning jihadists remain a potential threat to all countries. The millions of refugees caused by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Syrian war, the Libyan war, and the Yemen crisis have not only brought a severe political and economic crisis to the Middle East, but also put significant pressure on Europe and the world. As for energy security and cyberattacks, the latest incidents have happened in Sau-di Arabia. A drone attack on Saudi oilfields in September 2019 caused a 50% reduction in oil production, which further affected the world oil market and energy security. We should attach great importance to this new trend.

The Causes of the Security Dilemma in the Middle East

Countries in the Middle East have few independent political, economic, diplomatic, cultural, and military resources to compete with the United States; neither have they established an effective collective security structure. Therefore, since World War II, the United States has been the largest provider of security public goods for the world generally and the Middle East particularly. Countries in the Middle East rely on security

protection provided by the United States (Weijian, 2019). The U.S. has established many military bases in many countries in the Middle East; has signed a large number of defense peace treaties; and has conducted military personnel exchanges and joint training, military intelligence sharing, and military equipment provision in accordance with these peace treaties. This has allowed a greater degree of penetration of U.S. military force into the countries of the Middle East. Especially in the Gulf region, the United States has built a "Pax Americana" under the auspices of its strength.

The United States also provides protection for the political systems of many states in the Middle East. For example, the Gulf countries are oil producers, but at the same time the last remaining absolute monarchies in the world. Although the United States has always prided itself on being a defender of democracy, freedom, and human rights, and has always been keen on launching "democracy transformation" plans in the Middle East, it has never challenged or criticized the monarchic systems in the Gulf region. Instead, it has acted as their protector, thanks to the U.S. interest in benefiting from these countries' large energy resources. Besides, these absolute monarchies are much easier to control than other authoritarian countries because they are eager to maintain their systems and in dire need of a great power guarantee. Meanwhile, countries that are anti-American or fight for regional hegemony can easily become the targets of U.S. containment and crackdown. This can be seen clearly when looking at the history of U.S. Gulf policy.

U.S. Gulf policy prior to the Trump presidency can be divided into five phases. In the first phase, from 1969 to 1979, the U.S. implemented the Twin Pillar strategy. Its main strategic goals were to curb Soviet influence in the Middle East and ensure the supply of oil. Therefore, Saudi Arabia and Iran were established as "the police in the Gulf region". This period ended with the outbreak of the Iranian Islamic Revolution (Xinli and Xiaomin, 2001). In the second stage, from 1981 to 1990, the U.S. implemented the Strategic Balancing strategy, aiming to curb Iran while weakening Iraqi forces during wars. In the third stage, from 1991 to 2000, the United States implemented the Dual Containment strategy, containing Iran and Iraq by imposing sanctions. In the fourth stage, from 2001 to 2009, the U.S. implemented an anti-terrorism strategy to counter terrorism through a democratic transformation plan in the Middle East; thus it launched the Iraq war while maintaining sanctions on Iran.

Iraqi people in Baghdad protesting the United States' the Middle East peace plan on January 31, 2020 (Xinhua / Khalil Dawood)

As a result, Iran and Iraq became the key targets for the United States. However, during the Obama administration (2009–2016), the previous containment policy was replaced by seeking change through contact rather than isolation. Guided by this policy, the U.S. reached a nuclear agreement with Iran and sought to withdraw from Iraq, showing that the U.S. was no longer concerned about those issues not vital for its own interests. One reason for this was the U.S. shale gas revolution, which reduced demand for

Middle Eastern oil, so that the US's energy interests in the Middle East began to decline (Jikang, 2019). Another reason was that the United States was trapped in the quagmire of the Iraq war for more than a decade; it urgently needed to withdraw, and then to seek strategic rebalancing to curb its rivals in Asia, particularly China.

After Donald Trump took office, he revised Obama's Middle East policy. First, he gave full support to Israel, for example by announcing the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, relocating the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, declaring the Golan Heights as Israeli territory, launching the "Peace to Prosperity" plan, and reducing the Palestinian-Israeli question to an economic issue; all these moves have been widely criticized in Palestine and the Arab world (Jin, 2019). Second, he set out to unite allies but with an "America first" philosophy, so that allies had to bear the cost of combating security issues such as terrorism and extremism. Third, Iran became the main target. Thanks to Trump's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear agreement, resumption of the containment strategy, and treatment of Iran as the United States' biggest enemy in the Middle East, the previously ameliorating Middle East security situation has become sharply worse.

Take, for example, the Saudi oilfield attack. On September 14, 2019, several drones attacked two of the Saudi Arabian National Petroleum Corporation's oil facilities. Subsequently, Saudi Arabia announced that it would cut its oil production by half, reducing its output by 5.7 million barrels per day, causing an increase in world oil prices. The Yemeni Houthi armed forces have claimed responsibility for this incident. The United States believes that Iran was responsible for the attack, but Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait,

and other countries have not publicly named the attackers, and have not rashly accused Iran of being behind the scenes. This shows that Saudi Arabia hopes to reduce the internal and external shocks caused by this event (Huanyu, 2019).

However, there are doubts over the incident. Although the Houthi armed forces have repeatedly launched drone attacks on Saudi Arabia, this time the technology involved was more advanced than ever before, causing all parties to wonder whether the Houthis have such weaponry. In addition, the United States is responsible for the Saudi air defense system, so how could unmanned aerial vehicles penetrate these defenses and launch attacks without any warning? One can imagine how big the Saudis' air defense loophole must be.

The incident further exacerbated Saudi concerns over Iran's military power. An important part of Iran's military policy is the development of the Rocket Army. Iran has achieved medium-range missile capability, albeit at the expense of developing its Air Force. If Iran's missile technology continues to develop, its regional influence and threat will continue to increase, which will pose a security risk to Israel and Saudi Arabia. By then, the important military targets of both countries will be within the range of Iranian missiles. Considering this, Saudi Arabia is bound to become more reliant on U.S. security protection.

Therefore, the current security situation is causing a dilemma for Middle Eastern states. In the past, they could rely on the United States, but that is no longer the case. At the same time, no new alternative force can replace the U.S. in providing a security structure, and Arab countries cannot establish a collective security mechanism for three reasons. First, there are multiple layers of overlapping competitive relationships in the Mid-

dle East: between large foreign countries (mainly the United States and Russia), Arab countries and non-Arab countries in the region, the Arab/Islamic world and Israel, Islamic Sunnis and Shiites, inter-Arab conflicts, and so on. Second, there are many alliances. For example, there is the U.S.-led "Middle East Strategic Alliance" against Iran. In the Syrian civil war, Russia and Iran support government forces while the United States, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia support the opposition; in the political process of resolving the Syria crisis, a confrontational pattern formed between the two camps of Russia, Turkey, and Syria on one side, and the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt on the other. Within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Qatar was isolated by the other members; in the Eastern Mediterranean oil and gas project, Turkey and Libya are on one side, while Southern Cyprus, Israel, and Egypt are on the other. The third and most fundamental reason is that the century-old structure of the Middle East is collapsing, and the original geopolitical balance is being destroyed; Arab states such as Iraq, Syria, and Yemen are weakening, but non- Arab countries are becoming stronger and more nationalist. This makes it more difficult to establish a security structure that can be agreed upon by all parties. It can be said that if Iran and Saudi Arabia are not reconciled, peace in the Middle East will be difficult to achieve.

The Impact of Middle East Security Issues on China's Belt and Road Initiative

In the past, due to geographical distance and the complexity of the situation in the region, China did not pay enough attention to this area and the Middle East was not so important for China's foreign policy. However, in the new millennium, and especially since the beginning of the Belt and Road Initiative (Chen, 2019/2020; Gökçay,

2019/2020; Koray, 2019/2020; Tutan, 2019/2020; Yi, 2019/2020), the political, economic, cultural, and diplomatic relations between the Middle East and China have become increasingly close. If the Middle East is unstable, unsafe, and unsustainable for a long period of time, it will also be difficult to advance the Belt and Road Initiative smoothly.

> **The Belt and Road Initiative cannot bypass the Middle East, which is full of security challenges and risks. First, terrorism is the public enemy of humankind, and is extremely serious in the Middle East; therefore, to combat terrorism and obtain the moral high ground, China must clearly demonstrate its attitude.**

The security situation in the Middle East will have an impact on China's various interests. First, energy security. More than 50% of China's oil is imported from the Middle East. After the United States withdrew from the nuclear agreement with Iran, it put maximum pressure on the country. One goal was to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero; this has caused huge damage to the interests of China, Europe, India, Japan, and other countries (Hongda, 2019). The safety of the passage of the Strait of Hormuz also has a significant impact on China's energy security, and is also an important consideration for the joint military exercises between China, Russia, and Iran. In addition, the attack on the Saudi oilfield caused oil production to be abruptly cut by more than half, producing fluctuations in the global oil market and setting off alarm bells for China's energy reserves.

Second, security against terrorism. The Belt and Road Initiative cannot bypass the Middle

East, which is full of security challenges and risks. First, terrorism is the public enemy of humankind, and is extremely serious in the Middle East; therefore, to combat terrorism and obtain the moral high ground, China must clearly demonstrate its attitude. Second, on the Syrian battlefield, there are various East Turkistan terrorist organizations that have posted videos calling for a small jihad against China. Once these jihadists and terrorists return to China, they will endanger the security of the western region and indeed the whole country. Third, China already has a lot of practice and experience in counterterrorism and anti-extremism, and urgently needs the support and affirmation of the Middle East countries.

Third, economic security. China has a large number of investments, enterprises and personnel in the Middle East. There are 200,000 Chinese in Dubai alone. China has invested in the Iraqi oil industry, built industrial parks in Egypt, and taken part in reconstruction in Syria. The deteriorating security situation may cause huge economic losses. For example, in 2011, withdrawing Chinese nationals from Libya caused tens of billions of yuans to China. From this, China has learned the lesson that only a stable Middle East can help protect its overseas interests.

Fourth, strategic security. Although in the past, the Middle East was not given sufficient weight in China's overall diplomatic strategic layout, the impact of geopolitical changes in the Middle East has global significance. For example, the Gulf crisis and Gulf War of 1990–91 prevented the United States from comprehensively containing China and eased strategic pressure on China after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe. The 9/11 incident in 2001 again disrupted the U.S. siege of China, resolved the deterioration of the relationship caused by the China-US plane collision incident in April 2001, opened the Sino-US cooperative anti-terrorism mechanism,

and laid the foundation for China's accession to the WTO. For the next decade, China once again experienced a period of strategic opportunities. Since then, both the Obama and the Trump administrations have hoped to withdraw from the Middle East and deal with China, but the deterioration of the security situation will continue to plunge the United States into the Middle East; this will be beneficial for China's further development.

China's Approach to Solving Middle Eastern Security Issues

At the Middle East Security Forum, many Middle Eastern leaders and scholars called on China to strengthen its political, economic, and military presence in the Middle East. There are indeed many security problems in the Middle East, but China is also a newcomer to the region. China does not have the strength to maintain the stability of the entire Middle East. If the area falls into a vortex, China can only work with other countries to stop the appearance of larger-scale turmoil, crack down on radical religious forces, and maintain the stability of individual countries (Jisi, 2016).

China has been working hard to contribute to security and stability in the Middle East, in accordance with UN resolutions and the wishes of local countries.

However, since the Belt and Road Initiative began, China has increased its involvement in security issues in the Middle East. China has been working hard to contribute to security and stability in the Middle East, in accordance with UN resolutions and the wishes of local countries.

For example, China has sent 1,800 peacekeepers to the Middle East, spreading across all countries in the region. China has insisted on

escorting all ships in the Gulf of Aden for more than ten years. China has also held a Middle East Security Forum with Middle Eastern countries, proposing to get rid of the old Cold War mentality and explore the creation of a common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable new security concept as an approach to solving Middle Eastern security issues (FMPRC, 2020).

Wang Yi has said that common security is to ensure the security of all countries; not to build the security of one country on the insecurity of others, let alone to seek unilateral absolute security. Comprehensive security means not only seeking military security, but also achieving political stability and social tranquility. Cooperative security is to achieve security through political dialogue and multilateral cooperation, not to impose it unilaterally through military intervention. Sustainable security is to attach equal importance to security and development, and provide support for security through development, so that security has an endogenous motivation and will not be a flash in the pan (FMPRC, 2019).

> **The original intention of the Arab Spring was to promote economic development through political change, but countries such as Libya, Syria, and Yemen descended into war. Not only did political change fail, but also economic development did not acquire a safe environment, which is a great irony.**

To this end, first, China should continue to strengthen economic exchanges with the Middle East, promote economic development in the Middle East, and promote security through fast development. At present, the countries of the region, both non-oil-producing and oil-producing, are facing severe economic development issues. The original intention of the Arab Spring was to promote economic development through political change, but countries such as Libya, Syria, and Yemen descended into war. Not only did political change fail, but also economic development did not acquire a safe environment, which is a great irony.

Among the oil-producing countries, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, and others face sluggish oil prices and increasing fiscal deficits. Moreover, Iran is subject to sanctions, and its economic development has encountered great obstacles, which has led to constant domestic opposition and protests. All this shows that economic instability is an important cause of political insecurity. So, who can provide the driving force for economic development in the Middle East? Obviously, compared with western countries' emphasis on political and security interests, China's concept of attaching importance to economic development is more operable and attractive. In particular, the Belt and Road Initiative is a public product launched by China that can contribute to the economy and security of the Middle East.

Second, China should continue to increase its efforts to promote peace talks and contribute China's wisdom and strength to solving hotspot issues in the Middle East. China is developing good relations with all countries in the Middle East, without discriminating between Arab and non-Arab countries, Islamic and non-Islamic countries, or Sunni and Shiite countries. This has laid a solid foundation for China to provide proposals or even solutions accepted by all parties to resolve the hot issues in this region, such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Syrian crisis, and the Iranian nuclear controversy. In the future, China's position on these issues will be clearer and firmer, insisting on solving these problems through political consultation rather than military means, and using multilateralist principles instead of unilateral action (Sheng, 2019).

Third, China should strengthen security cooperation in the Middle East. This includes two aspects, the first being deepening security

cooperation with Middle Eastern countries. Just as President Xi Jinping has put forward, China will follow the "Three Principles" of "No agent, no sphere of influence, and no attempt to fill the vacuum."

This pledge has won unanimous and wide praise from Middle Eastern countries, and has become China's most important political advantage and strategic asset in strengthening security cooperation with the Middle East. China has also put these principles into action. For example, in recent years, the Chinese Navy has participated in normalized escorts in the Gulf of Aden, and has conducted anti-terrorism security consultations with countries in many regions. When President Xi visited the region in 2016, he announced the provision of U.S.$300 million in assistance for law enforcement cooperation, police training, and other projects, to help regional countries strengthen capacity building (CCTV, 2016). China has also established a permanent military base in Djibouti. This is, on the one hand, a natural process by which China's influence is gradually increasing; on the other, it is a concrete manifestation of China's increasing role in regional security affairs.

Another aspect includes security cooperation with other big powers. The adjustment of U.S. Middle East policy is the biggest variable affecting the development of the regional situation. Of late, the United States has continually accused China of piggybacking on U.S. security protection in the Middle East, and has started to assign more security responsibilities to China. Chaos in the Middle East may remain the norm. However, uncontrollable disorder in the Middle East is not beneficial to the interests of either the United States or China. Historically, for more than a century, the extent and attitude of major countries' involvement in Middle Eastern affairs has affected the development of the Middle East, especially in the area of security. Although the intervention of major powers depends on their respective national interests, there will always be points of interaction between the interests of major powers, which will form the basis for cooperation among them (Qi and Wenji, 2018). Therefore, the international community urgently needs to make a concerted effort to restructure the balance of power in the Middle East.

Fortunately, since the changes of 2011, compared with other big powers, China is the only country that has not made strategic mistakes in the Middle East. Even though the Middle East is full of dangers and faces many security issues, China still has to unswervingly promote the smooth progress of the Belt and Road Initiative. Of course, this is not to say that China has already exerted great influence in the Middle East. In fact, China's role may not even be that of a small player, and increasing its influence in the Middle East will be a long and slow process. However, the elements of China's Belt and Road Initiative are not separate from each other, but form a tightly integrated whole. It is a bond that links Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Central Asia, and is also a public good provided by China to the world. Since the Middle East is at the heart of the world, a peaceful, stable, and developing Middle East can contribute to the continuity and realization of the entire initiative, the connectivity of Eurasia, and to interaction and exchange between human civilizations.

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The Geopolitics of Separatist Movements in Eurasia

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ABSTRACT

Historically, the struggle for global hegemony has seen geographical power centers move from one region to another. In the 15th and 16th centuries, maritime trade and sea power shifted the world's center of weight to the West. At that time Asia entered a period of stagnation. It has been observed that the transition of power is directly associated with the change of control of global production networks and trade routes. In the last quarter of the 20th century, the dynamism in the world economy at long last shifted back towards Asia. It is noteworthy that Western-based powers are now trying to block this development. The intensive efforts by Western powers to prevent the power center from shifting to Asia have turned into fierce competition in the Eurasian region. The forces that are parties to this competition have backed subversive activities as an effort to intervene in the internal affairs of countries with high potential to stand out, to protect their positions and defeat opponents. The forces that can resist similar destructive activities will take an active place in the new international system. Today, the instability created by separatist movements, which we currently observe as one of the most salient destructive activities, is a tool used by the prevailing hegemonic forces to exclude potential rivals in the race for hegemony.

Keywords: Destructive activities, Eurasia, geopolitics, hegemony struggle, international system.

THE STRUGGLE FOR GLOBAL HEGEMONY, experienced in various dimensions in different periods, has often led to a shift of power or control from a state or groups of states in a certain region to other states in another region. This shift is predicated upon a change of control in terms of production networks and trade routes. The countries controlling production networks and trade routes have also acquired leadership within the world system. In the context of the struggle for global hegemony, the end of the 14th century witnessed a power shift towards the West. In the 15th and 16th centuries, due to its power over the seas and maritime trade, the West emerged as the world center of attraction, while Asia entered into a process of inertia. This rise and fall were similar to Ibn Khaldun's depictions back in the 14th century, when a vacan-

cy left by one power was occupied by another within a hegemonic struggle (Khaldun, 1990).[1] Having observed the developments of the 1 20th century, Kennedy put forth a similar view, arguing that, as a result of competition, one power tended to give place to another (Kennedy, 1989). According to Abu Lughod, in the 17th century, the Central Asian–Anatolian–Mediterranean trajectory abandoned its centricity within the world system to the West, and Central Asia was rendered stagnant; as such, the East's regression paved the way for the rise of the West (Abu-Lughod, 1989: 338).[2]

In the 20th century, as dynamism in the world economy shifted to Asia (Dicken, 1998: 68; Hoge Jr., 2004), a new structure involving numerous power centers came to the fore; that is, the US-UK in the Western hemisphere, Germa-

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1 Regarded by some sociologists as the pioneer of sociology and the founder of the philosophy of history, Ibn Khaldun's (1332–1404) reflections on the rise and fall of societies and states shed light on the studies of many academics who developed theories on this subject in the 20th century. Also, for the process, see Gills & Frank, 1996a; Frank, 1978.

2 Also see Frank, 1990.

> **In the last quarter of the 20ᵗʰ century, with the emergence of Eurasian areas of geopolitical competition, a new process began in military-political-economic rivalry over geographical areas with strategic resources.**

ny in Europe, the Russian Federation in Western Asia, and China in Eastern Asia (Schaffer, 1998; Pant, 2004; Achcar, 2004; "Russia/China/India Axis", 2005: 8). In the Cold War era following World War II, as the hegemonic power with access to the most significant financial profits in certain regions, the United States, along with its main allies (e.g. the UK and Israel), tried to develop new policies to secure hegemony. A 1992 Pentagon report points to alternative power centers as risk factors, and in an anxious tone, urges that preventing the emergence of potential future global rivals should be a major focus for US strategy (Tyler, 1992; New York Times, 1992). Thus, especially in regions that offered prospective economic alternatives with energy resources and energy transfer routes, the US committed destructive acts, explicitly or implicitly supporing the provoking of separatist groups.

Various Dimensions of Geopolitical Competition

At the onset of the 20ᵗʰ century, Western imperialists paid close attention to the relationship between region and politics (Hudson, 1977). During the Cold War, a new structure emerged predicated upon the US-USSR struggle for control over strategic world resources and regions. In this era, major regions controlled by these two states indicated the presence of two basic units

(Cohen, 1973; Cohen, 1992). With the dissolution of the USSR, the governments in Moscow encountered difficulties in controlling Russia's own geographical area, which became adjacent to the US's regional geopolitical subunit field. Moscow's "Nearby Abroad" thus became "Nearby Abroad" of the US, being incorporated into Washington's area of interest due to the race for newly opened markets. This development paved the way for a process of profound geopolitical competition.

In the last quarter of the 20ᵗʰ century, with the emergence of Eurasian areas of geopolitical competition, a new process began in military-political-economic rivalry over geographical areas with strategic resources. In the Cold War era, geopolitical discussions largely focused on the competition between the US and the Soviet Union as they sought to control world strategic resources (Mamadough, 2000; Taylor, 1993: 330; Tuathail, Dalby & Routledge, 1998; O'Sullivan, 1986).[3]

In the first quarter of the 21ˢᵗ century, new developments in Eurasia led to an increase in geopolitical competition in this region. States aiming to be part of this competition for controlling the region's geopolitical areas embarked on an intense quest to find the most effective methods to achieve their goals. Seizing these processes of political uncertainty, especially pronounced in Eurasia, some separatist leaders took action to gain international support.

Although some define Eurasia as consisting only of certain Central Asian and neighboring countries, there are also studies that treat the whole region between China and Ukraine-Romania-Hungary as part of Eurasia (Abu-Lughod, 1989: 343–345; Hambly, 1969: xi; Adshead,

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3   For a different approach to the relationship between geography and politics, see O'Loughlin, 2000.

1993: 3). These assessments define the Eurasian region in terms of its function in world history. Considering its role within the world system, Gills and Frank (1996b: 86) discussed Eurasia in tandem with the regions of China, India, and the Persian and Roman Empires. In fact, taking into account its historical role within the world system, Eurasia may well be recognized as the region surrounded by China, India, the Russian Federation, and Turkey.

Prior to his visit to South Asia in March 2000, then US president Bill Clinton declared that the region would possess the world's largest economic potential in the coming 50 years (L.A. Times, 2000).[4] As oppressive actions justified on the grounds of such concepts as democracy and human rights were being imposed on countries such as China, J. K. Galbraith (1999: 15) made the following statement: "China does not have a Western style democracy, yet it can sustain basic needs for over one billion people". Zbigniew Brzezinski (1997a: 23), the National Security Advisor for then US President Jimmy Carter (1977–1981), regarded countries such as Russia and China as threats to US hegemony. Back then, Russia and China were often indicated as potential rivals in Eurasia (Achcar, 1998: 103).

> **In certain areas, central hegemonic states that are substantially dominant within the international system can overlook redefinitions of national boundaries in line with their own interests, unless a separatist movement threatens stability.**

In the wake of the Cold War, and after the September 11 attacks in 2001, the US started to face difficulties in gaining control over natural gas and petroleum reserves in the nascent regions of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. It thus engaged in efforts to prevent its exclusion from transportation of resources around the Caspian basin (i.e. to the West via Russia, to the East via China, to the South via Iran).[5] Following this goal, the US embarked on a strategy that put its mark on the last quarter of the 20th century, attempting to seize control over certain regions of Eurasia by manipulating separatist, ethnic, and religious movements. In tackling geopolitical problems, Washington's governance approach is known to resort to "controlled" instability as a tool for overcoming obstacles in the way of its hegemony. For this purpose, the US employs direct (military, etc.) or indirect (manipulating separatist groups, etc.) interventions, using internal instabilities as legitimizing pretexts when needed (Escobar, 2002).[6]

In the post–Cold War era, uncertainties in social and international systems have been regarded by separatist–ethnic group leaders as opportunities to provide social mobilization and, if possible, to find their own countries via procuring international support. In certain areas, central hegemonic states that are substantially dominant within the international system can overlook redefinitions of national boundaries in line with their own interests, unless a separatist movement threatens stability. Here, the essential goal is to seize control over present (or prospective) markets or engaging in efforts to obtain a share of them.

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4   The former foreign secretary James Baker also characterizes this area as the world's most dynamic region.

5   For the subject of alternative pipelines, see., Amirahmadi, 2000; Miles, 1999.

6   Vidal posits that the September 11 attack can be regarded as the onset of such a legitimization process. See Vidal, 2002.

History reveals that, when an unstable environment generated by separatist-ethnic conflicts and rifts induced by such movements threatens the economic and strategic interests of hegemonic states and their allies on national or international levels, these states watch for an occasion to directly or indirectly interfere. Regardless of whether or not such an intervention has the potential to contribute to desired goals, such intervention would become inevitable (Touval, 1992: 272; Daalder, 1996). In turn, separatist and ethnic movements generally welcome external state interventions, based on economic and political grounds they reckoned on beforehand. Thus, using the increasing opportunities for communication, they try to attract the attention of governmental and nongovernmental organizations to garner their prospective support (Premdas, 1991: 13).

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, obstacles to US hegemony in the region diminished and Washington sought to exclude other states competing for hegemony. Frank and Jaber (1991: 46) indicate that interventions in the Middle East by the US and its allies were oriented towards preserving US hegemony in regions with rich petroleum resources. As this region held the world's most important petroleum deposits, the revenues of regional states had also major significance for Western countries (MEED, 1985: 39).[7]

Accordingly, controlling t 7 his region has been a necessity for preserving US global hegemony. Moreover, certain petroleum-producing Middle Eastern countries constitute the world's most important buyers of arms; they procure their defense tools and services primarily from Western markets (Anderson & Rashidian, 1991: 55–71; Smith, 1990: 13–15; Wright, 2003). In the coming years, Middle Eastern countries are expected to spend billions of dollars on armaments. This fact reveals the extent of their contribution to Western defense industries and thereby economies, which have been lurching since the end of the Cold War (MEED, 1995a: 12; MEED, 1995b: 5).[8]

With the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the Soviet Union as a rival, an important obstacle was removed for the US to intervene in Iraq. Thus, the US, with the support of some social, regional and international allies, succeeded in preserving its hegemony by backing separatist-ethnic groups and creating a Kurdish area in northern Iraq. During this enterprise, Washington attempted to shape the region according to its economic, military and geostrategic calculations. However, local, regional and international factors obstructed the structure desired by the US.

The Conundrum of Separatism

The rise of separatist and ethnic movements at the end of the 20th century revealed how crises in social, regional and international systems provide a suitable environment for separatist leaders to organize internal and external support for their own interests (Heraklides, 1992: 40–42). In the wake of the Cold War, some states and organizations showed an unprecedented interest

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7 Germany's exports to Iran and Saudi Arabia reached an annual amount of $3 billion (see MEED, 1984: 62). Between 1980 and 1984, France's weapons sales to Iraq reached $5 billion (see İsmael, 1986: 194). During the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, Iraq spent $178 billion on weaponry, while Iran spent $81 billion. The US and UK were the main sellers to Iraq (see Gibson, 1990: 8–9).

8 In the wake of the Gulf War, in 1993, the US's biggest arms deals were with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Saudi Arabia ordered $9.5 billion worth of warplanes from the McDonnel Douglass company, while Kuwait made a $2.2 billion deal with the General Dynamics firm to buy battle tanks (see Johar & Bahgat, 1995:180).

in defending the human rights of minorities. These states and organizations, in turn, devoted strong efforts to assessing the opportunities that these issues could offer them within the Eurasian region (Malek, 1989). As at the end of the Gulf War, developments in this region brought many separatist-ethnic movements to international attention (Gunter, 1993: 313; Freedman, 1991: 201–202; Bölükbaşı, 1991; The Times, 1991; International Herald Tribune, 1991; Sunday Times, 1991; Newsweek, 1991). United Nations Security Council Resolution 688 (adopted on April 5, 1991), intended to contribute to international peace and security, also paved the way for interventions in the internal affairs of states that seriously violated human rights (Moynihan, 1993: 67–68). Leaders of ethnic-separatist movements, regarding this development as an opportunity, raised their demands for preserving their cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities, and pushed for autonomy or the building of federations.

> **In the first quarter of the 21st century, Eurasia, geopolitically prioritized by the West, has been the region where separatist-ethnic movements have been exploited most intensely.**

When a separatist-ethnic movement arose in a "peripheral" country, certain core countries tried to act as intermediaries to find solutions, or alternatively to impose their own solutions. Inequalities in economic and military power can facilitate the imposition of certain outcomes in favor of core states. This situation has formed within a framework of local, regional or great-power competition or cooperation (Nagel, 1993: 103,108,110; Entessar, 1984).

In the first quarter of the 21st century, Eurasia, geopolitically prioritized by the West, has been the region where separatist-ethnic movements have been exploited most intensely. The Western world, exhibiting solidarity among prominent states, has continued to directly or indirectly intervene in separatist-ethnic activities, according to its own interests.[9]

Touval 9 (1992: 272) states that international powers withdrew from taking important steps to find solutions to certain conflicts that seem to clash with their interests. Anthony Lake (1994), the national security advisor to Bill Clinton, made the following statement regarding interventions in Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda: "Let's be clear. Preserving peace is not the center of the US foreign policy or defense policy. The main mission of our military forces is not to organize peace operations but to win wars" (Lake, 1994).

Between 1991 and 1995, Washington preferred to stand off from the conflict in Yugoslavia, leaving involvement to European countries. In the middle of 1995, the Clinton administration decided to intervene in developments in Balkans, due to concerns that nonintervention would shake NATO's efficiency and prestige in the broader European region (Art, 1998/1999: 108–109; Holbrooke, 1998: 356–360). Thus, it might be said that NATO operated to detain Russia, to keep the US in Europe and to bring Germany under control. Similarly, the presence of natural gas resources in the East Timor Sea attracted the interest of Western and Australian companies, leading to the formation of a UN peacekeeping force to keeping the provoked instability under control. This move ultimately resulted in the recognition of East Timor's independence by the UN (Nel-

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9 Regarding the US attitude to the Yugoslavian conflict, the US Secretary of State of the period stated that for the first time since 1930, the US deliberately withdrew from a crisis in the Balkans due to its changing interests. (see Binder, 1992).

son, 1991; Glassman, 2003: 272; Anderson, 2006: 63–67; Schofield, 2005: 262–277; Cotton, 2005; Pietsch, 2010; Dickens, 2001).

Separatist-ethnic movements such as the IRA (Irish Republican Army) in the Northern Ireland region of the United Kingdom and ETA (Euskadi ta Askatasuna—Basque Homeland and Liberty) in Spain did not receive any toleration from Western developed countries. For these regions, London and Madrid's demands were prioritized. Conversely, in the Middle East, Western imperialist centers continued to use separatist groups as "pawns" to take advantage of regional and international developments (Hiltermann, 1992: 620–622).[10]

The terrorist attact against the police station in the Lukiang Town of Sinciang Uygur Autonomous Region organized by separatist movements in 2013 (Xinhua).

The US is also known to support groups such as the YPG (People Protection Troops) organically connected with the PKK in Syria (Reuters, 2019). Similar developments had also occurred in the past. For instance, in 1962, Mullah Mustafa Barzani gave the following statement to the New York Times: "First let the US provide us with mil-

itary support and help us become an autonomous region. Then, we shall become your loyal friend in the Middle East" (Shareef, 2014: 138).

Explicit or implicit support to separatist movements was, moreover, linked to certain conditions, rendering some separatist movements rather vulnerable to negative developments within their regions (Smith, 1981: 198–199). The US regarded some groups as threats to the regional order deemed important for controlling energy resources vital to Western markets' stability. The threats coming from these groups were also combated via regional cooperation (Freedman, 1991: 205, 208). Yet in the past,

its hegemonic status notwithstanding, the US failed to obtain Turkey's support in realizing its plans for Iraq (Hashim, 1995: 47–49; Reich, 1991).

In the wake of the Gulf War, the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq was encouraged to destabilize the Baghdad government. Nonetheless, to keep it from falling under Iran's regional influence, the US preferred a centralist Iraqi state over a disintegrated one (Frank & Jaber, 1991: 59–61; Gurr, 1993: 22, fn. 20; Muzaffar, 1993: 77–96). While separatist-ethnic Kurdish nationalism threatened the territorial integrity of states in the region, this was also accompanied by these states' diplomatic and military interventions. Turkey, in this sense, militarily intervened in northern Iraq and Syria. Wary of their future effect, Iran, too, become involved in regional developments. Ankara continued meeting with Iraqi and Syrian representatives, whenever it saw this as fitting Turkey's interests (Azadi, 1992; Milliyet, 1994).

Likewise, the US considers the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Eastern Turkistan) significant as it has geopolitical goals there. Xinjiang is China's most important gateway to Pakistan and thus to the Indian Ocean. In the 1970s,

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10 According to the PKK leader Ocalan, the war between Iran and Iraq provided a suitable environment for social and national movements in the region (see Ocalan, 1992: 296. Also see Olson, 1992).

the US-UK front favored India against Pakistan, providing it with nuclear-weapons technology; after that, the intimacy between Pakistan and China began. The US, then, reckoned that China's access to the Indian Ocean could be prevented via Xinjiang's detachment or by perpetuating the conflict there.

> **The US is known to directly or indirectly support separatist demands in Xinjiang, to provoke the Uyghurs and to support the "East Turkistan Government in Exile" and the "Uyghur American Association" based in the US. The National Endowment for Democracy, founded in 1983 under President Ronald Reagan to extend US-style democracy, and supported by the US Congress, is known to help the Uyghur Human Rights Project.**

The rapprochement between China and Pakistan (Malik, 2011: 3–5) served to balance India as an ally of the US and the UK. It should also be considered that, for China, the Xinjiang region is an important corridor for accessing energy resources, especially in the Caspian basin (Van Wie Davis, 2008: 9). The 935-km pipeline between Kazakhstan and the Xinjiang Autonomous Region was completed in December 2005 (Raballand & Genté, 2008: 16). The US is known to directly or indirectly support separatist demands in Xinjiang, to provoke the Uyghurs and to support the "East Turkistan Government in Exile" and the "Uyghur American Association" based in the US. The National Endowment for Democracy, founded in 1983 under President Ronald Reagan to extend US-style democracy, and supported by the US Congress, is known to help the Uyghur Human Rights Project. Radio

Free Asia (an extension of Radio of Free Europe or RFE, which was founded to produce propaganda against the Soviet Union), and human rights organization such as the London-based Amnesty International and the US-based Human Rights Watch, are also known to support separatists by disseminating information (Debata, 2010: 55–73; Millward, 2004: 22–28).

To prevent China from becoming an alternative economic power center, the US and the West in general are involved in activities to induce disorder in Xinjiang area. They have also sought to support social provocations to disrupt relations between Beijing and Hong Kong (a trade center transferred from the UK to China), so that the latter can continue acting as the operation center of UK-based Western capital. By creating disorder in the area, the US and its allies also aimed to prevent transfer of underground resources in the Caspian region to Western markets via Russia. This transfer takes place via the pipeline through Chechnya in northern Caucasia (Brzezinski, 1997b: 140). Accordingly, Zbigniew Brzezinski (1997c: 57) had stated that the US should support the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline for its own interests.

As Washington aims to control energy resources via the pipeline through Azerbaijan, Turkey and Georgia, the completion of NATO's expansion into Georgia and Azerbaijan would also ensure the military protection of energy resources. Another containment policy against the Russian Federation was also on the agenda. In the first quarter of the 20th century, the UK feared Bolshevik Russia's influence being extended to the south and intended to build a barrier against this. Halford Mackinder raised concerns about the British Empire's future and sought measures to protect it (Blouet, 2004: 328). To this end, he prepared a report stressing the importance of the

Map showing the infrastructure pipeline, railway and transportation corridor of China and Central Asian regions.

Khazar-Caucasian region as a barrier (O'Hara & Heffernan, 2006: 66). India was also regarded by London as part of this barrier against Russia (O'Hara & Heffernan, 2006: 67).

In his book entitled Diplomacy, the former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (1994: 814) pointed out that Mackinder designated Russia as Eurasia's geopolitical hearth. The policy advocated by Brzezinski and Kissinger for creating buffer states around Russia to limit its activities was put into practice in the last quarter of the 20th century (Lieven, 1999: 309). Graham Fuller (1994: 130), a former vice president of the US National Information Council and an official at RAND Research Foundation, defined the Khazar-Black Sea line as Russia's economic area of influence, and indicated that preventing Russia's expansion was a national interest for the US. In his work Strategic Depth, Prof. A. Davutoglu wrote the following: "A cooperation among Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan against Russia regarding the Caspian Sea, must be one of the bases of Turkey's Middle East policy" (Davudoğlu, 2001: 181).

This statement seemed to be in line with Washington's regional plans and was quite similar to the efforts of Mackinder over 110 years ago to preserve British imperialism.

It was predicted that the expanded NATO and the European Union would serve similar geopolitical needs to those of the US (Brzezinski, 1997c: 53). The participation of Ukraine in these organizations was expected to fulfill this goal. However, Moscow succeeded in preventing both of these enterprises. Nireiver, Georgia was seen by the US as a country that could play a complementary role on the Turkey-Azerbaijan line. After President Shevardnadze gave a statement to the Financial Times, which indicated Georgia's wish to enter NATO, the Russian Foreign Ministry declared on October 26, 1999 that NATO's expansion into Caucasia would not contribute to stability in the European-Atlantic region (Russian Federation/Chechnya, 1999).

Core states do not have the full power to engage in regional operations and shape regional developments in their interests without securing the cooperation of regional powers. In the past,

when needed, Iran and Turkey were able to play significant roles to protect US regional interests (e.g. purging anti-Western Islamic movements in the region). Washington continues its regional and international efforts to diminish Iran's regional influence. As Steinbach (1980: 27) indicates, there is a direct correlation between regional instability and international interests. When targeted states adopt an oppressive orientation against separatist movements' violent acts, the question of human rights violations is often brought up, and is usually used as a pretext for international actors to directly or indirectly participate in developments.[11]

Imposition of "Human Rights" and "Democracy"

Regarding international interventions, the most important arguments used by the US-led coalition center on the concepts of human rights and democracy. In supporting uprisings in the Arab region, this coalition claimed to be advancing human rights and emancipating people from authoritarian regimes (Nixon, 2011). As Anthony Lake, the US National Security Council Director, stated in 1995: "We are fighting for democracy because the wider its pool, the more security and well-being we will have" (Ikenberry, 1999: 60). By contrast, Brzezinski had indicated that there should be no rush to democratize the Middle East, as an election in Saudi Arabia could result in victory for Usame Bin Ladin (Brzezinski, 2004: 16).

Different parts of the world with different historical experiences to the West have varying approaches in terms of human rights. For example, African thought stresses social harmony and maintenance of order (Okere, 1984: 145–146),[12] while the advance of industrial capitalism 12 in some Western societies usually produced an individualist conception. The traditional Chinese approach prioritizes common rights and responsibilities. However, for a certain period of time, a particular understanding aiming at the salvation of humankind that saw the Western-based arguments as extensions of imperialist plans was also effective, alongside traditional notions ("Notes on the Human", 1979: 17–18).[13] Due to its own historical experiences, China generally supports human rights campaigns if they are in opposition to imperialism, hegemony, colonialism and racism (Kim, 1979: 161, 484–486, 493). In Islamic thought, based on obeying divine authority, social responsibility precedes individualist quests (Said, 1979: 63–66; Khadduri, 1946: 78–79).

As Habermas posited, the West's own understanding of human rights, which it propagates according to its own liberal internationalism, is "neither the only, nor the best answer" (Habermas & Rehg, 1998: 169). Yet according to liberals, liberal regimes are the best forms to preserve human rights and to serve citizens' interests. While Fukuyama (1992) asserts that liberal states are the best forms in political and civil respects, Kissinger (2001: 252) opines that the

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11 From the 1970s onwards, the US clearly declared that it intended to maintain its influence in the Gulf region. According to the Carter Doctrine, while the petroleum industry had to be secured, the region also had to be protected from Soviet influence by safeguarding moderate states there. The factor of petroleum makes the US's struggle to reign in the region inevitable (see Gowan, 1991: 47–48). According to Jahar and Bahgat, as the largest petroleum consumer, the US has explicit interests in pr curing petroleum from the Gulf region. Therefore, Washington will not allow any challenge that might threaten US interests in the region (See Johar & Bahgat, 1995: 174. Table 2. Also see Khashan & Harik, 1992: 154).

12 In the Banjul Agreement of June 1981, The Organization of African Union (OAU) prioritized definitions such as national solidarity, independence and harmonious development of the family.

13 When reminded of the then US President Clinton's remarks that concerning human rights, China was on the wrong side of history, Zemin (the then President of the Peoples Republic of China) indicated that different countries had different historical and cultural traditions as well as varying levels of economic development. Thus he posited that propositions regarding human rights should be in line with countries' own conditions (see www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/asia/july-dec97/china).

best and most reasonable option for the world lies in an economic and political structure similar to the US style. Yet both of these approaches ignore the peculiarity of economic and social conditions in other countries. This understanding may lead to the conclusion that liberal democracies should make every effort to construct a world order where liberalism is applied everywhere. This approach, in turn, is obviously open to a dangerous interpretation of "liberal imperialism", meaning that to establish liberal institutions, every method, including power, may be seen as just (Miller, 2000).

Many people working on human rights, especially in wealthy developed Western countries, tend to disregard alternative opinions on universal principles.[14] Discussions on liberties and requirements for human rights can only flourish in cases of mutual agreement (Frost, 1999: 55; Shue, 1996: 35). If parties try to impose their own propositions at the very onset of these discussions, the process will be harder.

The restricted definitions and practices of human rights pursued by developed Western countries (i.e. prioritizing certain political rights rather than basic economic needs) justly provoke doubts in developing peripheral countries (Habermas, 1998: 169). Questions arise regarding what lies behind such definitions and practices. Efforts to internationalize liberal capitalism result in economic predicaments, malfunctions in democracy and an increase in human rights violations (Timur, 1999: 243–244).

Governments that fail to provide basic social, economic and political rights to their citizens inevitably find themselves in a dead end. Rising economic, social and political demands may complicate the provision of balance between "justice" and "order". Governments straining to meet demands for basic needs can attempt to repress social reactions by resorting to violence. In such instances, the question of human rights is put into discussion. Apart from being used as a critique of practices that might be performed by security units, such as violence, arbitrary detainment or torture (so that certain individual rights are not violated), the notion of human rights also involves the right to freely express and mobilize for political views, opposition to exploitation, the right to freedom of movement and the right to found associations or unions (Halliday, 1991; Beitz, 1979; O'Neil, 1991). Actors disagree over how to define each of these rights. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, the formulation of certain social and international norms is needed, based on a consensus that everyone has inviolable rights (Linklater, 1990: 201).

> **If in the wake of a struggle for minority rights, a successful outcome may boost ethnic group rights at the expense of individual rights, but the latter can find themselves in a new repressive environment.**

Many separatist movements have succeeded in attracting the attention of governments and nongovernmental organizations by arguing that the human rights of their own ethnic groups are being violated. Leaders of these separatist movements have claimed to have different identities, and therefore to have suffered discriminatory and unjust policies inflicted by central authorities. To obtain concessions, these figures even demanded embargos against their governments.

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14 Bessis makes the following statement: "It is high time Westerns comprehend that others too can share universal principles without necessarily wishing to resemble them in every aspect" (see Bessis, 2000: 34).

In different periods, countries such as Turkey, Iran, the Russian Federation and China have faced such impositions. When issues such as embargos or aid are brought up, concepts such as democracy and human rights are employed as justifications. Yet according to Conteh-Morgan (1990: 25), the US external aid program has neither fostered human rights nor helped strengthen democracy.

Rather than adopting a concessionary attitude, the government of a certain country may pursue repressive policies which might complicate existing disagreements. Some separatist movements are quite content when central governments respond to violence with violence. After all, these instances bring up claims of human rights violations and attract the attention of international organizations.

The United Nations General Assembly accepted a resolution in December 1992 regarding the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minority groups. According to its first article, states are responsible for protecting minorities' national/ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identities in their own regions (Newland, 1993: 92–93). Yet, this article does not discuss the rights of the individual. If in the wake of a struggle for minority rights, a successful outcome may boost ethnic group rights at the expense of individual rights, but the latter can find themselves in a new repressive environment. Minority rights may clash with individuals' rights in certain situations. Securing a minority group's rights via granting it autonomy also means preventing individuals from freely deciding on their futures independent of their ethnic identities. In this way, individuals cannot escape from being imprisoned in yet another undesired environment.

In some cases, governments do not comply with international organizations' definitions of human rights, finding them contradictory with their own definition (Rady, 1993: 720–722). It is also the case that these interests usually vary dependent on parties' perceptions, and that human rights are defined differently in different times and places. These discussions entail questions about order and justice, because for stability to exist, there must be a balance between the two. What are the criteria of justice? What do we understand by this term? As much as we can be willing to comply with rules, these must be agreed upon and open to constant renegotiation and redefinition when needed. An order where a single understanding has the monopoly on judging others cannot be accepted. No culture can be essentially right or wrong as every system has an inherent basic logic. Each culture possesses at least some truths, yet no culture can be claimed to include all truths.

In an environment where disagreements and oppressive practices continue, achieving economic development becomes increasingly difficult. For economic development to be secured, it is evident that the necessary infrastructure should be put in place, which in turn entails human rights and basic needs as an inseparable whole (Vincent, 1986: 86). In an environment where international rules are generally arranged in line with core states' interests, organizations (e.g. Amnesty International) controlled by these states continue to impose their understanding of human rights on non-Western countries.

Conclusion

Long-term socioeconomic and political unrest has either resulted in the emergence of organized violence or in protest activities seeking to influence central authorities' policies and alter certain legal laws and practices, as in the case of many separatist-ethnic movements. Rawls (1973: 364–368, 371–377) states that, when pos-

sibilities to rectify an unfair practice via legal means die out, certain civil disobedience activities may be justified. By comparison, Habermas (1985: 100) posits that states can expect their citizens to comply with existing laws as long as they are worth following. Such approaches are usually forefronted in the case of non-Western social movements, and frequently when provoked events turn violent, international interventions are enabled.

Those states (e.g. China, the Russian Federation) that are economically and politically in a position to oppose core states' decisions have the capacity to resist any decision against their interests. But states that are economically dependent (due to markets) on traditional hegemonic centers (i.e. the US and its designated allies) find it difficult to do so.

The universal declaration of human rights
10 December 1948.

By influencing national and international public opinion, institutions such as Amnesty International have engaged in impositions, particularly on non-Western governments, for "them to respect human rights to avoid economic and military embargo". Yet such institutions have only succeeded to the extent that they have received the support of the US and its designated allies (Premdas, 1991: 19–20). Amnesty International has closely collaborated with the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office over human rights violations in developing countries (Christiansen & Dowding, 1994: 15). For instance, the institution's reports about human rights violations in China were submitted to the British Government and later used by former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979–1990) as an element of leverage against the Beijing Government (Christiansen & Dowding, 1994: 20–21). Separatist movements, on their part, have tried to abuse such institutions to garner support for their own activities and have placed a priority on fostering their relations with them to act against their central governments.

In an international environment where socioeconomic and political consensus is low, hegemonic powers and their allies also reduce prospects of compromise with separatist movements, while trying to satisfy their demands or impositions. We are in a process which entails efforts to prioritize elements that can facilitate people's access to their basic needs. This process also has the potential to establish an alternative social and international system. Unless a just restructuring of national and international economic and political systems is ensured, social, economic and political inequalities in different parts of the world will continue to threaten regional and international stability.

In order to maintain their military activities in Eurasia, the US and its allies will try to preserve their competitive power in political and economic realms. To this end, they will develop distinct relations with Berlin, Moscow, Beijing, New Delhi and Tokyo while concomitantly trying to prevent cooperation amongst them. The

future of Eurasia will directly depend on issues to be prioritized by regional countries.

Competing powers or actors have either opposed various demands or tried to adapt to new developments in case of failure. In the current process, the competing powers and capacities of social and international actors will decide whether the demands of separatist movements, operating on a new level, will succeed or fail.

Efforts to reconfigure the Eurasian region are also accompanied by high costs. These costs are predicted to be laid upon non-Western countries. Yet given the emerging social reactions, here too, difficulties are expected. Moreover, given the efforts of the US and its designated allies to preserve their status, the rising competition in Eurasia will most probably have a distressing quality. ☙

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International Security After the Arab Spring: Domestic and International Sources of the Syrian and Libyan Conflicts (2011-2020)

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ABSTRACT

The so-called Arab "Spring" may be considered as the most significant geopolitical event and the largest social mobilization that have shaped Greater Middle Eastern politics in the post-Cold War era. The present article examines how this process turned into an Arab "Winter", having led to the world's largest humanitarian crises since World War II. Using a geopolitical-economy framework guided by narrative analysis and incorporated comparison, this article focuses on the countries where the Arab Spring process led to gravest consequences: Syria and Libya. The research aim is to develop a comprehensive and multi-dimensional framework that gives due attention to the dialectics of internal and external factors underlying armed conflicts. I argue that the failure of Syria's Baathist development project constitutes an important root cause for Syria's tragic destabilization, since it created a favorable environment for foreign intervention and the exploitation of ethno-religious differences by foreign powers. The same can be said of Libya's domestic policy failures inscribed in its extractivism, liberalization and nepotism, which are coupled with its cultural and socio-demographic vulnerabilities. As far as the external factors of the Syrian conflict are concerned, the evidence suggests that the transformation of ethno-religious tensions into a proxy war is strongly mediated by the foreign policy imperatives of key countries involved in the Syrian conflict. In both cases, geopolitical factors – including energy and human security, military alliances, and foreign-policy commitments – seem to have served as strong incentives for the emergence and diffusion of conflicts.

Keywords: Arab Spring; human security; international development; international security; political ecology; political economy

THE SO-CALLED "ARAB SPRING" MAY BE considered as the most significant geopolitical event and the largest social mobilization that have shaped Greater Middle Eastern politics in the post-Cold War era. It was triggered in December 2010, when Tunisian working class and civic organizations massed after the self-immolation of a street vendor who had been repressed by police forces. Social mobilization was so vigorous and united in its aims that the president was forced to resign after three weeks. Inspired by this success, similar mobilizations began in Egypt, Libya, Syria and elsewhere. Indeed, the Arab Spring conjuncture provided a unique opportunity for global and regional powers to take advantage of the emerging power vacuum in advancing their own geopolitical interests. This being said, Arab Spring mobilizations differed importantly in their degree of civil society organization and the extent of meddling by foreign powers (Otero & Gürcan, 2016: Chen, 2019/2020).

Eventually, the Arab Spring turned into an Arab "Winter" (Prashad, 2012; Koray, 2019/2020). In Egypt, with considerable popular support, the July 2013 coup d'état restored military rule. Under foreign intervention, Libya became mired in a full-fledged war that has produced tens of thousands of casualties. Many foreign-backed mercenaries in Libya would eventually move on to the Syria campaign. Thanks to continued Western support, Syria and Libya were center stage of one of the world's largest humanitarian crises since World War II (Otero & Gürcan, 2016; Gürcan, 2019b; 2019e).

The severity of this situation in the Arab Winter conjuncture prompts us to think about the underlying causes that have led to such a wide-scale conflict with grave consequences for international security. Grasping these causal mechanisms would certainly improve our knowledge on how to prevent the emergence and diffusion of such conflicts in the future. From a conventional International Relations perspective, one could indeed grant primacy to external factors associated with the role of geopolitics, proxy war, and foreign intervention. Nevertheless, one point remains to be clarified: what are some of the major domestic factors that have rendered Syria and Libya vulnerable to these external influences in the first place? With this question in mind, the present article employs a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach that combines conventional International Relations approaches with political economy and political ecology.

This article is organized into three sections. The first presents the conceptual and methodological framework used to study the case of Syria and Libya. The two remaining sections explore the internal and external factors underlying the Syrian and Libyan conflicts, respectively.

Conceptual and Methodological Issues

By conventional International Relations approaches, I mostly refer to the study of geopolitical factors leading to the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Libya. For example, Sunni sectarianism and Kurdish autonomism in Syria are among the most pronounced geo-cultural factors that have shaped the regional conflicts through foreign intervention, whereas geopolitical factors are perhaps most clearly identified with energy and human security, military alliances, and the foreign-policy imperatives of key countries involved in the region, including Syria and Libya (Gürcan, 2019e).

In turn, what I call the domestic factors concern Syria and Libya's political-economic and political-ecological transitions. Particularly, they are related to the exhaustion of Syria's resource-based, or extractivist development model, neoliberal restructuring and environmental de-regulation, which have converged to generate deep-rooted socio-economic tensions paving the way for the Syrian conflict (Gürcan, 2019b). In the case of Libya, policy failures such as oil extractivism, state decentralization and tribalism, liberalization, nepotism and corruption stand out as key factors underlying the Libyan conflict.

Before tackling the case of Syria and Libya, a few words are in order about the methodology that has been employed. My comparative study combines narrative analysis and incorporated comparison within the framework of geopolitical economy. As a school of international relations established by Radhika Desai (2013) and later developed by Efe Can Gürcan (2019a; 2019c; 2019d), geopolitical economy studies how interstate struggles and their interactions with non-state actors are entangled with economic relations. The critique of imperialism and neoliberal capitalism lies at the heart of geopolitical economy. Moreover, geopolitical economy refutes transnationalism and re-asserts the persisting centrality of nation-states in world politics. As such, it allows for a balanced study of how conflicts are shaped by the dialectics of domestic and external factors (Desai, 2010; 2013; 2015a; 2015b; 2016; Gürcan, 2019a; 2019c; 2019d; Tutan, 2019/2020).

In turn, incorporated comparison is a comparative method that "seeks to understand the complexity of global phenomena by addressing

cross-case commonalities, mutual influences, and interdependencies in tandem with spatial or temporal variations, historical specificities, and internal tensions for a fuller understanding of a global configuration at hand" (Gürcan, 2019d: 6). Therefore, case selection is made based on the principle of historical connectivity and mutual conditioning (McMichael, 1990; 2000). The rationale for focusing on the case of Syria and Libya in this study is thus to reveal how the Arab Spring conjuncture evolved into a "winter" of conflicts and chaos. Syria and Libya epitomize the ways in which this process unfolds, as different from other major Arab Spring countries such as Tunisia and Egypt, which did not really witness wide-scale conflicts that gravely damaged international security (Otero & Gürcan, 2016).

Finally, the case of Syria and Libya is examined here by means of a narrative strategy (Silver, 2008). This strategy portrays social phenomena as "temporally ordered, sequential, unfolding, and open-ended stories" (Griffin, 1992: 405). In doing so, it logically and chronologically discerns relations of contingency and critical combinations of events or circumstances that create conditions for the emergence and development of social phenomena under study (e.g. Libya's extractivist policies and their consequences; Syria's initiation of economic liberalization in 1986, its acceleration in 2006, and the amplification of its negative impact with the multi-season drought in the period 2006-2011) (Griffin, 1992).

Internal Factors in the Syrian and Libyan Conflicts

What are the domestic factors that have played a major role in rendering Syria and Libya vulnerable to foreign intervention? My overall argument is that the failure of Syria's Baathist development project constitutes an important root cause for Syria's tragic destabilization, since it has created a favorable environment for foreign intervention and the exploitation of ethno-religious differences by foreign powers. The same can be said as to Libya's domestic policy failures inscribed in its extractivism, liberalization and nepotism, which are coupled with its cultural and socio-demographic vulnerabilities.

The development model pursued by contemporary Syria can be traced back to the 1970s following the military coup that brought Hafez al-Assad to power. The Hafez al-Assad regime represented a moderate form of Ba'athism, which consists of a secularly-oriented and socialistic form of Arab nationalism in Syria. While the emphasis on nationalization and agricultural reform was retained, the economic model of moderate Ba'athism developed a claim to a pluralistic economy based on partnership between the public and private sector (Norton & Lampros-Norton, 1982; Bellamy, 2004; Azmeh, 2016).

Hafez al-Assad's Ba'athism failed in its attempt to create a competent industrial sector, mostly due to the hindrance of an excessive reliance on oil revenues and other energy resources. This reliance was fueled by the oil price boom, especially in the 1970s. Syrian Ba'athism thus opted for an extractivist model and turned into an oil exporter regime following the nationalization of the petroleum sector in 1964 and the completion of the pipeline construction in 1968, which connected oil production of the Northeast region to the port of Tartous. Although Syria's oil reserves were minor in comparison with other oil giants in the Arab world, the Baathist socialistic project was heavily financed by oil revenues. The excessive emphasis on the oil sector – and the increasing relevance of the natural gas sector since the 1980s – had hindered the development

of a competent and diversified industrial sector. Consequently, the majority of the non-energy sector was only represented by the food production and processing sector. In 1998 alone, the oil and mineral sector contributed to almost 70% of Syrian exports (Collelo, 1987; Azmeh, 2016).

Started in 1986, Syria's early phase of liberalization (ta'addudiyya, or economic pluralism) had already eliminated certain subsidies, facilitated private investments and allowed for a gradual liberalization of prices, trade and foreign exchange.

According to the World Bank (2016), oil rent accounted for over 20% of Syria's GDP (gross domestic product) in 2004. It is therefore not surprising that Syria has been among the countries with the highest rates of energy and agriculture subsidies in the Middle East and North Africa by 2000 (Azmeh, 2016). Eventually, the depletion of Syrian oil reserves in the 1990s revealed the poor sustainability of this extractivist model. According to the US Energy Information Administration, Syria's annual unrefined oil production declined from 582,000 barrels per day in 1996 to 368,000 barrels per day in 2009. Worthy of note that Syria's oil production saw a considerable decline with the outbreak of the so-called Arab Spring, from 383,000 barrels in 2010 to 340,000 in 2011 and 23,000 in 2014. Consequently, the Assad regime was unable to generate as much oil revenue to ensure economic and political stability (EIA, 2017).

Besides extractivism, another development that has marked the course of Syrian and Libyan development is liberalization. Started in 1986, Syria's early phase of liberalization (ta'addudiyya,

or economic pluralism) had already eliminated certain subsidies, facilitated private investments and allowed for a gradual liberalization of prices, trade and foreign exchange. The new investment laws adopted in the 1990s were aimed at encouraging the private sector, including rewards such as tax holidays. This process gained momentum when Bashar al-Assad took power in 2000 with a promise of economic and political reform. The objective of building a social market economy was introduced at the Baath Party's 10th Regional Congress in 2005. Syria then focused its efforts on attracting foreign direct investment (FDI), which mostly originated from Arab countries interested in speculative and non-productive sectors such as real estate, finance and tourism, to the detriment of the productive sector and infrastructure investments. As part of the Five-Year Plan (2006-2010), Syria eliminated the state monopoly on imports; liberalized prices, including that of diesel, gas, gasoline and electricity; deregulated the real estate market; licensed private banks; instituted the stock exchange; and consolidated the regulations in favor of the protection of private property (Dahi & Munif, 2012).

It is possible to argue that agriculture was hit the hardest by this economic restructuring through the liberalization of agricultural prices and the elimination of subsidies on energy and agricultural inputs. In fact, the abolition of state farms had already begun in June 2000 (Ababsa, 2013). Under the Five-Year Plan, the price of diesel increased by almost 280% with the cancellation of the subsidy on diesel in May 2008. Although the abolition of subsidies on diesel and fertilizers was beneficial for the environment, the failure of the regime to propose alternative policies that could alleviate agricultural producers' hardships aggravated the political-ecological crisis by undermining producers' access to agri-

cultural inputs at favorable prices. Syria's crisis eventually led to a rural exodus and massive migration to urban areas. In view of these developments, it is not surprising to observe that the first protests against the regime were triggered in Dar'a, a city in the south of the country, known as an agricultural center and a strategic support base for the Syrian regime. Protests against the bankruptcy of new economic policies and corruption later spread to other rural centers like Homs, Idleb and rural areas in Aleppo and Damascus (Azmeh, 2016; De Châtel, 2014).

Indeed, the destabilizing effects of extractivist and neoliberal policies have been amplified by major supra-seasonal droughts that are partly attributed to climate change. The 2006-2011 period experienced a multi-season drought, which saw the worst droughts in Syria's modern history, leading to countless instances of crop and livestock devastation and the dislocation of Syrians. The cost of these droughts is beyond measure considering that more than 46% of Syria's population lived in rural areas and 15% of the workforce was employed in agriculture before the outbreak of the Syrian conflict. Overall, it is estimated that the drought – combined with policy failures and other related factors – affected 60% of Syria's agricultural land and killed 85% of livestock in the 2004-2008 period alone (Richani, 2016; Gleick, 2014).

The Syrian crisis is also reflected in the Baathist regime's unsuccessful planning and policy efforts, which find their sharpest expression in the overexploitation of underground water resources and environmental deregulation. Agricultural subsidies were directed towards industrial crops requiring extensive usage of water such as cotton and wheat. Moreover, the regime failed to carry out the modernization of its irrigation infrastructure with the aim of reducing water consumption and making agricultural

production more efficient, which was attempted in 2005 but remained as a failed attempt. Meanwhile, available estimates on Syria indicate that 50% of irrigation depends on groundwater systems and that 78% of groundwater extraction is carried out in an unsustainable way, resulting in the over-pumping of water by wells (Ababsa, 2013; Barnes, 2009; Balanche, 2011; Balanche, 2012; Feitelson & Tubi, 2017; Forsythe, 2017; Gleick, 2014; Salman & Mualla, 2013).

A similar situation applies to the case of Libya. Libya's economic and political instability –which paved the way for foreign intervention and the fall of the Gaddafi regime– has much to do with the extractivist development model adopted in the Gaddafi era (1969-2011). Libya had experienced tremendous human development by the 1980s thanks to rising oil revenues. This was noticeable, not only in rising literacy rates, women's improved status, improved housing and public health-care system, but also in Libya's national average income, which increased by nearly 50% between 1969 and 1980 (World Inequality Database, 2020). Oil revenues reached the peak with a rise of over 96% in the 1970-1984 period, from around 1.57 million to 3.1 million of Libyan dinars. However, Libya failed to take this opportunity to consolidate and diversify its industrial base, which impeded the sustainability of its human development gains in the longer term (Ali, 2011; Otman & Karlberg, 2007; Prashad, 2012; Wehrey, 2018; St John, 2013). Oil revenues fell to a record low of 1.34 million of Libyan dinars by 1986, which accounted for nearly 54% of total government revenues, dropping from 69% in 1984 (Ali, 2011).

Libya epitomizes the problem of resource curse, where the profitability of abundant natural resources leads to poor economic development and excessive dependency on a fluctuating

Oil production in Libya.
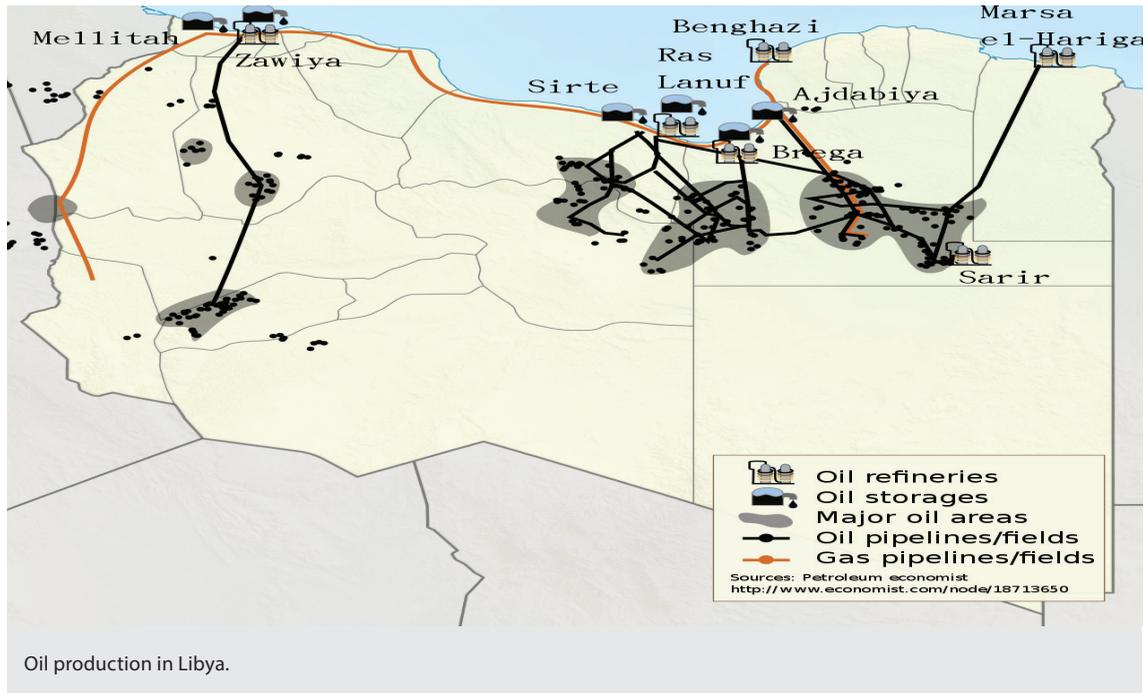
world market despite impressive but short-term gains. Falling crude oil prices (nominal, per barrel) –from $37.42 in 1980 to $16.56 in 1999 (Bilgin, 2016: 40) – helped paralyze the Libyan economy and intensified socioeconomic inequalities. This went hand in hand with a nearly 50% decline in average national income in the 1980s and an almost 20% decline in average national income in the 1990s (World Inequality Database, 2020). Moreover, a quick look at Libya's oil revenues prior to the fall of the Gaddafi regime would reveal the impact of its policies. Oil revenues accounted for over 90% of public revenues, 75% of the national budget and 95% of export revenues before Gaddafi's death (Kane, 2016).

In Libya, Western sanctions had combined with the negative consequences of decreasing oil revenues and the 1987 defeat in the war with Chad to encourage Gaddafi to give serious compromises in its domestic and foreign policy (Otman & Karlberg, 2007). Gaddafi abandoned his intentions to radically transform Libya's clan

structure and opted for a decentralizing strategy of inviting a number of allied clans to local governance and security forces, which gained a certain level of autonomy from the state (Erdağ, 2017; Hüsken, 2019; Joffé, 2013). Indeed, this strategy impeded the process of nation-state building and contributed to the further heterogenization of Libyan society. Libya's cultural heterogenization can also be associated with Gaddafi's stateless state model, theoretically modeled on direct democracy, customs and community (i.e. tribe and clan) engagement. The idea of stateless state (the Jamahiriyya, or the state of the masses) acted as a hinderance to the formation of well-functioning and stable institutions at the national level (Northern & Pack, 2013; Erdağ, 2017; Sawani, 2013; Prashad, 2012).

What is more, Libya started to normalize its relations with the West in 2003 (Erdağ, 2017; Otman & Karlberg, 2007; Wehrey, 2018; St John, 2013). Libya also underwent three successive waves of liberalization in (1987, 1993, and 2003),

which weakened the organic bonds between the state and the working masses. Privatization went hand in hand with massive corruption and increasing cost of living, which in turn had an alienating effect on the working masses (Otman & Karlberg, 2007; St John, 2013). Interestingly, Libya was praised by the International Monetary Fund for its "ambitious reform agenda" in early 2011, prior to the Western intervention (Prashad, 2012: 93).

> **It is possible to suggest that Libya's geographic and demographic structure serves to amplify the negative consequences of policy failures.**

Under liberalization, Gaddafi's close circle and tribe (i.e. the Qadhafa) took the lead in crafting a nepotist state structure (Erdağ, 2017; Prashad, 2012; Joffé, 2013; St John, 2013). Privatization and rising nepotism resulted in the Gaddafi regime abandoning its former anti-imperialism and devoting special efforts to overcoming political and economic isolation after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Erdağ, 2017). Liberalization and the penetration of Western companies in the Libyan market were accompanied by American military officers and contractors establishing organic ties with Libyan officers, some of whom were to take active part in the Western intervention in in 2011 (Wehrey, 2018). Consequently, Libya became a base of systematic torture and interrogation for suspected terrorists servicing the United States and Britain in the 2000s (O'Sullivan, 2018; Prashad, 2012; Wehrey, 2018). In the final analysis, one could argue that the heterogenization of Libyan society through liberalization, decentralization

and globalization has served to expose Libya to foreign intervention in the longer term.

It is possible to suggest that Libya's geographic and demographic structure serves to amplify the negative consequences of policy failures. Libya is Africa's fourth largest country by surface area, despite being ranked one of the countries with sparsest population (Otman & Karlberg, 2007). 95% of Libya's population is estimated to concentrate in coastal regions, which represent only 1% of the total surface area. Tripoli is home to one-third of the population (Otman & Karlberg, 2007; Cole & Khan, 2015). What is more, Libya is fragmented into nearly 140 tribes and clans originating from neighboring countries such as Tunisia, Chad and Egypt (Erdağ, 2017). Tribal and clan affiliation co-exists with religious identities even in urban areas, even though Libya does not suffer from the problem of sectarianism, unlike Syria (Hüsken, 2019; Sawani, 2013; St John, 2013). Indeed, this situation renders Libya highly vulnerable to global security challenges.

Besides persisting tribe and clan heterogeneity facilitated through decentralization strategies, Libya is divided into three separate regions with different historical and cultural legacies (the Eastern region of Cyrenaica, the Western region of Tripolitania and the Southern region of Fezzan) (Otman & Karlberg, 2007; Prashad, 2012). In Libya, there has been a historical rivalry between the East and the West in the post-colonial era. King Idris' reign (1951-1969) in the pre-Gaddafi era was based on Libya's Eastern part, and the country's axis of power shifted to the West under Gaddafi's rule. In the Gaddafi era (1969-2011), Libya's Eastern region was relegated to underdevelopment, despite its contribution to two-thirds of national oil production. Not surprisingly, Libya's marginalized Eastern region served as a strategic base for anti-Gaddafi forces in the 2010s (Erdağ, 2017; Prashad, 2012; Kane, 2016).

To finish with this section, it would be difficult to over-emphasize the importance of political-economic, geo-demographic and political-ecological factors in the Syrian and Libyan conflicts. The evidence shows that one of the most important causes of the Syrian tragedy relates to the outbreak of a political-ecological crisis whose origins are to be found in the long-term consequences of Syria's (a) oil-centered extractivist model of development adopted since the 1970s and its legacy reflected in the government's failure to generate adequate livelihood, (b) neo-liberal restructuring that has widened inequalities and bankrupted the agriculture since 2000, and (c) environment-blind policies that have neglected the severity of droughts, encouraged water intensive crops and the over-exploitation of water resources, and failed to address the modernization of the irrigation infrastructure. In a similar fashion, Libya's policy failures such as extractivism, liberalization, and nepotism combined with cultural heterogeneity and other geo-demographic factors to facilitate socioeconomic and political instability.

Internal Factors in the Syrian and Libyan Conflicts

The arguments highlighting the role of the geopolitics of ethno-religious conflicts on a global scale and foreign intervention in the Syrian conflict are perhaps better known than Syria's political ecology and political economy (Otero & Gürcan, 2016; Gürcan, 2019b). First of all, the fragmented state of Syria's ethno-religious configuration is beyond question: 12% of the Syrian population belongs to the Alawi community, of which President Bashar al-Assad is a member; 64% of the population is part of the Sunni Arab community, while Christians, Kurds and Druze represent 9%, 10% and 3% of the Syrian population, respectively (Phillips, 2015). The impli-

The role of broader geopolitical factors in the transformation of the Syrian conflict into a proxy war cannot be ignored, either.

cations of regional interventions for ethno-religious conflicts are of an utmost importance for the diffusion of the Syrian conflict. Indeed, the contemporary resurgence of sectarian and ethnopolitical conflicts is due in large measure to US military intervention in Iraq, whereby Kurdish autonomy and Islamist terrorists gained ground in the entire region. Moreover, donations offered by foreign individuals and governments of the Arab Gulf states to various Islamist factions have also played a crucial role in the emergence and spread of the Syrian conflict. These actors have mainly aimed at extending the regional Sunni hegemony and proactively opposed Iran's increased activism. Rough calculations point to a spending of about $3 billion by Qatar in the 2012-2013 period and over $10 billion by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in the 2013-2015 period alone (Jaafar & Woertz, 2016; Richani, 2016). Similar to the Arab Gulf states, Turkey has been contributing the Syrian conflict by supporting Sunni sectarianism in order to motivate the pro-Turkish Sunni and jihadist opposition in Syria with the aim of expanding its sphere of influence (Otero & Gürcan, 2016).

The role of broader geopolitical factors in the transformation of the Syrian conflict into a proxy war cannot be ignored, either (Gürcan, 2019e; Otero & Gürcan, 2016). For example, Syria's strategic position on energy routes and the discovery of abundant natural gas reserves in the eastern Mediterranean in 2010 have attracted regional players such as Israel, Turkey and Qatar, which had a vested interest in destabilizing Syria in order to implement their own energy projects and

counter Iran's regional influence (Delanoë, 2014; Engdahl, 2013; Otero & Gürcan, 2016; Ipek, 2017; Winrow, 2016). The discovery of large conventional gas reserves takes on a greater relevance to Syria's strategic position as a center of attention in geopolitical conflict in light of the global integration of natural gas markets and a 25% increase of global gas consumption in the last decade, which seems to support the idea of a "Golden Age of Gas" (Bridge & Bradshaw, 2017).

As part of Turkey's energy aspirations, the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline was initiated in March 2015. Its successful construction would open up a gas corridor from Azerbaijan through Georgia and Turkey to Europe (Nader, 2013). According to Delanoë (2014),. Interestingly enough, the Iran-Iraq-Syria pipeline project was accepted in 2010 and formally announced in 2011 right before the onset of the Syrian conflict (Ahmed, 2013; UPI, 2011). This project presented a direct competition to the Qatar-Turkey pipeline project. The Qatar-Turkey project was to connect Qatar's natural gas over Turkey via Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria. Syria rejected this project in 2009 to protect the interests of Russia – Syria's main economic partner. As such, Syria's rejection is one of the main reasons for Turkey and Qatar's active involvement in the Syrian conflict (Nader, 2013). Qatar does not conceal its ambition to become the world's leading liquefied natural gas exporter (Engdahl, 2013). One could therefore argue that regional players' intervention seeks to prevent Syria from engaging in energy cooperation with Iran and Russia and claiming the abundant energy resources in the Levantine basin. Regional players seem to resort to destabilization attempts in the case of failed deterrence.

Libya's geopolitics is equally important from the perspective of global and regional powers seeking to advance their own agendas by taking advantage of the emerging power vacuum in the Arab Spring conjuncture (O'Sullivan, 2018; Prashad, 2012). Libya constitutes a strategic bridge that connects the Middle East, Africa, and Europe (Erdağ, 2017; Wehrey, 2018). It owns Africa's largest oil reserves and fifth largest natural gas reserves. Meanwhile, Libya's oil is called "sweet crude" for its low cost of production, low sulfur content, and proximity to Europe. Libya's control is also crucial for controlling the entire Levant, where newly discovered natural gas and oil resources intensify geopolitical rivalry. The Mediterranean region is not only home to one-third of global maritime commerce, but also possesses one of the most abundant sources of natural gas in the world. Furthermore, Libya dominates African migratory flows towards Europe and other Middle Eastern countries in the region (O'Sullivan, 2018; Prashad, 2012). Controlling Libya also means controlling migratory flows, which can be used as a strategic leverage against regional countries.
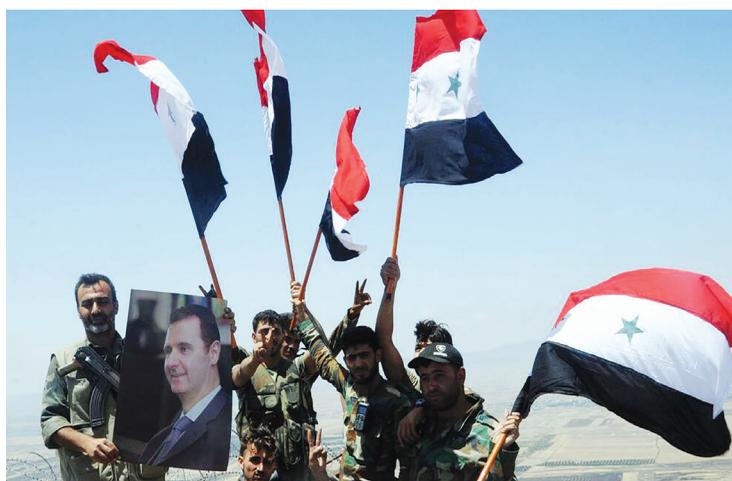
Syrian soldiers hold Syrian flags on the Tal al-Harrah in the northwestern countryside of Daraa Province, Syria, July 19, 2018. (Xinhua)

A common mistake is to call the Libyan conflict a "civil war". This conflict is rather escalated by foreign powers who take advantage of the regional power vacuum. As Ramazan Erdağ

(2017: 31) argues: "The use of force by NATO and allies and the military assistance it provided changed the balance of power in favor of the opposition. It is not improper to say that the Libyan revolution could not have been achieved in the absence of the external transformation in neighboring countries and NATO's intervention." The conflict following the NATO intervention in 2011 is led by Khalifa Haftar, a Libyan-American warlord supported by countries such as France, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Haftar fights against the UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA). Similar to GNA, Haftar's forces heavily rely on militias from neighboring countries and even Salafist elements in the region. In supporting Haftar, France seeks to outrival Germany and Italy's political and economic influence in the region. 11% of France's oil consumption originates from Libya (Northern & Pack, 2013). As a matter of fact, Italy used to be Libya's biggest trade partner as the most important oil producer there (Northern & Pack, 2013). It is also known that as much as 11% of Germany's oil demand depends on Libyan oil. Germany has crucial infrastructure and energy investments in Libya. Similar to Italy, Germany used to count on the Gaddafi regime in controlling migratory flows from Africa. Moreover, Egypt and the UAE are primarily interested in cleaning the region of radical religious elements and ensuring border security. The UAE's drive to assert itself as an independent geopolitical player and a proxy for US interests is also to be taken into account. Egypt and the UAE's rivalry with Turkey and Qatar could also be seen as an important factor in their support for Haftar's forces (Rickli, 2016; Ulrichsen, 2016; Wehrey, 2018; Northern & Pack, 2013).

Russia seems to be fully aware of Libya's strategic position that can be leveraged against European powers that are fearful of migratory flows and concerned with their energy security (Gürcan, 2019d). This may also explain the presence of the Wagner Group, a Russian military contractor in Libya as well as Russia's position as a powerful mediator in the conflict. Russia has crucial geopolitical and economic interests in Libya (Larssen, 2016; Prashad, 2012), which can be broadly summarized in two major points. First, Russia's increasing engagement contributes directly to the multipolarization of world politics by constraining Western powers' prestige and military influence. The general opinion about the Libyan crisis is that the Western intervention for regime change in Libya, and the West's lack of engagement after Gaddafi's death, are the chief factors contributing to the chaotic environment of the post-Gaddafi era (Gürcan, 2019d). Therefore, Russia sees the Libyan conjuncture as a great opportunity to fill the power vacuum created by the Western powers (Neale, 2018). Russia had also shown interest in constructing naval bases on Libya's eastern coasts in 2008 and 2009. Therefore, Russia's increasing involvement in post-Gaddafi Libya could be indirectly associated with its intention to increase its global military influence by contributing to the multipolarization of world politics. In Russia's quest for global military influence, against the backdrop of its intensifying confrontation with the Western powers, the Mediterranean basin is of crucial importance. Relatedly, Libya's proximity to Europe is a great source of concern for European powers, who have already been suffering a historic wave of migration from Arab Spring and African countries. Russia's political, economic, and military involvement would certainly force its hand in influencing Europe's

geopolitics (Eljarh, 2018; Neale, 2018). Second, Gaddafi's death dealt a huge economic blow to Russia, which lost contracts worth billions of dollars in strategic sectors such as energy, construction, infrastructure, and defense. Russia is now interested in regaining its former economic concessions in the face of Northern economic sanctions and stagnation. Russia is therefore seeking both to contribute to Libya's reconstruction efforts and to exploit its vast oil resources (Eljarh, 2018; Kuznetsov, Naumkin & Zvyagelskaya, 2018; Neale, 2018; Gürcan, 2019d).

Libya and Syria's foreign policy attitudes are also a cause for Western resentment as another driving factor behind foreign intervention.

As another key player in the Libyan conflict, Turkey seems to be facing direct and concrete threats originating from the Mediterranean region. Since the early 2000s, the Greek Cypriot governments have been illegally declaring exclusive economic zones and expanding its drilling zones in the Levant. Israel, the United States, Greece and the Greek Cypriot governments have been holding military drills such as Noble Dina and Nemesis, directly targeting Turkey. Turkey also seeks to desperately improve its energy security and to be in closer proximity with Egypt for expanding its military influence against the Sisi regime as a Muslim Brotherhood rival. In addition, the so-called Seville Map –prepared with the European Union and Greece's initiative– unilaterally limits Turkey's maritime area to a small zone around the Bay of Antalya, despite the fact that Turkey possesses the longest coastline in the Mediterranean region. Indeed, Qatar is Turkey's key ally in the region as a rival of the UAE, recently alienated from the United

States and its regional allies. It thus supports Libya's UN-backed government (Ulrichsen, 2016; Rickli, 2016).

Libya and Syria's foreign policy attitudes are also a cause for Western resentment as another driving factor behind foreign intervention. For example, Western powers had long been resenting Syria's foreign policy commitments and alliances. Syria had opposed the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Prior to the invasion, Syria defied US sanctions by receiving Iraqi oil, facilitated sales of arms to Iraq, and allowed the movement of thousands of Arab resistance fighters across the Iraqi border. After the invasion, certain fleeing Iraqi officials took refuge in Syria (Hinnebusch, 2009). As acknowledged by Raymond Hinnebusch (2009: 18-19), these moves reflected Syria's stance for the "Arab nationalist identity rather than a pure calculus of interest", which displeased the United States and Europe by making Syria look like "the last remaining voice of Arab nationalism". Furthermore, the US invasion of Iraq also consolidated Syria's partnership with Iran against the US (Hinnebusch, 2009). For Iran whose participation has been crucial in the course of the Syrian conflict, sustained cooperation with the Assad regime offers guaranteed access to Lebanon and the rest of the Middle East along with an opportunity to expand its regional Shiite influence and constrain Israel's regional power (Türkeş, 2016; Öniş, 2014). Iran's presence in Syria is also related to its concerns about Assad's possible departure, which could result in a Sunni government and concomitantly Iran's regional isolation (Barfi, 2016). Indeed, Hezbollah – which has been present since the very beginning of the Syrian conflict and associated with Iran's proxy war – would greatly suffer from such outcomes. Last but not least, Syria is still home to the Russian naval facility in Tartous, which provides Russia's sole access to the Mediterranean for commercial and military purposes (Gordon, 2017).

Syria's isolation from the West – as a key factor that has indirectly fueled the Syrian conflict in 2011 – was not merely rooted in the Iraqi question, the Perso-Syrian alliance, and Russia's involvement.

As far as the external factors of the Syrian conflict are concerned, the evidence suggests that the transformation of ethno-religious tensions into a proxy war is strongly mediated by the foreign policy imperatives of key countries involved in the Syrian conflict.

In Syria's eyes, Lebanon is seen as a natural sphere of influence that is crucial to Syria's national security. It was known that Syrian opposition elements took refuge in Lebanon. Moreover, due to its geographical location, the Syrian regime cannot afford Lebanon to become an Israeli or Western outpost that could also constrain the reach of Arab nationalism. The Lebanon-based Shiite Hezbollah is of strategic importance for Syria in its efforts to constrain Israel's regional power and consolidating its alliances with Iran. Additionally, the West was also troubled with the Syrian intervention in Lebanon in 2005, which resulted in sanctions being placed on Syria. In addition, Syria was blamed for the assassination of Lebanese ex-Prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri, who was seen as an important ally of the Saudi Arabia regime (Phillips, 2015). In addition, Israel's involvement in Syria is also worth addressing. Not only is Syria a strategic gate for Iran, which seeks regional hegemony as Israel's arch enemy, but also Israel is interested in dominating the gas and oil and water resources in the Golan Heights and the Levantine basin by undermining Syria's national security (Ağdemir, 2015). As was discussed in the previous section,

Libya was similarly isolated by the West due to its anti-imperialist foreign policy stance before the 2000s. It would be worthwhile to mention here how Libya's anti-imperialism alienated the West and resulted in the US sanctions imposed in 1986 and the United Nations sanctions adopted in 1992. The cost of the UN sanctions to the Libyan economy alone is estimated at $33 billion (Otman & Karlberg, 2007; Prashad, 2012; Wehrey, 2018).

Review and Discussion

The Syrian and Libyan cases are illustrative of how extractivist development strategies could inhibit industrialization and generate over-dependency on external markets. Certainly, neoliberal restructuring has done nothing but exacerbate these outcomes by completely destroying these countries' social fabric and intensifying the already-existing socioeconomic tensions. Furthermore, Syria's mismanagement of environmental problems demonstrates that the environment is more than a mere development issue and that it also constitutes a national-security issue. In the future, the case of Syria and Libya is hoped to encourage multi-disciplinary research on the political-economic and political-ecological foundations of national security.

As far as the external factors of the Syrian conflict are concerned, the evidence suggests that the transformation of ethno-religious tensions into a proxy war is strongly mediated by the foreign policy imperatives of key countries involved in the Syrian conflict. In both cases, geopolitical factors – including energy and human security, military alliances, and foreign-policy commitments – seem to have served as strong incentives for the emergence and diffusion of conflicts. The centrality of geopolitical factors in shaping the Syrian and Libyan conflicts calls attention to the region's need for constituting strong regional cooperation mechanisms, which

would prioritize key issues such as Western interventionism, national sovereignty, military cooperation, and human and energy security. Eurasia and Latin America's experience of regionalism (Gürcan, 2019c; 2019d) – e.g. the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Collective Security Treaty Organization, Union of South American Nations, Bolivarian Alliance for Our America – would provide crucial hints in constraining the Western military aggression, while establishing stable, institutionalized channels of political, economic, military, and cultural cooperation between Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, and Russia, among others. ✿

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Turkey in the Century of the Sea and Asia

CEM GÜRDENİZ

Retired RADM

Cem Gürdeniz graduated from the Naval Academy International Relations Department in 1979. He completed his post graduate project on 'Personal and Education Analysis' in Naval Postgraduate School/USA (1983-1985). He received a master's degree from Universite Libre Bruxelles (ULB) on International Politics. He was assigned as the Commodore for the 3 Frigate Flotilla. Concluding the BH Strategy Branch in Plans and Policy Division at Turkish Naval Forces HQ, he was promoted to Rear Admiral (LH) and assumed the duty until 2005. He became Division Head for the Plans and Policy Division at Turkish Naval Forces HQ (2005-2007). Then he was posted as the Commander of the Landing Forces and by promoting to Rear Admiral (UH) to Commander of the Mine Fleet Command. He assumed the duty of Division Head of the Plans and Policy Division at Turkish Naval Forces HQ for the second time. He was arrested with false evidence in the so-called Sledgehammer Case on February 11, 2011, and was convicted for 18 years. He was freed by the Constitutional Court's decision to retrial on 19 June 2014 and was acquitted on 9 June 2015. Admiral (R) Gürdeniz speaks French and English fluently and has 22 articles published in Turkish Navy Bulletin. He is also the author of a number of publications including Turkish Navy Handbook, Naval Terms Dictionary English/Turkish and Turkish/English and Turkish Naval Fleet (prestigious book), Cumhuriyet Donanması, Açık Denizlere Doğru Deniz Kuvvetleri, Hedefteki Donanma and Amatör Denizciler İçin Acil Durum Seyri. He is the author of the weekly column named "Mavi Vatan" in Aydınlık newspaper. He still serves as the Founding Director of Koç University Maritime Forum.

After July 16, 2016, a turning point in our recent history, Turkey was compelled to turn back to the geopolitics once adopted by Mustafa Kemal. Thus, Turkey changed its route from Atlantic to Eurasia. This is in fact not an outcome of daily politics, but rather a result of a geopolitical reflex of daily awakening and the urge to survive. Turkish-Russian cooperation should expand from the Levant Coast to the region covering Maghreb Coast as well. Turkish-Chinese rapprochement and, in particular, the development of economic, political and military cooperation between the two countries should be added to this axis of cooperation. Within the framework of the said tripartite cooperation, many creative options can be formulated with regard to the issues of Crimea, Xinqiang Uighur Autonomous Region and the future of the TRNC, within the scope of the future of relations among the three countries.

KEMALISM SHAPED THE GEOPOLITICAL axis of Turkey, during the first fifteen years, on the basis of friendship and cooperation with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and Iran in the east and Greece, Bulgaria and Romania in the west, in line with the paradigm of "Peace at Home, Peace in the World". Turkey formed a belt around itself aimed at defense, security, and stability through the Soviet-Turkish Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality that was undersigned in 1925, and additionally the Balkan Entente the Saadabad Pact which took effect in 1934 and 1937 respectively. Despite the multiple political pressures from all-around during the Second World War, the young Republic was able to remain out of the great destruction. This was indeed a great success. However, the Euro-Atlantic system, the winner of the War, did not let Turkey, bordering the southern part of the USSR, become independent at the postwar geopolitics. After all, Turkey was in a very strategic location controlling Dardanelles and İstanbul Straits as well as the huge geography of Afro-Eurasia. The Democratic Party (DP), founded by deputies who left Rebublican People's Party (CHP) on January 7, 1946, upon the

approval of the "Second Man" İnönü, emerged with a conservative attitude and liberal economy thesis. DP's greatest strength was its ability to convert the tenets (values) of Islam Religion into a political instrument. The DP has won the elections held in 1950. DP led Turkey to participate in the Korean War without the approval of the Turkish Parliament. After the Korean War, in 1952 Turkey pursuing the path pushed by DP became a member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The burden of NATO has kept growing for Turkey ever since.

The Era After 1950 and Rupture From Eurasia

After 1950, the biggest loss for Turkey was the conversion of Turkish-Soviet friendship into hostility between the two countries. Turkey was cut off from Eurasia during the Cold War period. Fully independent Turkey founded by Mustafa Kemal had become a useful instrument of the Atlantic system. Under the name of "Combating Communism", the Kemalist and revolutionary vein was dried out. Turkey could not even mimic Finland that was invaded by the Soviet Union

during the Great War. In the end, Finland had achieved to protect its land and independence. Contrary to Finland, Turkey could not succeed in remaining non-committal and neutral. Thus, Turkey failed to remain loyal to the legacy of our founding father, Atatürk. Over the years, being involved in the "Rimland" (Spykman, 1944) of the Atlantic System, Turkey became the pioneer and willing actor of George Kennan's "Containment Doctrine" (National Security Archive, 1946). "Brzezinski Islamization"[1] of the "Rimland" around the Soviet Union after 1979 gave rise and life to the containment of the Soviet Union while rendering democracy in Turkey into a conservative form. The Kemalist essence of the Republic was tried to be destroyed during the era after 1979. Moreover, separatist ethnic nationalism became a problem for the state in the same period through PKK terrorism.

The Cold War ended in the early 90s. Imperialism, that is the West, had won the War. While Yugoslavia fragmented, Muslims were massacred in Bosnia. In a euphoria of triumph, enlargement of NATO carried on continuously until Ukraine and Georgia. While Russia was under siege, it was time to deal with "the Heartland" (Mackinder, 1904) in Eurasia. The events of September 11, 2001, provided a historic opportunity for this. The invasion of Iraq followed the invasion

of Afghanistan. Maps would now be changed in Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. In terms of the interests of imperialism, it was of vital importance for both energy and critical raw material resources should be under control. Besides, it seemed also imperative to prevent the rise of China while ensuring the security of Israel. But, most importantly, from the point of view of imperialism, the "Rimland" needed to be consolidated. At this stage, the reshaping of Turkey under imperialist projects and intentions has taken place since 2002.

FETO designed and implemented a conspiracy against the Turkish Army. As a result, the command structure (the military chain of command) of the strongest military force of the "Rimland" collapsed, and many officers were put in the prisons in a day.

After 2008, the Turkish army and navy became ineffective and neutralized through Fethullah Terror Organization (FETO), designed and implemented a conspiracy against the Turkish Army.[2] As a result, the command structure (the military chain of command) of the strongest military force of the "Rimland" collapsed, and many officers were put in the prisons in a day.

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1 Famous strategist Zbigniew Brzezinski served as the National Security Consultant of US President Jimmy Carter between 1977 and 1980. With the "Green Belt Theory" developed in 1979, Brzezinski aimed to support Islamic fundamentalist religious organizations and formations against the Soviet Union. The Green Belt theory was implemented immediately after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

2 Editor's Note: The author refers to the cases such as Ergenekon and Balyoz through which some of the higher positioned army officials, intellectuals and politicians were tried in the courts or imprisoned between 2007-2014. As a result of these cases, hundreds of officers at key positions in the Turkish Armed Forces were imprisoned and removed from the army. With these cases it was aimed at making weaken the forces embedded in the state, political sphere and the society, that opposed Turkey's dependency on the United States and that supported independent foreign policy. Moreover, FETO members who made the failed coup attempt on July 15, 2016, were brought to key positions via these lawsuits. It has been understood since 2014 that the police reports on which these cases were based and the indictments prepared by the prosecution offices were created with false evidence. The cases which were later referred to as "conspiracy cases", were documented that all the processes about court orders were executed by the members of the Fethullah Terrorist Organization in the police and judicial departments. Judicial authorities in Turkey has still been investigating the role of the US in both the July 15 coup attempt by FETO and the above mentioned "conspiracy cases".

Turkey's naval exercise called 'Blue Homeland 2019' launched on 27 February till 3rd of March.

After the coup attempt by FETO on July 15, 2016, the paradigm shaped by the conspiracy against the Turkish Army and thus against Turkey went bankrupt. This is because, a hitman of the Atlantic System, namely FETO supposedly adhering to the Islamic tenets had opened fire to its own people, causing hundreds of deaths and casualties. It's noteworthy that the government it attempted to overthrow also had adhered to Islamic values. Thus, the process of testing democracy with religion has ended.

The Route Change From Atlantic to Eurasia

After July 16, 2016, Turkey had to change its course from "Atlantic" to "Eurasia" and turned back to the geopolitics once adopted by Mustafa

Kemal. This is a geopolitical reflex of awakening and the urge to survive, not of daily politics. The said geopolitical reflex strongly opposes to the attempts to establish a "puppet" Kurdish state in the south of Turkey and to Turkey's detachment from the Mediterranean, and to the termination of the Turkish military presence in Northern Cyprus. The Mediterranean Shield and Gunboat Diplomacy, Blue Homeland Naval Exercise, Operations of Euphrates Shield, Operations of Olive Branch, Operations of Peace Spring, fight against FETO, and Turkey's seismic research and drilling activities related to oil and gas exploration underway in the Mediterranean are the reflections of this reflex. In this context, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched the "Asia Anew" initiative on August 4, 2019. On 22 October 2019 Sochi agreement was signed between Turkey and

Russia. On the 5th of November, departing from China and crossing the "Middle Corridor", the first train reached Europe through the Anatolia and Bosphorus Tunnel under the sea. In addition, Turkey signed the Maritime Boundary Delimitation Agreement with Libya on November 27, 2019. Consequently, Turkey's relations with Iran, Russia and the Asian countries, especially China, are rising on every level. In the meanwhile, the Astana Process underway in Syria has taken precedence over the Geneva process. The states on the "Rimland" of Spykman (Spykman, 1944) are turning their faces to Eurasia.

No doubt that this inevitable change will restart the period of peace, stability, and balance that Humanity sought for in history. Everlasting peace and tranquility are the longings for peoples of the world as Humanity has suffered a great deal from the unipolar Atlantic impositions, especially over the past thirty years. A lot of blood has been shed, and still continues to spill more. While Atlantic imperialism is retreating, it uses many tactics to provoke and to confuse the entire world spanning from Bolivia to Hong Kong and from Venezuela to Iran; however, it does get any results. Our world needs breathing and a new order in every aspect.

"Asia Anew" Initiative and Our Maritime Boundaries

On the other hand, in the multipolar global system, the 21st century will be both "the Century of Asia" and "the Century of the Oceans". In this century, the Mediterranean Sea will be the door

opening to "the Century of Asia and the Sea" for Turkey. In this initiative, Turkey, "Blue Homeland"[3] and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) geopolitical integrity is essential. Turkey will meet with Asia and the Sea more intensely than ever before. TRNC and Turkey's geopolitical future in the Eastern Mediterranean is fully dependent on each other. This future is shaped on three legs. The first of these is the protection of the "Blue Homeland". The second is to block the "puppet Kurdish state" that aims to reach the sea. Thirdly, the biggest assurance of the Anatolian peninsula along the southern axis is to maintain the independent existence of TRNC. All three legs are like "communicating vessels" (united containers) which cannot be separated or isolated from each other.

In Turkey's new initiative policy for Asia, the existence of the TRNC has special importance. There is much that can be done both in terms of mutual recognition and economic cooperation with Asian countries especially with the Russian Federation and China. With reference to Crimea, Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region and the future of the TRNC, there is a wide range of options regarding the future relations among Turkey, China and the Russian Federation. Cooperation as such can contribute to resolving the problems of the "Blue Homeland" regarding the sovereignty in the seas surrounding Turkey, in particular, the maritime boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean. The said cooperation can offer options that can balance a complex and dangerous picture resulting from the aggressive, unlawful attitudes and ac-

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3 Editor's Note: "Blue Homeland" is a concept developed by Retired Admiral Cem Gürdeniz and embedded in Turkish military-political literature. Gürdeniz, which is also called "Blue homeland" in its column as title in the Aydınlık newspaper, defines the concept of the Blue Homeland as follows: "I used the concept of the Blue Homeland for the first time in the symposium on the Black Sea and Naval Security we organized at the Naval Forces Command on June 14, 2006." It is the name of the country, which briefly covers our maritime jurisdiction areas (territorial waters, continental shelf and exclusive economic zone) in the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the Aegean, where we are surrounded by living and non-living resources. The surface of this homeland, the mass of water, the bottom and the land mass beneath belong to Republic of Turkey. The size of blue homeland is equal to half of land of Turkey. Every state that has got to coast to the sea has a blue homeland. The most fundamental action of geopolitical reflexes is reflecting tendency to the sea and ownership of the blue homeland." For more info: (Gürdeniz, 2013).
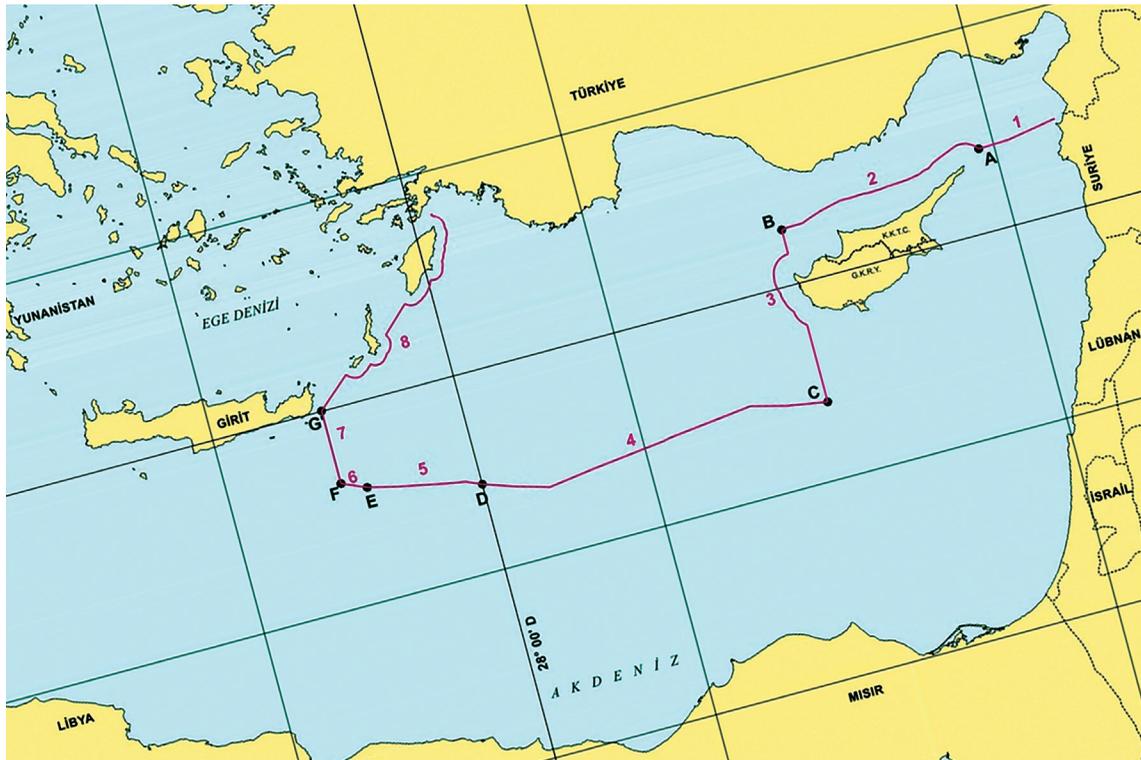
Turkey's maritime jurisdiction areas in the Eastern Mediterranean. E-F line shows the boundary drawn in the agreement with Libya.

tions like piracy of Greece and Southern Cyprus, which receive the support of the United States of America (USA), European Union (EU), Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. In this context, the signing of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) border memorandum with Libya on 27 November 2019 is an extremely important and major development. Similarly, the government's initiation of a new process for a boundary agreement with Syria, hopefully very soon, will make a great deal of contribution to the security of the "Blue Homeland".

On the other hand, it should be encouraged to invite friendly and allied countries to the Mediterranean Shield Operation and especially the landlocked Turkish Republics in Central Asia with shore access to the Caspian Sea by renting them warships. It is a sheer fact

that Greece tries to present ongoing conflict as a mere Crusader-Islam polarization. Being a secular republic, Turkey must not fall into this trap. Against this tout by Greece, we and all other third party countries should consider the fact that Egypt and Palestine, too, stand with the anti-Turkey bloc of Greece and Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean. Israel is also included in the same bloc.

In summary, Turkey now is in a new phase. Turkey's borders regarding its security are with-

The Turkish-Chinese rapprochement and especially the development of economic, political and military cooperation between the two countries should be added to the above-mentioned union.

in the surrounding seas while the defense of the TRNC begins in Anatolia. It should not be forgotten that Turkey and TRNC that are tried to be isolated and excluded from the Eastern Mediterranean today, will not allow the repeat the history.

Turkish-Russian Cooperation Expanding From Levant To Maghreb

In this context, The Turkish-Russian cooperation should expand from the Levant Coast to the region covering Maghreb Coast as well. The USA's move against Iran and its open conflict with this country make this cooperation even more essential. This cooperation will balance the unlawfulness of US and Israeli policies in the Gulf and the Levant coast. This cooperation will balance the unlawfulness of US and Israeli policies in the Gulf and the Levant coast. It will also give a serious message to Saudi and United Arab Emirates (UAE) regimes. In the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean, we can restore the stability, which the Atlantic front impaired, through the new balance of power of the 21st century. Turkish-Russian cooperation, which will provide stability in Syria and Libya, will also prevent the tension that is likely to escalate between the USA and Iran. In this process, Turkey's biggest mistake that Turkey must refrain itself would be to make harm to it he Turkish-Iranian rapprochement, which took place in the Astana Process, by taking a negative stance against Iran. Iran is the biggest obstacle to Atlantic imperialism in West Asia and Israel's policy of creating regional expansion and instability. The internal unity of Turkey and the Turkish-Russian cooperation will be the most important factor that will prevent the Third World War which everyone around the globe badly fears.

Multi-Dimensional Benefits of Turkish-Chinese Rapprochement

The Turkish-Chinese rapprochement and especially the development of economic, political and military cooperation between the two countries should be added to the above-mentioned union. To prevent the development of an alliance stated above, it is possible that pro-Atlantic bloc in Turkey may engage in any kind of provocation and blocking efforts. However, this process should be managed in a calm and cold-blooded manner, and mutual welfare and happiness of all parties involved should be targeted accordingly. Favoring and nurturing the mutual interests of Turkey and China fairly and in a balanced manner is integral to the development of the relations between two countries. Within the scope of the Belt and Road Initiative (In line with the guiding principles of BRI), implementing joint projects beneficial to both parties will positively affect the view of the public opinion in Turkey. In this way, the negative perceptions about China in the people who have been poisoned with pro-Atlantic propaganda for years will disappear. It is necessary to touch on another subject: As is known, the Greece/Piraeus port was chosen by China as the entry gate to Europe. This preference has potentially geopolitical risks. In the future, the US may put pressure on Greece on the activities of this port and its relations with China. Keeping in mind all these facts, we kindly advise our Chinese friends to look for alternate ports in Turkey and the TRNC for entry to Europe.

Turkey, on the path illuminated by the teachings of Mustafa Kemal, should fulfill its responsibility reflected in the directive "Armies, your first goal is the Mediterranean", that he gave on September 1, 1922. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

told the Egyptian Ambassador one morning in 1933, showing the sun rising from the crests of Ankara:

"Look at the sun that will rise from the east now! Today, I see the awakening of all eastern nations from afar, just as I see the day dawning. There are more sister nations to achieve independence and freedom. Their rebirth will undoubtedly come true towards progress and prosperity. Despite all the difficulties and obstacles, these nations will defeat them and reach the future that awaits them. Colonialism and imperialism will disappear from the earth and will be replaced by a new era of harmony and cooper-

ation, with no color, religion or race difference between nations." ♨

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China's Novel Coronavirus Pneumonia Battle: Responses, Results, and Reflections

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the social and economic effects of a deadly epidemic that abruptly emerged in Wuhan, China and then spread to other regions of China as well as other countries in a short period of time. The "New Corona Virus" (NCV) caused deep worries, not only in China, but also the entire world. The present article addresses the outbreak, the way China responded to the epidemic, and the negligence that may have occurred during this intervention process. Succesful measures taken by the central government and administrative disposals to eliminate negligence are also tackled herein. The article discusses the attitudes adopted by central and local governments throughout the epidemic process and their relations with the public and the outside world as well as the possible socio-economic effects of the epidemic on China. Overall, this Chinese NPC battle can also be considered to be a world anti-epidemic war, and China's success will bring nothing but security to the entire world. The NCV's case reveals the extreme importance and urgency of the world's need to "build a human community with a shared future".

THE SUDDEN OUTBREAK OF NOVEL coronavirus pneumonia (NCP in short, as is accepted by Chinese officials) has created a great deal of concerns across the world, since the reach of this epidemic was not only constrained to China and also extended to over 20 countries. In today's globalized world, it is increasingly difficult to contain the epidemics within national boundaries and the survival of one country depends on another as far as global epidemics are concerned. The narrow-minded attitude of "cleaning up the snow in front of one's own front door" can only result in worldwide diseases. In this sense, this Chinese NPC battle can also be considered to be a world anti-epidemic war, and China's success will bring nothing but security to the entire world. The NPC's case reveals the extreme importance and urgency of the world's need to "build a human community with a shared future".

As of 11:00 am on February 20, 2020, there were 74,675 confirmed NCP cases, 4,922 suspected cases, 16,180 cured cases, and 2,121 deaths in China. Compared to previous statistics, both the number of newly confirmed and suspected cases decreased, and the cure rate continued to rise,

and the mortality rate remained at around 2% (Baidu, 2020). More importantly, there is zero growth in many provinces for consecutive days. This shows that China's epidemic prevention and control campaign is taking effect after one month's strenuous efforts. We have reason to believe that the central government can cure the infected people and defeat the epidemic.

This article aims to answer the following five questions related to this epidemic:

1- What is NCP?
2- What was China's response to this epidemic?
3- What may be the early neglect in China's fight against epidemics?
4- What does the epidemic mean for China?
5- What are the results of the epidemic and its impact on China?

What is NCP?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found in both animals and humans. Some infect people and are known to cause illness ranging from

common cold to more severe diseases such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

The novel coronavirus (CoV) is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. The new, or "novel" coronavirus, now called 2019-nCoV, had not previously detected before the outbreak was reported in Wuhan, Henan Province, China in December 2019. Chinese officials later adopted the name "Novel Coronavirus Pneumonia" (NCP).

On February 11, the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses officially named the "new coronavirus" as "SARS-CoV-2". As this naming suggests, the current virus and the 2003 SARS virus are sister viruses. Subsequently, the WHO (World Health Organization) officially named this virus-infected pneumonia as "COVID19", which is an acronym that brings together Corona, Virus, Disease and 2019 (year). Including this 2019-nCoV in Wuhan, there are 7 coronaviruses that can infect humans, but not all of them are significantly dangerous. SARS-CoV, MERS-CoV, 2019-nCoV can cause infectious pneumonia, and the other four are more active every spring and winter, but just causing common flu.

There is definite evidence that NCP can be transmitted from person to person. However, what kind of animal vectors the new coronaviruses transmit to humans remains to be further studied, but the mainstream opinion of experts at home and abroad is that this disease is preventable, controllable and curable.

The main route of transmission for NCP is through respiratory droplets and can also be transmitted through contact. The incubation period of pneumonia caused by novel coronavirus

is generally 3-7 days, and the longest is not more than 14 days. Deaths are more common in the elderly and those with chronic underlying diseases.

China's response to this epidemic

First, the whole country united to fight against the epidemic under the strong leadership of the Party Central Committee. According to the Public Health Emergencies issued in 2006, the response of the central government can be described as rapid. General Secretary Xi Jinping personally directed this battle and held several sessions of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee to give important instructions on the prevention and control of the epidemic. On January 25, the Central Leading Group for N.C.P Epidemic Situation of the Chinese Communist Party was established. On January 27, Prime Minister Li Keqiang personally came to Wuhan to inspect and guide the epidemic prevention and control work. At that time, Deputy Prime Minister Sun Chunlan led the Central Steering Group to direct the struggle in Wuhan. As of January 29, 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities in mainland China have initiated first-level responses to public health emergencies. The support of national leaders can bring confidence and necessary mobilization to the battle against the epidemic. According to calculations based on relevant data, if the strict isolation policy introduced by the country is three to five days later, considering the factors of population migration during the Spring Festival, family reunion, and large-scale outbound tourism, the infection rate would eventually reach 20%. If that happened, the medical resources across the whole country would be extremely scarce, and it could

Medical team from Guizhou leaves for Hubei to aid novel coronavirus fight. (Xinhua)

even trigger a series of deep economic and social crisis (Jiandong, 2020). At the same time, more countries and populations in the world would be in danger.

Although Wuhan closed the city, water, electricity, heating, communication, supplies of living, and timely treatment of the illness are provided. There was no disorder in the overall social order, and the state machinery was operating normally. Compared with the West, China has a big government, but the state and the Communist Party of China aim to serve the people, which is also a source of legitimacy. As a result, the country's decisive and timely decision made us avoid a huge catastrophe.

Local governments at all levels are also acting. Among them, Hubei Province has adopted strict measures. The government announced that from 10:00 am on January 23, 2020, the capital city Wuhan's urban bus, subway, ferry, and long-distance passenger transportation will be suspended; for no special reason, citizens are not to leave Wuhan, and the airport and railway corridor for departures from Wuhan will be temporarily closed. China has taken the most severe epidemic prevention measures that world history has ever seen: lockdown of the city with tens of millions of citizens. The closure of Wuhan City reflects the severity of this virus epidemic and the Chinese government's determination to prevent and control the epidemic.

Even though Wuhan was under coronavirus lockdown, water, electricity, heating, communication, living supplies, and timely treatment of the illness were provided. There was generally no disruption in the social order, and the state machinery operated normally.

According to calculations based on relevant data, if the strict isolation policy introduced by the country were implemented three to five days later, considering important factors of population such as migration during the Spring Festival, family reunion, and large-scale outbound tourism, the infection rate would have eventually reached 20% of the entire population. If that happened, the medical resources across the whole country would face extreme scarcity, and this could even trigger a series of deep economic and social crises (Jiandong, 2020). In the meantime, other countries would be put in grave danger.

Even though Wuhan was under coronavirus lockdown, water, electricity, heating, communication, living supplies, and timely treatment of the illness were provided. There was generally no disruption in the social order, and the state machinery operated normally. Compared with the West, China has a larger government. This being said, the state and the Communist Party of China aim to serve the people, which is also a source of legitimacy. As a result, the country's critical and timely decision made us avoid a huge catastrophe.

The president of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping, in Hubei. (APL Xhinhua/Pang Xinglei)

Second, the counterpart support model[1] has shown its power again. Although Wuhan's medical capacity is relatively high, the epidemic situation is too sudden and too severe. Wuhan has been facing a serious problem, that is, the hospitals are short of resources, lack of beds, epidemic prevention supplies, medical equipment, and medical staffs. There is an old saying in China: "When disaster struck, help came from all sides." Under unified deployment, 19 provincial-level units began to support Hubei counterparts. As of February 11, the National Health Commission, the State Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine, the Chinese Red Cross, 29 provinces (autonomous regions, municipalities), the Xinjiang Construction Corps, and military hospitals have sent a total of 178 medical teams and 21.618 medical team members to support Hubei (Hubei Daily, 2020).

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1   Counterpart support program is a policy behavior in which an economically developed or stronger party provides assistance to an economically underdeveloped or weaker party. Developed local governments are matched with the region to be supported in the program, and supporters from the supportive local government support another region in need in the relevant area when needed. This model basically consists of four main support models: Disaster Support, Financial Support, Medical Support and Educational Support. Supports can be intellectual, material and financial, source sharing and   as well as labor support provided when deemed necessary. The first example of this was successfully accomplished in the Wenchuan earthquake. In the Corona epidemic originated from Wuhan, Jiangsu counterparts also supported the Hubei province.(see. https://baike.baidu.com/item/)

Rely on all the people to establish the defense line. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that the epidemic is the devil, and we cannot allow the devil to hide. Therefore, the government and the party must mobilize the masses, organize the masses, gather the masses, implement joint defense and control, and build a people's defense line.

In response to the above problems in Wuhan, designated hospitals were quickly set up in various places, and two hospitals like Huo Shenshan and Lei Shenshan were completed in ten days, providing 2.500 beds. Many "mobile cabin hospitals" which can provide thousands of beds were also established at the same time. The Hubei government also uses 16 provincial universities as reserve isolation points just in case of more patients. Medical supplies and the supplies for prevention and control of NPC were provided in a timely manner. The manufacturing companies that can produce medical protective clothing, masks, and related medicines work day and night to satisfy the needs. Supplies such as vegetables and supplies from all walks of life are continuously shipped to Wuhan. The express companies open "Green channel" for the transportation of needed resources. The government has also a rapid allocation of special financial funds for public health services and preventions (Yongchao,2020). As Academician Zhong Nanshan said, "A lot of things can be solved with the momentum. Wuhan can pass the country with the help of the whole country" (Changjiang Daily, 2020).

Third, rely on all the people to establish the defense line. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out that the epidemic is the devil, and we cannot allow the devil to hide. Therefore, the government and the party must mobilize the masses, organize the masses, gather the masses, implement joint defense and control, and build a people's defense line. 1.4 billion people were demanded to remain at home, but the masses' general attitude soon changed from initial criticisms and doubts to widespread support, understanding and cooperation. Urban communities and rural areas have also implemented grid-based epidemic prevention and control. Countless medical staff, community workers, police, and volunteers battled day and night on the frontline of the epidemic. The army also rushed to the front line of epidemic prevention and control, bringing great confidence to the people. During recent attempts at epidemic prevention and control, China's thousands of years old customs have changed; adults and children no longer visit relatives and friends; they no longer admire travel and vacation, and have become overnight "home men and women". Chinese people share food, express their affection with smile face emojis on WeChat, showing that Chinese are not pessimistic and panicked (People's Daily, 2020).

Fourth, they actively carry out international cooperation. China has identified pathogens at an unprecedented rate and shared relevant viral gene sequences with the WHO and other countries as soon as possible, providing the possibility of developing rapid virus detection tools. The Chinese health department also shared epidemic information with relevant countries and regions when needed, and provided valuable time for rapid action. Besides, the Chinese government also welcomes the WHO to send an international expert delegation to assist China in fighting the epidemic.

Turkish Ambassador to China and Turkish students shot videos, saying "Wuhan Jiayou, Zhongguo Jiayou" (Stay Strong, Wuhan; Stay Strong, China), showing Turkish people's solidarity with Chinese people.

China has also received a lot of donations from foreign governments and institutions, including 21 countries in the first batch, and China must and shall remember these contributions. Among these countries, Japan is quite exemplary. In addition to donating a large number of medical supplies, Japanese officials also publicly stated that "Virus is bad, but not a human" in response to extremely discriminatory statements. Moreover, each parliamentarian of the Japanese Liberal Democratic Party will deduct 5.000 yen from his salary to donate China for fighting this epidemic (Tencent Net, 2020).

Another example is Iran. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif is the first foreign minister of public solidarity with China and provided China with 3 million medical masks. Considering that Iran is still under full US sanctions, it was not easy for Iran to make this contribution for China (FMPRC, 2020a).

The Red Cross of China is supporting its government to fight new Coronavirus. (Xinhua)

Turkey is also among the first 21 countries to send additional supplies to China. On January 31, 2020, the Turkish Air Force military aircraft transported aid to Wuhan, including a total of 1,000 sets of chemical protective clothing, 93,500 filter masks and 1,000 sets of disposable chemical protective clothing, among others (Chuanbao,2020). Later, Turkey's TIKA, AFAD, TIM, IGA and Turkish Cargo have organized several multiple batches of medical device assistance to China. Besides, Turkish Ambassador to China and Turkish students shot videos, saying "Wuhan Jiayou, Zhongguo Jiayou" (Stay Strong, Wuhan; Stay Strong, China), showing Turkish people's solidarity with Chinese people. Just as State Council and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said when he met with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavosoglu, "the Chinese side appreciates that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Mr. Foreign Minister have repeatedly expressed support for China's fight against the epidemic" (Xinhua Net, 2020a).

Early neglect in China's fight against epidemics

In 2003, China had experienced a severe SARS incident. It stands to reason that it should have enough experience to deal with the epidemic, but it seems that the lessons of history have not been fully drawn. Although the epidemic situation was obviously controlled in the later period, various problems were neglected in the early outbreak, midway control, and public opinion control.

First, the local government and the epidemic control department underestimated the severity of the epidemic and took slow action to cause the epidemic to spread throughout the country. On January 21, 2020, Zhong Nanshan, a Chinese acamic who serves as head of the high-level ex-

pert group of the National Health and Medical Commission, inspected Wuhan and pointed out that "the virus can be transmitted from person to person" (The Paper, 2020a). Previously, the local government had not disclosed and controlled the mass gathering activities because of the Spring Festival. Wuhan's resident population was more than 14 million, but 5 million people had "normally fled" before the city was closed (The Paper, 2020b). This is an important reason for the rapid spread of the epidemic across the country. It can be said that local governments are responsible.

Second, Hubei and Wuhan are seriously short of medical resources to deal with the epidemic. Even neighboring cities and counties have inadequate supplies, and they need help from all over the country. This reflects that the national public health system is still lagging in terms of personnel, technology, and equipment under this serious epidemic. If this epidemic happened in other areas without better medical resources compared to Wuhan, this epidemic would have caused more deaths. In this sense, there is still a huge gap in the distribution of public health resources between the East and the West, big cities and small and medium cities in China. This epidemic also exposes another problem, that is all cities in China still lack a complete public health system, infectious disease prevention system, and ICU isolation resource management system. Therefore, several counties and/or cities are in need of an independent public health and epidemic prevention system. Various hospitals with enough beds should be set up following the standards for treating infectious diseases, and other infrastructure related to controlling the infection (Qifan, 2020).

Third, the local government does not pay enough attention to public opinion, which leads to the decline of the government's credibility. The death of 35-year-old Dr. Li Wenliang on February 7 triggered a strong backlash from public opinion. At the end of December, Dr. Li has noticed that the virus can spread from person to person, but he was admonished by the police. In the end, the local government did not comfort him, and he insisted to fight on the front line after being cured.

> **If Wuhan wins then Hubei Province wins, if Hubei wins then China will win this battle against novel coronavirus pneumonia. Based on data on the number of confirmed cases in Wuhan and Hubei, the reshuffling of leaders proves to be accurate and effective.**

He was regarded as a hero by common people and was highly praised by WHO. Also, many problems have arisen regarding the distribution of donated items by the Wuhan Red Cross, which has attracted criticism from public opinion across the country. As a result, the State Supervision Commission sent an investigation team to conduct a comprehensive investigation, responding to public concerns and raising expectations for restoring the truth.

Hubei Government's policies were useful but not efficient enough, and cannot still satisfy the people's needs due to their early neglect. On February 13, 2020, the central authorities adjusted the top leaders in Hubei Province and Wuhan. The mayor of Shanghai at that time; Ying Yong, was replaced with Jiang Chaoliang as the Hubei State Party Committee Secretery. Wang Zhonglin, then Jinan Municipal Party Secretary, was succeeded by Ma Guoqiang as the Wuhan Municipal Party Secretary (Xinhua Net, 2020b).

After this adjustment, the epidemic situation has been changing towards a positive direction. Focusing on the two major tasks of isolation and treatment, Wuhan carried out a large-scale network investigation, carried out the strictest closed management of the community for 24 hours, and severely punished officials for dereliction of duty. The purpose is to achieve five hundred percent, that is confirmed patients are 100% attended, 100% of suspected patients are tested for nucleic acids, 100% of patients with fever are tested, close contact people are 100% isolated, and community villages are 100% closed (Xinxin, 2020). With these strict policies into practice, the epidemic in Wuhan has been greatly alleviated. If Wuhan wins then Hubei Province wins, if Hubei wins then China will win this battle against novel coronavirus pneumonia. Based on data on the number of confirmed cases of Wuhan and Hubei, the reshuffling of leaders proves to be accurate and effective.

What does the epidemic mean for China?

China's NCP Battle encompasses four fronts. The first front is the medical battle. This is the most critical battle, which is a life-and-death situation. The first battlefield is the most important one, which is Wuhan City. The second battlefield is very important, which is Hubei Province. The third battlefield is also very important in other provinces across the country. Batches of medical teams gathered from all over the country, and even from the fourth and fifth-tier cities to Wuhan and Hubei. Regardless of the danger of life, these white angels realize the most beautiful retrograde.

The second front is the economic battle. In order to fight the epidemic, the country extend-ed the holidays, which is no problem for the rich people, but for ordinary people, there is no work and no income, and an SME's boss cannot afford it. After all, tourism, catering, entertainment, production, transportation fell into stagnation during this period. On the other hand, the national economy also needs to operate normally and production must be started. Therefore, the question of balancing between prevention, control and economic development requires the central and local governments' efforts at all levels to find solutions.

The third front is the diplomatic campaign. In the face of the epidemic, many countries expressed their understanding and support for China, sending charcoal in the snow, and giving a helping hand. Pakistan donated national strategic materials to China. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen made a special visit to China to show his standing together with the Chinese people (FMPRC, 2020b). In the country, there are still some countries and people that "drop down a stone on the man who has fallen into a well". Wilbur Ross, the Trump administration's Commerce Secretary said that the coronavirus could bring jobs back to the US from China. Walter Russell Mead said China is the "Sick Man of Asia" on the Washington Post. German Der Spiegel said the virus was "Made in China" (Hong Kong China News Agency, 2020). They all show the inhuman aspect of certain Western politicians and media. Under such circumstances, China must launch a diplomatic counterattack, show China's image of a strong and responsible country with its performance in the fight against the epidemic, and show the heroic spirit of the Chinese people to defeat the epidemic.

The fourth front is the battle of faith. In the face of the epidemic, some countries have adopted some extreme restrictive measures.

A medical team member leaving for Xianning City of Hubei Province February 12, 2020. (Xinhua)

This is not advisable. What is more terrible than the epidemic is the panic itself. Just as Franklin Roosevelt said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself". As long as the government, especially the central government, seeks the truth from the facts, keep an open and transparent attitude, and guides and responds to the public opinion rightly, it will help strengthen confidence.

What are the results of the epidemic and its impact on China?

On January 30, 2020, Professor Zhang Wenhong, the leader of the Shanghai Medical Treatment Expert Group, analyzed the three outcomes of the epidemic. The first one is a success: the number of new cases has decreased in 2 weeks; the epidemic in Wuhan has been controlled in 2 months; and the peripheral area around Wuhan has been cleared in 2 months. There are basically no sporadic cases in major provinces and cities, and WHO ends its high-risk assessment of China. The second one is a failure. Then China follows the Mexican flu model in 2009, and the virus swept the world. The third one is the stalemate. Every hospital in China becomes an infectious disease hospital, and the disease is included in daily management until the society establishes a certain immunity

and then the epidemic gradually fades naturally (Wenhong, 2020.).

At present, in terms of actual control results, China's national system and control measures are working towards the first result without thinking about any cost. The epidemic is expected to reach its peak in April and then will be significantly controlled (The Paper, 2020c). For China, there is no choice but to control the epidemic quickly and completely. Otherwise, China will pay three major costs.

The first one is a strategic cost. At present, the United States intends to use this epidemic to create a panic atmosphere and isolate China politically and economically, especially when the WHO lists the novel coronavirus epidemic as a public health emergency of international concern. The purpose of the United States is to achieve what they have not achieved in the Sino-US trade war. Therefore, China must stop the development of the epidemic as soon as possible and win a new period of strategic opportunity for China's development.

The second is the economic cost. China is at the heart of the global supply chain. If the epidemic cannot be controlled for a long time, the global supply chain will fall into the trap of violent turmoil, and global multinational companies will consider reorganizing their own supply chains. This is also a strategic economic loss in China. By then, if the jobs will not return to the United States, they will also partially be transferred to other countries, and once they are transferred, they will not return. If the core position of the global supply chain is disrupted, the transition of China's economic structure from low-end industries to high-end industries will be interrupted. Therefore, China needs to anni-

hilate the epidemic as soon as possible, resume industrial production quickly, and continue to attract foreign confidence and foreign investment.

The third cost is the cost on the people's livelihood. If the epidemic is not well controlled, it will inevitably have a huge negative impact on the people's livelihood due to serious economic problems. The result is that everyone will be threatened tremendously no matter the rich and the poor. The richer will get a greater economic loss, while the poor will get the worse economic conditions. If the epidemic continues for a long time, the society will be destabilized.

In Chinese, the crisis also means "opportunity within risk". If China can overcome this epidemic as quickly as possible, this will also bring huge opportunities and strategic benefits to China. First, China's authority and credibility will be further enhanced, and global rule-making capabilities will be enhanced. This time, China pressed the pause button directly, which involves 1.4 billion people. As a result, the country was suspended in an orderly manner, and then everyone united to fight the epidemic. What other country in the world can achieve this?

Second, China's economy will suffer significant losses in the short term, but it will continue to develop in the medium and long terms. If we achieve rapid and complete victory in this battle, although the economic benefits will be lost in the short term, the whole world will know that the Chinese government and people have a strong ability to avoid risks. It is safe to put eggs in China's basket, especially for financial and investment fields. Considering China's market potential and China's industrial capabilities, more resources will be concentrated in China, which

also means long-term economic benefits. Moreover, through this epidemic, new outbreaks including our work efficiency, emerging industries and new business models will inevitably increase in popularity, which will also generate long-term positive outcomes for the economy.

Third, China's social governance capacity will be greatly improved as a result. This epidemic has allowed us to see a lot of our shortcomings in national governance, so our improvement speed will become much faster. The ability to implement our policies from top to bottom will be greatly improved, and social problems will be more quickly exposed and quickly resolved. This improvement in the ability of state governance means an increase in the efficiency of social functioning, which is of great significance to the development of the entire country.

Since the establishment of People's Republic of China; New Corona Virus has created an important situation, because it sweeps and spreads the area swiftly, transmits the disease and affect the largest number of people with a nation-wide impact involving 1.4 billion people, not to mention the world population. Moreover, the mobilization of the health branches of the army on a massive scale, large isolations on the quarantine of the virus, hospital buildings and mobile treatment were included in China's struggle. In the process; the first response to the crisis is China's act to put a city of 10 million people in quarantine overnight and the Central bureau's action on the highest alarm level on the New Year's Eve. Despite all this, the Chinese enjoy the longest spring holiday in history and the development of construction services with training.

It can be said that China is struggling an extraordinary battle against this epidemic. Undoubtedly, this war will cost immeasurable human, material and financial resources for China. But the nation's confidence that "China will win! Wuhan will win" has always been there. Just as Chinese philosophy tells us, "Good fortune comes after disaster, and the disaster lurks in a good fortune." In other words, there are always opportunities in the crisis. Natural and unnatural disasters are inevitable experiences for the development of society. The victory of China against this epidemic will make a great contribution to the world. 🪷

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