

NO: 11, ISSUE: 1, 2023

Journal
of Global Politics
and Current Diplomacy

 [Center for
European Dialog
and Cultural Diplomacy]
DEDiC

Journal of Global Politics and Current Diplomacy

GLOBAL POLITICS AND CURRENT DIPLOMACY (JGPCD)

The JGPCD is a biannual (Summer and Winter), open access, peer-reviewed international journal that will consider any original scientific article without being predisposed nor fostering any particular methodology.

The issues of the journal will include multi and interdisciplinary papers. Occasionally, individual issues may focus on a particular theme.

ISSN 2344 – 6293 ISSN-L 2344 – 6293

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-Chief:

Mihai Alexandrescu, PhD

Deputy Editor-in-Chief:

Marcela Sălăgean, PhD

Editorial Board:

Editor: Paul Popa, PhD

Indexing and Abstracting: Stefan Maroşan, MD

Design Editor: Mihai-Vlad Guţă

PUBLISHER:

Centrul pentru Dialog European şi Diplomatie Culturală/Centre for European Dialogue and Cultural Diplomacy (DEDIC)

READERSHIP

The JGPCD aims to publish high contributions across the wide-range topics of International Relations from theoretical debates to historical and cultural analyses of scholars and practitioners in the IR community. The Journal provides a platform to develop and promote research and practices in current diplomacy and its interconnection with International Relations, Euro-

pean Studies, Socio-Anthropology, History, and Cultural Studies.

The JGPCD keeps with its European roots and assumes its commitment to producing a European journal with a global impact, encouraging broad awareness and innovation in this interdisciplinary field. In this respect, authors outside of the European area are welcome to submit their works in order to promote different theoretical methods approaching particular topics in International Relations.

The Journal intends to establish an effective channel of communication between policymakers, diplomats, experts, government agencies, academic and research institutions and persons concerned with the complexity of international relations, especially *global politics*, and various forms of *diplomacy*.

Open Access Statement

This is an open-access journal which means that all content is freely available without charge to the user or his/her institution. Users are allowed to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of the articles, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without asking prior permission from the publisher or the author. This is in accordance with the BOAI definition of open access.

SUBMISSION

Authors are invited to visit the JGPCD website <http://journal.centrulededic.ro/sample-page/about-igpcd-2/author-guidelines/>

COPYRIGHT RULES

This Journal publishes its articles under the Creative Common 4.0 License ([CC BY-NC](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/))

Journal
of **Global Politics**
and **Current Diplomacy**

ISSN 2344 – 6293 ISSN-L 2344 – 6293

CONTENTS

INVESTIGATING THE ORIGIN, ELEMENTS AND MOTIVATIONS OF THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS IN CAMEROON	Clotilde ASANGNA	5
NORMATIVE STATECRAFT: THE EU SANCTIONS POLICY ON RUSSIA'S ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA	Halil DELIGÖZ	23
GEOGRAPHY, REGION, SPACE: THE EVOLUTION AND REFLECTION OF GEOPOLITICAL THEORY	BO Rong Kang	39
WHAT IS IT TO BE 'NATIONAL'? : CONTESTING NATIONAL (IN)SECURITY, NATIONAL IDENTITY, OTHERING AND ALTERNATE IMAGINATIONS IN INDIA	Mansoor ASHRAF	57
BANGLADESH'S EVOLVING BALANCING STRATEGY: FROM TWO-WAY TO THREE-WAY?	Mufassir RASHID Nishat TASNIM Aishwarya Sanjukta Roy PROMA	76
ONLINE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN IN ROMANIA'S ELECTIONS (2016-2020). A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW	Ştefan MAROŞAN	101

INVESTIGATING THE ORIGIN, ELEMENTS AND MOTIVATIONS OF THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS IN CAMEROON

Clotilde ASANGNA*

Abstract: This essay examines the status of Anglophones in Cameroon as marginalized to illustrate the politics of oppression that has survived since the creation of the unitary state on May 20, 1972. Anglophone marginalization operates at various levels in the unitary state, with varying impacts. The purpose of this study is to depict how decades of marginalization have eventually resulted in incessant civilian unrest in a country that was once deemed "peaceful". This essay adopts the narrative model and maintains that the effective method of sustaining the status quo has been to control the conduct of anglophone Cameroonians by suppressing anglophone identity to ensure the survival of the politics of oppression within the unitary state.

Keywords: Democratization; Cultural and Linguistic identity; Self-determination; Regional Conflict; Decentralization.

Introduction

THE YEAR 1972 UNEARTHED A PIVOTAL MOMENT IN THE DEMOCRATIC governance and political advancement of Cameroon, marking a period of constitutional, legislative, political, and institutional change. It was the year Cameroon transitioned from a federal government system to a unitary state; the unitary state merged East and West Cameroon under one centralized government with Yaoundé as the nation's capital. These developments were purportedly intended, among other things, to introduce a paradigm shift from a colonial

* Clotilde Asangna, Doctoral student at Franklin University. Columbus, Ohio, United States. Email: asangn01@email.franklin.edu

heritage of autocracy to a contextualized, progressive system of democratic governance. President Ahidjo projected the creation of the unitary system of government as the ultimate solution for fostering socio-economic growth and preventing administrative disarray. However, reunification resulted in extreme centralization of political power in East Cameroon and subsequent authoritarianism at the expense of liberal democracy. First, it endorsed the design of an authoritarian social contract in which the head of state extended welfare and bribes, and in exchange, the denizens settled for a reduced role in politics. Second, the unitary state evaded the necessity to build administrative capacity because of the absence of accountability, financial transparency and legal limits on state officials. Besides the adoption of multiparty politics in 1990, the unitary state rendered little overall growth for the former British territory of Cameroon.

Why has the state yet to return to the federal system of government, seeing as the unitary state has failed to live up to its promises of greatness through unity? This essay examines the internal dimension of anglophone identity and argues that an anglophone problem in Cameroon has been caused by years of state-imposed marginalization. Having faced endless roadblocks in the quest for federalism, the Anglophone community is adopting a more radical stance and pushing for complete secession/independence from East Cameroon.

Political background

A look at the political history of Cameroon will provide a premise for understanding the culmination of separatism that now defines the country. Like most other African countries, Cameroon's history has been burdened with political strife since the colonial exit. It has been the subject of academic discussions on failed independent or neo-colonial states. One country (German Kamerun) was suddenly split into two territories by British and French colonial masters, with different cultural legacies, languages, and levels of economic development. It is no surprise that attempting to reunify this fragmented country at independence resulted in cultural pluralism and ethnic fragmentation.¹ French Cameroon gained independence on January 1, 1960, and British Cameroon merged with French Cameroon as a federal state on February 11, 1961, by way of a plebiscite.

Cameroon was first colonized by the Germans, who named the country Kamerun in 1884. Otto von Bismark initially entered the colonial race to protect

¹ Following German exit, the British and French split the German territory in two and each ruled their respective portions as mandated territories of the League of Nations between 1919 and 1945 and then as U.N trusteeship territories until independence. The partition between the British and French created major ethnic polarity and resulted in the formation of up to over 200 ethnic groups in Cameroon (Imbert 1982 and Prouzet 1974).

German trade overseas, but the "scramble for Africa" changed the course of events and soon resulted in Gustav Nachtigal being dispatched to explore the coastline of Cameroon and subsequently hoist the German flag in the territory on July 14, 1884. This ceremony officially marked Germany's claim to the country. German rule in Cameroon (Kamerun) ended following the German defeat in the first world war. The British and French-administered Cameroon as an Anglo-French condominium from 1914 until the German expulsion from Cameroon in 1916. Following German exit from Cameroon, Britain retained about 1/5th of the territory (the Southern and Northern regions of the country). At the same time, France took control of approximately 80% of the colony, which came to be known as French Cameroon. The June 1919, Treaty of Versailles solidified the partition of Cameroon between France and Britain, granting both countries legal authority to govern Cameroon. Following institutional changes to the international system in 1922, Cameroon came to be defined as a mandated territory of the League of Nations administered simultaneously by both France and Britain. Both countries governed their territories according to their corresponding policies, resulting in conflicting political institutions and cultures that eventually shaped the country's polarized identity.

French and British rule in Cameroon could not be more dissimilar. British Cameroon was administered as a mandated territory of the League of Nations (subsequently the United Nations), while France governed Cameroun as a colonial possession through assimilation. Despite the differences in colonial administrations, the wave of self-government eventually swept across Cameroon. By the mid-late 1950s, France began efforts to prepare the Cameroonian élite for self-rule. Initial steps towards self-rule included passing the *Loi Cadres* in 1956 by the French Assembly, which aimed to provide an institutional framework for eventual autonomy to the territories. This law resulted in the dissolution of the Assemblée Représentative du Cameroun (ARCAM) and the creation of a new assembly (in December 1956) that was afforded increased power over territorial affairs called Assemblée Législative du Cameroun (ALCAM). In 1957, Andre Marie Mbida was appointed the first Prime Minister of French Cameroon. Unfortunately, Mbida resigned from office around a year after assuming power due to harsh criticism for his policies and impending impeachment.

Consequently, Vice Prime Minister Amadou Ahidjo was appointed Prime Minister. Ahidjo prioritized complete independence from France and led French Cameroon to independence on January 1, 1960. Ahidjo's next priority became the reunification of the two Cameroons.

British Cameroon had a different colonial experience from their Francophone counterparts. Due to financial reasons, Britain administered their Cameroon territory as an extension of Nigeria through indirect rule. The British

"territory was divided into Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons. As per the British Cameroons Order-in-Council of June 26, 1923, Northern Cameroons was administered as part of Northern Nigeria, whereas Southern Cameroons was administered as part of the southern provinces of Nigeria and subsequently as part of the Eastern Province of Nigeria" (Enonchong 2021: 11). The 1953 Eastern Region Crisis, which resulted in Southern Cameroons demand to split from the Eastern House, had a great impact on British Cameroon's political atmosphere. According to Ngoh (1979), élites like John Ngu Foncha, Solomon T. Muna and Augustin Jua, among others, formed the Kamerun National Convention (KNC) to eschew any political alliance with political parties in Nigeria, choosing "benevolent neutrality" instead (Ngoh 1979: 85). Due to links with the Nigerian Action Group, Jua and Foncha left the KNC and founded the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP). The KNDP quickly became the most significant political party in British Cameroon with its ambitious quest for reunification with French Cameroun and secession from Nigeria.

On March 13, 1959, the United Nations General Assembly approved Resolution 1350(XIII) recommending that "the Administering Authority, in pursuance of Article 76 b of the Charter of the United Nations Plebiscite Commissioner, to organize, under the supervision of the United Nations, separate plebiscites in the northern and southern parts of the Cameroons under United Kingdom administration, in order to ascertain the wishes of the inhabitants of the Territory concerning their future" (United Nations 1959). Resolution 1350 (XIII) recommended that the plebiscite be organized between December 1959 and April 1960; this document officially set in motion events leading to the 1961 plebiscite.

The February 11, 1961, plebiscite was the first official prospect of independence enforced by the United Nations General Assembly for the British-administered territory of Cameroon.² The people of this region were given two alternatives: A) Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent federation of Nigeria? B) Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of Cameroun?³ A third alternative which recommended independence for Southern Cameroon was opposed by Sir Andrew Cohen, then a British appointee to the United Nations Trusteeship Council. The idea of having an independent Southern Cameroon was shut down due to the region's

² The British administered portion of Cameroon that opted for unification with the Republic of Cameroun, will alternatively be referred to as West Cameroon or Southern Cameroon throughout this paper.

³ United Nations Document Retyped in parts from Ambazonian Archives; The Two Alternative Part 2 – Offer Made by the Independent Republic of Cameroun to the State of Southern Cameroons <https://ambazonia.org/media/pdfs/The%20Two%20Alternatives%20Part%202%20-Republic%20of%20Cameroon%20and%20Southern%20Cameroons.pdf>

economic backwardness. Unlike French Cameroun, which received direct financial assistance from France, financial aid into Southern Cameroon flowed through Lagos because Southern Cameroon did not have an independent budget. For the most part, financial aid for Southern Cameroon ended in Nigeria (Ngoh 1979).

Northern Cameroon voted in favour of unification with Nigeria, while Southern Cameroon settled for unification with the Republic of Cameroun. Sixty-two years since the decision to unite with the Republic of Cameroun, the plebiscite reads more like an experiment than an electoral process. To some, it was a betrayal, not a choice, that would eventually disseminate into chaos (Percival 2008). The plebiscite resulted in the creation of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, and the flag was hoisted to reflect two stars for the two Cameroons with Ahidjo as president and Charles Assalé and John Ngu Foncha as Prime Ministers of East and West Cameroon.

Literature Review

Throughout the years, African politics and history scholars have advanced theories defining nation-states. However, such theories have only multiplied for countries that have undergone civil wars like Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Sudan. Per Collier (2000) conflicts are more likely to be perpetuated because of the lack of suitable economic opportunities⁴ (Collier 2000). Then, there are other scholars who argue that post-independent governments under African rulers were inherited from colonial masters. This argument suggests that the colonial legacy that was passed down to the African elite was porous and incomplete. For instance, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) until 1907 was governed as King Leopold's personal property (Meredith 2005; Shillington 1989). As the argument goes, after the DRC gained independence, President Mobutu Sese Seko continued to rule the state just like his Belgian predecessor (Young 1986).

There are hardly any works of such eminent scholars which discuss the question of the "peaceful" states in Africa unless we take Huntington's (1991) claims about democratization into account. Huntington (1991) uses GNP statistics and the correlation between economy and democracy to define transitioning states. However, even Huntington's analyses are not relevant to Cameroon because the GNP has either declined or remained unchanged for decades. Changes in the economy of the transitioning nation are important for the

⁴ Collier and Hoeffler (2004) argue in a later study that the risk of a civil war outbreak is most likely when the following conditions are present: low GDP per capita, large diaspora, low growth rate, and a rising population.

democratization process because economic development (among other variables) brings about and sustains democracy. In this light, Przeworski et al. (2000) argue that the probabilities of transitions change depending on developmental levels. Therefore, liberalism (multi-partism and free press) only marked the first stage of the democratic transition for Cameroon.

Also, there is Johan Galtung's neo-Marxist concept of dependence or structural theory of imperialism. For Galtung (1972), the international system consists of centre nations (industrial West) and periphery nations. Per this model, the periphery nations supply "value" to the centre nations. This dominance/dependence relationship fosters repression and disharmony of interest in periphery states. Furthermore, neo-Marxist concepts maintain that the source of economic stagnation and repression in the "third" world is in exogenous factors, the product of capitalism. In recent years, exogenous accounts for underdevelopment and marginalization, like Rodney's (1973) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, have lost much of their attraction because several former Asian colonies have demonstrated that identity formation/preservation coupled with a vibrant market economy supports democratic institutions. Thus, exogenous accounts for slow growth and marginalization are no longer popular.

Other authors have looked for answers pertaining to the failure of post-colonial states in the extraction and distribution of raw materials. Such states, Vandewalle (1998) calls "distributive states"⁵ are prone to economic collapse. Also, Holm and Sorensen (1995) maintain that there are core and periphery states. But unlike Galtung (1972), do not blame exogenous factors for the status of the marginalized and failing states. However, per Holm and Sorensen (1995), periphery states are that way due to pre-modern political systems. Holm and Sorensen's (1995) concept only accounts for less than half of the problem in Cameroon. These scholars do not analyse the role of identity (or lack thereof) as an endogenous factor in the underdevelopment of the "third" world. In its holistic form, the literature on "third" state politics does not address the idea that identity conditions the survival of the status quo in post-independent states. Opposed to interacting with values like premodernity, performance dilemma/corruption, neocolonialism, and poverty, this essay aims to fill the literary gap.

Scholars of Cameroon's History and politics like Dickson Eyoh (1998), Piet Konings and Francis Nyamnjoh (1997, 2003), Fonkem Achankeng (2015), Victor Ngoh (1979), Joseph Takougang (2003, 2019) and Milton Krieger (2008), etc., have all covered the Anglophone problem extensively. Some of these scholars like Ngoh (1979), discuss the History of Cameroon, from before the German

⁵ Distributive states are "states that do not rely on local extraction of revenue and that spend inflows of capital generated by commodity sales as their primary economic activity" (Vandewalle 1998: 7).

colonial era until independence. While others like Achankeng (2015) investigate the “false negotiations” at the Foumban constitutional conference of 1961 that set in motion the path for future Anglophone manipulation by the Francophone-led government. He also argues that the current nationalist conflict in British Southern Cameroons is a direct result of the political developments following the Foumban Conference. Meanwhile, Le Vine (1964) and Benjamin (1972) hold that the Anglophone problem is a direct result of the partition of German Kamerun between the British and the French.

Konings and Nyamnjoh (1997) do a deep dive into the intricacies of the Anglophone problem. In so doing, they examine the socio-economic and political factors and implications of the crisis. Furthermore, Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003) examine the deconstruction of Anglophone identity by the Biya government by means of adopted colonial policies such as divide-and-rule tactics. Similarly, Eyoh (1998) discusses the effect of ethnonationalism in sustaining the Anglophone crisis. Ethnonational identities play a fundamental role in influencing the ‘us versus them’ dichotomy that has now sustained political struggles. In his analysis of the Anglophone minority in Quebec, Stevenson (1999) also draws attention to the role of ethnonationalism and argues that a new sense of Anglophone identity was born out of conflicts with the Francophones. Despite this rich and seemingly well-rounded research, none of these scholars discusses why and how Anglophone identity is a threat to the Francophone-led government and why the latter seeks to suppress it.

Since the 2016 uprisings, Cameroon has witnessed a profound transformation of its socio-political structure, with substantial economic changes in society. As the current state of events remains fluid, comprehending the new Cameroonian reality and political economy is burdened with hurdles and uncertainty. In its current state, Cameroon is unstable and divisive: political fragmentation seems to be the dominant dynamic based on differences of opinion, loyalties, interests, and identities. The coercive power and manipulation of the state can suffice for the socio-political marginalization of an entire group within a nation-state. The Anglophone society has come to see itself within the governing structure as inferior and powerless, hence not deserving of increased political participation and developmental resources. In addition, the unitary state continually exploits West Cameroon and pits the elites of the southwestern region against their northwestern counterparts to further demolish a unified Anglophone identity.

Identifying the Driving Factors of the Anglophone Crisis

Following the dissolution of the federal system, the unitary state began to utilize repressive politics to marginalize the Anglophone minority. Marginalization encompasses social inequality, the core of the anglophone problem. Unlike the Marxian concept, which focuses on the ruling class and subjects, marginalization in Cameroon is politically stratified. Political power stems from the state in a top-down fashion and is dominated by the president. Who, in turn, governs along patrimonial/patron-client lines. In Cameroon, diversity between ethnic groups has been evident since the German exit. Both Ahmadou Ahidjo (1960-82) and Paul Biya (1982-present) have been skilful at exploiting ethnic diversity for their political gain (this system leaves ethnic groups fighting each other for political favour, as opposed to banding together against the broken system).⁶ Upon independence, the government was formed on a multi-ethnic ruling class, which has prevented the rise to power of any one ethnic group over the other. Although Ahidjo was Fulbe, and Biya was Catholic of the Beti ethnic group, they both established a diverse ruling class along neo-patrimonial/patron-client lines that rendered monopolization by one ethnic group practically impossible. Power is decentralized to the extent that those on the outside, looking in, could barely sense the presence of any form of real marginalization.⁷

According to Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003), Ahidjo emphasized the need for ethnic balance and national unity; however, both authors agree that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that three elite ethnic groups enjoyed positions of privilege during Ahidjo's administration. "There was, first of all, the Muslim Fulbe elite, especially those who originated from Garoua, Ahidjo's hometown, the so-called 'Garoua barons'. Second, there were the members of the Christian Beti elite from the southern part of Francophone Cameroon who formed the core of the bureaucratic-administrative faction of the hegemonic alliance based on their high educational qualifications. The Fulbe-Beti axis constituted the regime's major ethnic underpinning. And thirdly, there were the members of the Bamileke elite from the Francophone part of the Grassfields, the present-day West Province" Konings and Nyamnjoh (2003: 6). Favouritism towards certain groups (mainly in Francophone Cameroon regions) over others was not subtle and has persisted into Paul Biya's regime. These ethnic partialities have gone a long way in solidifying proof of blatant anglophone marginalization.

⁶ Gabriel (1998: 3) maintains that these presidents have been able to prevent the ethnically diverse country "from joining the ranks of failing states" and preventing the rise to power by a single ethnic or regional group.

⁷ From the vantage point of many critics, the problem in Cameroon is not that one group "has its hand in the public till" - but rather that all of them do!" (Gabriel 1998: 7).

To the average Cameroonian, anglophone marginalization is visible in all spheres of life. In the political domain, members of anglophone political parties such as the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and the Alliance of Progressive Forces (APF) are treated by the government as political dissidents.⁸ Francophones occupy almost all key positions in government. In contrast, qualified anglophone candidates are excluded from holding top political senatorial and ministerial positions even in their regions (the Northwest and Southwest regions). Per Eyoh (1998: 351), economically, anglophone marginalization "has taken the form of discrimination against anglophones in employment within the state and parastatal sectors and the private corporate sector, which is predominantly French or located in French-speaking areas, and discrimination in the allocation of public investment." In the social domain, marginalization is marked by the daily treatment of anglophone denizens as unequal partners of the unitary state. Anglophones are called "Biafrans" and "enemies in the house" and are advised to leave the country. This poor treatment of Anglophones by their Francophone counterparts resulted in John Ngu Foncha's resignation from his post as VP of the CPDM. In his resignation letter, Foncha wrote, "The Anglophone Cameroonians whom I brought into the union have been ridiculed and referred to as 'les Biafrais', 'les ennemis dans la maison', 'les traîtres' etc., and the constitutional provisions which protected this Anglophone minority have been suppressed, their voice drowned while the rule of the gun replaced the dialogue which the Anglophones cherish very much."⁹

The 1991 Tripartite conference, which called together government representatives, members of the opposition parties and civil society, was the first attempt by the Francophone-led government to resolve the Anglophone problem. Francophone representatives proposed decentralization, while their Anglophone counterparts sought complete dismantlement of the unitary state and a return to the federal system of government (Takougang & Krieger 1998). Although the Anglophone delegation's request for a return to the federal state was not granted, President Paul Biya expressed his desire for constitutional reform. As a result, a constitutional committee was formed – the Technical Committee

⁸ "Cameroonian security forces have repeatedly used violence, arbitrary arrests and unlawful detentions to prevent political activists who belong to opposition political parties from holding public or private meetings. Those targeted include members of the Front des forces alternatives (FFA, Alternative Forces Front), some of whose leaders were briefly detained in October 2003 and in January 2004, including its president, Jean-Jacques Ekindi; members of the Alliance of Progressive Forces; members of the Social Democratic Front (SDF); and members of the SCNC." "Cameroon: Impunity underpins persistent abuse." *Amnesty International* <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr17/001/2009/en/>

⁹ John Ngu Foncha's letter of resignation as national VP of the CPDM, cited by Piet Konings and Francis. B Nyamnjoh in *Negotiating An Anglophone Identity*. Afrika-Studiecentrum Series, vol. 1. London: Brill, 2003.

on Constitutional Matters (TCCM). The TCCM comprised seven francophones and four Anglophones, chaired by then Secretary General Joseph Owona. Efforts at federalism were still the objective of the Anglophones as the four Anglophone representatives (Benjamin Itoe, Simon Munzu, Sam Ekontang Elad and Carlson Anyangwe) presented a draft proposal for a new federal structure. This proposal, code named EMIA, was rejected by Biya, and soon after, the committee was suspended, and Benjamin Itoe was discharged from his ministerial position. Two weeks before the October 1992 presidential elections, the chairman of the TCCM, Joseph Owona, presented a draft constitution to then Anglophone Prime Minister Simon Achidi Achu, which preserved the essential features of the unitary state, making no concession to the Anglophone members' federalist demands (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003).

The 1991 Tripartite Conference was the first and last attempt of its kind to resolve the Anglophone crisis. The Biya government trivialized the Anglophone problem by maintaining the need to unify the country as it was during German colonial rule. During his 1991 visit to Bamenda, Biya had this to say concerning the Anglophone problem:

Let us not oppose Anglophones and Francophones... The language barrier is not and should not be a political problem in our country. Mind you, at the start of this century Cameroonians were neither Anglophones nor Francophones. Why should the wars of others and the culture of others divide Cameroonians at the dawn of the third millennium? (Biya 1991: 68)

The Biya administration has since maintained that the decentralized structure of the state introduced in the 1996 Constitution comprises the only acceptable approach that underscores the government's policy against a single Cameroonian identity and guarantees respect for difference through circumscribed regional autonomy (Enonchong 2021). This policy has been fundamentally ineffective, as was witnessed in 2016 when sectoral appeals by teachers and lawyers in the Anglophone regions deteriorated into armed struggles between the government and extremist secessionist groups.

The federal structure adopted in 1961 for many Anglophones was the ideal form of government. Due to the widely shared feeling of communal disadvantage among the anglophone community, the anglophone élites fought for a loose federalism with less centralized executive powers. As Foncha argued, a loose federation would guarantee the protection of the minority status of the Anglophones and ensure the preservation of their unique identity, specifically in the linguistic, cultural, educational, and judicial domains.

Defining Anglophone Identity

What is anglophone identity? How and why did anglophone identity change after the creation of the unitary state? The answers to these questions will provide a deep understanding of the motivations of the anglophone crisis. The creation of the federal state of West Cameroon laid the foundation of an anglophone identity, evidenced by the organization and construction of historical ties and ethno-regional cultures. It is important to stress the cultural differences between Anglophones and Francophones based on their different colonial legacies to argue for a return to federalism strongly and indicate the disappearance of Anglophone identity. The simple assertion of an anglophone identity was slackened shortly after the creation of the unitary state. This paper argues that the effective method of enabling the prevailing order has been to control the conduct of West Cameroon by suppressing anglophone identity in a way that sustains the status quo. Hence, the survival of the politics of oppression.

Maintaining that identity is "people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others" Hogg and Abrams (1988: 2); one can see how identity is not simply a result of people sharing similar norms when it is in their best interest but also when those norms are internalized in their identities. In a draft essay, Fearon (1999: 10) maintains, "Identity is a new concept and not something that people have eternally needed or sought as such." However, an argument can be made that identity was recently contextualized, not that the term itself is a new concept. People have had identities for as long as history can remember, which helped communities form and define the differences between people. Several factors, like culture, interests, geographic location etc., have over time contributed to identity formation.

Anglophone identity, in its broadest sense, is a cultural identity. That is an identity that was formed as a result of a shared culture. The question of anglophone identity pivots on the subject of how this society bestows self-formation. Anglophone cultural norms are perceived as wealthy, steeped in tradition, and authentic. Hence there is a shared effort to preserve this cultural heritage irrespective of the odds. The odds are the birth of a 'new' identity cultivated following the institutionalization of the unitary state. This 'new' identity has redefined the Anglophones' interests, an identity now defined by communal marginalization and political oppression. Over the years, the recreation of Anglophone identity by the Francophone-led government has modified the individual interests of the Southern Cameroonians and heightened the shared desire amongst Anglophones to push for a return to the federal state or complete secession from French Cameroon.

Identity as a concept is subject to interpretation depending on specific linkages and, in some cases, is a causal determinant of interests, behaviour and policies. The present sense of anglophone identity has evolved in the last sixty years, influenced by various endogenous and exogenous factors. The basis of anglophone identity "is the conception of former West Cameroon as a distinct community defined by differences in the official language and inherited colonial traditions of politics, law, education and public administration" (Eyoh 1998: 351). Anglophone identity was established before the reunification of Cameroon in 1972. Its reproduction has been facilitated by the attempts of the francophone élites to extend French administrative systems to anglophone communities in the post-colonial era. This extension would completely annihilate anglophone legal, institutional and cultural distinctiveness.

In studying the anglophone cultural construct, one will easily notice a divergence between anglophones favouring secession and those favouring a return to federalism. At the core of this divergence is the dire need for the preservation of a sense of anglophone culture and individuality. This divergence became apparent with the creation of political parties like the Social Democratic Front (SDF), which has, since its formation in 1991, sought decentralization within the unitary state. The birth of the SDF in 1991 and multiple Anglophone political parties thereafter increased Anglophone consciousness. Political parties like the Free West Cameroon Movement and the Ambazonian Movement of Fon Gorji Dinka pushed for creating an Ambazonian State or West Cameroon state. Meanwhile, the creation of the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) in 1994 sought "to restore, within a newly restructured Federal Republic of Cameroon, the autonomy of a territory – Southern Cameroons – and of a people – Southern Cameroonians – and to put an end to their annexation by La République du Cameroun" (Konings and Nyamnjoh 2003: 91).

Even now, it is unclear what percentage of the electorate favours separatist status versus those favouring recreating the federation. A referendum has yet to be organized. Therefore, it is still being determined whether a majority of the populace supports the struggle for federalism or Southern Cameroon's independence. While a voluntary referendum is not the deciding factor of either federalism or secession, it will determine if the anglophone movement has the support it requires to make either federalist or separatist demands to the government. Despite the divergence in political preference, most Anglophone communities seek to preserve Anglophone culture and identity.

Policy Recommendations

It is useless to spend any more time identifying the outstanding democratic shortfalls that have contributed to the Anglophone crisis. However, it is worth noting that the fundamental dispute between the government and the separatists is the question of self-determination for the Anglophone regions. Stabilizing Southern Cameroon will require an intentional solution for sustaining democracy, human rights, and a transparent government. These recommendations speak to the Biya administration, civil society organizations (CSOs) and the international community. If all these groups plus stakeholders work as a cohesive unit to level set and problem solve, the Anglophone crisis will be resolved quickly.

Form a United front: All anglophone political factions (either in favour of separatism, federalism or maintaining the unitary state as is) should compromise on a single coherent and unanimous stance to address the political economy of marginalization, hence begin efforts towards restoring peace. There is no room for divisiveness on such crucial matters to determine the future of all anglophones in Cameroon or abroad. Considering how policies and agendas directly influence institutionalization and social cohesion will be necessary. This recommendation will be successful through the inclusive participation of all anglophone political groups in objective and transparent discussions to determine the path to peace.

National Dialogue/Peace Negotiations: A second national dialogue that includes key government officials, civil society actors, separatist factions, and the public to discuss a path forward for stabilizing conflict-affected regions would be a practical first step towards meaningful participation of stakeholders. The September 30 to October 4, 2019, national dialogue between Anglophone and Francophone representatives in Yaoundé did not end the Anglophone crisis as anticipated. A follow-up to the 2019 national dialogue should be organized. Only this time, the national priority should be social cohesion, given that premature desertion of peacebuilding activities would destabilize an exit from instability. Efforts towards conflict mitigation should be discussed and enforced with special consideration to historical fault lines and to dimensions of peace processes that were previously overlooked, such as disarmament and truth and reconciliation processes. The crisis would be quelled if successful, and efforts to disarm rebel groups and reincorporate them into society will begin. Historically, such channels for dialogue have successfully brought about peace and laid the path for democratic transitions (in other war-torn countries).

Constitutional and Institutional Reform: Amending the constitution to articulate the Anglophones' demands clearly will help secure long-term peace. If Anglophones were guaranteed some autonomy over their legal and educational

systems, then demands for secession will certainly recede. The central focus should be on democracy and good governance, as the democratic deficit is the underlying cause of the broader crisis. Any policy to stabilize Cameroon must account for the democratic shortfalls and employ strategies to resolve them directly. In this light, the Biya regime should clearly elucidate how it proposes to peacefully transfer executive power and how government officials and party-affiliated politicians should be held accountable for enabling patron/client politics. One of the arguments for the underdevelopment of the African continent is the prevalent patron/client system that in itself is antidemocratic and corrupt. The absence of checks and balances in patron-client systems results in gross mismanagement of foreign aid/loans. The Biya administration has, in recent years, detained several ministers for such alleged financial mismanagement of public funds (Kindzek 2021). However, the problem has persisted, mostly due to the absence of financial transparency. While this policy may appear risky to the government, whose highest priority is maintaining Cameroon's territorial integrity instead of implementing democratic measures, it is worth noting some considerations to counter any reservations. Firstly, amending the constitution to allow Anglophones certain privileges will end the crisis, as warring factions will no longer have grounds for disgruntlement. Secondly, instituting democratic practices to curb patron/client politics will mean equal growth opportunities for all people, hence improved economic conditions. Finally, ensuring the peaceful transfer of executive power by means of free and fair elections will show the international community that Cameroon is finally turning away from autocracy and embracing modern forms of government. Cameroon has undergone several constitutional amendments since 1972, none of which have materialized in the democratic transition of executive power. Instead, the country wallows in sustained poverty, lacking fundamental human rights and overall institutional weakness. One of the effective ways to resolve the question of secession will be via constitutional amendments that directly result in the democratic transfer of power and subsequent institutional reform to help rebuild the private sector and overall economy.

Prioritize regional growth: Some of the systemic and institutional problems in Cameroon can be resolved by CSOs and development actors. Civil society actors should develop regional networks to participate in advocacy, information/knowledge exchange, and monitor local governmental policies and strategy advancement, including collaboration between CSOs and locally elected officials. They should engage in efforts to address instability in warring regions and take into account regional resources in their policy development and design. Borrowing democratic tenets from other African countries like Kenya, can help CSOs problem-solve bureaucratic obstructions and proactively ensure a consistent path towards regional growth. The success of this policy

recommendation lies in cultivating efforts for CSOs to be nonpartisan and to be granted immunity from suffering unjust punishments for holding elected officials accountable. As mentioned earlier, Cameroon has a history of persecuting right-based civic groups and individuals who challenge the abuse of power by the government and government officials. This is a human rights violation and democratic deficit that can be curbed if the Biya administration institutionalizes free speech and political protection for right-based groups.

Support from the International Community: The French and British governments should make deliberate short-term ventures to expand citizen involvement in local governance, especially in conflict-affected regions, while encouraging long-lasting stabilization and recompense of political, economic and security injustices. In addition, it will help international organizations like the United Nations to continue voicing support for CSOs and providing financial assistance to apolitical welfare groups that provide aid to internally displaced persons. In the event that peace is restored, these social welfare groups will be the front-runners for resettling displaced communities and restoring a sense of normalcy in the interior/villages. Organizations like the African Union should publicly condemn the abuse of political power in Cameroon and take steps to encourage the institutionalization of a due democratic process, such as a limitation on the presidential term/power and fair elections etc. Finally, organizations like the World Bank and international NGOs should withdraw financial aid/loans and foreign investments from the Biya government until the Anglophone problem is peacefully resolved. Stopping these foreign monies from flowing into the country until democratic tenets are employed would force government officials to look into resolving the Anglophone problem and finally take steps to incorporate democratic tools in administering the state.

To increase the likelihood of success, these recommendations must be driven by a policy for stabilization. A negotiated resolution between armed militia and the government is the only clear path to sustainable peace. However, immediate financial and technical support to build regional governance infrastructure will enable municipal councils to carry on with the day-to-day functions of serving their regional communities.

Anglophone pressure groups like the Southern Cameroons Restoration Movement (SCARM) have maintained that children and youths constitute at least two-thirds of the population of Anglophone Cameroon. For an area that produces critical sources of regional wealth, the unemployment, illiteracy, and underemployment rate among this group is staggering. The state has failed for several years to provide essential services, and the repressive nature of the state has rendered formal complaints impossible, if not suicidal. Suppose we are to accept that societies comprised of human beings are in a state of steady growth

and social change. In that case, we must also accept that the civilian uprisings indicate the status quo is unsustainable.

Conclusion

Its checkered past arguably haunts contemporary Cameroon. There is a valuable debate concerning the factors that account for the many political and civil issues befuddling its overall development. As aforementioned, the very nature of the colonial administrations to prepare the territories for self-determination lacked genuine effort, as was reflected by the problems that plagued the country shortly after. Particularly for British Southern Cameroons, its attachment to Nigeria, while not wholly irrational, unavoidably meant that its socio-political and economic growth was forfeited for administrative convenience. Nevertheless, a considerable focus on developing the region would have potentially placed it in an irrepressible position, better prepared to confront the challenges of building a modern state. Cameroon's colonial history considerably accounts for its social and political development (or lack thereof) and its myriad of governance problems. Be that as it may, federalism was a defining point for the liberalization of Cameroon, given that it introduced essential elements of constitutional democracy. However, the country continues to face considerable socio-political challenges due to the imposition of the unitary state, which has hampered constitutional and democratic advancement.

To unsuspecting visitors, Cameroon was once perceived as a "peaceful" country, diverse but inclusive.¹⁰ "The official discourse made use of all necessary means to maintain the fiction of a society devoid of conflict" (Mbembe 1992: 5). To a developing country like Cameroon, identifying as a peaceful nation, is imperative because it allows access to financial, medical, and military assistance from the international community. While Cameroon's foreign policy has been geared towards portraying a peaceful façade within Africa and the international community, it has failed to retain stable political institutions and socio-economic structures. Contrary to popular belief and by all standards and definitions, this paper argued that Cameroon is fragmented, divisive, politically stunted, and repressive.

Even though it is difficult to predict the outcome of the ongoing civilian unrest (seeing as Cameroon has yet to readopt federal status, and President Paul Biya won the 2018 elections, with 2022 marking his fortieth anniversary as president), this paper is relevant to 21st-century scholarship for two reasons. 1) It makes a methodological contribution to discussing "peaceful" state

¹⁰ Scholars like Jurg Martin Gabriel maintain that Cameroon's "main achievement is that the peace has been kept" (Gabriel 1997, p. 9).

governmentality. 2) It serves as a framework for analysing the legality of the unitary state versus the implementation of a loose federation. Several anglophone political parties and civil society groups increasingly refer to the anglophone region as Southern Cameroons or Ambazonia, challenging the unitary government and pushing for secession. Despite its violent resurgence, self-determination will prove highly costly with an uncertain future and possibly low success rate.

References

- Anyangwe, C. (2012). *Revolutionary Overthrow of Constitutional Orders in Africa*. Langaa Research & Publishing CIG.
- Biya, P. (1991). The Speech of President Biya in Bamenda on 13 September 1991. In *Playdoyer pour une Vraie Démocratie*. Yaoundé.
- Collier, P. (2000). Ethnicity, Politics and Economic Performance. *Economics and Politics*. Vol. 12 (3): 225-245.
- Connolly, W. (1991). *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*. Minnesota.
- Enonchong, E. L. S. (2021). *The Constitution and Governance in Cameroon*. Routledge.
- Eyoh, D. (1998). Through the Prism of a Local Tragedy: Political Liberalisation, Regionalism and Elite Struggles for Power in Cameroon. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*. 68(3): 338-359.
- Fearon, D. J. (1999). "What Is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?" November 3, 1999. Draft Paper. Department of Political Science, Stanford University, CA.
- Gabriel, J. M. (1999). Cameroon's Neopatrimonial Dilemma. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*. 17(2): 173-196. <https://doi.org/10.3929/ethz-a-001990933>
- Hogg, A. M. and Abrams D. (1998). *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Inter-group Relations and Group Processes*. Routledge.
- Holm, H.-H. and Sorensen, G. (1995). Introduction: What has Changed?. In Holm, H.-H. and Sorensen, G. (edited by). *Whose World Order? Uneven Globalization and the End of the Cold War*. Boulder: 1-17.
- Huntington, S. (1991). *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*.
- Imbert, J. (1982). *Le Cameroun (Que Sais-je?)*. Paris.
- Galtung, J. (1972). Eine strukturelle Theorie des Imperialismus. In Dieter Senghaas (ed.), *Imperialismus und strukturelle Gewalt, Analyse über abhängige Reproduktion*. Frankfurt a/Main.
- Kindzeka, M. E. (2021, May 31). Cameroon investigates missing \$335 million in COVID funds. Voice of America. Retrieved from <https://www.voanews.com/a/af-rica-cameroon-investigates-missing-335-million-covid-funds/6206445.html>

- Konings, P. and Nyamnjoh, F. (2003). *Negotiating an Anglophone Identity: A Study of the Politics of Recognition and Representation in Cameroon*. Leiden.
- Kymlicka, W. (1995). *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. Oxford.
- Maurat, J.-P. (1995). *The Chains of Slavery (1774)*. Brussels.
- Mbaku, J. M. and Takougang, J. (2004). *The Leadership Challenge in Africa: Cameroon Under Paul Biya*. Trenton.
- Mbembe, A. (1992). Provisional Notes on the Postcolony. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*. 62(1): 3-37.
- Meredith, M. (2005). *The State of Africa: A History of Fifty Years of Independence*. Michigan.
- Miller, D. (1995). *On Nationality*. Oxford.
- Ngho, V. J. (1979). *The Political Evolution of Cameroon, 1884-1961*. Dissertations and Theses. Paper 2929. <https://doi.org/10.15760/etd.2924>
- Prouzet, M. (1974). *Le Cameroun*. Paris.
- Przeworski, A., Cheibub, J. A., Alvarez, M. E., Limongi, F. (2000). *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Material Well-being in the World, 1950-1990*. Cambridge.
- Rodney, W. (1972). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Dar es Salaam.
- Samir, A. (1973). *Neo-Colonialism in West Africa*. Harmondsworth.
- Shillington, K. (1989). *History of Africa*. Revised Edition. New York.
- Stark, M. F. (1976). Federalism in Cameroon: The Shadow and the Reality. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*. 10(3): 423-442.
- Takougang, J. and Krieger, M. (1988). *African State and Society in the 1990s: Cameroon's Political Crossroads*. Oxford.
- Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge.
- United Nations. (1959). Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly from 20 February to 13 March 1959. UN Resolution, 13 March 1959 on the UN website <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/335/84/IMG/NR033584.pdf?OpenElement> accessed 10 August 2022.
- Zognong, D., and Mouiche, I. (eds.). (1997). *Démocratisation et Rivalités Ethniques au Cameroun*. Yaoundé.

NORMATIVE STATECRAFT: THE EU SANCTIONS POLICY ON RUSSIA'S ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA

Halil DELİGÖZ*

Abstract The instruments of economic statecraft have been utilized increasingly in the face of geopolitical challenges. The EU's response to the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 was to impose sanctions. This paper analyses the EU as a normative sanctioning power in the context of the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 until the start of the Russia-Ukraine War on February 24, 2022. In its Global Strategy, the EU mentioned sanctions as a credible tool in the Union's foreign policy mix. Following David A. Baldwin's economic statecraft conceptualization, this article argues that, in various contingencies, economic statecraft might constitute a credible option, especially if the potential perils of military statecraft in a nuclear world are considered. The EU sanctions after the annexation of Crimea functioned at least for two purposes: first, the EU successfully conveyed its messages to Russia and the wider international community that what Russia committed was not approved. Although this message could be conveyed verbally diplomatically, as done by many international actors, the EU's message was supported with relatively credible instruments compared to ineffective verbal declarations. Secondly, the EU committed itself through the sanctions on the Ukrainian cause. Thus, this paper argues that although economic statecraft cannot be considered a cure for all the vagaries of geopolitical challenges, it has proved to be an essential part of the policy mix of a containment strategy upon the annexation of Crimea.

Keywords: Economic statecraft, EU sanctions, EU Global Strategy, great power rivalry, Crimea

* Halil Deligöz, PhD in International Relations, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University. ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0878-9299> | Email: halimdeligoz@gmail.com

Introduction

THE USE OF SANCTIONS IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS DATES BACK TO ANTIQUITY. As Thucydides said, Athenian sanctions on Megaria -a small Spartan ally-were one of the events leading up to the Peloponnesian War. In this sense, imposing sanctions is a historically well-founded tool to exert negative pressure short of war. To what extent sanctions could be a symptom of a pending war, a cause of a war or an action alternative to war is not the subject of this paper, but all depend on context. The effectiveness and efficiency of sanctions constitute a vast debate in the economic statecraft literature. The European Union, an international organization with supra-national, intergovernmental and transnational characteristics, has a still evolving sanctions policy. This paper attempts to capture the function of the EU sanctions imposed on Russia upon the annexation of Crimea in 2014 by focusing on whether the EU acts with normative or realistic concerns. The later sanctions packages upon Russian actions unfolding from February 2022 onwards are outside the scope of this paper.

Normative responsibility is expected from the authorities, who have enough power to affect the political conditions to correct a perceived error through hard or soft power. An important aspect of normative behaviour is sending messages to international actors. Although this aspect of normative power might be interpreted as insufficient to rectify a violation of international law, David Allen Baldwin argued that sending messages is an important function in the context of great power rivalry (Baldwin 2020: xix). This study combines arguments regarding the EU as a normative power with the statecraft analysis, largely relying on Baldwin's *Economic Statecraft*.

Methodologically, the paper focuses on the EU's legal and political instruments and decision-making framework in making economic statecraft. The EU sanctions on Russia upon the Russian annexation of Crimea are analysed to comment on the effectiveness and efficiency of sanctions. The remaining article proceeds as follows. The second section refers to the literature on economic statecraft and the EU as a normative power. The third section summarizes the EU sanctions procedure. The fourth section visits arguments on the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), with a sub-section devoted to discussing the main tenets of the EU's 2016 Global Strategy. The fifth section analyses the EU sanctions on Russia in the context of its annexation of Crimea, and the sixth section concludes.

Literature Review

Drawing on the liberal theory, Moravcsik (2009) contends that realists' expectations after 1989 of a 'European demise' and that the 'global influence of Europe is in decline' proved wrong. Supporting this view, the EU continues to be strong with its institutions regarding the quality of state and democracy, hence, stable and able to act against economic and political crises within its borders. Its 'union' model for a common freedom area and its policies, standards and institutions are emulated by other regions and polities. Pollack (2016), however, states that '[t]he image of the EU as a purely normative actor...is an ideal type.' He refers to the EU response to the Ukrainian issue and states that member states declined harsher measures due to the dependence on Russian energy. Complementing these arguments, an intergovernmentalist, Milward (2000, 2), contends that the European Community was an empowering force and a resource pool to 'rescue the nation state'. Positioning the EU as a 'supranational buttress' (*Ibid.* 297) implies the limits of the EU as a normative power. Milward's more realist argument is useful in explaining the EU states' actions regarding the new vagaries of geopolitics, such as the 2014 Crimea case.

In his recently re-published *Economic Statecraft* (1985 and 2020), Baldwin A. Baldwin argued that, according to the contingency framework, instruments of economic statecraft might have advantages compared to other forms of statecraft, i.e., military statecraft, diplomacy, and informational statecraft or propaganda. For example, economic statecraft instruments can add credibility to the messages. So, in various circumstances, economic instruments of statecraft promise better results than others, either too costly military conflict, especially against nuclear power, or ineffectual measures, such as propaganda and diplomacy. Economic statecraft stands out as a credible alternative in various contingencies, especially regarding the constraints of military destruction in the nuclear age. Furthermore, although some commentators find economic statecraft 'merely symbolic' (Baldwin 2020: xix), Baldwin argues that symbolic behaviour is important in international politics indeed. Conveying messages, signalling, and asserting image are crucial elements of statecraft. However, to what extent they function efficiently needs to be investigated according to the specific context.

Union Method and the EU Sanctions Procedure

Contrary to the UNSC sanctions, the EU sanctions method is still evolving apace with the evolution of the EU itself. The EU as a union was established in 1992 with the Treaty of Amsterdam, which institutionalized the supranational structures of the Union. At least so far, the EU has evolved from purely economic to an economic and political union. Before and after the Amsterdam Treaty depict two different sanctions characteristics within the borders of the EU. In the pre-1993 period, although the Treaty of Rome (1957) provided a basis to 'coordinate their trade policies to produce the effects of economic sanctions', the member states did not transfer their powers in political matters, including economic sanctions (Giumelli 2013). Therefore, the member states were interlocutors in implementing the UNSC sanctions resolutions in a coordinated way. In this period, member states transposed the UNSC resolutions into domestic law through national acts and administrative measures. As a result, the pre-1993 era is characterized by a sporadic implementation of the UNSC sanctions resolutions among member states.

After the institutionalization of supranational bodies of the Union, the member states chose to transfer some political authorities to the Union, and therefore the implementation of the sanctions changed. More to this, the EU sometimes began to sanction autonomously from the UNSC. The EU has become an important sanctioning power. Between 1980 and 2014, the EU imposed 36 % of the world's non-UN sanctions, after the US, which accounts for 36.9 % (EUP 2018).

The sanctions procedure in the EU machinery deserves summarizing as it demonstrates the high-political characteristics of sanctioning. Sanctions are imposed through CFSC Council decisions and Council Regulations; both adopted simultaneously. Preparation steps can be summarized as follows: Firstly, High Representative proposes. Secondly, it is examined by the bureaucratic bodies of the CFSP Council. First, these bodies include the Working Party related to the target country's region.

Regarding sanctions on Russia, the working party is the Working Party on Eastern Europe and Central Asia (COEST) which has two wings: Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The second body is the Working Party of Foreign Relations Counsellors Working Party (RELEX), which works on legal, financial, and institutional issues (CEU 2019a). The RELEX began to include 'sanctions formation' and focuses on developing best implementation practices, preparation of guidelines, etc. The need for such a formation was expressed by the Council's *Sanctions Guidelines* (2003), and for this formation, RELEX was authorized by the Committee of the

Permanent Representatives of the Governments of the Member States to the European Union (also called COREPER II) in January 2004. RELEX in sanctions formation meets periodically, and when necessary, additional experts from the MSs attend. Its mandate includes information collection and exchange 'on alleged circumvention of EU restrictive measures', effective sanctions management, and their 'humanitarian provisions' (CEU 2019b). Thirdly, when necessary, the Political and Security Committee (PSC), composed of MSs' ambassadors and chaired by a European External Action Service (CEU 2019c) representative, also examines the measures. Fourthly, the Committee of the Permanent Representatives of the Governments of the Member States to the European Union (also called COREPER II) studies the measure. COREPER II 'is the Council's main preparatory body. All items to be included in the Council's agenda (except for some agricultural matters) must first be examined by COREPER unless the Council decides otherwise.' This Committee comprises the 'permanent representatives', i.e., ambassadors of all MSs, and thus, '(t)hey express the position of their government' (CEU 2019d). Finally, the sanction measure is adopted by the Council of the EU by unanimity, and the Council informs the European Parliament of the Council regulation.

Thus, especially the lack of the EU Parliament in the decision-making as an exception to the ordinary legislative procedure clearly demonstrates the intergovernmental characteristics of the sanctions procedure. During the draft flow inside the bureaucratic device, the configuration of the effective committees, particularly COREPER II, composed of the permanent representatives of each MS, implies intergovernmentalism. Finally, unanimity implies that, with the agreement of all MSs, a decision may be taken, a feature characterizing intergovernmentalism. In other words, the EU values are reflected in the sanctions decisions to the extent that either the Member States regard them as part of their high politics or agree to so after a compromise among the Member States.

Still, EU sanctions procedures differ in their more 'principled' aspects than UNSC and US sanctions. One such feature is that natural or legal persons are notified by letter or a notice in the *Official Journal* about a measure, such as an asset freezes and travel restrictions against them. Secondly, a 'constant review' differs from US and UNSC sanctions; neither contains a sunset clause nor an ending date. Contrary to them, EU autonomous sanctions are subject to a review, the latest every 12 months, and the sanctions on Russia every six months. A third feature is that persons can submit a request to the Council for

consideration of their de-listing from the blacklist. A fourth feature is the judicial review procedure, which again needs to improve in the US and UNSC sanctions regimes. Although the review process is confined to the measure's legality, it is a crucial opportunity to bring the decisions in line with the Union values and refrain from arbitrary sanctions. Persons can apply to the General Court of the European Union under Article 275 (2) and Article 263 (2 and 6) of the TFEU (CEU 2019e). Fifth, the EU sanctions apply only within the territoriality principle regarding jurisdiction, contrary to the extraterritoriality of the US sanctions. The territorial implementation is the rule and, therefore, not limited to the EU. However, the EU example is more consistent in this. Related to this feature, the EU also opposes extraterritorial sanctions of other parties, mainly the US, by legislating blocking statutes.

The EU Common Foreign and Security Policy

The EU'S 'common' foreign policy, a field of 'high politics', has been one of the least integrated policy fields. Maastricht Treaty (1992) defined CFSP as one of the three pillars of the Union. The title of 'High Representative for the CFSP' was created to be used by the Secretary General of the Council of the EU. However, CFSP was '(built) upon a tradition of loose, informal cooperation in foreign policy' (Uoregon 2018).

The EU Treaties, namely the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) define a 'Common Foreign and Security Policy' and 'Common Security and Security and Defense Policy' area. Regarding the degree of the Union mandate or supranationalism vis-à-vis the Member States (MSs) or intergovernmentalism, Article 2 of the TEU states that '(t)he Union shall have competence... to define and implement a common foreign and security policy, including the *progressive* framing of a common defence policy' (emphasis added).

However, supranational institutions of the Parliament and the ECJ are exempt from the decision-making process, and the External Action Service, led by the High Representative, enjoys limited policy space. In voting, decisions are unanimously taken by the European Council and the Foreign Relations Council, saving intergovernmentalism (Gehring et al. 2017). In other words, member states continue pursuing individual foreign policies, potentially creating inconsistencies and ineffectiveness in the decision-making and implementation processes (Orenstein and Kelemen 2017). The authors contend that while the EU imposed a

strong sanctions regime over Ukraine, the EU 'could not prevent Member States from pursuing divergent pro-Russia policies' in the form of new energy deals and port access to the Russian navy. They explain this dilemma with the argument that foreign competitors 'cultivate Trojan horses among the EU Member States', which is discussed further in the next sections.

Gehring et al. (2017) articulate that the EU is 'institutionally ill-equipped' to deal with high-politics issues 'targeting other great powers'. Nevertheless, Gehring et al. regard EU sanctions on Russia as a non-military great power political actions. They claim that the EU's institutional setup enables it to perform as an 'inadvertent' great power because its low-power politics has 'side-effects' or 'cross policy effects' on the high politics areas of third countries. In the 2014 Crimea crisis, the EU is positioned as the primary superpower against Russia, along with the US.

The Global Strategy for the EU's CFSP

The Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (hereafter, the Strategy) was launched on June 30, 2016. The timing coincides with a disappointing erosion of confidence, not least due to the result of the Brexit referendum on June 23, 2016. The Strategy is regarded as the successor of the outmoded European Security Strategy 2003 (Winn 2017). The Strategy admits that for 'external credibility and influence, ' consistency in upholding values is key. The Strategy offsets EU values and its interests: 'We have an interest in promoting our values... [O]ur fundamental values are embedded in our interests.' The Strategy refers to a broad framework of 'a rules-based global order with multilateralism as its key principle and the United Nations at its core.' The Strategy suggests 'a realistic assessment of the current strategic environment' with an 'idealistic aspiration to advance a better world.' Hence, it frames a concept of 'principled pragmatism' to guide the Union. Despite contestations, the Strategy affirms the EU's 'responsibility...across Europe and the surrounding regions to the east and south.' The Strategy does not offer supranational recipes except for articulating the need for more coordination in its intergovernmental configuration. It admits that 'Member States remain sovereign in their defence decisions' but suggests 'defence cooperation must become the norm' to deal with challenges successfully. It suggests 'a more structured form of cooperation' among MSs. It sees the UN platform 'as the bedrock of the multilateral rules-based order' and emphasizes the need to 'develop

globally coordinated responses.’ The imbalances of the UN setup are recognized, especially in the UNSC and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and the need for reformation is voiced (EUHR 2016).

Regarding the 2014 Crimea crisis, the document reiterates that ‘the Russia’s violation of international law and the destabilization of Ukraine...[has] challenged the European security order at its core.’ It commits that the EU, in this matter, will be guided by the values of ‘international law, democracy, human rights, cooperation and each country’s right to choose its future freely.’ It confirms that the EU denies the Russian annexation of Crimea and the destabilization of eastern Ukraine. On the other hand, in pursuing ‘a global order based on international law’, the Strategy stresses the importance of ‘credibility’, and it admits that ‘soft power is not enough,’ thus, it recommends the reinforcement of ‘credibility in security and defence’. For this purpose, defence expenditure should be adequate and ‘meet the collective commitment of 20 % of defence budget spending devoted to procuring equipment and Research & Technology’. The strategy mentions sanctions as a credible instrument in the foreign policy mix (EUHR 2016).

Winn (2018) believes the Strategy signals a ‘cooperative realism’ and represents ‘a degree moving away from the EU as purely a normative ideational power.’ Winn (2018) considers the EU ‘a mixture of Westphalian sovereignty, transnational cooperation and ideational preferences.’ He concedes that ‘EU has a comparative advantage as an honest broker in international politics based on the projection of its values into the wider world.’ With the Strategy, the EU sets a course ‘moving beyond normative power towards pragmatic strategies in its external policies.’ The Crimea case sheds light on this discussion in the next section.

The EU Sanctions on Russia

This section elaborates on EU sanctions on the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. The EU, concurrently with the US (Guardian 2014), imposed sanctions on Russia upon the latter's annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and since then over its destabilizing acts in Eastern Ukraine. The EU sanctions on Russia were assessed every six-month and renewed throughout these years (see CEU 2022g).

Upon the Russian annexation of Crimea, the EU imposed different types of sanctions, namely 'diplomatic measures, individual restrictive measures (asset freeze and travel restrictions), restrictions on economic relations with Crimea and Sevastopol, economic sanctions, restrictions

on economic cooperation' (CEU 2019f). Diplomatic sanctions included soft decisions such as cancelling the EU-Russia summit of June 2014, suspending bilateral meetings and new agreements, and negotiations on Russia's joining the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Energy Agency (IEA). Similarly, the G8 summit in Sochi on 4-5 June 2014 was cancelled, and a G7 meeting was held in Brussels. Asset freeze, travel restrictions and ban on access to funds or other economic resources included 862 individuals and 53 entities by March 10, 2022. The sanctioned Russian figures in 2014 included a deputy prime minister, state Duma deputies, an advisor to the president, and an aide to the president (Guardian 2014). Upon the annexation of Crimea, the EU economic sanctions targeting exchanges with Russia in specific economic sectors aimed to 'limit access to EU primary and secondary capital markets for certain Russian banks and companies', 'impose an export and import ban on trade in arms', 'establish an export ban for dual-use goods for military use or military end users in Russia', 'curtail Russian access to certain sensitive technologies and services that can be used for oil production and exploration' (CEU 2019f). Finally, measures have been adopted concerning economic cooperation aimed at suspending new investments to be financed through the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and some EU bilateral and regional cooperation programs with Russia (CEU 2019f).

The EU sanctions on Russia became more serious when the Malaysian Airlines MH17 passenger jet from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was shot down (Giumelli 2017) in July 2014, killing all the 298 people on board; among them were 44 Malaysian and 28 Australians, while more than half Dutch (Guardian 2018). Upon this case, the Council decision 2014/512/CFSP was adopted, and MSs were encouraged to take necessary steps accordingly. The Council's decision included financial, military and energy sector sanctions. Financially, the purchase and trade of financial instruments such as bonds and equity with a maturity exceeding 90 days and issued by 'major financial institutions' such as Sberbank, Gazprombank, VTB Bank, Rosselkhozbank, Vnesheconombank were banned. Militarily, it mainly included arms and dual-use goods and technology trade. Finally, regarding the energy sector, the decision banned goods and technology in the exploration and production of oil related to 'deep water, Arctic and shale oil-related projects' (Giumelli 2017).

Orenstein and Kelemen (2017) contend that the European leaders were unaware of Russia's authoritarian drift until 2012 when Putin was re-elected for the third term of the presidency. Until then, they regarded

Medvedev as supportive of liberalization and modernization. So, with the liberal dimension existing, the EU's liberal expansion towards the former Soviet Republic would not be seen as a threat by another liberal. At the same time, an ideological rival would interpret things differently (also see [Giulan 2016: 44-49](#)). Orenstein and Kelemen argue that two factors fed into Russia's threat perception: First, the normative agenda of the EU in the form of democracy and liberal market promotion.

Contrary to the EU, Russia preferred regimes like 'Alexander Lukashenko's Belarus or Viktor Yanukovich's Ukraine – that embrace its model of authoritarian politics and state capitalism.' Authoritarians, however, could be subject to 'colour revolutions' supported by the EU. Thus, ideological rivalry paves the way for threat perceptions and carries geopolitical implications. The second factor is the conflicting material interests. The EU's 'collective negotiating position' on energy issues harms Russia's position as its economy depends largely on natural resource extraction. Therefore, Russia perceived the EU's preferential trade agreements with the Central and Eastern European countries (CEEs) as an economic threat. In addition to this framework, Orenstein and Kelemen (2017) articulate that the EU decided to take advantage of the 'disaggregated' feature of the CFSP, which allowed member states to follow their national foreign policies despite the availability of more unified action.

The authors argue that Russia took various steps to undermine the EU: It bypassed the EU on important issues and chose to negotiate bilaterally with the nation-states. For example, on the Nord Stream, with Germany, and on Iraq, with the UK, France, and Germany. In the meantime, Russia also increased its presence in Brussels. An EU parliamentarian from Hungary's far-right Jobbik party, the EU Parliament lifted Béla Kovacs's parliamentary immunity for treason in 2015. Orenstein and Kelemen (2017) also claim that Russia employed 'Trojan horses' within the EU, mostly through economic instruments. The authors argue that certain EU members were eager to continue their mutually beneficial partnerships with Russia without paying too much attention to the Ukrainian crisis. They remind that '[t]hese countries' leaders (had) all spoken out against EU sanctions against Russia.' Orenstein and Kelemen (2017) state that the EU's concerted stance against Russian annexation was not due to the EU as a supranational institution but rather because Germany took the lead and used the EU to form a common action and bring the 'Trojan horses' within the EU in line through 'logrolling and side payments', e.g., Greece through bailout for recovery after the economic crisis in the country. In a nutshell, the Union lacked internal cohesion,

which damaged its consistent and credible resolve on the Crimea case unfolding in 2014.

Hierarchy of Concerns

Brummer (2009) approaches from the neo-realist perspective and distinguishes sanctions of the EU, which, he claims, prioritizes first-order, i.e., security and economy, compared to second-order, i.e., normative concerns. The EU's stated sanctions aims are exhibited in *the Basic Principles on the Use of Restrictive Measures* adopted by the Council of the European Union in 2004. *The Basic Principles* declare the EU's commitment concerning 'the effective use of sanctions as an important way to maintain and restore international peace and security following the principles of the UN Charter.' Thus, the EU highlights the UN principles and values in its sanctioning practice. As an EU Parliament paper (EU 2018) states, EU sanctions on Russia are based on the principle of territorial integrity, while Russian position as a veto player from within prevents UNSC sanctions from upholding this principle in the Ukraine case. The TEU Article 21 states two sources of principles for the EU's international actions:

the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement... (And, those pursued) in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

Regarding external borders, the TEU refers to the United Nations Charter, Helsinki Final Act and Charter of Paris (Article 21 of TEU). Concerning human rights, while Russia and China's negative vetoes prevent effective UN action in this normative field, the EU Parliament (EUP 2018) states that human rights and democracy are the 'dominant theme of most autonomous EU sanctions, for example, against Belarus, Burundi, China, Guinea and Venezuela'.

Edward Hunter Christie, a defence economist at NATO, evaluated the aggregate effects of the Western sanctions on Russia after a year after their imposition. He referred to economic data that Russia's economy slumped 2.2 % in the first quarter of 2015 compared to 2014. The inflationary effect on food prices and the devaluatory effect on the Russian currency was also mentioned. Furthermore, Mr Christie mentioned the signalling effect of sanctions. What signals the West liked to convey to Russia through sanctions? He argued that sanctions conveyed several messages: First, they

signalled that the democratic world was able to take coordinated action; second, the West registered disapproval and held actors responsible; third, it credibly gave its messages by causing economic pain and at the same time incurring costs itself (Christie 2015). On these points, two issues can be underlined. First, although sanctions convey disapproval of the target's actions, they may cause a rally-around-the-flag effect in a highly political issue and discourage the target's compliance (Baldwin 1985: 106-110). So, this unintended provoking effect must be considered in the sanctions decisions. Secondly, although the costliness of sanctions for the sending powers is often mentioned as an indicator of the failure of sanctions, Baldwin argues that costliness is 'often a blessing in disguise' (Baldwin 1985: 108). He argues that incurring reasonable cost increases the credibility of political commitment.

Giumelli (2017) contends that the EU sanctions on Russia have not only an 'aggregate effect but also a redistributive one' in the EU. Although the EU, as a whole, is affected as Russia is the third trading partner after US and China, Giumelli attracts attention to their unequal effects of them. For example, Malta, Cyprus, and Denmark were the most affected by the 40 % drop in EU exports to Russia from 2013 to 2014. Malta saw a drop of 91 %, while Greek Cyprus was 63, and Denmark was 52%. However, by size, 27 billion EUR of the total 46 billion EUR export fall was shared by: Germany with EUR 14 billion, Italy with 4 billion, France, Netherlands, and Poland with 3 billion each, while Malta experienced a mere EUR 3 million.

Interestingly, Germany was affected most and Greece the least, but Germany supported and indeed coordinated the sanctions, while Greece was among the most critical of EU sanctions on Russia (Giumelli 2017). Mitchell et al. (2017) find the EU position over Ukraine 'paradoxical' in that the EU imposed a strong sanction regime on Russia, while some EU countries pursued pro-Russian policies inconsistent with the EU position. For example, contrary to the EU's policy of decreasing energy dependence on Russia, Athens signed a gas pipeline deal, while Nicosia provided access to its ports to the Russian navy.

Thus, Orenstein and Kelemen's (2017) 's contention that the EU continued to deepen its institutional cohesion during the Crimea crisis was not a seamless argument. However, their diagnosis that the EU was 'constrained' due to the 'contradictory' policies of some member states and by the EU's competitors' that can mobilize Trojan horses to undermine EU unity' seem plausible. On the other hand, the mentioned deviation widened to the areas of strategic interests. On Nord Stream 2, US President Trump warned Germany that the latter was becoming a 'captive' of Russia and signalled sanctions against the involved companies (CNBC 2019). However,

the EU opposed new US sanctions on the Russian gas sector as five EU companies were cooperating with the Russian Gazprom on the \$11.1 billion Nord Stream 2 pipeline project to carry Russian gas across the Baltic. Business Europe, the main lobbying entity in the EU, demanded that the US should 'avoid unilateral actions that would mainly hit the EU, its citizens and its companies' (Reuters 2018a). On the other hand, critics contended that the project was to 'punish Kiev' because it was providing Russia with an alternative to change the gas routes from Ukraine to the Baltics *en route* to mainland Europe (Fortune 2018).

Conclusions

This paper analysed the EU's economic statecraft-making in response to Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. As a normative power, the EU was forced to change its foreign strategy, especially after being exposed to geopolitical risks, as articulated in the concept of 'principled pragmatism' in its 2016 Grand Strategy. By this, the EU tries to adopt a credible stance against re-emerging geopolitical powers like Russia while maintaining its normative characteristics. Sanctions are mentioned as a credible tool in the foreign policy mix. The EU sanctions policies present distinct features in the increased use of economic statecraft. In the case of the Crimea crisis, the EU finds itself constrained between, on the one hand, its comparably dwarfed hard power and, on the other, its expansion in Eastern Europe through normative and economic ideals, namely democracy, liberalization, and partnerships. The EU's symbolic response through visa bans and asset freezes until a Malaysian Airlines jet was shot down in Eastern Ukraine in July 2015 demonstrates that the EU found itself unprepared against a hard power strategy regarding geopolitical issues outside the EU's normative realm.

Baldwin's economic statecraft framework is relevant, especially since economic instruments of statecraft, e.g., sanctions, are utilized to convey messages to the target and employed as a commitment mechanism. Regarding the EU sanctions, it can be argued that the Union successfully conveyed to Russia and the wider international community that what Russia committed was not approved. Although this message was also constantly conveyed through diplomacy or with verbal messages by various international actors, verbal and diplomatic messages complemented by economic instruments bear more credibility. Secondly, and more importantly, the EU committed itself to the cause of Ukraine and Crimea through sanctions. Thinking retrospectively, the EU sanctions fulfilled to message not only towards Russia but also towards the international community.

Regarding the latter, the EU signalled its stance on the Crimea issue and prepared the ground for further collective action in the later stages of the crisis. In this sense, the EU sanctions should be moderately successful. On the other hand, it is questionable to what extent the EU sanctions affected the calculations of the target state. Indeed, as Baldwin stated, in certain situations, sanctions might even provoke the target. However, Baldwin argues that considering that a war with a target is already in the making, in such a framework, reducing the enemy's warring capabilities by denying critical sources can be considered a strategic goal (Baldwin 1985: 171). History proved that economic instruments were essential to a long-term containment strategy. US President Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921) stated that sanctions are a 'peaceful, silent, deadly remedy' (Kern 2009: 30). This dictum was plausible during the Cold War in nuclear parity between the two superpowers, i.e., the US and the USSR. However, as the EU sanctions between 2014 and 2021 show, although they caused substantial pain in the target economy in the form of, e.g., inflation and devaluation, it is hard to argue that they deterred it, as confirmed with Russian actions in Ukraine in 2022. So, this case adds to the argument that although economic statecraft cannot be considered a remedy for all types of vagaries of geopolitics, it has been an essential component of a long-term containment strategy.

References

- Baldwin, D. A. (1985). *Economic statecraft*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Baldwin, D. A. (2020). *Economic statecraft* (New Edition). Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- CEU. (2019a). 'Working Party of Foreign Relations Counsellors (RELEX).' <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/preparatory-bodies/working-party-foreign-relations-counsellors/>. Accessed 7 August 2022.
- CEU. (2019b). 'Monitoring and evaluation of restrictive measures (sanctions) in the framework of CFSP.' <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5603-2004-INIT/en/pdf>. Accessed 7 August 2022.
- CEU. (2019c). 'Political and Security Committee (PSC).' <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/preparatory-bodies/political-security-committee/>. Accessed 7 August 2022.
- CEU. (2019d). 'Coreper II.' <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/preparatory-bodies/coreper-ii/>. Accessed 7 August 2022.

- CEU. (2019e). 'Adoption and review procedure for EU sanctions.' <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/adoption-review-procedure/>. Accessed 7 August 2022.
- CEU. (2019f). 'EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine.' <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/ukraine-crisis/>. Accessed 7 August 2022.
- CEU. (2022g). 'Timeline - EU restrictive measures against Russia over Ukraine.' <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/restrictive-measures-against-russia-over-ukraine/history-restrictive-measures-against-russia-over-ukraine/>. Accessed 7 August 2022.
- Christie, E.H. (2015, July 13). Sanctions after Crimea: Have they worked? *NATO Review*. <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2015/07/13/sanctions-after-crimea-have-they-worked/index.html>. Accessed 7 August 2022.
- CNBC. (2019, January 8). 'Europe is fast-becoming a natural gas battleground for Russia and the US.' <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/01/08/russia-and-the-us-battling-over-europes-gas-market.html>. Accessed 7 August 2022.
- EU (2016). Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf. Accessed 7 August 2022.
- EUP. (2018). 'EU sanctions: A key foreign and security policy instrument.' [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/Reg-Data/etudes/BRIE/2018/621870/EPRS_BRI\(2018\)621870_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/Reg-Data/etudes/BRIE/2018/621870/EPRS_BRI(2018)621870_EN.pdf). Accessed 7 August 2022.
- Fortune. (2018, Sep 5). 'Russia's Controversial Nord Stream 2 Pipeline May Now Be Unstoppable.' <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davekeating/2018/09/05/as-of-today-russias-controversial-nord-stream-2-pipeline-is-already-underwater/#3dd0702a1e1c>. Accessed 7 August 2022.
- Giulan, R. (2016). *European Union-Russia relations after the annexation of Crimea: Confirmation of Neorealism?* Master Thesis, Development and International Relations, Aalborg University, Denmark. https://projekter.aau.dk/projekter/files/239486232/Radu_Giulan_Master_Thesis.pdf. Accessed 7 August 2022.
- Giumelli, F. (2013). 'How EU sanctions work: a new narrative.' *Chaillot Paper N° 129* by EU Institute for Security Studies (Paris). https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Chaillot_129.pdf. Accessed 7 August 2022.

- Giumelli, F. (2017). The redistributive impact of restrictive measures on EU members: Winners and losers from imposing sanctions on Russia. *JCMS: journal of common market studies*, 55(5), 1062-1080. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12548>. Accessed 7 August 2022.
- Guardian, The. (2014, March 17). 'EU and US impose sanctions on Russian and Ukrainian officials.' <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/17/eu-imposes-sanctions-21-russian-ukrainian-officials-crimea>. Accessed 7 August 2022.
- Guardian, The. (2018, May 25). 'MH17: Australia and Netherlands accuse Russia of complicity.' <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/25/mh17-australia-and-netherlands-accuse-russia-of-complicity>. Accessed 7 August 2022.
- Kern, A. (2009). *Economic sanctions: law and public policy*. Berlin: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230227286>.
- Milward, A.S. (2000). *The European Rescue of the Nation State*. Routledge: London and New York. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203982150>.
- Moravcsik, A. (2009). Europe: The Quiet Superpower. *French Politics* Volume 7, No. 3/4 (September-December 2009), pp. 403-422. <https://doi.org/10.1057/fp.2009.29>.
- Orenstein, M.A., and Kelemen, R.D. (2017). Trojan horses in EU foreign policy. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*. 55.1, 87-102. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12441>.
- Pollack, M.A. (2016). 'Living in a Material World: A Critique of 'Normative Power Europe.' in Zimmermann, H. and Dür, A., (eds.), *Key Controversies in European Integration*. London: Palgrave. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1623002>.
- Winn, N. (2018). Between soft power, neo-Westphalianism and transnationalism: the European Union,(trans) national interests and the politics of strategy. *International Politics* (2018): 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-017-0126-9>.

GEOGRAPHY, REGION, SPACE: THE EVOLUTION AND REFLECTION OF GEOPOLITICAL THEORY

Rong Kang BO*

ABSTRACT. This paper compares the development of geopolitical theories and divides them into three categories according to their characteristics: offensive, defensive, and normative. *Time* is a dimension that must be considered in any theory. This paper argues that geospatial characteristics and national development methods determine the changes in geopolitical competition, and force's effectiveness is an intervention variable. The three variables lead to the evolution of geopolitical theory from conflict to defence to institutional cooperation. The emergence of virtual spaces such as the Internet has changed the contradiction between limited geographical space and unlimited national development in geo-competition and provided an opportunity for geopolitical theory to break through power theory. The complexity of the geo-environment that countries face when participating in geo-competition determines the necessity of establishing a united geopolitical view. This paper divides a country's diplomatic environment into three categories: geo-environment, regional environment, and space environment. Distinguishing these three environments can help to think about the focus of a country's foreign strategy. The country must make a difference in the geo-environment, be active in the regional environment, and work hard in the space environment.

Keywords: geopolitical evolution, geographical environment, national development model

The development of geopolitical theory

THE GEOPOLITICAL THEORY IS A PRODUCT OF THE TIMES, AND its definition changes accordingly with the development of the times. Rudolf Kjellen, who was the originator of the concept of geopolitics, defined it as "the theory of the state as a geographical organism or a spatial phenomenon" (Weigert 1942: 106-9). German geopolitics scientist Karl

* Rong Kang BO, PhD student at the School of International Political Economy, University of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Email: blcu14brk@163.com

Haushofer believes that geopolitics is a national science about national interests, which takes geography as a broad basis (Gyorgy 1944: 183). Richard Hartshorne defines *geopolitical theory* as geography used for profit-seeking purposes other than intellectual purposes (Hartshorne 1939: 404). The above definitions have in common that they link the content of the geographical environment with the use of political power and analyse the influence of the geographical environment on national politics. However, with the development of the times, the ability of human beings to shape the geographical environment has been continuously enhanced, and the geographical environment has also been continuously shaped by political power. Therefore, this paper defines *geopolitical theory* as the interactive analysis of the geographical environment and political processes. This interaction is dynamic and two-way. Geographical environment includes objective geographical features and man-made environments endowed with economic and social significance.

Geopolitical thought can be traced back to Aristotle, Strabo, Bodin, Montesquieu, Kant, and Hegel; for example, Aristotle, in his *Politics*, uses geographical factors to explain why the Minoan city-state can become a hegemonic country: "Crete dominates the sea, and the coastal areas of the entire island are densely covered with cities transplanted by the Greeks; its west is not far from the Peloponnese Peninsula, approaching the Cape Trio and Rhodes on the corner of Asia (southwest) to the east (Aristotle 1965: 93). Geopolitics was still in its infancy, and a perfect theoretical system had not yet been formed. Friedrich Ratzel published 1897 his "Political Geography", which is considered a symbol of the formation of geopolitical theory.

According to the characteristics of geopolitical theories, this paper divides them into three categories: offensive geopolitical theory, defensive geopolitical theory, and institutional cooperation geopolitical theory. By sorting out the development of geopolitical theory, we find the evolutionary logic behind it and discuss the future development direction of geopolitical theory.

(1) Offensive geopolitical theory

Traditional geopolitics is attached to power politics, focusing on the impact of an objective geographical environment on national power and discussing how to obtain world dominance through geographical factors.

Theoretical Name	State organism theory, Living space theory	Heartland theory	Sea power theory	Marginal zone theory	Sky power theory
Representative	Lazell, Chiron Haushofer	Mackinder	Mahan	Nicholas Spykman	Alexander Seversky
Key Concepts	State organisms; living space; absolute rule	heartland	sea power	fringe	Air rights
Concern	land	land	Ocean	Combine land and sea	Sky
Common Feature	Geo-confrontation, zero-sum game, state centre, war effectiveness				

Table 1: Traditional geopolitical theories

The state organism theory was proposed by Ratzel, who believed that the state is a biological organism that needs a certain living space. It is inevitable that the state, as a healthy space organism, will increase its strength by expanding its territory. Rudolf Chillen accepted Ratzel's concept of the organic state, agreed that the political process is determined by space, and regarded geopolitics as a science with the state as its object. The representative of the living space theory is Karl Haushofer (Parker 1988: 10-19). Based on the works of Chiron, Ratzel, and Mackinder, it regards living space and absolute domination as its core concepts and endorses pan-continentalism based on complementary resources and human resources to satisfy national expansion and imperialism. Haushofer believed that gaining control of the World Island, controlling the Soviet Union and destroying British sea power was necessary and that organic expansion of Germany to the west and east was inevitable (Cohen 2011: 24).

Mackinder, characterized by the impermeability of sea power, regards the inner region of Eurasia as the hub of world politics and puts forward the heartland saying: "Whoever rules Eastern Europe rules the heartland, and whoever rules the heartland rules the world island."; whoever rules the World-Island rules the world" (Mackinder 2010: 30). Mahan believes that the extensive areas reached by the Panama Canal and the Suez Canal are the key to world power and that sea movement is better than land movement, and he puts forward the idea of sea power (Mahan 2014: 28). Speakman's marginal zone theory absorbed Mahan's worldview and tried to correct Mackinder's heartland theory. Speakman believed that the key to controlling the world lies in the coastal areas of Eurasia because of their population, abundant resources, and control of inland access to the sea (Spykman 1942: 457-472).

Scholars who support the theory of air rights discuss the control of key areas of the world from the space perspective. George Rayner

believes that air routes have connected the heartland of Eurasia with the Anglo-American regions across the Arctic region, forming a new one in the northern hemisphere. Expanding the heartland, the Arctic is the key to the heartland (Renner 1942: 152-154). Seversky made an equidistant azimuth projection with the North Pole as the centre and regarded the place where North America and the Soviet Union's air-ruled area overlapped as the "decision area" to control the world (Seversky 1950: 11).

The focus of the above geopolitical theories has been changing from the heartland, the fringe, the sea, the combination of sea and land to air power, etc., and the research methods and conclusions are also different (Weiwei 2010: 70). Traditional geopolitical theories believe that geographical location and distance will greatly affect state behaviour. The discussion aims to determine how countries can enhance national power and gain global dominance by occupying favourable geographical spaces. These theories can be attributed to geo-conflict theories. Conflicting concepts are attached to power politics. Looking at the evolution of traditional geopolitical theories, they all serve the competition for national power. Speakman believes that political ideas that power cannot support have no value (Thompson 2003: 107). Gankov believes that the greed for power induced by conflicting worldviews prevents geopolitics from becoming a scientific theory. The theory of national organisms and living space theory promote the inevitability of national expansion. This powerful view of geopolitical conflicts can easily lead to territorial expand reasonable risk assumptions.

There are two root causes of geopolitical conflicts: first, due to the limitations of technological means at that time, before the emergence of long-range weapons, the objective geographical environment played a decisive role in national security. Hamilton believed that it was a threat to his security, and Hamilton proved this conclusion through his long-term observation of social development (White 2004: 106). If a country feels threatened by its neighbours, it will act on the principle that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend (Nye 2002: 51)." Second, the contradiction between the limited geographical space and the infinite development of a country runs through the traditional geopolitical theory. Whether it is worrying about neighbouring countries in the early stage or expanding outwards to compete for world hegemony in the later stage, this kind of competition for limited objective geographical location is A zero-sum game of "what you gain is what you lose" that has led to inevitable geopolitical conflicts.

(2) Defensive geopolitical theory

Wars between states resulted in a large decrease in the number of states and an increase in the average state size (land, population, and resources). The expansion of states in terms of territory, population, and resources meant that defence became relatively easy while conquest was getting harder and harder. In addition, the concepts of sovereign state and nationalism are deeply rooted in the people's hearts, and territorial occupation's cost has become more expensive. After World War II, the destruction of countries due to violent conquest stopped, and international politics irreversibly changed from Mearsheimer to Jervis World (Tang 2009: 11). The defensive geopolitical theory of this period was the theory of containment aimed at countering the Soviet Union and the communist bloc of countries to which it belonged.

Representatives of this period included George Kennan, Bullitt, Kissinger, and Brzezinski. They introduced concepts such as containment, domino theory, the overall view of the balance of power, and key countries into geopolitics, greatly enriching geopolitics and political theory. In 1964, George Kennan wrote a long telegram suggesting peaceful "containment" of the Soviet Union, becoming one of the United States' containment policy representatives during the Cold War. He believed the world after World War II was when sea power confronted land power. If land power is to be defeated, the principle of restricting land power by land power must first be adopted, that is a comprehensive strategic containment of the Soviet Union (Kennan 1947: 566-582). William Bullitt proposed the Domino Theory. He worried that the communist power of the Soviet Union would spread to Southeast Asia through China and pointed out that the loss of the dominance of the previous country in the geopolitical confrontation would produce a domino reaction in the region. This theory became an important argument for American intervention in Southeast Asia and Central America at that time. The big picture concept was introduced into geopolitics by Henry Kissinger (1979: 127-138). The core of the big picture is that conflicts in each region need to be considered from the perspective of the global balance of power politics, and the impact of the local on the overall situation should be observed. Brzezinski's geopolitical theory introduced the concept of "key countries", which refer to countries in key geographical locations that can exert economic and military influence on surrounding areas. Countries that meet these conditions include Germany, Poland, Iran or Pakistan, Afghanistan, South Korea, and the Philippines (Brzezinski 1986: 52-56). Samuel Huntington believed that the

differences between people after the Cold War were no longer ideological, political, or economic but cultural differences. A clash of civilizations will dominate global politics, and the fault lines between civilizations will be the future battle lines. Huntington established the geopolitics of "West versus East" through the "Clash of Civilizations" (Huntington 2010: 161).

(3) Composite geopolitical theory (Institutional Co-operation/Rule)

The end of the Cold War era brought some new geopolitical research methods. Although geopolitical scientists represented by Brzezinski continued to explore the geopolitical prescriptions for maintaining US global hegemony, more scholars began to explore the emergence of various geopolitical theories. Representative theories include geoeconomics, universalist geopolitics, critical geopolitics, network geopolitics, etc.

Theoretical name	Geoeconomics	Universalist geopolitics (Regional Geopolitics)	Critical geopolitics	Geo-Network Theory
Representative	Robert Kaplan Wallerstein	Saul Cohen Gerald Roe Crone Peter Taylor	John Agnew Ottowatel	Arthur Sebrowski
Key Concepts	Society, economy North-South confrontation	Geopolitical system Multipolar world model	Knowledge-power Social movement geography	Virtual space Information symbiosis

Table 2: Composite geopolitical theories

Immanuel Wallerstein believes that the changes in modern society do not occur in the country's unit, and the whole world is a single society, a social system. Wallerstein replaced the North-South contradiction with the East-West contradiction to reconstruct the overall cognition of the world (Flint & Taylor 2016: 12-13). Saul Cohen analysed geopolitics from the perspective of regional structure patterns and characteristics, regarded the world geopolitical structure as a system composed of multi-level hierarchies, and divided it into geostrategic jurisdictions, geopolitical regions, and ethnic groups according to geographic characteristics of the country and other spatial levels (Cohen 2011: 9).

The representatives of critical geopolitics, Ottowatel and John Agnew, regard geopolitics as a kind of discourse, a multicultural and political description. Ottowatel believes that the geopolitical theory of MacKinder and others is based on the neutrality of the subject's world

observation. However, such neutral observation does not exist, and geopolitics is actually a kind of "knowledge" -power" relations, geography is the writing of the earth by the expanding imperial state, not a static term (Ó Tuathail 1996: 1-2). Based on this theoretical assumption, Agnew proposed the concept of "modern geopolitical imagination" to illustrate a constructed system of world representation. Criticism of geopolitical theory emphasizes the practice of geopolitical discourse and writing and criticizes existing theories' Western-centric and state-centric perspectives, opening a new direction for geopolitical research.

The theory of network geopolitics was first produced in the military field. Admiral Jay Johnson, the Chief of Naval Operations of the United States, formally proposed the network-centric warfare theory in 1994. "Network-Centric Warfare: Origins and Future" has become the foundational work of the network-centric warfare theory. With the development of network technology, countries are paying more and more attention to cyberspace issues, including the scope of cyberspace, the sovereign rights of countries in cyberspace, and the rights of individuals in cyberspace. The biggest difference between cyber geopolitical theory and previous ones is that cyberspace is a virtual space, and the infinity of virtual space and the characteristics of information symbiosis have become the direction of geopolitical theory innovation.

Geeconomics adds economic and regional factors to geopolitical analysis, and critical geopolitics focuses on pursuing the context of "knowledge-power" in geopolitical theory. The above theories provide a new understanding of the increasingly complex international political reality brought about by economic globalization. This theoretical paradigm contains the concept of geography guided by regional differences and belongs to the traditional geography method. Although it is good at the static description of world politics, it needs more grasp of the dynamic process (Lu 2007: 109).

Exploration and Analysis of the Motives of Geopolitical Theory Changes

Time is a dimension that must be considered in any theory. From the perspective of time, there are two basic categories of international relations theory: circulation and evolution (Qin 2003: 1). Social sciences have formed different basic paradigms Around the distinction between circulation and evolution (Tang 2001: 84). This paper looks at the evolution of geopolitical theories based on "scientific realism". The second,

mechanism is the deepest level of ontology, and the world is composed of “mechanisms”, and social sciences, like natural sciences, should explore “generative causal mechanisms”.

The core of the geopolitical theory is to explore the geopolitical competition of countries. This paper argues that geospatial characteristics and national development methods determine the changes in geopolitical competition. Among them, the effectiveness of force is the intervention variable. The three together lead to the transformation of geopolitical theory from conflict to the evolution of defensive to institutional cooperation theory, which is shown in Figure 1.

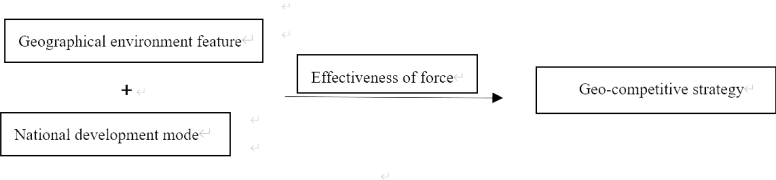


Figure 1: Drivers of Geopolitical Evolution

(1) The characteristics of the geographical environment determine the main stage of geo-competition and affect the degree of conflict in geo-competition.

To participate in geo-competition, a country first needs to select a stage for geo-competition, and the characteristics of the stage determine the main means by which a country participates in the competition. With the development of productivity, the stage of national geo-competition has undergone a transformation from an objective geographical environment to a man-made geographical environment, as shown in Table 3.

The objective geographical environment refers to the objective and realistic environment before human society. Human exploration of the objective environment has changed from land, sea, and sky to space. The occupation and zero-sum game of the objective geographical environment have led to the means of war. Effectively, the degree of conflict in geo-competition is high. The objective geographical environment can be quickly occupied and controlled by employing war, and the land, sea, and sky currently fully utilized by humans are limited spaces. This limited geographical space and the unlimited development of countries constitute a fundamental contradiction in geo-competition. The competition among various countries in the objective geographical environment is a

zero-sum game. The means of war often become the main way to compete for the objective geographical environment, and the degree of geo-competitive conflict in the objective geographical environment is relatively high. The spatial change of the objective geographical environment determines the shift of the focus of geopolitical theory. The geopolitical theory has experienced the evolution of land, sea, and air power theories. These theories are all classified as conflicting geopolitical theories.

		Type	Spatial features	Effectiveness of force	Degree of geopolitical conflict
Objective geographical environment	geo-environment	land, sea, sky, space	finiteness	powerful	powerful
Artificial geographical environment	geo-environment	economic Society, thought, network	infinity	weak	weak

Table 3: Geographical environment characteristics

The man-made geographical environment refers to the new complex environment shaped by the objective geographical environment in human development, including economic, social, ideological and network environments. The man-made geographical environment has changed the limitation of geographical space and the effectiveness of using force. The man-made geographical environment relies on human activities in the objective geographical environment, and it is more difficult to be directly occupied by force. The role of war in occupying territory in the man-made geographical environment is becoming less effective, reducing the degree of conflict in geographical competition. In addition, the man-made geographical environment is in the process of dynamic change and will continue to expand with the development of productivity. The contradiction between the limited geographical space and the unlimited development of the country will continue to decrease with the expansion of geographical space. The degree of dependence is deepened, and the competition among countries in the artificial geographical environment is mostly a "non-zero-sum game", and the conflict intensity of geopolitical competition is reduced. The higher the infinity of geographic space, the lower the effectiveness of the use of force and the lower the degree of conflict in geopolitical competition. The emergence of virtual spaces such as the Internet has fundamentally changed the premise of limited geographic space and the development direction of future geopolitical theories.

(2) The country's development mode determines the means of national wealth acquisition and the goal of geo-competition and affects the preference for geo-competition methods.

National development mode refers to the dominant economic growth dynamic mechanism in the process of national economic development, which determines the means by which a country obtains wealth, and then determines the goal of geopolitical competition. According to historical experience, national development modes can be divided into four types: resource-oriented, trade-oriented, capital-oriented, and information-oriented, as shown in Table 4.

Type	Time	Competition target	Method preference
Resource -oriented	Before the 1760s (primitive accumulation of capitalism)	Looting resources	War
Trade- oriented	1760s - 2050s (Liberal Capitalism and State Monopoly Capital)	Broad market Transportation channel	War system
Capital-led	1950s - 21st century (Social capitalism)	Stable environment	System specification
Information-driven	21st century	Information	Specification

Table 4: *Evolution of National Development Models*

The resource-led model mainly occurred before the 1760s. Capitalist countries mainly relied on the coercive power of the regime and used war to colonize and plunder foreign countries to accumulate primitive capital (Gu 2001: 13). During this period, the goal of geopolitical competition was territory and resources. Mainly war. The trade-led model occurred during the period of free capitalism and state monopoly capitalism from the 1760s to the 1950s. National economic development required a broad market and stable transportation channels, and the focus of the geopolitical competition was on key areas the competition for transportation nodes, the geopolitical competition is mainly based on war and supplemented by the system. The capital-led model occurred from the 1950s to the 21st century. At this stage, the degree of socialization of capitalism is getting higher and higher (Lu 1989). Social capital plays an important role in promoting the country's economic development. The effectiveness of the war on the operation of social capital is greatly improved. Reduced, institutional norms have become the main way of geo-competition. The information-led model is the

trend of future economic development. After the 21st century, human beings have entered an economic society based on the creation and distribution of information from the industrial society, that is, the information economy society, which can also be called “post-industrial society” (Naisbitt 1984: 1-10). And distribution has become the main content of economic development, the characteristics of symbiosis between countries are obvious, and the setting of information norms has become the main way of competition in cyberspace.

(3) The characteristics of the geographical environment and the mode of national development determine the evolution of geopolitical theories

The country's development mode determines the goal of geo-competition, and the characteristics of the geographical environment determine the means used to achieve the goal. The objective geographical environment can be occupied and zero-sum games lead to higher effectiveness of war means, and the artificial geographical environment is difficult to conquer and coexists. Sexuality has led to a reduction in the effectiveness of means of warfare and a reduction in the degree of conflict in geopolitical competition, as shown in Table 5.

	Objective geographical environment (force is effective)	Man-made geography (reduced effectiveness of force)
Resource-oriented	Offensive Geopolitical Theory	Defensive geopolitical theory (non-mainstream)
Trade-oriented	Offensive Geopolitical Theory	Defensive geopolitical theory
Capital-led	Offensive Geopolitical Theory (non-mainstream)	Defensive geopolitical theory institutional geopolitical theory
Information-driven	Offensive Geopolitical Theory (non-mainstream)	Normative geopolitical theory

Table 5: *Evolution of geopolitical theories*

Before the first industrial revolution in the 1760s, the stage for countries to participate in geopolitical competition was mainly the competition for land resources in an objective geographical environment. Before the emergence of long-range weapons, territorial security was the primary guarantee of national security. The countries before this period were mainly divided into agricultural countries and early capitalist countries, relying on the coercive power of the regime and means of war to obtain resources and develop the economy. Therefore, the mainstream geopolitical theory at this time was the offensive geopolitical

theory. Early geopolitical thought can be traced back to Aristotle, Strabo, Bodin, Montesquieu, Kant and Hegel, who believed that the objective geographical environment plays a decisive role in national security, the most typical of which is with the "distance-distance and close-attack" strategy, neighbouring countries will naturally be regarded as threats to their own security. The offensive geopolitical theory after the emergence of capitalism is attached to power politics, focusing on the impact of objective geographical environment on state power. Representative theories include state organism theory and living space theory.

From the 1860s to the 1950s, due to the advancement of scientific and technological means and weapons, human exploration of the objective geographical environment expanded to the stage of ocean and sky. At this time, the national development model was a trade-led economy, and capitalism entered commodity capitalism. In the stage of monopoly capitalism, geopolitical theories at this time include offensive and defensive geopolitical theories. On the premise that the war is effective, the contention for the objective geographical environment such as the sea and the sky is an offensive geopolitical theory. Representative theories include the theory of sea power, the theory of the heartland, the theory of the periphery, and the theory of the right of heaven. The way of geo-competition after the sphere of influence is demarcated mainly relies on the system to maintain control over the artificial geographical environment. The commodity economy and capital flow require a stable social environment, and the role of the system is greatly improved compared with the resource-led development model.

After the 1950s, wars between countries resulted in two results: a sharp decline in the number of countries and an increase in the average size of countries (land, population, and resources). The expansion of countries in terms of territory, population, and resources meant that as defence becomes relatively easy, conquest becomes increasingly difficult. In addition, the concept of a sovereign state and nationalism has taken root in the hearts of the people, and the cost of occupying territory has become more expensive. During this period, the theory of containment as a defensive geopolitical theory was valued. Representatives of defensive geopolitical theories include George Kennan, Bullitt, Kissinger, and Brzezinski. They introduced concepts such as containment, domino theory, the overall balance of power, and key countries into geopolitics. enriched geopolitical theory.

After the 21st century, human beings have entered an economic society based on the creation and distribution of information from an industrial society, that is, the information economy. Contradictions and

conflicts have been greatly weakened, information accumulation and distribution have become the main content of economic development, and the characteristics of symbiosis between countries are obvious. Although geopolitical scientists represented by Brzezinski continued to explore the geopolitical prescriptions for maintaining US global hegemony, more scholars began to explore the changes in geopolitical theories, among which representative theories include geoeconomics, universalist geopolitical Political science, critical geopolitics, cyber geopolitics, etc.

When the stage of national geo-competition is an objective geographical environment, under the premise that force is effective, no matter what kind of development model the country is in, geo-competition will mostly be geo-conflict, but the change of national development model needs to consider the time dimension. In the dominant mode, the objective geographical environment is no longer the main stage of geopolitical competition, so the mainstream geopolitical theories in this period are defensive and normative geopolitical theories. We can find that countries with different economic development models choose different geopolitical competition methods in the face of an objective geographical environment and man-made geographical environment. Therefore, it is necessary to build a joint geopolitical view, which also conflicts with the traditional dominance of Reflections on Geopolitics (Weiwei 2010: 74). The joint geopolitical view will play a greater guiding role in the construction of future geopolitical theories, and geopolitical theories based on reality will continue to be an important tool for understanding, predicting, and forming the structure and direction of the world system (Cohen 2011: 33).

Geography, Regions, and Space: Joint Geopolitical Viewpoint

On the whole, post-Cold War geopolitical theories have shown new features on the basis of critically inheriting traditional theories, but in essence, these theories still have obvious power characteristics, only from the perspective of economics, culture, and discourse power. "soft" areas are discussed. Whether geopolitical theory can break through the limitation of power and develop into a real institutional and normative geopolitical theory, it is necessary to reclassify the research object of geopolitical theory, that is, the diplomatic environment in which the country is located. The geopolitical competition methods in different

diplomatic environments are different. The infinity of virtual spaces such as the Internet and the symbiosis of data wealth sources provide an opportunity for breakthroughs in geopolitical theory.

The joint geopolitical view requires countries to reclassify their diplomatic environment when facing geopolitical competition. This paper divides a country's diplomatic environment into three categories: geo-environment, regional environment, and space environment, as shown in Table 6.

	Geographical environment	Regional environment	space environment
Environment type	Objective environment	Objective and economy, society	Objective and virtual
Source of wealth	Land and Resource Utilization	Division of labour system	Symbiosis data
Source of power	Violence control	Alliance, cooperation	Node control
External strategic focus	Make a difference	Active	Work hard

Table 6 – *Classification of the diplomatic environment*

First is geo-environment. Geo-environment is the sum of the relationship between countries based on geographic location. This geographic relationship focuses on the relative position in the objective geographic environment, which is the core content of traditional geopolitical research. Political scientists have politicized geographical relations and created political concepts with geographic meanings such as East, West, South, and North. Deng Xiaoping said: "East, west, north, south", and now the east rises and the west falls. As an objective geographical environment, the source of wealth in the geo-environment is land, resources, and their utilization of technology, and the source of power is the control of violent means. Therefore, the competition in the geo-environment is mostly a zero-sum game.

The second is the regional environment, the sum of geographical relations based on a specific geographical range. This sum includes the objective geographical environment in which the country is located and the economic and social environment created on top of it. Each country is within a specific region, which has special significance for the country. For example, Latin America is the "backyard" of the United States, and its periphery is the basis for China's rise. Since the end of World War II, regional political and economic integration has been on the ascendant, such as NATO, the European Union, and RCEP. At a time when globalization is encountering difficulties today, the trend of global re-regionalization is once again on the rise. Land and resources are the most basic

source of wealth in a regional environment. However, the cooperation and division of labour in the integration process can play the role of a wealth multiplier. The source of power in regional settings is still the control of violence, but alliances or cooperation can expand the control of violence. The geographical environment and regional environment belong to the flat two-dimensional world. For example, if you open a map, you can see at a glance what geographical environment and regional environment your country faces from the perspective of China or the United States.

Third, the space environment. It is different from the geographical and regional environment, and it is a three-dimensional world. The space environment is the sum of all relationships within the real and virtual space, the space environment is the real space environment, and the Internet is the virtual space environment. The source of wealth in the space environment includes not only real natural resources (outer space, which is not available now) but also virtual natural resources (data). There are two sources of power in the space environment. In real space, it is the control of the frequency spectrum, orbit and aircraft. In virtual space, it is the control of nodes and flow.

Distinguishing these three environments may help us rethink the focus of China's foreign strategy. The basic conclusion of this paper is: we must make a difference in the geo-environment, be active in the regional environment, and work hard in the promising space environment.

Making a difference in the geo-environment means the country should be cautious and not overdo it. The geographical relationship is the oldest in human history. Human beings have competed and cooperated in various geopolitical environments for thousands of years, but there are two serious problems in geopolitical competition and cooperation. First, the involution of geopolitical competition is very serious, and the competitive strategies usable by all parties have basically been used up. Traditional geopolitical theories, such as the theory of land power and sea power, require us to carry out corresponding military construction and arms competition. According to the theory of sea power, if the United States builds a huge aircraft carrier fleet, China needs to build more aircraft carriers. Suppose China has built 11 aircraft carriers, but the technology and tactics used by the United States on aircraft carriers are very mature. How much room for innovation can China have in this regard? The second is the unpredictability of failure. There are many failure cases of major powers in geopolitical competition. From the Cold War to the present, the United States and the Soviet Union have suffered failures in Vietnam, North Korea, Iraq, and

Afghanistan, respectively, and these failures were all unexpected by major powers. When the geopolitical expansion of major powers reaches a certain point, there will be a power break. However, where the boundary of this point is currently, the country cannot accurately predict. This kind of geopolitical failure has caused these countries to spend a lot of money. However, they have gained very little, and the morale of the people has also been severely damaged, causing serious domestic conflicts. Therefore, China can refrain from engaging in fierce geopolitical competition with other countries. Of course, any country cannot avoid geopolitics, so it is enough for China to do something in this regard.

In the regional environment, China needs to be proactive. Being proactive means actively promoting the region's integration, and it can also actively participate in the integration process of other regions because the region is the foundation of China's rise. The integration of East Asia is affected by two factors, one is the change of the pattern, and the other is the internal driving force. As far as the former is concerned, the regional structure of East Asia tends to be polarized, and the trend of polarization is a centrifugal force for East Asian integration. However, the integration of East Asia also has its own internal driving force, which is a kind of centripetal force, so the integration of East Asia will be affected by both centrifugal force and centripetal force. This has affected the speed and degree of integration in East Asia, which is exactly what requires China to promote the integration process in East Asia actively.

Regarding the worldwide re-regionalization process, China seems to be using the "Belt and Road" initiative to link these different regions together. There are achievements and resistance which has aroused overt and covert opposition and exclusion from core countries in other regions. Of course, China's overly active activities in other regions will lead to geopolitical and economic competition. The so-called activeness in this article refers to the activeness in the Asia-Pacific region, and we should be cautious when entering other regions.

We must work hard in the space environment. The space environment is a new field and a new world. There is not enough intensity in this vast world and a lack of strict rules and systems, so it is very suitable for staking. We can do a lot in the space environment and avoid involution. For example, the key to the Internet space is three words: data, nodes, and traffic. The wealth in the Internet space comes from data, and the source of power is the control of nodes and traffic. Mastering these three points can control wealth and power in the Internet space. However, China's attitude towards data, nodes, and traffic is still relatively conservative, with more worries and less openness. As the source

of wealth in the Internet space, the biggest feature of data is that it is growth wealth; that is, data will be used more and more, while traditional Sources of wealth such as land and natural resources are consumptive wealth, that is, they become less and less as they are used. Therefore, the key to growing data wealth is openness and use because storing data will not increase wealth. However, China's data openness and flow policy is still very cautious. This requires the government and Internet companies to maintain an open attitude on data opening and flow issues, find a better balance between maintaining data security and open data use, and establish more innovative usage rules.

References

- Aristotle. (1965). *Politics* (W. Shoupeng, Trans.). Commercial Press.
- Brzezinski, Z. (1986). *Game Plan*. Atlantic Monthly Press.
- Cohen, S. (2011). *Geopolitics: The Geography of International Relations* (Y. Chunsong, Trans.). Shanghai Social Science Press.
- Flint, C., & Taylor, P. (2016). *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-State and Locality* (L. Yungang, Trans.). Commercial Press.
- Gu, H. (2001). On "How to Understand the Historical Process of Capitalist Development". *Teaching and Research*, 6.
- Gyorgy, A. (1944). *Geopolitics*. University of California Press.
- Hartshorne, R. (1939). *The Nature of Geography*. Association of American Geographers.
- Huntington, S. (2010). *Clash of Civilizations and Reconstruction of World Order* (Z. Qi et al., Trans.). Xinhua Publishing House.
- Kennan, G. (1947). The Sources of Soviet Conduct. *Foreign Affairs*, 25, 566-582.
- Kissinger, H. (1979). *The White House Years*. Little, Brown.
- Lu, C. (1989). Is it State Monopoly Capitalism or Social Capitalism. *Economic Research*, 4.
- Lu, J. (2007). From Naturalism to Structuralism: The Evolution of Geopolitical Methodology. *Human Geography*, 5.
- Mackinder, H. (2010). *Geographical Hubs of History* (L. Erwei & C. Jiang, Trans.). Commercial Press.
- Mahan, A. T. (2014). *Theory of Sea Power: The Influence of Sea Power on History* (D. Chuyang, Trans.). Times Literature and Art Publishing House. (Original work published unknown date).

- Naisbitt, J. (1984). *Megatrends—Ten New Directions Changing Our Lives*. China Social Sciences Press.
- Nye, J. Jr. (2002). *Understanding International Conflict* (Z. Xiaoming, Trans.). Shanghai People's Publishing House.
- Ó Tuathail, G. (1996). *Critical Geopolitics: The Politics of Writing Global Space*. Routledge.
- Parker, G. (1988). *Geopolitics: Past, Present and Future*. Printer.
- Qin, Y. (2003). *Circulation and Evolution: The Thinking Orientation of International Relations Theory*. *World Economy and Politics*, 1.
- Renner, G. T. (1942). *Human Geography in the Air Age*. Macmillan.
- Seversky, A. D. (1950). *Air Power: Key to Survival*. Simon & Schuster.
- Spykman, N. (1942). *America's Strategy in World Politics*. Harcourt, Brace.
- Tang, S. (2001). *Basic Paradigms of Social Sciences*. *International Social Sciences*, 1.
- Tang, S. (2009). *The Social Evolution of International Politics: From Mearsheimer to Jervis*. *Contemporary Asia-Pacific*, 4.
- Thompson, K. (2003). *International Masters of Thought* (G. Xiefeng, Trans.). Peking University Press.
- Weigert, H. (1942). *Generals and Geographers*. Oxford University Press.
- White, M. (2004). *Power Politics* (S. Aiqun, Trans.). World Knowledge Press.
- Zhang, W. (2010). *Analysis and Reflection on Conflicting Geopolitical Views*. *Academic Forum*, 8.

WHAT IS IT TO BE 'NATIONAL': EXAMINING NATIONAL (IN)SECURITY, NATIONAL IDENTITY, OTHERING AND ALTERNATE IMAGINATIONS IN INDIA

Mansoor ASHRAF *

Abstract: Strong overarching states have always characterised South Asia. A post-colonial democratic India has been no different. Other than that, of a top-down 'nationalist' idea which is an inherently exclusive project, it seems to securitise and consider any other collective sensibility as a threat. It does so because of its insecurities and lingering cartographic anxiety. The paper argues that alternate imaginations can and do co-exist with national imaginations, but the Indian 'nation-state' has increasingly had problems with such imaginations. The paper seeks to locate and critically analyse such nationalist insecurities and the multiplicity of alternate imaginations of Pan-South Asianism, sub-nationalisms, other such regionalisms and cosmopolitanisms and their complex interactions in everyday India. The paper employing critical discourse analysis explores how popular alternate imaginations co-exist with, contest, resist, or negotiate with the 'national' identity. Without assuming people to be readily more cosmopolitan, it looks at how people respond to the overarching state and its articulation in the everyday - whether they readily accept the 'manufactured' picture or go beyond. It also explores the question of whether such articulations have a differential impact in certain sites and spatialities, especially in the socio-political and geographical margins. Essentially, it asks whether alternate imaginations have to always come at the cost of the loss of nationalist imagination or does it have more to do with how that nationalist imagination gets articulated. The question begs whether popular imaginations have to be necessarily constrained within the 'container' of the 'national'. The paper concludes that top-down national integration that constructs other sensibilities readily as threats *en route* to a more homogenised national identity creates more problems than what it is purported to solve.

Keywords: Nationalism; National Security; Identity Politics; South Asia; India; Regionalism; Rising Powers; Democracy.

* Mansoor Ashraf. Centre for International Politics, Organisation and Disarmament, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-110067, India. email: dar.mansoor18@gmail.com

Introduction

WHAT IS IT LIKE BEING INDIA? IT IS NOT EASY, FOR ONE. MOREOVER, being one of the biggest countries in the world, and that too a democracy at that, is most definitely not easy. As the seventh largest country in terms of area and set to become the most populous, India is arguably the most diverse country in the world – not just in terms of landscapes but, more importantly, the people that inhabit it. India is more populous and diverse than the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central America, South America, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom combined, and to be a democracy at that, however flawed, being India is nothing short of an exception. However, as the world's largest democracy and a vibrant secular, pluralist democracy at that, which manages such a big and diverse society is what really sets it apart, something Perkovich (2003) calls a "world historical challenge".

Given such features and being a representative democracy, the very "idea of India" comes across as fascinating and no less a wonder for "no state* in history has been as populous, diverse, stratified, poor and at the same time democratic as India" (*Ibid.*). As such, India is poised for extraordinary things on a global scale and at the same is the biggest challenge. Therefore, given the potential of it, it is a great thing to be a democratic India. Historically, India has always been relevant in the global community. In more recent times, it has also been classified as a 'rising' state owing more to its increased relative material capabilities in terms of military power and economic prowess. As Perkovich noted, a decade and a half back that "achieving socio-economic development and internal peace through democratic means" for a hugely diverse India would be a "great global triumph" (*Ibid.*). Therefore, the challenge of an ascendant India is "getting India 'right'" which would manifest "great global power; failing to meet the aspirations of Indian citizenry would consign India to the world's middle ranks". To democratically uplift the quality of life of a society as big, diverse, and dynamic as India, while ensuring basic freedoms, to which this power is a means and not an end in itself. Indeed, India would have achieved "perhaps the greatest success in human history" (*Ibid.*).

Therefore, it is this democratic upliftment, preserving and celebrating its huge diversity sans any compromise on its core values and freedoms that would be the ultimate touchstone to determine whether India has truly lived up to its potential. This paper seeks to analyse such questions in the light of India's 'nation-building'; national identity; conduct as a vibrant, secular democracy; and

* Here, 'state' means the republic of India or alternatively republics in South Asia and 'States' with a block letter S mean the constituent states of the Indian Union.

the tendencies and the trajectory of answering the question and the “world historical challenge” of being India.

The nation-state and the challenge of Hindu Nationalism

The nature of the ‘nation-state’ has been in a flux for quite a while. Yet, the nation-state has been the most dominant historical ‘container’ which has sought to contain, regulate, and discipline societies across centuries. South Asia has been no stranger to the ubiquity of the nation-state. ‘Nation-building’ has been an arduous task. The questions of identity, nationalism and nation-building have resulted in troubled waters particularly for the younger post-colonial states in South Asia, resulting in a distinct security predicament as compared to the European experience which took its own long time grappling with these challenges (Ayoub, 2002). A post-colonial democratic India too has been an overarching state wherein top-down nation-building process has been followed. Nation-building can often be an inherently exclusivist project. In the case of the Indian state, it has not been any different and given its huge diversity, it has been problematic when a top-down nation-state project has been often unilaterally imposed. While there has been some respect for diversity coupled with the constraints of realpolitik, for example the formation of States of India along linguistic lines yet securitizing any other collective sensibility than that of the nation-state has been conspicuous all along, especially noticeable with lasting conflicts along the lines of multiple identities and aspirations.

India is not a ‘nation-state’ per se. It is a ‘multi-nation’ state. Given its diversity, it always has been so. Therefore, it has needed to accommodate and be flexible with these different sensibilities, and these have not always been at odds with the ‘nationalist’ idea although these have largely been ‘seen’ and ‘made to be seen’ in only that light. The idea of India as a vibrant and diverse democratic state has always needed to be more accommodative of differences. As such, diversity has needed to be institutionalised and not to be swallowed under a ‘grand idea’ of a singular top-down nationalist idea of a ‘coherent’ nation-state that disregards inherent differences and refuses to accommodate diversity which is quite obviously its greatest strength but has also alternatively been problematic because of such a rigid approach.

As a vibrant pluralist democracy, India has needed to accommodate various cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversities and its minorities. To its credit, the Indian constitution has recognised such diversity and ensured its respect as such and in the process laid the foundations of a vibrant ‘multi-cultural’

democracy via special rights, cultural and political, and institutions that allow for and protect and promote it as such. However, this rich and diverse social fabric of India has for long been under strain and of late, it has only grown such that the very idea of India has been a terrain of contestation. The divides become evident in terms of class, caste, religion, ideology, region, and whatnot. As such, the definition of a clearly and well-accepted common good remains elusive. The challenges of uplifting India's historically marginalised *Dalits* (literally oppressed, former 'untouchables'), the tribals, communal violence, corruption and so on remain and one can say have only exacerbated. The biggest challenge that has emerged, however, to the secular, constitutional democratic state of India and the very idea of India is an aggressive Hindu nationalism or Hindutva.

The coming to power of the Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) in 2014 (although it got only 31% of the vote as Macdonald and Moussavi cited in [Miller and de Estrade, 2017](#) show) raised fears owing to its and its allies' vehement commitment to Hindutva. The alarming trend of a Hindu hyper-nationalism, growing intolerance and hate, lynchings by cow-vigilantes of minority Muslims and violence against *Dalits* has risen and the government has over the years been rather tight-lipped allowing for accusations of complicity. In some cases, there has been an open show of support by members of the ruling party towards such extremist elements accused of hate crimes. The BJP, led by populist figure Narendra Modi won in a more decisive 'landslide' victory in 2019 earning Modi his second term as Prime Minister. This happened mostly on the back of belligerent rhetoric against Pakistan. What can now be safely said is that the Hindu extremism that has for most of India's 73 years of independence been on the fringes of the socio-political scene is no longer there. In fact, it is the secular voices that have been marginalised. The fringe is now the mainstream and the mainstreaming of the Hindu right-wing extremism, even while it has gone more extreme, is now complete. Hindu nationalism as the one and only idea of India has indeed gained more and more traction. The idea of a Hindu *rashttra* or Hindu nation is now more entrenched than any other time in the history of India.

India could always show the way forward for a vibrant multicultural democracy but in recent times, it has only gone backwards and undone a lot of richness of its social fabric. In what he calls "India's reactionary modernism", Pratap Bhanu Mehta (2018) argued that the trend has gone so far that a "total inversion of values" has become possible and how India is in a "full-blown reactionary moment" but one wearing the garb of democratic legitimacy. Further, a monolithic cultural nationalism of Hindutva is contrary to the secular democratic essence of the idea of India which is its biggest strength. As Perkovich (2003) noted that the most successful course of a rising India would be one that "strengthens the cohesion and allegiance of the greatest number of India's diverse citizens and groups". Ganguly (2015) had argued how disturbing domestic

developments could jeopardise India's foreign policy initiatives. Looking back from 2023, with a sweeping electoral victory of the BJP in 2019 and the free flexing of the Hindu extremist muscle on the marginalised, we very well know which way the tide has swung. In its second run, the BJP buoyed by the vast electoral mandate has arguably gone more berserk with its policies.

The one policy that stands out in the post-2019 India is that of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) combined with the National Register of Citizens (NRC) that was widely criticized as being an assault on the constitutional basis of Indian nationhood as well as its citizenship and, also, as being particularly discriminatory against the largest minority of India that is the Muslims. The first step to this is creating a National Population Register (NPR) which includes all the Indian population following which government bureaucracy will mark 'doubtful citizens' who will subsequently be asked to produce documents to prove their citizenship to then decide who qualifies for citizenship. This is being asked mostly of a rural, extremely poor, uneducated people who can hardly be expected to fulfil the complex bureaucratic criteria around which there is plenty of obscurity. Then will come the NRC with the list of filtered out Indian citizens and those who fail to make it, for whatever reasons, will end up in detention centres. The NRC experience in Assam in the Northeast of India has been nothing short of disaster, a humanitarian crisis, with family members separated and ending up in detention centres as some members miss out on the list.

The worst affected by the NPR+NRC combination as the Assam experience has shown will be women (two-third out of Assam NRC), the poor and uneducated, the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Castes (OBCs), the nomads and *adivasis* (indigenous tribes), orphans, LGBTQ communities, the elderly, or people without birth certificates (42% or 515 million people of India's population), migrant labourers and their families, illiterate people, disabled or abandoned people or even people with different spellings in different documents or anyone with a slight bureaucratic lapse, and of course, the Muslims for whom the combination of CAA and NRC would be nothing short of catastrophe. (CJP Team, 2020)

CAA allows for Indian citizenship to illegal migrants who are basically non-Muslims - Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians - from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh who reached India before 2015 in the name of them being "persecuted minorities" in these three countries, thereby ignoring persecuted minorities from say Tibet (the Tibetan refugees run a government-in-exile in India headed by the Dalai Lama), Sri Lanka and Myanmar as well as persecuted Muslim sects in Pakistan. This act uses religion as a criterion for Indian citizenship and therefore violates the Constitutional secular principles and is a violation of Articles 13, 14, 15, 16 and 21 which "guarantee the right to equality, equality before the law and non-discriminatory treatment by the Indian

State” (*ibid.*). This would leave a Muslim who is declared an ‘illegal migrant’ in the NRC no way to get citizenship in India. While the non-Muslim Indians could perhaps lie and claim citizenship as illegal migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, this could be tricky and, in many places, say in South India, impossible. There have also been concerns from the SC, ST, OBC groups about CAA+NRC which could disempower these marginalised groups by taking away reservations in case of a loss of citizenship. The CAA has been challenged in the Indian Supreme Court but the hearings have been put off during the pandemic. Apart from several other concerns, the financial burden of such an exercise runs into billions of dollars in a largely poor country with huge economic disparities which could leave it on the brink of economic collapse. This leaves the doors open for disenfranchisement, extreme poverty, riots, and terrorism to which India is no stranger, even genocide à la the Holocaust, or a civil war and the Nazis inspiring the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) of which the BJP is the political wing and PM Modi a proud member, is no secret. And what is all this humongous disaster being justified in the name of? Precisely the bugbear that can justify everything a state does – national security!

What has become amply clear in the six years of the Hindu nationalist BJP’s rule is that Hindu nationalism has emerged as the main challenger to India’s composite nationalism, its federal structure, its secular democracy and indeed the very idea of India. Given BJP’s mantra of big money and media, hyper-masculine toxic nationalism, communalism and anti-Muslim politics, foreign policy attuned to domestic electoral gains (Balakot strikes for instance); the mainstreaming of Hindu nationalism is embedded more and more. The construction of the Ram Mandir (temple dedicated to Hindu deity Ram) over the land where the Babri Mosque stood which was demolished by Hindu extremists in 1992 is as symbolic as it is a manifestation of the New India, which is overtly becoming a Hindu nationalist India. This is not to say that the Congress rule in India was devoid of communalism. In fact, the worst of communal riots happened under their watch. They opened the gates of Babri Masjid to the Hindu worshippers who claimed it as the birthplace of Ram in 1986 and subsequent events led to its demolition. But, what has changed distinctly now is that the very socio-political narrative which once used to be centrist and secular has now become unapologetically rightist and the “battlelines have been drawn within the ‘Hindutva’ terrain” as Mukopadhyay (2018) had argued. This has been further cemented and Hindutva is now the dominant narrative. This is also evident in how from time to time; the supposedly more secular Congress party – India’s main opposition party – has tried to portray itself as a better champion of Hindu nationalism as compared to the BJP. The celebrations over the foundation laying of the Ram Mandir on the 5th of August by the Congress party members are a case in point. Further, that the foundation laying was kept deliberately on the first

anniversary of the Hindu nationalist central government's undemocratic assault on, and subsequent siege of, Jammu and Kashmir – when its special status was revoked unilaterally – was symbolic of the muscle flexing of the Hindu nationalist project wherein the forceful 'nationalist integration' of a Muslim majority J&K State into Hindu 'nation' was billed as the flagship of the Hindu nationalist state.

Nationalism and National Identity

Even a cursory look at nation-building in India brings to the fore many conflicts and contestations in this terrain. One can argue that India, as mentioned before, is not a 'nation-state' in the classical sense but has many nations within its state and therefore the biggest challenge becomes to articulate a larger accommodative identity of an Indian 'nation' which diverse people can willingly subscribe to or can be integrated into. Nation-building thus involves "elimination" and "management" of differences (O'Leary cited in [Mishra, 2014](#)). It is never easy and can often be a violent process (not just overtly so) and it goes without saying that India has had a fair share of its problems and violence along the course and arguably India has been a very violent state right from the start.

There are challenges by geographical, ethnic, and religious nationalities to the idea of an 'Indian nationality'. The weakness of such an articulation of identity by the Indian state is shown by demands of regional autonomy, even secession, by "linguistically organised States, ethnically composed north-eastern States and not to mention the religious Sikh nationalism" that has challenged the "political sovereignty and national unity of India". Northeast India alone is home to 36 major or minor ethnic nationalist movements (*ibid.*). The growing intensity of such "ethno-nationalist" conflicts exhibits lack of an accommodative ability on the part of the Indian nation-state. This is where nationalist insecurities, the bug of particular understanding of national integrity at any cost, cartographic anxieties have come into play providing a hurdle to India's proactive management of these differences via greater decentralisation, federalism and so on. This has ensured a suffocation of India's geographical and socio-political margins whereby the conflicts have only intensified.

The Northeast region of India is quite unique with its own fair share of diversity even while it is often presented as a monolith in the mainstream Indian imagination. It has been home to ethnic conflicts, insurgent violence, a breakdown of state machinery and of late a preventable citizenship crisis. It is unique in that the factors of caste, class or religion which are prevalent everywhere else in India remain largely insignificant as ethnicity and sub-nationalisms drive politics. It is herein where the challenges for India's nation-building exercise lie. And

it has left a lot to be desired in terms of accommodating or even managing these differences.

While the state has tried to allow for tribal autonomy and institutions of self-government in these States as part of a federal structure that distributes power to accommodate local diversity, but these structures have not transformed the scene in practice. The primary strategy of the state has been that of control rather than accommodation, mitigation, or management of differences. The management of these differences or assertions of ethno-nationalities have been overtly constructed as existential threats to national integrity and therefore territorial control has received primacy. The primary response as such has been that of excessive militarism coupled, more so of late, with developmentalism in the region and beyond. Thereby, the decentralisation process and various distributive measures such as special economic privileges, reservations, grass-roots democratic process and increased political representation in a bid to accommodate differences in the larger national identity have taken a hit.

The idea of a distinctly Indian style of federalism has been much celebrated. While a semblance of its inclusive federal nature has always lingered, an inherent unitary tendency has only increased with time. Interestingly, this federal structure would ensure India sustaining itself as the vibrant secular pluralist democracy that it was conceived to be and would also embed and nourish the characteristic of 'unity in diversity' as the bedrock of its internal security. But what has actually transpired has been an ever tightening noose from the centre which has ensured that sometimes even the modest tag of 'quasi-federal' becomes a bit too far-fetched. The Indian state rather ironically has been plagued by a national insecurity which while not unfamiliar to post-colonial states has been the starkest in India, more so because of its great potential of 'rising' as a pluralist democracy with a federal structure that takes all its diverse peoples along – a great but far from fulfilled potential. India's federalism was always going to be an India-sized challenge, yet increasingly, the failures and the imaginations of 'what could have been' become starker. India's federalism is hardly very inclusive, but with an ever-strengthening centre on a rampage undermining State autonomy and decentralization of power, the exclusionary nature has become more manifest. All this inevitably prompts the question of whether the emancipatory agenda of its constitution has been fulfilled and whether at all it has ever been inclusive enough, great proclamations notwithstanding, and that is where the margins, be it the Northeast or Jammu and Kashmir and so on, speak for themselves.

The Union government led by the BJP has been on a rampage to undermine State autonomy and decentralization of power in India's States. The legislations have come under tremendous scrutiny and criticism for undermining and abrogating the existing Constitutional norms of providing States' autonomy. This

is a story of the popular imagination being manufactured to cater to the government advocacy for uniformity in the garb of bringing 'national integration', but severely undermining India's pluralist democracy. These trends of the slide towards authoritarianism have been defended in the name of national security. The withdrawal of special status, by reading down Article 370 and abrogating Article 35A, from Jammu and Kashmir and declaring them as Union Territories in 2019 puts up a new flavour in redefining India as a more centralised government. This could well be replicated in the Northeast as well thereby scrapping the special provisions there. The very discourse of federalism has shifted and if it can be shown as a hurdle to national integration, it might as well be completely done away with more. Already, it has been severely eroded in its own interpretations by the government. In its quest of an ambitious project of national integration, it has tried to further delineate and continued to circumvent in defining India as either an 'asymmetric' or a 'quasi' federal state; and thereby is trapped within the boundaries of these two narrow and repressive narratives.

The Indian government's approach to Jammu and Kashmir – the conflict-torn long standing disputed region in its north and the central pivot of its enduring rivalry with Pakistan which is a party to the dispute – has been abysmal and a disastrous to say the least. The long-standing Kashmiri demand has been that of a plebiscite under the auspices of and according to the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council in order to fulfil their right to self-determination. The conditional accession with India eventually provided for autonomy and a special status to the State of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. It is another matter that the Indian rule over J&K over decades has resulted in the erosion of this autonomy to the point of it being rather hollow as it was always seen as a threat to India's national integrity. This, or whatever semblance of autonomy remained was, on August 5, 2019, unilaterally annulled by the BJP government in the most undemocratic manner with the local populace under siege in the name of 'integrating' J&K with the Indian Union. This step requires the concurrence of the erstwhile Constituent Assembly of J&K which was dissolved in 1956, thereby arguably making the article permanent in the Indian Constitution. Even at present, one could argue that the annulment would require the concurrence of the J&K Legislative Assembly. But the Indian government put the State under President's rule and went ahead with the annulment, thereby taking the President's assent as a substitute for the Assembly and the local populace. This would be a joke in a democracy but there is no joke anymore for which realisation is not possible, especially if it can be argued to strengthen India's national integrity. It goes without saying that it has, and will, continue to damage India's case in Kashmir but for the Indian government and its electoral base, that is beside the point. This was followed by one of the most inhuman communication blackouts in history with phones, mobile networks and

the internet blocked for months, along with rampant incarcerations turning the State into an open-air prison. Four years on, high speed internet continues to be snapped intermittently even when it was restored after an alarming length of 555 days, even as the pandemic raged on. All along, the Indian government had gone ahead with policies like the new domicile law (Ashraf and Karthik, K. R., 2020) that could fundamentally alter the demographics of the State and annihilate the local identities of peoples of J&K. Now well into 2023, the Indian government ruling J&K directly as a Union Territory since 2019 has gone on a rampage against whatever was left of the distinct identity of J&K with sweeping laws being hastily put into place or older ones significantly diluted which give unchecked vast powers to the state at the cost of even the slightest local aspirations and seem clearly designed to significantly alter its demography. Buttressed by an overwhelmingly large and omnipresent military apparatus in J&K, the Hindu nationalist umbrella of parties or the *Sangh Parivar*, of which the ruling BJP is part, in their bid for making India a Hindu *rashttra*, have left no stone unturned in quickly forcing upon J&K what comes across as more of an at-any-cost, dehumanising, disenfranchising, unabashed “settler colonial project”; in the final march of turning India into a Hindu supremacist state. Jaleel (2021) provides a rather detailed account of such unilateral changes, imposed on J&K which serve as the final nail in the coffin of any kind of quasi-federal arrangement or a more or less superficial autonomy that it had within the Indian state.

Nation, Region and Regional Identities

Regional identities, in this case, are understood as supra-national sensibilities as compared to regions within India which can be categorized variedly. The region tends to be loosely defined and can be used as a “classificatory device” (Agnew 2013) across disciplines. Therefore, it is important to underline what we mean by it here. Regional identities or regionalisations and regionalisms have hardly taken root in South Asia or with South Asian states within other such configurations, taking South Asia to be *the* region; fluid and constructed, modified, and reshaped continually as it is. India occupies the predominant position and has an immediately tangible relationship with all these states, without them having much amongst themselves. This also becomes a basis for seeing the region as an ‘Indian peripheral region’ or an Indian ‘backyard’. As the “least integrated region in the world” (Sally cited in Buzan 2011), regionalism has never really taken off in South Asia. The problems of ethno-nationalisms, religion, and caste spill over across borders in South Asia fragmenting in the process not just India’s domestic scenario but also relations with its neighbours. Further, in a largely unintegrated space, India has not led the way nor set agendas in the regional organizations.

India's 'enduring rivalry' with Pakistan has been at the heart of the region. Even regionalism has been argued to be its captive (Hussain 2014).

It has also been argued that India has been increasingly disengaged from South Asia, or it has shown a propensity for seeking status, outside the region than within it (Buzan 2011). This also then leads to an interesting question of what India sees as and how it sees its 'own' region or maybe does not see one at all. The successes of other regional and sub-regional arrangements like have been modest at best. Given various "aporias", as Mohammad-Arif (2014) would argue, of South Asia, envisioning a common space, a regional identity may seem a bridge too far. South Asia has a persistent "low intelligibility" among the people whom it is supposed to provide a sense of belonging.

Fluctuating boundaries, the problems of SAARC regionalism have not done it any favours. However, the picture is much brighter once we look at the active constructions of South Asia 'from below'. The argument (*Ibid.*) is one of everyday constructions and flows and certain 'deliberate' engagements by people's movements and social struggles (e.g., People's SAARC) that imagine to (re)construct the region for want of peace and socio-political and economic prosperity. There are important socio-cultural and historical continuities that underpin the imagination of a shared space of South Asia. These continuities are especially evident in the border areas where populations tend to be divided by the delimitations of the states. And the crossing of these borders as an important 'everyday construction' of South Asia is particularly pertinent. Their crossing and the flows of people, ideas and so on that take place therein, at once challenges and disrupts the delimitations set by the states. The disruption is especially done by the people who are separated by such uncrossable boundaries that they take recourse to poetry and art.

Such 'disruptive writing' critiques and goes beyond the exclusive and violent logic of territoriality and transcends the boundarying practices of the states as it makes explicit the use of language as enabling certain meanings and constraining others. People who are separated by uncrossable boundaries employ this to firstly preserve the memory which is threatened by the state which employs "strategic forgetting", "premised on guarding against lapses of official memory" (Rajaram 2004). Secondly, such writing articulates the "possibility of other, transnational forms of identification, existence, and memory". This capacity as Ahmed (2013) argues "allows us to connect not only the past" but also the "many implicated presents" by showing "what *is* is only one possible future among many". These commonalities, argues Mohammad-Arif (2014) not only contribute "to the notion of a South Asian cultural space" but "are also related to practices that generate everyday constructions of South Asia" while at the same time providing the "material and symbolic resources" to the actors that seek to (re)construct South Asia from below.

Further, the 'Indo-centrism' has been a source of discomfort for the other states in South Asia and it has also been argued that the drive to regionalism from these states is more of a "classic balancing" (Dash 2008) act against India. South Asian regionalism can be argued to be a hostage of the India-Pakistan rivalry. Pakistan, being the traditionally weaker party, has benefitted by involving external players in the region, which India has resisted seeking what it calls 'regional autonomy' in South Asia. India has also been irked when the two are coupled together. All this has meant that India has had to deal with and manage its insecurity vis-à-vis Pakistan. In a rather diffuse power structure of Pakistan, the dominance of the army, ISI and the "Jihadists" as Perkovich (2003) argues will not lessen as long as "Hindu militants continue to rise in India". This, he argued will "only tighten the hyphen connecting Pakistan and India". Therefore, it is "pluralist liberalism" and not "cultural nationalism" that provides the "path for growing India's power not only by improving India's internal stability and cohesion but by negating the Pakistani argument that Hindu-majority India" is unilaterally spiteful and hostile to Muslims. This argument has well and truly come home looking back from 2020. Indeed, the two feed off and are used as rhetoric against each other. The pursuit of Hindutva, which has now almost completely dominated the scene in India, uses aggressive rhetoric against Pakistan for primarily electoral gains. However, as the Balakot strikes just before the elections in 2019 have shown, this could lead to greater escalations as what the charged-up Indian public consumes of the war rhetoric against Pakistan is only going to get more intense and demand for more (Staniland, 2019). Domestically, it is not difficult to see Pakistan being blamed for virtually anything that could go wrong (the same is true for Pakistan viz-a-viz India) and as a popular distraction for the electorate. Nothing seems like a bigger certificate of nationalism in today's India than extreme hatred for Pakistan. Pakistan as the external enemy is the yardstick as well as the fuel for India's narrow nationalism. So much so that a commonly heard phrase, which has now been turned into a joke is being 'anti-national' in India, that is if one does not follow the Hindu nationalist idea of India, or the ruling party's dictums on nationalism which in essence draw on the antipathy of Pakistan and the minorities within especially the Muslims which in the Hindu nationalist imagination have to be, euphemistically speaking, 'set in line' to clear any hurdles to the creation of Hindu *Rashtra* (nation) or a Hindu India. Tellingly then, the slur 'go to Pakistan' has been freely used against Muslims or any dissenters against the Hindu nationalist government.

Othering, Enemy Creation and the Idea of India

The catchy idea of a 'rising India' aside, the very idea of India is different along the diverse sites and peoples. The idea of India along the socio-political and geographical margins is not necessarily the same as that of the core clusters. It does not have to be and these sites cannot be coerced to be brought under a uniform idea in the name of 'unity in diversity'. Yet, that is what is expected of them and if the scenario is to the contrary, they become blameworthy for being 'anti-national' to be then 'integrated' fully into the union. So, for instance, people in remote areas or border areas sometimes have no idea of India at all. Further, for some, say, people along the Line of Control (LoC) bearing the brunt of cross-LoC firing, their idea of India is a very different one from a person sitting in Delhi, as they are constantly under the barrel of a gun for which they are the 'other'. Similarly, a conflict zone like parts of the North East which have been faced with a violent face of the state, their idea of India is very different. Jammu and Kashmir which has borne the brunt of extreme state repression sees it very differently. Also, what needs no pointing out is the plight of the marginalized groups like the *Dalits*, the tribals and the minorities who have been reeling under discrimination and violence, structural and overt; increasing alarmingly of late and whose socioeconomic condition has barely improved, if not worsened — what about their idea of India? And one needs to remember that it is this diversity that is supposed to enrich the 'idea of India' and a 'rising India' is so not despite that — despite the huge numbers and diversity but more importantly, it is also because of that.

As much as the pluralistic composite nationalism has weakened and a narrower cultural hyper-nationalism has taken hold, the toxicities of such nationalism have come into their own and are poised to wretch whatever remnants of a pluralist secular democratic India that survive. There is a continuous othering and enemy creation which is on-going in the everyday, true to the tastes of such nationalism that requires both internal and external enemies to survive and thrive. It can and often does lead to constructing the two types of 'enemies' as having similar traits or being two sides of the same coin for making it easy to sell and to be consumed. One does not need to look further than the coupling of Indian Muslims-Pakistan being the tailor-made example of such enemy creation. It, however, does not and will not stop there. Such categorizations and labels or similar ones are reserved for any entity that speaks a different language or refuses to consume such toxic nationalism. And once the labelling is done, silencing to use a euphemistic word becomes easy. This is line with the saying of 'killing a mad dog', for only when the dog can be labelled mad or mad enough can

it be eliminated without accountability. Such exercises have become a lot easier in India today with the far from unexpected obliquity of the Indian media, especially the TRP-driven TV media, which has left no stone unturned to prostrate before the whims and diktats of those in power. Hyper-nationalism, war-mongering, hate of many a 'other' is sold like hot cakes day in day out. It is becoming more and more commonplace to draw parallels between the TV media and the infamous Rwandan hate radio which ultimately resulted in genocide.

For the 'average' Indian who is not from the margins, their idea of the geographical and political margins of India is nothing much except what the state and an increasingly statist-mouthpiece media especially TV media tells them of it. Therefore, the idea of Kashmir or of the Northeast of India is one of 'beautiful landscapes full of exotic people some of whom resort to "terrorism" against India', thereby conveniently obfuscating, broad brushing and strategically making forget ground realities and genuine aspirations of these peoples which are diverse in their own right – from national to sub-national aspirations, from protest against state-abuse to autonomy to greater representation, and so on. But, for the self-proclaimed foot soldiers of India's national integrity – those who exert considerable power to label – therefore do the groundwork for muffling, obfuscating, and for violent suppression of anyone who dares to have a different idea of India.

What the state requires to ultimately legitimize its violence and to justify its need against such people is that a significant share of the electorate is rendered oblivious of, and/or is silent, and thereby enables, or even cheers such violence as the ultimate altar set is that of national security and national unity. The manufacturing of 'threat' to national integrity therefore is sweeping to the point of leaving very little outside the gamut of what or who could be a national security threat. The othering and enemy creation continue unhindered aided and abetted by the media. It is becoming increasingly difficult to be sure of what or who can be considered 'safe' and not a 'threat' to national security. This has resulted in widespread self-censorship or 'falling in line' with the dominant narrative which owing to its grip on power duly rewards allegiance. Therefore, violent crackdown is rampant on any sort of dissent by civil society activists, students, academics, artists; especially by the current government which rather freely invokes the national security act or that draconian law which reeks of a colonial hangover, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act or the UAPA, on flimsy grounds and is the making of a pervasive, authoritarian state which keeps constringing the scope of what is acceptable and thereby setting dangerous precedents.

The margins in being silenced speak loud and clear. The case of Northeast India or a Kashmir easily highlights the failures of an accommodative larger political nationalism, one that would not be about imposing 'homogeneity' and

repression on India's 'own people'. That is where Kashmir, from an Indian perspective represents a massive failure. What has been one of the reasons why India has held 'dearly' to Jammu and Kashmir is that a Muslim-majority State (the only one) can prove to be a marker of the success of India's secular democracy. What actually has happened leaves a world lot to be desired as far as the success of both 'secular' and 'democracy' are concerned? For India, the Kashmir that could otherwise represent the hallmark of a secular Indian nation vis-a-vis neighbouring 'Islamic' Pakistan has been rendered as the darkest chapter of it.

Further, in a politico-cultural sense, the idea of India has unfortunately been shrunk more to the Hindi language dominated States of the so-called 'cow-belt' whereby other Indians are rendered as 'not Indian' or 'not Indian enough' with Hindi being accorded the status of almost the 'essence' of India. The imposition of Hindi has been a contentious issue for long. The fact remains that Hindi speakers feel no need to learn any other Indian language but it is expected of non-Hindi speakers to learn Hindi. There have also been concerns about the imposition of Sanskrit which is an ancient language with an insignificant number of speakers. The New Education Policy (NEP-2020) does very little to assuage these concerns. Clearly, national integration in a linguistically highly diverse country like India cannot happen by way of cultural homogenization via 'imposition' of a single language even if it is spoken by a majority (43.63 % in Hindi's case as per census 2011) or culture. ([Vombatkere 2020](#)).

The way hate, intolerance, discrimination, racism has taken root has been alarming for a long time. To speak of national integration while these problems rage on is to fool oneself. Then to vouch for national integration by coercion and homogenization is an assault on the diversity and indeed the very idea of India. These divisive forces have become normalized and are being celebrated in 'New India'. Lynching of minority communities, especially of Muslims at the mere excuse of carrying beef is the new norm. Violence and racism are at an all-time high. Social media has added a different dimension to the intensity and mainstreaming of hate. Casual racism is 'fun and banter'. Experiences of the peoples from the Northeast are harrowing to say the least. From being called Chinese to Nepali, *chinky* and all kinds of slurs spans across streets, professional organizations, university campuses and so on. Even in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, appallingly some have been called "corona" and spat at ([Krishnankutty 2020](#)). These peoples have suffered the worst kind of racist abuse almost everywhere for looking 'different' than what has been constructed as the 'typical Indian'. South Indians have had their fair share of discrimination too. The *dalits* have historically seen the most brutal face of majoritarian violence and that knows no respite but has only intensified. Muslims could be on course to be rendered more or less 'second class citizens' in their own country. India, after all, even managed to communalize the spread of COVID-19 ([Thapar 2020](#)) by

blaming that one group which has the potential of being blameworthy for more or less everything – the Muslims. The widespread Islamophobia in the Indian media may hardly have a parallel. All this has a direct co-relation with the increased incidents of hate-crimes against the minorities. Before the pandemic, there was a full-fledged pogrom (Kamdar 2020) unleashed by Hindu nationalists in Northeast Delhi against the Muslims (Clarion India 2020) in late February, 2020. This is a major statement by Hindu nationalists emboldened by Modi's re-election in 2019 that they intend to leave no stone unturned and destroy everything in their path to turn the secular republic of India into a Hindu *rashtra*. Ultimately, alongside the spilt blood of the minorities, the marginalized and anyone who stands against the Hindu supremacist project will flow the blood of whatever remains of the secular, democratic republic of India.

Conclusion

A top-down national integration that constructs other sensibilities readily as threats and is bent on annihilating them at the altar of a constraining national identity *en route* to a more homogenised national identity is highly problematic. In a diverse secular democratic country like India, such a project is a disaster unlike any other. National, sub-national and post-national sensibilities engage, co-exist with or contest, resist or negotiate with each other. To constrain every other sensibility within the exclusivist 'container' of the national creates more problems than what it is purported to solve. In India's case, therefore, the problems of a constraining unaccommodating national identity are a fundamental challenge to the diversity and the potential of a secular democratic India. Nationalist insecurities and othering feed into each other and are eventually a 'self-goal' in both the long and short run. Federalism in India has taken a major hit. The biggest challenge, however, to the secular, democratic republic of India and an oft celebrated 'idea of India' remains the onslaught of the forces of Hindu nationalism. With Hindu nationalism being the mainstream now and enjoying power, the battle for India is poised to be a decisive one.

The story of India's plunge into hyper-nationalism and Hindutva has been one of constringing the national identity of India and unleashing the toxicities of narrow nationalism, thereby sowing the seeds of the destruction of the very idea of India. Violence, hate, intolerance, discrimination, racism have already sprouted and are running havoc, and these are only early days. Things are set to get worse as the quest for Hindu *rashtra* has intensified. From an international perspective, India has it all to lose. In such a scenario then, if the fundamental source of India's power were to be the "power of India's own example" (Khilnani et. al. 2012), this has suffered a big blow as India has thus far failed to live up to

that potential and the trends are anything but encouraging. The perverse impact on security and foreign policy when such decisions are made with an eye on the appeasement of majoritarian domestic aspirations and electoral gains cannot be understated. A look at India's souring relations in its neighbourhood is a case in point. The commonplace Euro-American view of India may well be almost a romanticization of it – its diversity and its colours, the land of spirituality, a vibrant secular democracy and so on. But the reality of India has been a story of unfulfilled potential, even while its material capabilities or its GDP have increased, of a lack of an accommodative national identity and a story of relentless violence – often directed at its 'own peoples'.

That national integration has always been about articulation of a 'larger identity' in which other identities would either wilfully come into or are able to be coerced into coming under is no panacea. More problematic is the coercion and homogenization of diverse peoples into an ever-constraining national identity. In India today, this national identity is becoming more and more exclusivist. A Hindu India is the most exclusionary and violent project that requires purging of any entity that does not fall in line and this idea has gained more and more traction. That the diverse secular, democratic republic of India is standing on its last legs and battling for its life goes without saying.

One wonders whose India it is anymore. While that plays out, what is becoming increasingly clear is whose India it is not anymore. The questions of alienation and problems inherent in exclusivist violent nationalisms will ravage India's well-being. The list of categories that can be termed 'safe' or relatively so, in 'New India', is fast vanishing. For now, perhaps one can point out one majoritarian combination – Hindu, upper caste, male. The advent and dominance of Hindu nationalism further nails the argument against the increasing problems of India's unaccommodating nationalism and national identity. Whether that is the final nail...time will tell.

However, to respond to Perkovich's (2003) call – has India been gotten 'right' after all? Forget material capabilities, GDP and so on. Most importantly, far from getting India 'right' as a vibrant pluralistic democracy, it has plunged worryingly '*right*' into a narrow nationalism contrary to its very essence. A Hindu nationalist India or a Hindu *rashtra* to a lot of commentators is going to be no India at all, even while we excuse some ahistoricity of the claim of a golden post-colonial India at some point. What is understood is that it is only so near a slide into authoritarianism as it is far from a 'free fall' into an all-encompassing authoritarianism that reeks of fascism. In any case, it is set to be an India-sized tragedy and an annihilation of whatever potential India had as a diverse and pluralist secular democracy.

References

- Agnew, J. A. (2013). Arguing with regions. *Regional Studies*, 47(1), 6-17.
- Ahmed, M. (2013). Future's past. In A. Najam & M. Yusuf (Eds.), *South Asia 2060: Envisioning regional futures* (pp.46-54). London, England: Anthem Press.
- Ashraf, A., Karthik, K., & Vignesh, R. (2020, May 10). Why J&K's demography will change beyond belief. Newsclck. Retrieved from <https://www.newsclck.in/why-jks-demography-will-change-beyond-belief>
- Buzan, B. (2011). The South Asian security complex in a decentring world order: Reconsidering regions and powers ten years on. *International Studies*, 48(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002088171204800101>
- Casolari, M. (2000). Hindutva's Foreign Tie-up in the 1930s: Archival Evidence. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35(4), 218-228.
- Citizens for Justice and Peace Team (CJP). (2020, January 27). Why the CAA+NPR+NRC is a toxic cocktail for everyone. Cjp. Retrieved from <https://cjp.org.in/why-the-caanprnc-is-a-toxic-cocktail-for-everyone/>
- Clarion India. (2021, May 10). Delhi riots were 'planned' 'organised' and 'targeted' against Muslims. Clarion India. Retrieved from <https://clarionindia.net/delhi-riots-were-planned-organised-and-targeted-against-muslims/>
- Dash, K. C. (2008). *Regionalism in South Asia: Negotiating cooperation, institutional structures*. London, England: Routledge.
- Ganguly, S. (2015, May 10). Modi's balancing act. *Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/india/2015-03-26/modis-balancing-act>
- Hussain, A. (2014). The politics of regional cooperation in South Asia: SAARC and regional order. In B. Chakma (Ed.), *South Asia in transition: Democracy, political economy and security* (pp.230-246). London, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jaleel, M. (2021, June 24). Kashmir meet after two years of ruin: A reckoning or a new tack. *Inverse Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.inversejournal.com/2021/06/24/kashmir-meet-after-two-years-of-ruin-a-reckoning-or-a-new-tack-by-muzamil-jaleel/>
- Kamdar, M. (2020, August 13). What happened in Delhi was a pogrom. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/02/what-happened-delhi-was-pogrom/607198/>
- Khilnani, S., et al. (2012). *Non-Alignment 2.0: A foreign and strategic policy for India in the twenty-first century*. Centre for Policy Research. Retrieved from <https://cprindia.org/briefsreports/nonalignment-2-0-a-foreign-and-strategic-policy-for-india-in-the-twenty-first-century/>
- Krishnankutty, P. (2021, May 10). Eyes were burning from the paan, says Manipuri girl called 'corona' by Delhi man who spat on her. *The Print*. Retrieved from <https://theprint.in/india/delhi-man-spits-on-manipuri-womans-face-calls-her-corona/386357/>
- Mehta, P. B. (2018, August 10). The age of cretinism. *Open the magazine*. Retrieved from <http://www.openthemagazine.com/article/essay/the-age-of-cretinism>

- Miller, M. C., & De Estrada, K. S. (2017). Introduction: India's rise at 70. *International Affairs*, 93(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iw036>
- Mishra, B. K. (2014). The nation-state problematic in Asia: The South Asian experience. *PERCEPTIONS*, XIX(1), 71-85.
- Mohammad-Arif, A. (2014). Introduction, Imaginations and Constructions of South Asia: An Enchanting Abstraction? *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.4000/samaj.3800>
- Mohammed, A. (2002). Inequality and theorizing in international relations: The case for subaltern realism. *International Studies Review*, 4(3), 27-48.
- Mukhopadhyay, N. (2022, May 10). View: India's socio-political narrative has changed to BJP's advantage. *Economic Times*. Retrieved from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/view-indias-socio-political-narrative-has-changed-to-bjps-advantage/articleshow/66757025.cms>
- Perkovich, G. (2003). Is India a major power?. *The Washington Quarterly*, 27(1), 129–144.
- Rajaram, P. K. (2004). Disruptive writing and a critique of territoriality. *Review of International Studies*, 30(2), 201-228.
- Staniland, P. (2021, May 10). India's new security order. *War on the Rocks*. Retrieved from <https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/indias-new-security-order/>
- Thapar, K. (2021, August 13). Media and top central leaders are complicit in communalising COVID-19. *The Wire*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/communalism/media-and-top-central-leaders-are-complicit-in-communalising-covid-19>
- Vombatkere, S. G. (2020, August 26). Mind your language. *The Citizen*. Retrieved from <https://www.thecitizen.in/index.php/en/NewsDetail/index/4/19266/Mind-Your-Language>

BANGLADESH'S EVOLVING BALANCING STRATEGY: FROM TWO-WAY TO THREE-WAY?

Mufassir Rashid* | Nishat Tasnim** |

Aishwarya Sanjukta Roy Proma***

Abstract. Bangladesh has followed a balancing approach in its external relations historically. Over the last five decades, the balancing behaviour has undergone qualitative change due to Bangladesh's evolving national interest and power dynamics. Bangladesh has been striking a balance between India and China for a while now. However, the situation has changed since the announcement of the Indo-Pacific Strategy, the revival of QUAD and the inking AUKUS pact. To counter the growing Chinese presence, a US stake has become visible in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific region. As a result, Bangladesh is now directly balancing the interests of three superpowers, India, China, and the USA. Existing literature cannot explain this new balancing scenario. This paper aims to explain Bangladesh's evolving balancing strategy. To do so, this paper will look at Bangladesh's foreign policy from a historical perspective and focus on the latest development in the Indo-Pacific region. To overcome the limits of existing literature, this paper will attempt to develop a new balancing framework, Three-Way Balancing. This paper will also focus on how Bangladesh can maintain its tradition of neutrality amid heated geopolitics between these three states. This paper will follow a qualitative approach and analyse secondary literature.

Keywords: Balancing, Bangladesh Foreign Policy, Soft-Balancing, Three-Way balancing, Indo-Pacific Strategy

Introduction

SINCE ITS INDEPENDENCE, BANGLADESH HAS BEEN FOLLOWING A balancing strategy in its foreign policy regarding regional powerhouses and great powers. The country's foreign policy has been centred on maintaining neutrality. As a result, Bangladesh follows "Friendship with All and Malice towards None"

* MD Mufassir Rashid is a Research Associate at The KRF Center for Bangladesh and Global Affairs (CBGA). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3757-2806> email: mufassir.emil199@gmail.com

** Nishat Tasnim has completed her MSS in International Relations with Specialization in Security Studies, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3573-8032> ; email: tasnimnishat15@gmail.com

*** Aishwarya Sanjukta Roy Proma is a Research Associate at the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0492-1400>; email: ash77662@gmail.com

as the guiding principle in foreign policy. Over the decades, Bangladesh's balancing policy has evolved with national interest and power. However, Bangladesh never pursued hard balancing; instead, it relied on soft balancing owing to its small power status. In the last decade, many scholars also tried to understand the country's foreign policy from strategic hedging- a modern form admixing co-operation and confrontation at the same time. (Ciorciari and Haacke 2019: 1) However, it seems the core understanding is still related to Bangladesh's balancing strategy, as it has to strike a balance between its regional powerhouses and great powers at the end of the day.

Historically, Bangladesh used to balance India immediately after its independence. Amid the cold war, the country also had to maintain the balance between the rival blocs, but the geopolitics was less heated in South Asia than in many other regions. However, China quickly came into the scenario as it had a strategic rivalry with India. However, Chinese stake increased drastically not only in the region but also worldwide with the 'so-called' rise of China in the 2000s. The announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and rampant globalisation of Chinese Development Finance also intensified its hegemonic rivalry with the United States of America (USA). Since China's rise, it also became an important development partner for Bangladesh. The foreign policy also had to take China as an important factor alongside India. Hence, Bangladesh used to maintain a Two-Way Balance between these two nations.

China's intensified rivalry with the USA and its allies also quickly transformed the Indo-Pacific region's geopolitics. The region quickly emerged as a hotbed for great power rivalries. The announcement of the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), the revival of QUAD, and the AUKUS pact further heated geopolitics. Bangladesh could not avoid such rivalries as an Indo-Pacific nation, and its importance is growing amid rival blocs. However, the country is trying to maintain neutrality by striking a balance between the blocs.

Again, as the US has renewed its attention in this region to contain China, the country's stake has also increased, and the US is involved directly in this region, unlike the previous two or three decades. As a result, a new reality has emerged for Bangladesh where it has to maintain balance among the interests of three superpowers, the USA, China, and India. Therefore, the country's balancing framework is also subject to transform into a Three-Way from the previous Two-Way.

Against this backdrop, the aim of this paper is to provide a three-way balancing framework to explain Bangladesh's evolving balancing strategy. The literature on three-way balance is still limited and only semi-scholarly in nature, where this paper is likely to go into details. To do so, this paper will try Bangladesh's evolving balancing policy from a historical perspective; define the current

reality and dilemma for Bangladesh at present. After that, the paper will try to explain the three-way balance and attempt to prescribe a framework through which the country may be able to navigate amid such murky geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific between the superpowers yet maintaining neutrality.

Methodology and Research Questions

This qualitative research is based on secondary data such as books, journal articles, websites, blogs, and newspaper articles. The content analysis method is based on relevant textual literature to theorise the research framework and to link the framework and the findings.

The objective of the research is to explain how Bangladesh's balancing scenario is evolving and address the limit of the existing literature that mostly explains the Two-Way balance between China and India. Another objective of this paper is to provide a framework for Bangladesh in the current scenario.

In order to do so, this research will ask two questions:

- ✍ How has Bangladesh's balancing framework evolved from two-way to three-way?
- ✍ Does the existing balancing literature compatible with explaining Bangladesh's foreign policy behaviour?

To find the answers to these questions, it will start by identifying the existing gap in the literature.

Literature Review and Identifying Knowledge Gap

The study of foreign policy behaviour has always been at the centre of scholarly attention in the realm of International Relations. In order to understand how states operate in an anarchical world order, numerous literary works have been conducted on foreign policy theories, specifically on a balance of power theory.

The concept of 'balance of power' first appeared in the writing of Thucydides in 'History of the Peloponnesian War', where he stated how city-states were balancing against the growing power and aggression of Athens. (Thucydides 1972) Later on, Thomas Hobbes implicitly referred to balancing, saying 'the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination or by confederacy with others that are in the same danger with himself'. (Hobbes 1972; Brown et al. 2002) In 'Politics Among Nations', Morgenthau depicted balance of power as 'an actual state of affairs in which power is distributed among several nations with approximate equality'. (Morgenthau 1948: 134)

However, a broader understanding of this concept was developed by Kenneth Waltz in his book 'Theory of International Politics' (). Unlike Morgenthau, Waltz (1978: 105) argued that the behaviour of states is determined not by human nature but by the anarchic world order. Therefore, states increase power by expanding military capacity or through alliance building to ensure their survival in a competitive international system.

While Waltz's study focused on more defensive realism, Mearsheimer provided the concept of offensive realism in his book 'The Tragedy of Great Power Politics'. According to Mearsheimer (2001: 269), states maximise their relative power to strengthen their security to preserve their existence in a multipolar world. They employ buck-passing or balancing strategies depending on the situation. Nevertheless, scholars, including Robert Pape and T.V. Paul (2005), observed that balancing strategies were undergoing major transformations with the changes in power distribution in the post-Cold War period. T.V Paul, in his writing 'Soft Balancing in the Age of US Primacy' (2005: 46-71), argued that while countries used to increase their military might to counterbalance dominant states, in the post-Cold War era, major powers such as China, Russia, France, as well as Germany, India, employed soft balancing by using non-military means instead of hard balancing strategies.

Besides the theoretical development of the balance of power, many scholars focused on country-specific balancing strategies. T.V Paul termed China's rise 'peaceful rise strategy' or 'peaceful development strategy', which "aimed at accelerating its economic might through intensified trade of manufacturing goods, while deliberately keeping a low profile in the security arena". (Paul 2018: 3) Another study claimed it was China's "pursuit of economic pre-balancing to weaken the US hegemony" (Nazir 2021). In the case of India, Rajagopalan his article "Evasive balancing: India's unviable Indo-Pacific Strategies" (2020: 1) termed India's strategy as 'Evasive Balancing' which involves contradictory elements of "balancing China by building partnerships with the United States as well as with regional powers, while simultaneously pursuing a reassurance strategy to convince Beijing that India is not really balancing China."

While most of the prior research works on the balance of power theories focus mostly on balancing against one aggressor state or hegemon, very few articles focus on the states which require to ensure a balance between two or more powers at a time. Though Rajagopalan portrayed India's balancing strategies against the USA and China, the scenario is totally different from the countries like Bangladesh. Since Bangladesh shares strong bonds with both China and India, a vast array of studies has been conducted on Bangladesh two-way balancing strategies against these two regional rivals. Delwar Hossain and Shariful Islam's research (2021: 1) identifies the dilemmas of Bangladesh and Bangladesh's shifting strategy "towards a more cooperative framework for adjusting to

the emerging geopolitical environment.” Aminul Karim’s writing (2022), on the other hand, addresses the growing interest of the US in the Indo-Pacific and the implications of QUAD formations on South Asia and Bangladesh. Lailufar Yesmin also positioned Bangladesh in the growing power politics in the Indo-Pacific and its challenges.

Nonetheless, there is a clear gap in the existing literature on identifying Bangladesh’s shifting from its traditional two-way balancing to a three-way balancing strategy with the renewed engagement of the USA in South Asia. The existing literature perfectly explains the Two-Way balance between India and China but cannot explain the new reality where the US stake is increasing. Some semi-scholarly articles and opinion editorials addressed this issue, but these lack detailed and constructive analysis. Therefore, this study aims to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding Bangladesh’s foreign policy behaviour in the changing geopolitical landscape. Furthermore, it also aims to contribute to the theoretical development of the balance of power by analysing three-way balancing strategies in the context of Bangladesh.

For that, the next section of this paper will describe its theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework

Balance of Power

The balance of power is one of the most prominent theoretical ideas in the field of International Relations. Though Hans Morgenthau claimed the concept is “as old as political history itself” in his book ‘Politics Among Nations’, the balance of power as a core tenet of the realist school of thought evolved more systemically during the Renaissance age ([Morgenthau 1973: 186](#); [Tziampiris 2015: 22](#); [Haslam 2002: 91](#)).

In defining the term ‘balance of power,’ Paul denotes that while ‘balancing’ is a strategy or a state’s foreign policy behaviour, the balance of power is the “outcomes at the systemic or sub-systemic levels’ which implies maintaining power equilibrium among the states. ([Paul et al. 2004: 2](#)) As Kenneth Waltz, father of the neorealist school of thought, wrote in his book ‘Theory of International Politics,’ states operate in an anarchical international system where there is no sovereign central authority to regulate the behaviour of individual states. Therefore, they rely on a self-help system to ensure survival ([Waltz 1979: 105](#)). He also argued, “those who do not help themselves.....will lay themselves open to dangers, will suffer. Fear of such unwanted consequences stimulates states to behave in ways that tend toward the creation of balances of power” ([Waltz 1979: 118](#)).

The ultimate aim of balancing is to prevent a rising power from becoming too powerful to dominate all other countries. (Paul et al. 2004: 2) States can balance each other by using external or internal means. They can internally balance other states by increasing their military capability or externally balance through alliance building. Countries tend to join weaker coalitions to counter the stronger power as they perceive the rising power as their security threat. (Waltz 1979: 168; Schweller 2016: 4) States usually follow one of the four strategies for ensuring self-preservation. These are bandwagoning, buck-passing, hedging, and balancing.

Bandwagoning

While balancing involves countering the stronger counterpart, bandwagoning refers to the state's policy of aligning with the "source of danger". (Walt 1987: 17). This tendency is usually common among the weaker states, which neither have the capability to influence the existing distribution of power nor could make a significant difference in the international system through individual efforts. (Ian, 2003, p. 6) According to Annette Baker Fox (1969), the smaller states try to remain nonaligned amid the Great Power war; however, they "eventually tilt their allegiance to the winning side". (Fox 1969 cited by Labs 1992: 385)

Buck-Passing

According to Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder (1990: 138), states adopt a buck-passing strategy when they want to avoid war by "counting on third parties to bear the costs of stopping a rising hegemon". It often takes place in multipolar systems where a common aggressor and a state threaten multiple states can pass the buck to another state to manage the situation so that "they can remain unscathed while the buck-catcher defends the balance of power" (Mearsheimer 2001: 270).

Hedging

Strategic hedging, one of the most influential strategies, originated from the literature of international relations in the Asia-Pacific in the twenty-first century. Unlike bandwagoning and buck-passing, hedging is a mixed strategy involving cooperation and confrontation. (Ciorciari and Haacke 2019: 1) While some scholars argue that there is little difference between balancing and hedging as balancing can "constitute the military component of a broader hedging strategy

that also features economical and diplomatic engagement”, others argue they are unique. (Ciorciari and Haacke 2019: 3)

Balancing

Balancing refers to a situation where the state actively participates in maximising its power against the potential aggressor to ensure its survival as well as advance its security. (Waltz 1979: 126; Walt 1987: 21-22, and Mearsheimer 2001; 139, 156-157) Balancing can take two forms: hard balancing and soft balancing. Hard balancing is a strategy where states counteract the threatening conditions by advancing their military capability, whereas soft balancing involves non-military means such as international institutions, diplomatic coalitions, and economic policies which can delay, frustrate, and complicate the hegemonic policy of a dominant state without challenging its preponderance of power” (Feng and He 2017)

Though hard balancing was dominant in the cold war period, the liberal world order facilitated by economic globalisation, the rise of international institutions as well as the challenge in the translation of economic power into military power has made it costly for the states to engage in hard balancing and countries began to employ soft balancing against the global powers (Paul et al. 2004: 4).

With the changes in the international system from a unipolar world order to a multipolar one, along with economic globalisation and growing interdependency among states, countries are also adopting balancing strategies focusing on their specific interests. For instance, by undertaking several trades and investment policies, China has emerged as a global economic superpower without posing a direct military threat to the United States. By adopting this economic pre-balancing strategy, China balances the existing superpower in international politics (Brawley 2004; Li and Ye 2019: 73). India is also adopted evasive balancing as its Indo-Pacific strategy, where it is maintaining a strong relationship with the USA and Japan to counter the rise of China as a regional and global power as well as cooperating with China on several issues, leaving the actual motive of India unclear (Rajagopalan 2020: 1).

Based on this theoretical framework, this paper will scrutinise how the balancing framework evolved in the context of Bangladesh and analyse whether the existing balancing literature is compatible with explaining Bangladesh’s foreign policy behaviour.

Bangladesh's Balancing Policy: A Historical Overview

Since its journey of fifty years as a nation, Bangladesh has achieved several milestones with its foreign policy ([Chowdhury 2011](#)). Immediately after its independence, Bangladesh based its foreign policy on two ideas, Strengthening security and sovereignty and the quest for resources for development. Both aspirations require external cooperation with other states.

Amid the heated Cold War and its belief in global solidarity, Bangladesh emphasised friendship with all states and the peaceful coexistence of all states, according to the UN charter. As a newly emerged nation, these not only strengthened Bangladesh's sovereignty but also pinned the national security ideas for Bangladesh. As a war-torn country, Bangladesh wanted to gain recognition as a state and build partnerships to fight acute hunger and poverty. Bangladesh opted for a non-alignment approach to ensure an independent foreign policy during the peak of the Cold War. The idea of non-alignment and neutrality policy also invoked a balancing strategy in Bangladesh's foreign policy.

In the 1980s, Bangladesh prioritised economic development, which was essential for addressing the socio-economic challenges. During this period, Bangladesh focused on aid, trade, and infrastructural cooperation with neighbouring states from Western countries ([Hussain 2005](#)). The West and U.S. alone became the largest trading partner of Bangladesh, where Bangladesh generated revenue from export commodities. Bangladesh emphasised regional relations for national development to bolster economic ties with South Asian neighbours. In the later phase of the 90s, Bangladesh shifted strategically towards band-wagoning and alliance building ([Bhardwaj 2003](#)). Between the late 1970s and early 1980, Bangladesh also quested for resource-building with foreign aid. As a result, Bangladesh created a strong bond with China, the USA, and the Muslim world. The new ties resulted in huge aid from the Middle East to Bangladesh. Bangladesh opted for development through aid and focused on raising aid from such countries. However, relations with neighbouring India transformed as gradually it was perceived as a contributing factor to Bangladesh's security. Ultimately, a balance became visible as China entered the picture.

At the end of the 1990s, Bangladesh shifted and tried to deepen relations with major Global powers. In the early 2000s, Bangladesh signed a defence agreement with China and initiated Bangladesh-USA military ties to strengthen national security.

In 2010, Bangladesh increased its focus on economic and infrastructural development. At the same time, China's rise took place and emerged as one of the important powers in international politics. Chinese stake also increased

massively in South Asia's regional politics. So, Bangladesh had to take a balancing approach between India and China, ensuring its development. Bangladesh liberalised trade regimes for foreign investors with significant incentives. Bangladesh's ties with other states and actors also increased.

Due to an increased focus on economic development, the country emerged as a fast-growing economy attracting massive foreign investment. Bangladesh's GDP grew to US\$302 billion in 2019 (Huzen 2019). Bangladesh was the second largest recipient of FDI in South Asia (Minar 2018).

As South Asian Politics revolves around Sino-Indian rivalry in a broad sense, Bangladesh often relied on strategic hedging for its interest. Many scholars tend to see Bangladesh's deepening engagement with China in the decade of the 2010s as strategic hedging.

However, the situation again changed after the US renewed its focus on South Asia, especially under the Biden administration. The revival of Quad, the Indo-Pacific strategy, and the AUKUS pact made it visible to the white eye that the West and its regional allies are directly trying to contain China. As a result, the geopolitics in the region has become heated, unlike ever. The US foreign policy prioritising Democracy, Human Rights, and security agreements now poses new challenges for Bangladesh. The US is pursuing Bangladesh to sign two security agreements: the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA). These two agreements have conflicting interests with Chinese interests in the region. Bangladesh has been stalling the negotiations for a while now.

Bangladesh's Balancing Strategy and Sino-Indian Quest for Regional Hegemony

Bangladesh has been pursuing a balancing attempt to secure its interests. It avoids directly opposing any one actor since it might be difficult to engage one power without jeopardising the interests of the other. As mentioned, it also occasionally follows strategic hedging to maximise its national interest. Such a diversification strategy of Bangladesh ensures involvement with big and small states in the international system. Instead of battling the political repercussions of switching from one foreign corporation to another, Bangladesh has focused on addressing all main powers simultaneously (Bhatia 2019). As a result, there is a new tendency among scholars to understand Bangladesh's foreign policy behaviour as strategic hedging.

Bangladesh needs to maintain balance as security and economic aspiration remain the main goals. Bangladesh has had reliable commercial

relationships with India, China, and the USA for decades. India surrounds Bangladesh on three sides. Bangladesh would thus have to consider India in its foreign policy considerations. Bangladesh's nearest neighbour is India, and Bangladesh depends on India for bilateral cooperation, commerce, and security.

Nevertheless, to satisfy Bangladesh's development thirst, Bangladesh has to keep sound political and economic ties with China. The hedging technique in this situation is essential to working with both nations (Hossain and Islam 2022). Bangladesh can thus not choose a side in the trade dispute or any other ideological dispute between the US and China or India and China. So, Bangladesh adheres to a soft balancing plan by refraining from any alignment.

Chinese Belt and Road Initiative: Address Bangladesh's development imperative

The 21st century is transforming China-Bangladesh ties, with a greater range of mutual collaboration and benefits. In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping unveiled the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and the Silk Road Economic Belt. China aimed to increase its participation in global trade through the BRI, especially by facilitating infrastructural developments in Global South. BRI promised development assistance to the country to promote interconnectivity and economic growth along its corridors for Bangladesh in terms of commerce, investments, and connectivity. The execution of numerous government-to-government initiatives was addressed during the Chinese president's visit to Bangladesh in October 2016 (Hossain 2018). China then pledged to spend roughly \$40 billion in Bangladesh. Since then, China has contributed \$13.6 billion in joint - ventures and \$24.45 billion in bilateral aid to Bangladesh for infrastructural projects. Eight infrastructure development initiatives between Bangladesh and China, totalling more than \$9.45 billion in funding, were signed in 2016. These included the \$3.3 billion Padma Bridge rail service, the \$1.9 billion Payra power generation plant, the \$1 billion digital networking project, and the \$1.32 billion power grid infrastructure enhancement project (Lim and Mukherjee 2019). A 783-acre Chinese Economic and Industrial Zone (CEIZ) was also being built in the Chittagong district's Anwara Upazila. China allowed 97% of Bangladeshi goods duty-free access to its marketplace in 2020 (Al Mabru 2020). By building ports and an overland economic corridor linking China's landlocked regions, China hoped to get access to the Bay of Bengal. By aligning Bangladesh's national interest with Chinese aspirations, Bangladesh is ensuring its infrastructural development over the last decade.

Chinese net FDI input was \$396.99 million in 2019, accounting for 38.34% of all net FDI inflow to Bangladesh for infrastructure development. With a share of 18.94%, China was Bangladesh's biggest trading partner in 2018 (Aditya 2021). That

was more trading than was done with the US and Germany and almost twice as much trade with India. Bangladesh also increased its competitiveness through the BRI and the expansion of its infrastructure. Bangladesh also purchases most military weapons from China. Bangladesh requests \$1 billion from China to regulate the Teesta River's water resources more effectively (Shahid 2021). The Teesta flows from India into Bangladesh, and it has long been a divisive topic to share its water. The important thing to note is that Bangladesh, even in its ties with China, does not minimise the importance of India's relationship and is not so ignorant as to underestimate China.

India's Act East Policy: Bangladesh and India's Interdependency

Bangladesh's geographic position with India compels both nations to retain strategic relations in all-encompassing domains. India perceives Bangladesh as an important neighbour and valued friend in South Asia and the larger Indo-Pacific region. India is interested in Bangladesh for strategic reasons. India also wants access to new markets and to continue receiving remittances from its fifth-largest source, Bangladesh (Chand 2019). To promote the flow of products and services from West Bengal to impoverished Northeast India as well as to link to the Bay of Bengal, India strives to establish better east-west connections. This connection to Bangladesh benefits India economically greatly during times of peace. India and Bangladesh opened the 'Maitri Setu' in March 2021 in order to improve the infrastructural connection between the two countries (Anwar 2022a). Bangladesh is also in India's plans for the "Look East Policy" (Kumar Das 2010). For India's Look East strategy, the South Asia Growth Quadrangle (SAGQ), which includes Bangladesh, Northeastern India, Bhutan, and Nepal, is receiving extended focus. The two countries benefit from close collaboration between Bangladesh and India, including several active projects like transporting goods of Indian commodities via Bangladesh's Ashuganj port to Northeast India (Korolev 2016).

Given its size and location, Bangladesh may be Northeast India's most significant financial neighbour. There is a potential market for processed goods from Bangladesh in Northeast India. Nationwide, India invests heavily in Bangladesh and has allocated land to create exclusive "Indian economic zones" there (Yasmin 2018). India's anticipated power corridor for transferring hydropower from Arunachal Pradesh to the rest of India would extend via Bangladesh.

Regarding regional organisations, India has joined the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

Bangladesh is one of India's main entry points to East Asia, making it a crucial component of the BIMSTEC structure (Yasmin 2019).

Apart from economic dependency, both countries share cultural, political, and security ties. Moreover, India is also the powerhouse in regional politics and has its own aspiration in regional politics. Therefore, there is both dependence and a balancing posture between the counties.

The Growing Geostrategic Significance of Bangladesh

The global and regional power competition allows Bangladesh to maximise its objectives due to its growing geostrategic significance. That is made feasible by its longstanding neutrality in international affairs. Effectively fostering amicable ties with the big powers has prepared Bangladesh to strike that balance. Similarly, neutrality opens the door for Bangladesh to participate in major initiatives by Global powers and has become the cornerstone of Bangladesh's balancing approach (Siow 2022). Bangladesh's neutrality policy allows it to strike a soft balance in its relationship with China and India. Bangladesh has recognised that India and China would invest to their advantage. China may outperform India economically in Bangladesh, but India and Bangladesh have far stronger and tighter ties than Bangladesh.

Instead of relying on debt finance, Bangladesh's objective is to attract private investments, particularly from China. India's growing interest in the Indo-Pacific region and Africa, as well as China's intrusion into India's historic sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean, are all factors in the contest (Anwar 2022a). Also, the USA needs Bangladesh for its own interests involving issues of the Quad and Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS). So, Bangladesh's geostrategic position is becoming important in both regional and global politics.

Amid heated geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific region, superpowers presently have contradicting interests. In this context, Bangladesh may seek out a "three-way-balancing" strategy involving China, India, and the USA. Bangladesh intends to utilise such relations as leverage to negotiate better terms with the great powers. Bangladesh's balancing position in an interconnected and globalised society ensures equitable growth for the country that goes beyond material and infrastructural concerns (Anwar 2022b). Bangladesh has a cooperation framework with the USA to address shared issues, including climate change and sustainability, women's rights, violent extremism, and refugee and migration problems. While Bangladesh focuses on the East, it collaborates with the West and its allies, including Japan, Australia, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the European Union, on crucial international problems and concerns.

As a growing economic power in the neighbourhood, Bangladesh mobilises its economy, investment, geostrategic location, and connectivity projects as a soft balancing strategy tool. These instruments allow Bangladesh to maximise the odds between the superpowers.

The Great Power Politics in Indo-Pacific and the Challenges for Bangladesh

The Indo-Pacific has emerged as a theatre of Great Power rivalry in the twenty-first century. With China's increasing capability and assertiveness in the region under its flagship BRI and the U.S.-led Indo-Pacific Strategy with its allies to counterbalance China, the focus of the great power politics has shifted from Atlantic to Indo-Pacific, consolidating in the South Asian region ([Purushothsman 2016: 1](#); [Deb and Wilson 2021](#); [Anwar 2019](#)).

The Indo-Pacific Strategy

Since the Indo-Pacific region is made up of more than half of the population, around two-thirds of the global economy, as well as seven of the largest military powers in the world, the regional and extra-regional powers, including the USA, India, Japan, Australia, perceive China's growing dominance in the region as a threat to their national interest. As stated in the US National Security Strategy 2017, through BRI, China aims to "displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, expand the reaches of its state-driven economic model, and reorder the region in its favor" ([The White House 2017](#)). Thereby, the United States and its allies adopted the US Indo-Pacific strategy in 2017 under President Donald for a free and open Indo-Pacific ([The White House 2017](#)). In 2023, the Biden Administration published its Indo-Pacific Strategy formally, which succeeded the strategy of 2017.

After 2017, several concerned actors, such as the EU, France, and Canada, announced their Indo-Pacific Strategy for the next six years. In 2023, Japan also announced its vision regarding the Indo-Pacific region.

Under the Indo-Pacific strategy in 2017, the United States, along with India, Japan, and Australia, revived the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), which was first initiated as a High Availability Disaster Recovery cooperation in response to the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. In November 2017, the countries agreed to bring this cooperative framework back as a centrepiece of the Indo-Pacific strategy for keeping the critical sea routes free and open for all ([the White House 2018](#); [CRS 2022: 1](#); [Singh 2021](#); [Kliem 2020: 16](#)) Though the US administration push forward the commitment of QUAD is to ensure rule-based

international order where countries are free from any types of political, military and economic dominance, according to congressional research service, “China’s growing influence and military assertiveness appear to undergird the initiative’s motives.” (CRS 2022 1)

For the past two decades, the US has focused on elsewhere in the earth, especially in the Middle- East, due to its strategic interest. It had the least attention to South Asia during the whole time. However, since the announcement of the Indo-Pacific Strategy, the South Asia and Indo-Pacific region is finding them within the US attention.

As a result, a growing US interest is visible in the region. Under the Biden administration, the US engages with South Asia through its security agreements and Democracy and Human Rights policy. The US and its allies have already announced counter-initiatives, such as Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), to contain China’s growing presence. As a result of such renewed US interest in the region, Bangladesh’s foreign policy is also taking the US interest in its calculation.

The Growing Significance of South Asia and QUAD-China Stalemate

With the changing geopolitical calculations and rise of power competition in the Indo-Pacific, South Asia has become significantly important for all parties due to its geopolitical and geostrategic locations. While the traditional discourse of South Asian politics revolved around Sino-Indian and India-Pakistan rivalry, South Asia emerged as a crucial region for China, India, and the United States. Where India perceives South Asia as its sphere of dominance, for the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, “South Asia is where the land and maritime Silk Roads meet” (Anwar 2019: 6). As South Asian port cities act as gateways to the Middle East, Africa and the sea routes across the Indian Ocean and the Strait of Malacca that connect the Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean are significant for China as almost 80% of its energy comes through this corridor, China is extensively investing in roads and ports built in the countries including Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar to connect the maritime hubs with mainland China (Anwar 2019: 6). To counter China’s strong presence, QUAD tries to contain China’s rise by strengthening bilateral and multilateral partnerships with regional countries. However, the intensity of this competition and South Asian countries’ complex interdependence on the major powers have put South Asia in a QUAD-China stalemate (Rashid 2022).

Questioning the Unitary Idea of QUAD

While many scholars consider QUAD a unitary force as countries are tying together with the common interest of restraining China's influence, it is often unnoticed that countries joined the alliance to pursue their own national interests. Through QUAD, India is opting to maintain its security and establish itself as a regional powerhouse. The USA is attempting to maintain its power position in Indo-Pacific and Southeast Asia. Japan, in contrast, due to its history of conflict with China, does not prefer a regional order dominated by China, whereas Australia sees QUAD as an opportunity to enhance its bilateral, regional, and multi-lateral networks ([Rashid 2022](#); [CRS 2022: 2](#)).

As a result, QUAD is not a unitary idea; the members have diverse interest interests. Furthermore, in the globalised era, where countries depend on each other on various means, including military, economy, and technologies, it is tough for South Asian countries like Bangladesh to pick a preferred side in this power competition.

The Dilemma for Bangladesh

The great power politics in the Indo-Pacific has put Bangladesh in a dilemma. Due to its geostrategic locations as a bordering country of India on three sides, access to the Bay of Bengal, and its border with Rakhine state, which can provide a gateway for China to access the Bay of Bengal directly, every stakeholder of Indo-Pacific expects Bangladesh to be on their sides. However, because of the complex interdependence on each key player, including India, China, and the United States, Bangladesh fell into a dilemma to take a clear stance.

From a geopolitical perspective, India is not only a close ally who contributed to the independence of Bangladesh but also an important strategic partner due to its geographical proximity, strong socio-cultural linkages as well as one of the most significant development partners in the region ([Chowdhury 2022](#)). On the one hand, India put Bangladesh on the top of its 'neighborhood first policy'. It invested extensively in the infrastructural projects in Bangladesh to build an east-west route for facilitating the movement of goods and fostering trade between the two countries to gain control over its northeastern provinces as well as curb China's influence over Bangladesh ([Anwar 2022b](#)). On the other hand, the rival of India, China, is the top trading partner, largest foreign direct investor, trade importer, and arms supplier of Bangladesh ([Haroon 2022](#); [Anwar 2022b](#)). Bangladesh highly relies on China for its infrastructural development and economic growth. China has invested \$38.05 billion in Bangladesh under its Belt and Road Initiative as a strategic partner. It is nearly 10% of Bangladesh's GDP, as well as the largest amount of investment in Bangladesh by a single country ([Mrida 2016](#)). In 2020, China also allowed duty-free access to 97% of Bangladeshi

products in the Chinese market ([Dhaka Tribune 2020](#); [Anwar 2022b](#)). Though Bangladesh has maintained a balanced approach between these two powers by diversifying its areas of cooperation, the changing attitude of the United States towards Bangladesh from a 'bottomless basket' to an essential strategic partner in South Asia has made the choices more challenging for Bangladesh.

As a result of dilemma, dependence, and diverse interests, Bangladesh's balancing policy is also evolving in the empirical field. The next section of this paper will discuss this evolution in detail.

Bangladesh's Evolving Balancing Strategy: From Two-Way to Three-Way

While Bangladesh maintained a balanced approach between China and India by strengthening geopolitical and cultural ties with India and economic relations with China, the United States growing engagements with the South Asian countries to curtail China's assertiveness and establish a strong presence in the region has pushed Bangladesh from a two-way to three-way balancing ([Rashid 2022](#)).

A Three-Way Balancing among China, India, and the US.

Traditionally, the United States looked at South Asia through the lens of India. However, after 2018, the growing Chinese influence and Sino-Indian power competition provoked the United States to take a proactive approach towards South Asia, specifically towards Bangladesh. Due to Bangladesh's strategic locations and relations with India and China, the Biden Administration renewed its interest in deepening Bangladesh-US relations through security cooperation. In 2019, the US Secretary of Defence Mark Esper proposed a military modernisation plan for 2030 for Bangladesh's counterpart ([Hassan 2020](#)). In March 2022, Bangladesh and the USA approved a draft of GSOMIA ([Rahman 2022](#)). However, approving the draft does not mean that two countries are signing the agreement; rather, it is a diplomatic effort to create a space amid the rivalry.

However, these changes in realities put Bangladesh in hot water in terms of balancing power. Though Bangladesh used to follow hedging, a mixed strategy, as its foreign policy towards India and China, in the current Sino-Indian and Sino-QUAD stalemate, strategic hedging seems unviable for Bangladesh as it creates mistrust and confusion among the countries. For example, in October 2020, the Deputy Secretary of State Stephen E. Biegun, in his meeting with his Bangladesh counterpart, stated that "The United States sees Bangladesh as a key partner in the Indo-Pacific region, and we're committed to growing our partnership in this regard to advance a free and open Indo-Pacific. Bangladesh will be a centerpiece of our work in the

region". ([The US Embassy in Bangladesh 2020](#); [Siddiquee 2022: 14](#)) Many scholars consider this remark as an invitation to join QUAD. ([Siddiquee 2022: 14](#); [Bhattacharjee 2021](#)) After that, in May 2021, Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming warned Bangladesh not to join any anti-Beijing club by saying, "obviously, it will not be a good idea for Bangladesh to participate in this small club of four because it will substantially damage our bilateral relationship" ([Siddiquee 2022: 14](#); [Bhattacharjee 2021](#)). Apart from the QUAD, the US is overtly pursuing Bangladesh to join in its Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS). During Several visits by US diplomats and the annual Partnership Dialogue and Security Dialogue, the US invited Bangladesh to join its IPS ([Prothom Alo 2023](#)). Any ambiguous strategy might deteriorate the existing relations by making both rivals feel insecure about Bangladesh's strategic position ([Rashid 2022](#)).

Furthermore, many analysts argue that the US sanction on RAB and human rights violation allegations in Bangladesh has a geopolitical dimension. Since the US considers Bangladesh a 'Pro-Chinese' state, its imposition of sanctions upon the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), an elite force of Bangladesh, might be a coercive measure to bring Bangladesh out of China's influence ([Rashid 2022](#)). In this circumstance, Bangladesh has no alternative but to strike a three-way balance between China, India, and the United States.

Balancing Options for Bangladesh

Given the circumstances, this paper proposes that Bangladesh should prioritise formulating its strategy to balance three nuclear powers: China, India, and the USA, based on its beliefs, values, and guiding principles. As Ahmed ([2022](#)) noted, the foreign policy principle of Bangladesh, "friendship towards all, malice towards none," is especially true for a developing country like Bangladesh, whose primary goal is economic betterment rather than geopolitics". Therefore, to maintain warm relations with the major powers while fulfilling their national interests, Bangladesh should employ a soft balancing approach emphasising economic development and connectivity, defence cooperation, and multilateralism.

Trade, Investment, and Connectivity

Since economic development is one of the core national interests of Bangladesh and the key players of the great power politics are also pursuing their geopolitical motives using economic incentives, Bangladesh should harness the economic advantage by maintaining neutrality or non-alignment as its guiding principle. China provides Bangladesh with extensive investments in infrastructural projects and fostering connectivity, whereas India's contribution is relatively less than China, the USA, and Japan. Therefore, Bangladesh must

strengthen its economic ties with China and Japan while maintaining geopolitical, cultural, and defence cooperation with India and the USA.

Diversifying Defence Cooperation

Bangladesh should also emphasise increasing its military capability by strengthening security cooperation with diverse countries. However, Bangladesh should take cautious steps in securing national objectives without tilting towards any bloc or particular country. Apart from Superpowers, increasing ties with various middle powers may also allow the country to pursue its national interest.

Regional Organisations

While maintaining balance with the powers, Bangladesh must utilise the existing regional organisations to “keep continuing its bargaining positions and cards intact” (Siddique 2022: 24). Bangladesh is already a member of many international multilateral platforms, including the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and ASEAN Regional Forum. Bangladesh is also a founding member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and an active member of regional organisations, including the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIM-STEAC), the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). The country also has membership in Developing 8 (D8) and is observing Colombo Security Conclave (CSC). Through these multilateral forums, Bangladesh should avoid being highly dependent on a particular power and strengthen its capability by cooperating with diverse actors.

Formulating Indo-Pacific Outlook

On 24th July 2023, Bangladesh announced its Indo-Pacific Outlook (IPO). The 15-point outlook reflects Bangladesh's stance on Indo-Pacific affairs. In the outlook, Bangladesh reaffirmed its intention to strike a balance among the great powers while abiding by existing liberal values and multilateralism. However, the announcement is a public diplomacy to clarify its position, and its success depends upon Bangladesh's diplomacy, capability, and navigating foreign relations that may help the country to navigate accordingly and maximise its national interest. An IPO of its own would also serve as a guide for the country and would also benefit in negotiations.

Conclusion

As existing scholarly literature is insufficient to explain latest developments yet with the growing US stake, there is a limit to understand Bangladesh's current balancing scenario. Even though semi-scholarly literature has discussed this issue, they lack detailed analysis due to their short forms. Against this backdrop, this paper tried to explain Bangladesh's balancing strategy and its evolution until the present context. This paper examined the great power stakes in regional and global politics and their impact on Bangladesh's foreign policy. Strategic hedging in this regard may send the wrong signal to other great powers. Therefore, Bangladesh requires a balancing strategy.

In this context, this paper advocates for a Three-Way Balancing framework from a soft balancing approach. Bangladesh may follow strategic hedging from time to time, but it will be short-term considering the heat of great power politics and their stake. Bangladesh has many instruments to strike a three-way balance, including its Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), robust economy, connectivity schemes and infrastructural development projects. Moreover, the country's geostrategic position as an Indian Ocean state could also be a blessing in this regard.

However, it will be tough for the country to address the growing US stake shortly, considering the US interest in inking security pacts, namely GSOMIA and ACSA, as they directly contradict China's interest in this region. Moreover, the US policy of Human Rights and Democracy will also be tougher for Bangladesh to maintain as the country is still struggling with Human Development and is dependent on a bottom-heavy economy.

Perhaps, Bangladesh's balancing scenario is one of the most difficult, considering the stake, power involved and diverse interests. On the one hand, the US and India have a mutual interest in containing China, yet India is interested in emerging as the region's sole powerhouse. On the other hand, China is one of Bangladesh's most crucial development partners. Striking a balance between these powers and maintaining their interest will be a tough job for Bangladesh.

Again, as the country follows a neutrality policy, such a scenario may also bring new opportunities for the country considering its instruments such as FDI, development projects, and firm belief in multilateralism.

In the coming days, the geopolitics will be even tougher. There is also a possibility that a Russian stake in this region may also increase, considering Russia's recent approach to the region and its re-emergence as a direct challenge to the US in international politics. If Russia continues to increase its stake in the

Indo-Pacific region, the balancing strategy may again evolve according to national power, interest and the number of actors involved. However, this is still too early to elaborate further.

References

- 97% Bangladeshi products to get duty-free access to China (2020) Dhaka Tribune. Available from: <https://archive.dhakatribune.com/business/2020/06/19/5-161-more-bangladeshi-products-to-enjoy-zero-tariff-to-chinese-markets-from-july-1>
- Aditya S (2021) Bangladesh's Dilemma between Big Brothers India and China. *South Florida Journal of Development* 2(3): 4468–4479.
- Ahmed I (2022) Bangladesh must keep maintaining its balancing act. *The Business Standard*, 17th March. Available from: <https://www.tbsnews.net/analysis/bangladesh-must-keep-maintaining-its-balancing-act-386910>
- Al Mabur S (2020) Bangladesh's Strategic Hedging towards India and China: Challenges and Options. Researchgate, thesis. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352778372_Bangladesh's_Strategic_Hedging_towards_India_and_China_Challenges_and_Options
- Anwar A (2019) China's Growing Engagement in South Asia: Challenges for the US. *Pacific Forum*, thesis. Available from: https://pacforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/issuesinsights_Vol19WP6.pdf.
- Anwar A (2022a) Bangladesh's Balancing Act Amid China-India Rivalry for Regional Influence. Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, web log, National University Singapore. Available from: <https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/cag/publications/center-publications/publication-article/detail/bangladesh-s-balancing-act-amid-china-india-rivalry-for-regional-influence>.
- Anwar (2022b) China-Bangladesh relations: A three way balance between China, India and the US, rep., MERICS. Available from: <https://merics.org/en/china-bangladesh-relations-three-way-balance-between-china-india-and-us>.
- Anwar A, Macdonald G, Markey D, et al. (2022) Bangladesh's Balancing Act Amid the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy. United States Institute of Peace. Available from: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/04/bangladeshs-balancing-act-amid-us-indo-pacific-strategy>.
- Bangladesh's exports to India to grow record \$2 billion by FY22: FBCCI (2022) *The Daily Star*. Available from: <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/export/news/bangladeshs-exports-india-grow-record-2-billion-fy22-fbcci-2941941> (accessed 29 April 2023).
- Barry, B (1974) "Man and Citizen. By Thomas Hobbes. Edited with an Introduction by Bernard Gert. (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co. Inc.,

1972. Pp. 386. \$2.95, Paper.).” *American Political Science Review* 68 (2). Cambridge University Press: 759–60. doi:10.2307/1959528.
- Bhardwaj S (2018) Bangladesh foreign policy vis-a-vis India. Strategic Analysis. Available from: http://www.academia.edu/35787508/Bangladesh_Foreign_Policy_Vis_a_Vis_India. (accessed 29 April 2023).
- Bhatia R (2019) Bangladesh's India-China Balancing Strategy. Gateway House. Available from: <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/bangladesh-foreign-policy/>. (accessed 29 April 2023).
- Bhattacharjee N (2021) China's warning to Bangladesh on the quad. – The Diplomat, for The Diplomat. Available from: <https://thediplomat.com/2021/05/chinas-warning-to-bangladesh-on-the-quad/>. (accessed 29 April 2023).
- Brown C, Nardin T and Rennger N (2002) *International Relations in Political Thought: Texts from the Ancient Greeks to the First World War*. Cambridge.
- Chand B (2019) Dynamics of rivalry between geographically Contiguous Regional Powers: The case of Sino-Indian competition. *Asian Politics & Policy* 11(1): 122–143. 10.1111/aspp.12436
- Chowdhury D (2022) Revisiting Bangladesh-India Partnership: Latest Trends and achievements. *The London Globalist*. Available from: <https://thelondonglobalist.org/revisiting-bangladesh-india-partnership-latest-trends-and-achievements/>.
- Chowdhury I (2011) Foundations of Bangladesh's Foreign Policy Interactions, working paper. pp. 2–5 Available from: https://www.academia.edu/85023107/Foundations_of_Bangladeshs_Foreign_Policy_Interaction.
- Christensen T.J and Snyder J (1990) “Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity.” *International Organization* 44 (2) P.137–68, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2706792>
- Ciorciari JD and Haacke J (2019) “Hedging in International Relations: An Introduction” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 19 (3) p. 367–74. <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcz017>.
- Congressional Research Service (2022). “The ‘Quad’: Security Cooperation Among the United States, Japan, India, and Australia,” July 25, 2022, 6 edition. <https://crsreports.congress.gov>.
- Deb S and Wilson N (2021) The coming of quad and the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific. Air University (AU). Available from: <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2870653/the-coming-of-quad-and-the-balance-of-power-in-the-indo-pacific/>
- Feng H and He K (2017) Soft balancing. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.549>.
- Fox AB (1969) The Small States in the International System, 1919-1969. *International Journal* 24(4): 751–764. Available from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40200289>.
- Haroon JU (2022) China becomes Bangladesh's top trading partner again. *The Financial Express*, 1st August. Available from:

BANGLADESH'S EVOLVING BALANCING STRATEGY: FROM TWO-WAY TO THREE-WAY?

<https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/trade/china-becomes-bangladeshs-top-trading-partner-again-1659319605>.

Hassan AM (2022) Tough Love - Bangladeshi Foreign Policy on China, India, and the US. Dhaka Tribune, 4th December. Available from: <https://archive.dhaka-tribune.com/opinion/op-ed/2020/12/22/op-ed-tough-love-bangladeshi-foreign-policy-on-china-india-and-the-us>.

Helmreich PC (2002) No Virtue like Necessity: Realist Thought in International Relations since Machiavelli, *History: Reviews of New Books*, 31:1, 44, DOI: 10.1080/03612759.2002.10526356

Hossain D and Islam MS (2021) Understanding Bangladesh's Relations with India and China: Dilemmas and Responses. *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*: 17(1): 42–59. Available From: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19480881.2021.1878582>.

Hossain D and Islam MS (2022) The Five Decades of Making, Unmaking and Remaking of Bangladesh Foreign Policy. *The Journal of Bangladesh and Global Affairs* 1 (1). Available From: https://www.academia.edu/83844741/The_Five_Decades_of_Making_Unmaking_and_Remaking_of_Bangladesh_Foreign_Policy.

Hossain I (2018) Bangladesh Balances between Big Brothers China and India. *East Asia Forum*, 6th June. Available From: www.easiaforum.org/2018/06/06/bangladesh-balances-between-big-brothers-china-and-india/.

Hossain, S (2011) The Changing Pattern of Bangladesh Foreign Policy in Different Political Regimes. *Academia*, p. 2–8. Available From: https://www.academia.edu/3880706/The_changing_pattern_of_Bangladesh_foreign_policy_in_different_political_regimes.

<https://archive.dhakatribune.com/business/2020/06/19/5-161-more-bangladeshi-products-to-enjoy-zero-tariff-to-chinese-markets-from-july-1>

Hussain A (2005) Bangladesh's New Foreign Policy Direction in Southeast and East Asia: Perspective and Goals. 1 Jan. *Academia*. Available From: www.academia.edu/68185181/Bangladeshs_New_Foreign_Policy_Direction_in_Southeast_and_East_Asia_Perspective_and_Goals.

Huzen KB (1995) Geopolitics and Foreign Policy of Bangladesh. thesis, Institute of Bangladesh Studies. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/40387359/Geopolitics_and_Foreign_Policy_of_Bangladesh.

Huzen KB (2019) FOREIGN POLICY of BANGLADESH: THE DILEMMAS of WEAK STATE. *Academia*. Available From: www.academia.edu/40360038/FOREIGN_POLICY_OF_BANGLADESH_THE_DILEMMAS_OF_WEAK_STATE.

Ian CJ (2003) Revisiting Responses To Power Preponderance: Going Beyond The Balancing-Bandwagoning Dichotomy. Rep., RSIS. Available From: <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/54-wp054-revisiting-responses-t/#.ZEzidHZBzIU>

INDOPACIFIC STRATEGY (2022). Whitehouse. Available From: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>.

- Karim A (2022) The QUAD Formation: Is It a High-politics Approach? Ramifications for South Asia and Bangladesh. *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 24(1): 125–139. Doi:10.22883/kjda.2022.34.1.007
- Kliem F (2020) Why Quasi-Alliances Will Persist in the Indo-Pacific? The Fall and Rise of the Quad. *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 7 (3): 271–304. Available From: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2347797020962620>.
- Korolev A (2016) Russia-China-India Triangle - Systemic Balancing and Regional Hedging. *China-India Brief*, March. Available From: https://www.academia.edu/31781043/Russia_China_India_Triangle_Systemic_Balancing_and_Regional_Hedging.
- Kumar Das, S (2010) India's Look East Policy: Imagining a New Geography for India's North-East. *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs*.
- Labs EJ (1992) Do Weak States Bandwagon? *Security Studies* 1 (3): 383–416. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636419209347476>.
- Li Q and Ye M (2019). China's Emerging Partnership Network: What, Who, Where, When and Why. *International Trade, Politics and Development* 3(2): 66–81. <https://doi.org/10.1108/itpd-05-2019-0004>.
- Lim DJ and Mukherjee R (2019) Hedging in South Asia: Balancing Economic and Security Interests amid Sino-Indian Competition. P. 493–522. Oxford University Press, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*. 14th May. Available from: <https://academic.oup.com/irap/article-abstract/19/3/493/5489338>.
- Mearsheimer JJ (2001) *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Minar SJ (2018) Grand Strategy and Foreign Policy: How Grand Strategy Can Aid Bangladesh's Foreign Policy Rethinking? *Journal of Social Studies* 1(4):20-27. Available From: www.academia.edu/37743969/Grand_Strategy_and_Foreign_Policy_How_Grand_Strategy_Can_Aid_Bangladeshs_Foreign_Policy_Rethinking.
- Mirdha RU (2022) Deals with China a Turning Point for Bangladesh. *The Daily Star*. 5th December. Available From: <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/deals-china-turning-point-bangladesh-1299802>.
- Morgenthau HJ (n.d) *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*.
- Mueen M (2019) ROLE of BANGLADESH in UNITED NATION PEACE KEEPING OPERATION. *Academia*. Available From: www.academia.edu/40036199/ROLE_OF_BANGLADESH_IN_UNITED_NATION
- National Security Strategy of the United States of America (2017) Whitehouse. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.
- Nazir, I (2021) Chinese Pursuit of Economic Pre-Balancing: a Silent Weapon to Weaken US Hegemony. *Perspective (blog)*. Available From: <https://perspectivebd.com/archives/4264>.
- Paul T.V. (2005) Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy. *International Security* 30 (1): 46–71. Available From: <https://doi.org/10.1162/0162288054894652>.

- Paul T.V.(2018) When Balance of Power Meets Globalization: China, India and the Small States of South Asia. *Politics* 39(1): 50–63. Available From: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395718779930>.
- Paul TV, Wirtz JJ and Fortmann M (2004) *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*. Stanford University Press.
- Purushothaman U (2015) Political and Military Strategies of Major Powers in the Indo Pacific. Edited by IUrii Bialyi. Available From: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305323691_Political_and_Military_Strategies_of_Major_Powers_in_the_Indo_Pacific.
- Rahman A (2022) Bangladesh, US Approve Draft Pact on Defence Cooperation. The Print, 20th March. Available From: <https://theprint.in/world/bangladesh-us-approve-draft-pact-on-defence-cooperation/881189/>.
- Rajagopalan R (2020) Evasive Balancing: India's Unviable Indo-Pacific Strategy. *International Affairs* 96 (1): 75–93. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz224>.
- Rashid MM (2022) Balancing Quad-China: Why Bandwagoning and Hedging Are Unviable for Bangladesh. *The Geo Politics*, 25th February. Available From: <https://thegeopolitics.com/balancing-quad-china-why-bandwagoning-and-hedging-are-unviable-for-bangladesh/>.
- Schweller RL (2016) The Balance of Power in World Politics, In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, by Randall L. Schweller. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.119>.
- Shahid R (2021) At 50, Bangladesh Perfects an India-China 'Balancing Act'. Available From: https://www.academia.edu/48993232/At_50_Bangladesh_perfects_an_India_China_balancing_act.
- Sheehan M (2005) *The Balance of Power: History and Theory*. London: Taylor & Francis e-Library.
- Siddiquee MA (2022) Great Power Rivalry in the Indian Ocean Region and Bangladesh: Challenges and Responses. *Journal of Bangladesh and Global Affairs* 1 (2). Available From: <https://doi.org/10.55875/jbga.bd.oct22.001>.
- Singh A (2017) The 'Indo-Pacific' Has Always Been about Containing the Rise of China. *South China Morning Post*, 28th November. Available From: <https://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2121907/indio-pacific-has-always-been-about-containing-rise-china>.
- Siow M (2022) In South Asia, Bangladesh's 'Deft' Balancing of US, China and India Ties Stands Out. *South China Morning Post*, 22nd May. Available From: <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3178475/south-asia-bangladeshs-deft-balancing-us-china-and-india-ties>.
- Tziampiris A (2015) Balance of Power and Soft Balancing. In *The Emergence of Israeli-Greek Cooperation*, by Aristotle Tziampiris, 21–37. Cham: Springer International Publishing. Available From: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-12604-3_2.
- US wants Bangladesh to join IPS (2022) Prothom Alo, Prothom Alo, 23rd March. Available from: <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/us-wants-bangladesh-to-join-ips>.

- Waltz KN (1978) *Theory of International Politics*. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Yasmin L (2018) Understanding the Concept and Vision of BRI: The Economic, Cultural and Historical Aspects, in *Peace and Security Review*, 8 (19, Fourth Quarter): 26–37. Available From: www.academia.edu/38632342/1_Understanding_the_Concept_and_Vision_of_BRI_The_Economic_Cultural_and_Historical_Aspects_in_Peace_and_Security_Review_Vol_8_No_19_Fourth_Quarter_2018.
- Yasmin, L (2019) India and China in South Asia: Bangladesh's Opportunities and Challenges. *Millennial Asia*, 10 (3): 322. Available From: www.academia.edu/82798469/India_and_China_in_South_Asia_Bangladesh_s_Opportunities_and_Challenges.
- Yasmin, L (2022) Bangladesh's Foreign Policy Goals for 2041. *Dhaka Tribune*. 28th June. Available From: <https://www.dhakatribune.com/special-supplement/2022/06/28/bangladeshs-foreign-policy-goals-for-2041>.

ONLINE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN IN ROMANIA'S ELECTIONS (2016-2020). A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Stefan MAROSAN*

Abstract: The extent that social media has taken in the last decade in building social life (information, interaction, and group-building) has allowed political parties to interact directly with voters during political campaigns. This article focuses on how the literature has chosen to analyse the involvement of politics in social media during the electoral campaigns in Romania in the period 2016-2020. Based on a systematic literature review, this study aims to identify possible new perspectives for analysing election campaigns in social media.

Keywords: social media; political party; electoral campaign; Romania

INTRODUCTION

THE DEVELOPMENT AND DIVERSIFICATION OF MEANS OF COMMUNICATION in recent decades have determined changes in how people receive information, interact and form groups. Virtual space has taken over many aspects of communication in the real world; simultaneously, it has created many other patterns that remain specific only to the online environment. Naturally, in this transformative setting, politics could not remain unchanged. Political communication strategies and electoral campaigns have changed significantly in these decades. In this context, this article analyses the manifestation of political parties in Romania in the online environment, especially social media, during the electoral campaigns, based on a systematic review of the existing literature.

The context of this study is relevant from several perspectives. On the one hand, understanding democracy in the 21st century is facilitated by explaining how social media and information and communication technologies are instrumentalized by political parties to communicate and mobilize the electorate

* Stefan Marosan, MA Student in *Leadership and Communication in International Organisations*. Department of International Studies and Contemporary History, Babes-Bolyai University (Romania) ORCID: 0000-0002-6203-5757. Email: stefann.marosan@gmail.com

during election campaigns (Hassler et al., 2021). On the other hand, the significant increase in the use of social media in electoral campaigns in the last decade makes Romania a relevant case study for explaining how the political class manifests itself in the digital space (Androniciuc, 2016).

Several studies (Sasu & Androniciuc, 2017; Momoc, 2018) analyse the role of social platforms such as Facebook or YouTube in defining and transmitting political identity in debates regarding European integration. The strength of Facebook in mobilizing the electorate during the electoral campaigns in Romania is a study that deserves to be deepened (Tasente, 2020) because it proved significant both in the elections for the European Parliament (2019) and in the parliamentary (2016, 2020) and presidential (2019) elections). Likewise, Facebook was a communication tool used on a large scale by some extremist political formations during the COVID-19 pandemic (Doicar & Crețan, 2021).




This article aims to identify the major approaches in the literature regarding electoral campaigns in Romania in the online environment and present possible new directions for approaching this topic in the context of the increasing role of social platforms in determining citizens' electoral behaviour.

RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

This Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is necessary to observe the range of topics that the existing literature addresses when analysing the electoral behaviour of Romanian political parties in social media. In this sense, we used the literature that refers to the parliamentary elections (2016 and 2020), the elections for the European Parliament (2019) and the presidential elections (2019) in Romania.

Research questions

In conducting this SLR, we defined three research questions:

-  **RQ 1.** What are the main themes and topics addressed in studies on the use of social networks in electoral campaigns in Romania?
-  **RQ 2.** What are the main methods used to analyse the use of social media by political parties in Romania?
-  **RQ 3.** What gaps exist in the existing literature on the use of social networks in electoral campaigns in Romania, and what research directions could be explored in the future?

To comprehensively address RQ 1 and RQ2, this SLR has been conducted based on Page et al.'s (2020) methodological guidelines for the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses) process.

Eligibility criteria

The works published in peer-reviewed journals from 2017-2022 (CR 1), in English or Romanian (CR 2), were selected for this SLR. Instead, studies that had more than three authors (CR 3) did not mention the topic of the relationship between social media and political parties in the title (CR 4) or in the abstract (CR 5), did not refer to elections (euro)parliamentary (2016, 2019, 2020) or presidential (2019) (CR 6), did not clearly state the research objectives, the methods used and the results obtained (CR 7) and did not have the text of the study available in its entirety (CR 8).

Information sources

An automated search was based on the following scientific databases to identify relevant references: Google Scholar, SpringerLink, WorldCat, EBSCO and Jstor. Based on the above-mentioned research questions, this SLR used some specific terms along with synonyms as they appear below:

- "social media" OR Facebook OR YouTube
- "electoral campaign" OR elections OR "political parties"
- Romania OR "Social Democratic Party" OR "National Liberal Party" OR "Save Romania Union" OR "Alliance for Romanians Unity".

Data collection ran between May and June 2023. In all this period, the extractions were done by automatic search using a library browser followed by a subsequent step where a manual selection was needed. Due to the lack of references on the topic of this study, following several combinations of the above terms, the JSTOR database was removed from the study.

Results

Initially, 496 titles were identified that resulted from the various combinations of the items "social media", "Facebook", "YouTube", "political parties", "online", and "elections". Next, six scanning stages were completed, as described in Figure 1.

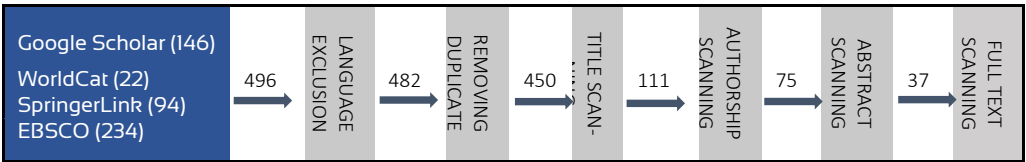


Figure 1 – Primary studies selection

After filtering the initial references through the seven exclusion criteria, a list of 37 peer-reviewed articles and chapters resulted. They were read and analysed, looking at what they were: the research objectives and questions, the methods used, and the results obtained. Finally, after analysing these articles, 10 studies remained that entered the review stage.

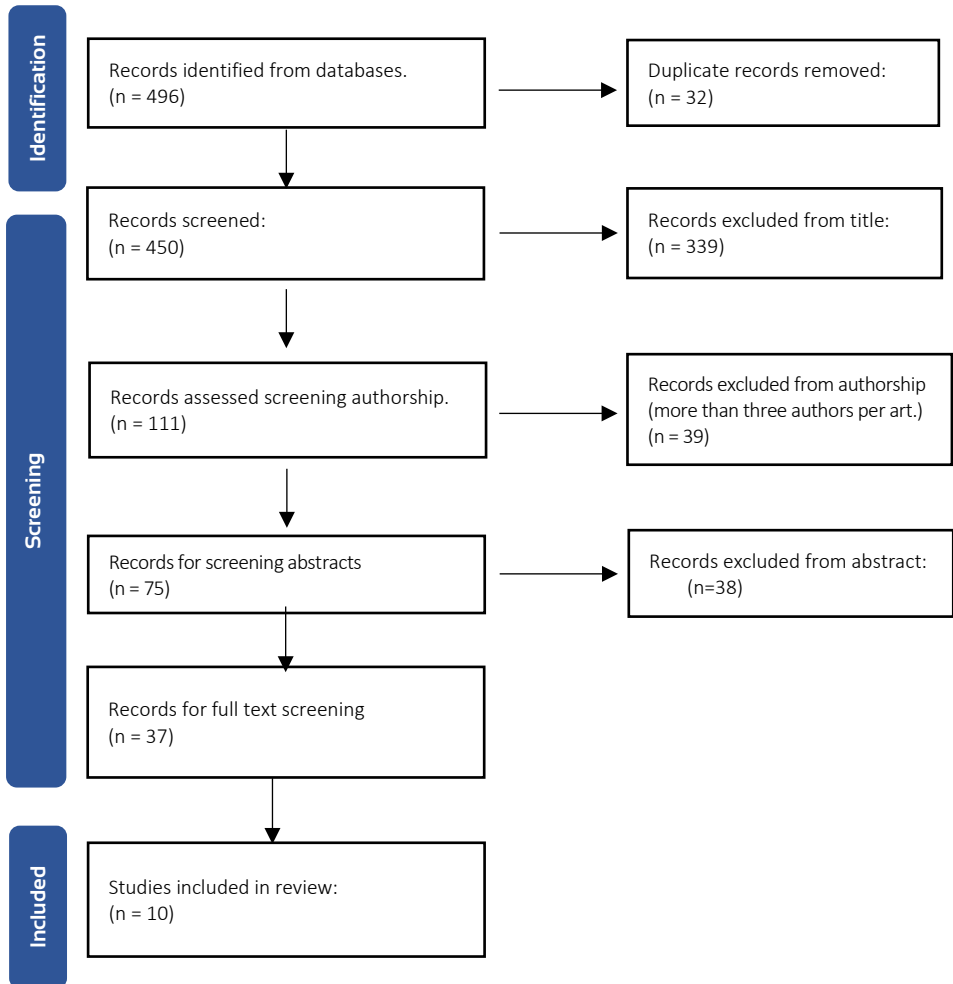


Figure 2 – PRISMA flow diagram

Table 1 shows their description from the perspective of the research objects/questions, the methods used, and the results obtained.

ONLINE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN IN ROMANIA'S ELECTIONS (2016-2020). A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Author(s)	Objectives / Research Questions	Methods	Results
Andronicu & Barreto (2018)	Investigating the use of social networks by Romanian politicians.	Content and statistical analysis of Facebook posts by politicians.	Mobilization messages generate high engagement; the parliamentary campaign focuses more on the presentation of the candidates.
Andronicu & Moreno (2018)	Comparing online political campaigns (Spain 2015 vs. Romania 2016).	Statistical analysis via SPSS of Facebook posts.	Differences in the communication objectives of political parties in the two countries.
Doiciar & Cretan (2021)	Understanding the distribution of votes for AUR and the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic.	Mixed method: election data, secondary online data, semi-structured interviews.	The typical AUR voter is young, high school educated, and lives in a small town or rural area.
Gherghina & Rusu (2021)	Analysing the influence of the electoral campaign on first-time voters.	Individual data from an online survey conducted during the presidential elections in November 2019.	Trust in politicians, campaign information, and the use of social networks influence voters; those with higher political knowledge are guided by their pre-election attitudes.
Grad & Marian (2020)	Explaining the change in the electoral marketing of PSD.	Analysis of two Facebook pages and an online platform where video testimonials were published.	Experience, leadership change, and the perception of new opportunities led to the success of PSD in the 2016 elections.
Marian (2018)	Analysing PSD's 2016 political campaign.	Analysis of PSD's political campaign in the 2016 parliamentary elections.	PSD's electoral strategy was based on the political message and program, using different tools to attract new supporters.
Momoc (2018)	Establishing the characteristics of populist ideology and the extent to which Romanian political parties have adopted populism.	Analysis of online discourses and values promoted on social networks (Facebook) by political parties in the 2016 parliamentary elections.	Digital democracy is a form of so-called direct democracy, possible especially online due to new technologies that offer all users the chance to express themselves, participate, interact, and get involved.
Sasu & Andronicu (2017)	Describing the use and evolution of social networks, with a focus on the political field.	Counting daily posts during the presidential campaign and formulating descriptive statistics.	In 2014, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis became the first politician in Europe to reach a million fans on Facebook.
Tăran & Ormenișan (2020)	What types of content were used on the Facebook pages of politicians and parties during the European elections in Romania? Which candidates and parties led the most intense campaign on Facebook, according to post frequency?	This quantitative research aims to analyse how Romanian political parties and candidates used Facebook in the electoral campaign for the European Parliament, in May 2019.	Romania's strict election laws push parties and politicians to accept the freedom offered by social networks, this unregulated political campaign territory.
Tasente (2020)	Analysing key performance indicators (KPIs) that facilitate communication on social networks in the	To achieve the research objectives, both quantitative and qualitative methods will be used. Thus, we analysed the Facebook	The National Liberal Party managed to mobilize the electorate on social networks much better than its opponents. At the end of the electoral campaign, PNL had

Author(s)	Objectives / Research Questions	Methods	Results
	2019 European parliamentary elections in Romania. Identifying and analysing messages that generate high engagement.	communication campaign during the electoral campaign of the three main parties in Romania, which obtained the most mandates in the European Parliament: the National Liberal Party (PNL), the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the Save Romania Union (USR).	293,677 fans on Facebook, 2.32 times more than USR and 3.39 times more fans than PSD.

Table 1 – *Reviewed studies analyses*

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 2 shows the main observations from the content analysis of the 10 previously selected studies.

Study	Methods	Common Themes	Different Themes	Results
Androniciuc & Barreto (2018)	Content and statistical analysis	Use of social networks by Romanian politicians; Voter mobilization	Investigation of the use of social networks by Romanian politicians	Mobilization messages generate high engagement
Androniciuc & Moreno (2018)	Statistical analysis using SPSS	Comparison of online political campaigns; Voter mobilization	Comparison of online political campaigns between Spain and Romania	Differences in the communication objectives of political parties in the two countries
Doiciar & Crețan (2021)	Mixed method: election data, secondary online data, semi-structured interviews	Analysis of voter behaviour	Understanding the distribution of votes for AUR and the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic	The typical AUR voter is young, high school educated, and lives in a small town or rural area
Gherghina & Rusu (2021)	Individual data from an online survey	Analysis of voter behaviour; Online electoral campaigns; Voter mobilization	Analysis of the influence of the electoral campaign on first-time voters	Trust in politicians, campaign information, and use of social networks influence voters
Grad & Marian (2020)	Analysis of two Facebook pages and an online platform	Analysis of political marketing strategies	Explaining the change in PSD's electoral marketing	Experience, leadership change, and perception of new opportunities led to PSD's success in the 2016 elections
Marian (2018)	Analysis of PSD's political campaign	Analysis of political marketing strategies; Online electoral campaigns	Analysis of PSD's 2016 political campaign	PSD's electoral strategy was based on the political message and program
Momoc (2018)	Analysis of online discourses and values promoted	Political ideology in the online environment	Identifying the characteristics of populist ideology and the extent to which	Romanian political parties adopt populist ideology in the

Study	Methods	Common Themes	Different Themes	Results
	on social networks (Facebook)		Romanian political parties have adopted populist ideology	context of digital democracy
Sasu & Androniciuc (2017)	Counting daily posts during the presidential campaign	Use of social networks by Romanian politicians	Describing the use and evolution of social networks, with emphasis on the political field	In 2014, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis became the first politician in Europe with a million fans on Facebook
Țăran & Ormenișan (2020)	Quantitative research on the use of Facebook in the electoral campaign for the European Parliament	Online electoral campaigns; Use of social networks in elections; Voter mobilization	Analysis of the types of content used on Facebook by politicians and parties during the European elections in Romania	Romania's strict election laws push parties and politicians to use social networks as an unregulated political campaign territory
Tasente (2020)	Quantitative and qualitative methods	Key performance indicators in communication on social networks; Online electoral campaigns	Analysis of the key performance indicators (KPIs) facilitating communication on social networks in Romania's 2019 European parliamentary elections	The National Liberal Party mobilized the electorate on social networks much more effectively than its opponents

Table 2 - Analysis of Methods, Themes and Results of Studies Concerning the Use of Social Networks in Electoral Campaigns in Romania

From the perspective of the three research questions formulated at the beginning of this study, the following analyses can be outlined.

The main themes and topics addressed in studies on the use of social networks in electoral campaigns in Romania.

The studies analysed earlier emphasises the crucial role of social networks in Romanian politics, focusing on themes such as the mobilisation of the electorate, the adoption of "digital democracy", online electoral strategies and the impact of social networks on new voters.

First, research by Androniciuc & Barreto (2018) and Tasente (2020) underlines how social networks, especially Facebook, have become tools for mobilising the electorate. Tasente (2020) indicates that the National Liberal Party has successfully mobilised the electorate through social media compared to competing political parties.

On the other hand, "digital democracy" is taking shape as a new emerging democratic model in Romanian politics. According to research by Momoc (2018), social networks enable the adoption of this form of direct democracy, allowing users to express themselves, interact, participate, and get involved.

Online electoral strategies are another essential aspect. The study by Marian (2018) reveals that the Social Democratic Party used a complex mix of political messages and tools to attract new supporters in the 2016 campaign. In another study, Grad & Marian (2020) point out that strategic developments, changes of leaders and the perception of new opportunities led to the success of the PSD in the same elections.

Finally, the impact of social media on new voters was discussed by Gherghina & Rusu (2021). They found that trust in politicians, campaign information, and social media use significantly affected voter behaviour.

The main methods used to analyse the use of social media by political parties in Romania.

An analysis of the existing literature reveals a preponderance of content analyses and statistical analyses, but mixed methods combine these approaches with others.

For example, Androniciuc and Moreno (2018) used statistical analysis to compare online political campaigns in Spain and Romania. Through statistical analysis, they identified significant differences in the communication objectives of the political parties in the two countries. The method utilized involved the analysis of Facebook posts using SPSS software, which allowed for a more detailed examination of the data.

Similarly, in the register of statistical analysis, Sasu and Androniciuc (2017) operated a similar method to describe the use and evolution of social networks in the political context. The authors counted daily Facebook posts during the presidential campaign and formulated descriptive statistics, thus highlighting trends and patterns of political behaviour online.

On the other hand, research by Gherghina and Rusu (2021) used individual data from an online survey to analyse the influence of the election campaign on first-time voters. This method provided an insight into how electoral attitudes and behaviours can be influenced by campaign information. The survey allowed the authors to observe voter perceptions and attitudes directly, while statistical data analysis revealed significant trends and patterns.

Although content and statistical analysis are the most common methods, some studies combine these methods with others to provide a more complex picture. For example, Doicar and Crețan (2021) used a mixed method, combining electoral data, online secondary data, and semi-structured interviews to understand the distribution of votes for the AUR party and the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These diverse research approaches reflect the complexity of the field and the need to use methods that can portray the nuances of the interaction between politics and social media. In this sense, the existing literature on online electoral campaigns in Romania provides a real knowledge base and opens new possibilities for future research.

Gaps exist in the existing literature and possible new perspectives.

Following the review of the existing literature on electoral campaigns and the involvement of the political class in social media, some observations are necessary.

Analysis of Alternative Social Platforms: Most studies use Facebook as a primary political communication and campaigning platform. However, there are many other social platforms where political parties and their leaders are starting to communicate with voters (Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok). They should become an object of analysis in the perspective of the future elections in 2024 when, unlike in 2016, the generation of young people who are used to these social media platforms will also participate in the vote.

Online-offline interaction: There needs to be more research to analyze the link between the online and offline behaviour of voters. The study of electoral behaviour becomes as necessary as political communication. A closer examination of how online campaigns influence offline actions, such as voter turnout, may provide a better understanding of the effectiveness of these campaigns. In this sense, the study by Gherghina and Rusu (2021) can constitute a possible direction for research.

Longitudinal analysis of the evolution of social media campaign strategies: Existing research mainly focuses on a single election campaign or a limited period. In the context in which political communication and the electoral campaign have also expanded online, at least since 2012, in-depth research on the evolution of electoral mechanisms is necessary. It could offer a year-round perspective on voters' behaviour and electoral psychology. This fact helps to make the efforts of political parties more efficient during election campaigns.

Research on specific demographics: In addition to studying individualized social media election campaigns, many existing studies focus on voters in general. However, the analysis should be extended to distinct demographic groups (e.g., youth, elderly, rural vs urban populations) to explain electoral behaviour and political communication in depth.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article went through a PRISMA systematic review of the existing literature on the relationship between political parties and the electorate in social media during the last electoral campaigns in Romania (2016-2020). Based on this analysis, most studies focus on individual election rounds and the entire electoral population. The predominant research methods are content analysis and statistical analysis.

Following the analysis, this study proposed four additional perspectives for approaching the parliamentary and presidential elections in Romania: analysis of alternative social platforms; online-offline interaction; longitudinal analysis of the evolution of social media campaign strategies; research on specific demographics. This expansion of research directions could be helpful for an in-depth understanding of electoral behaviour and political communication in the next election rounds, in which the electoral population that massively uses social media for information gathering, interaction and building social groups will increase.

REFERENCES

- Androniciuc A. & Barreto A. (2018). User mobilization and participation in online political campaigns. a case study from Romania. *Analele Universității Constantin Brâncuși Din Târgu Jiu : Seria Economie* 155–168.
- Androniciuc, A., & Moreno, F. R. (2018). Online social networks and parliamentary elections. An international comparison. *Acta Universitatis Danubius. Relationes Internationales*, 11(1), 83-97.
- Doiciar C. & Crețan R. (2021). Pandemic populism: covid-19 and the rise of the nationalist AUR party in Romania. *Geographica Pannonica*. 23(4). 243–259. <https://doi.org/10.5937/gp25-33782>
- Gherghina, S., & Rusu, E. (2021). Begin Again: Election Campaign and Own Opinions Among First-Time Voters in Romania. *Social Science Quarterly*, 102(4), 1311-1329.
- Grad, M., & Marian, C. (2020). Explaining Change: The Online Political Marketing of the Romanian Social Democrats. *European Review*, 28(5), 778-792.
- Hassler, J., Magin, M., Russmann, U., & Fenoll, V. (2021). *Campaigning on Facebook in the 2019 European Parliament Election: Informing, interacting with, and mobilising voters* (1st ed.). Springer International Publishing. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Marian, C. (2018). The Social Democrat Party and the use of political marketing in the 2016 elections in Romania. *Sfera Politicii*, 26(197-198), 70-82.

- Momoc, A. (2018). Populism 2.0, digital democracy and the new 'enemies of the people'. *Communication Today*, 9(1), 58-77.
- Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., & ... (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, 372, n71. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>
- Sasu, C., & Androniciuc, A. (2017). How do Romanian politicians communicate online? An emphasis on Facebook. *"Ovidius" University Annals, Economic Sciences Series*, 17(2), 461–466.
- Țăran, F., & Ormenișan, A. C. (2020). European Elections National Agenda: Facebook in the 2019 Romanian EP Elections. *Central European Journal of Communication*, 13(1), 55-76.
- Tasente, T. (2020). Facebook's power to mobilize fans in the electoral campaign. Case Study: 2019 European Parliamentary Elections in Romania. *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 4, 55