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CONTENTS

NEOCLASSICAL REALISM AND STUDIES ON FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

Flavia Loss DE ARAUJO 5

IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY TOWARDS POST-SADDAM IRAQ: AN ANALYSIS

Thowhidul ISLAM 24

EFFECTIVENESS OF MILITARY PEACE SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS IN STABILIZATION OF SOMALIA (1992-2022)

Cosmas Ekwom Kamais | Pontian Godfrey Okoth | Sussy Namaemba Kimokoti 48

NAVIGATING INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY: UNRAVELING INDIA'S STRATEGY, FUTURE PROSPECTS, AND INSIGHTS FROM THE INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FORUM

Abeer SHARMA | Siya SHARMA 83

NEOCLASSICAL REALISM AND STUDIES ON FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

Flavia Loss de Araujo*

Abstract. The study of trade agreements in the field of International Relations (IR) requires new systematization and investment in a more robust research agenda that emphasizes the field's contributions to the subject, focusing on the understanding of power dynamics. In light of this challenge and an increasingly complex international scenario, this paper discusses the use of Neoclassical Realism (NCR) theory in analysing trade agreement negotiations, as the outcome of such arrangements is influenced by both systemic and domestic variables. Through a review of the literature on NCR, it is demonstrated how this theoretical lens is the most suitable for addressing the different and complex levels of analysis involved in trade agreement negotiations between countries.

Keywords: Neoclassical Realism, IR Theories, Free Trade Agreements, International Relations, Trade Policy; Foreign Policy.

Introduction

The literature on trade agreements is extensive and various fields of knowledge delve into the subject. In general, free trade agreements have been analysed from the perspective of Economics in recent decades, with most studies focusing on trade creation or diversion, protectionism, and terms of trade, as well as analyses of the impact of tariff reductions in specific sectors. This latter type of analysis has significantly increased in recent decades, keeping pace with the negotiation of free trade agreements worldwide, and is, of course, of extreme importance to the economic sectors involved in trade negotiations and decision-makers. Even more important are the economic analyses of agreements involving countries with different levels of development, to understand possible gains and losses not only in economic terms but also in labour and social terms.

However, the focus of this type of analysis overlooks the political factors involved in trade negotiations between countries or economic blocs, which have become even more complex in recent decades. According to SEIERMAN (2018),

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'economists are primarily interested in the impact of trade agreements on trade flows and their determinants, while lawyers and political economists study the design of trade agreements and their diffusion' (SEIERMAN, 2018:04).

It is possible to complement this statement by noting that the fields of International Relations (IR) and Political Science are interested in the political (and consequently power-related) relationships involved in such negotiations, both at the domestic and international levels. Thus, the absence of this perspective has been criticized, given the increasing complexity of current trade agreements, which go far beyond tariff discussions, including topics such as investments, sustainable development, labour standards, intellectual property, and public procurement. To illustrate the growing sophistication of trade agreements, MATTOO ET AL. (2020:03) note that agreements negotiated in the 1950s covered eight areas, while in recent years, they covered more than seventeen. These agreements also include compliance and enforcement mechanisms, which are essential for their functionality and credibility with international investors. This latter point has even led to changes in dispute resolution systems, as the governance exercised by the World Trade Organization (WTO) has become insufficient in addressing the legal intricacies and specificities of current agreements.

The inclusion of new areas in agreements has also resulted in more divergent interests, not only between countries but also within domestic pressure groups. Internal disputes over all the aforementioned issues, in addition to the traditional tariff debate, have become more intense and increasingly pressure official negotiators from the countries involved.

More and more research in IR and the subfield of International Political Economy (IPE) seeks to bridge this gap, creating the necessary synergy for more comprehensive and in-depth analyses. Although this interconnection is positive, there are still criticisms regarding the relevance of studying trade agreements within these fields (particularly IR), and specifically about the lack of methodologies from Economics. Additionally, there is some confusion about the scope of the mentioned fields and critiques of potential redundancy between them. The fact is that there is a divergence in understanding the role of the two fields in academia, as some authors treat IPE as a subfield of IR, especially in the United States (MALINIAK; TIERNEY, 2009), while others view IPE as an autonomous field (RAVENHILL, 2017). IPE is also understood as a methodology in Economics for analysing political behaviours (WEINGAST; WITTMAN, 2006). In general, the interests of each field can be summarized as follows:

“(...) IR scholars are primarily interested in the power-play end, while economists are mostly engaged with the ‘business’ of economic diplomacy. Again, this is not to deny that exceptions obviously do exist, as

do scholars who operate on the borders of various research fields.”
(OKANO-HEIJMANS, 2011, p. 24).

Thus, there is a gap in studies addressing trade negotiations for understanding the power-play between countries and, in addition, that include domestic factors in this equation. The positioning of countries on the international stage is a result of domestic pressure on their governments, as PUTNAM (1988) demonstrated, but there is still a lack of studies on the interaction between domestic and international spheres and how this affects trade negotiation outcomes.

Inter-regional agreements, such as the Mercosur-European Union negotiations, for example, add the regional level as an additional layer of influence and decision-making in the countries' positions. Dealing with this number of levels of analysis and actors has been one of the main obstacles for studies on trade agreements in the fields of Political Science, International Relations, and the subfield of International Political Economy (IPE).

This paper aims to demonstrate the usefulness of one IR theory for analysing the political factors involved in trade agreement negotiations: Neoclassical Realism (NCR). To this end, the first section of the text will show how the international scenario has become more complex since 2017 for trade negotiations and how the tools provided by the main IR theories are used to analyse such agreements. The second section will present in-depth the characteristics of NCR, while the third section will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of adopting the proposed theory for analysing trade negotiations. Examples of studies that have applied NCR will be presented to support the argument. Finally, the conclusion will summarize the main points discussed throughout the text and suggest a research agenda that could expand studies on the topic, encouraging other researchers to analyse the power dynamics involved in trade negotiations, especially those conducted between countries in the Global South and North.

IR Theories and Trade Agreements

The past few years have been turbulent on the international level and brought about significant systemic changes that impacted the dynamics of state interactions, including within trade regimes. The tensions resulting from the rise of former U.S. President Donald Trump (2017-2021) led to significant changes, such as the U.S. withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) and the trade war with China. The latter had more severe consequences and began in August 2017, when the U.S. initiated a Section 301 safeguard investigation into China's trade practices. On March 22, 2018, the document titled 'Presidential Memorandum on China's Economic Aggression' was signed, reiterating the accusations and promising to impose 25% tariffs on 818 Chinese products.

This was followed by five rounds of tariffs: July 2018, August 2018, September 2018, June 2019, and September 2019. The White House's goal was to pressure China to open its market further to U.S. exports and, thus, reduce at least part of the trade deficit between the two countries. China responded in kind, initiating an unprecedented sequence of tariff retaliations involving the world's two largest economies.

Both sides agreed to negotiate and reached a truce in the trade conflict in January 2020 ('Phase One agreement'). Trade levels returned to normal only in 2022, when China even achieved a new record for exports to the U.S. Reflecting on Trump's presidency, it can be said that his administration gave voice to the appeals of the more nationalist and protectionist layers of American society, significantly altering relations between states in the international system. According to HEO (2023), the wave of protectionism initiated by the U.S. caused the international trade regime to regress to the GATT era (1948-1994), a period when disputes were resolved by a dispute settlement system based on the economic weight of the litigants. Another important point is that while Trump's predecessors softened the rivalry with China, at least rhetorically, his administration laid bare the competition in an irreversible manner.

Thus, Trump's administration has been considered by several authors as a 'perceptual shock,' meaning an event that draws the attention of decision-makers in countries within the international system to changes in the distribution of relative power, prompting a new strategy to be organized. These changes are often the result of a slow and cumulative process, but it takes a cataclysmic event to be perceived and interpreted by the political world. ZAKARIA (1998) emphasizes that '...statesmen's perceptions often change suddenly rather than gradually, and are shaped more by crises and catalyst events such as wars than by statistical measures' (ZAKARIA, 1998, p.11).

The trade dispute between the two powers has had consequences for the international system, as countries within the system are still seeking to balance their positions between the two litigants and gain advantages through relationships with both. There is a concern that the alliance game that the U.S. and China are beginning to shape will pressure other countries to choose a side. For now, each superpower has been trying to expand its sphere of influence, which in turn pressures other countries to rethink their strategies for trade negotiations. However, issues affecting the international system as a whole are not the only ones influencing the direction of international trade; countries must also deal with domestic pressures. An analysis that attempts to understand only one aspect of an international negotiation today will be incomplete if it does not consider multiple levels of analysis. Yet, the question remains of how to do this without creating a tangled web of levels and variables that fails to explain the decisions made by countries.

From an International Relations (IR) perspective, trade agreements are not merely discussions about tariff adjustments but also a political calculation, and IR theories have sought to understand this type of agreement. What is the most appropriate theoretical lens for analysing current trade agreements? We can consider theoretical alternatives that simultaneously address both domestic and international levels, such as Liberalism, Constructivism, and Two-Level Games. However, these approaches have certain limitations that make them less compatible for analysing complex and multifactorial negotiations such as the Mercosur-European Union agreement, the TPP, among others. Starting with Liberalism, which does not view the state as a unitary actor and focuses on the preferences of domestic actors (individuals and various social groups), from which other factors shaping a country's behaviour are discussed. Domestic political institutions aggregate the preferences of social actors, determining a state's choices and affecting its foreign policy.

Although systemic factors are considered in Liberalism, they play a lesser role within this analytical framework, with the emphasis being placed on the constraints imposed by the preferences of state and non-state actors in the international system. This reduces the efficiency of attempts to simultaneously address both levels of analysis.

The Constructivist theory of IR, in turn, emphasizes the international level and takes a structural approach to the constraints imposed on states by the international system. Constructivists also assume that the international system is created by the influence of ideas and identities of social actors, which can be states, non-state actors, interest groups, and even individuals. In other words, interactions between states are also ideational structures formed by agents, as Guimarães (2021) elucidates: '(...) these actors or agents have an impact on the structures and how they are altered and produced. Therefore — this is the key point — agents (actors) and structures mutually constitute each other' (GUIMARÃES, 2021:107).

Despite the structural and state-centric approach of Constructivism, the explanatory focus is not on power or security, but on the exchange of ideas and the agents' perceptions of international reality. It is also worth noting that this approach relegates the domestic level to a secondary role (FOULON, 2015), which does not fit into the attempt to create a framework that considers the role of internal actors and institutions in foreign policy actions.

Finally, while not an IR theory but an analytical tool, Two-Level Games offer a perspective that considers the internal and external pressures acting on a negotiation, as it views the international and domestic levels as two simultaneous 'boards' on which negotiations between states occur. However, this approach has three limiting points: first, it treats both levels of analysis as

equivalent in terms of importance; second, it does not address foreign policy or its variations throughout negotiations, nor the perceptions of its decision-makers; lastly, this analytical model assumes that negotiations are bilateral (FOULON, 2015).

Excluding the aforementioned options, the IR theory that offers the most suitable tools for the analysis in question is Neoclassical Realism (NCR), due to its comprehensive explanatory capacity that engages with both external and internal factors. NCR emerged in the late 1990s to fill the gaps left by Neorealism, the dominant theoretical school in IR since 1979, when the American scholar Kenneth Waltz published *Theory of International Politics*. Waltz's Neorealism sought to explain the outcomes of interactions between states within the international system, understood as an anarchic structure that operates independently of its agents. States occupy different positions within the structure based on their material capabilities and are constrained by this same structure, which in turn determines the behaviour of the actors.

Thus, Neorealism is a structural theory that views the international system as a constant presence in state relations, devoid of the idiosyncrasies and mood swings of individual states (LAWSON, 2015). Moreover, according to Neorealists, domestic characteristics are of lesser importance in analyses, as internal dynamics vary greatly over time, while the anarchic condition of the international system remains constant. Foreign policy issues should be left to their own theoretical expressions to explain state behaviour, while Neorealism would address the outcomes of interactions between these actors within the international structure.

Neorealists were criticized and challenged by theorists from other IR schools of thought after the end of the Cold War due to their limitations in explaining the end of bipolarity, as well as their difficulty in dealing with the new international context that was emerging. NCR arose not only to address these gaps in Neorealism but primarily to update it, as Rathbun (2008) elucidates: 'We should understand Neoclassical Realism not as a distinct variety of realism, but as the next generation of structural realism and a reflection of a common and coherent logic.'

The Neoclassical Realism (NCR)

The term "Neoclassical Realism" was coined by Gideon Rose in 1998 and came to designate certain branches of Realism that accept the primacy of the systemic variable of Neorealism but also revive interest in the domestic variables analysed by so-called "classical" realists. The generation of scholars who established the foundations of Realism as a school of thought in the first half of the 20th

century did not separate domestic and international levels as strictly as their Neorealist successors; in fact, for the most prominent representative of Classical Realism, Hans Morgenthau, "domestic politics and international politics are merely two manifestations of the same phenomenon: the struggle for power" (GUILHOT, 2011).

Domestic and foreign policy issues were present in the works of classical realists, but they were later sidelined with the advent of Neorealism. WALTZ's (1979) attempt to create a nomothetic theory of IR, that is, one that is generalizable and has a scientific methodology, required the exclusion of domestic factors since the intention was to identify patterns in state behaviours and not to explain the motivations behind foreign policy. The discussion about which level would provide better explanations for policy outcomes is longstanding and has been taken up by neoclassical realists, who point to the limitations of exclusively systemic approaches, such as Neorealism, and those that analyse only domestic factors to determine changes in state behaviour or preferences.

Denominated *innenpolitik*, such approaches have different independent variables at the domestic level, but, according to neoclassical realists, they fail to explain why states with similar political systems act differently in terms of foreign policy and vice versa. For TALIAFERRO, LOBELL, and RIPSAN (2016), *innenpolitik* theories explain only a restricted set of cases that do not coincide; on the other hand, systemic theories have a high explanatory capacity for the few cases that do coincide. The efforts of Neoclassical Realism aim to unite both perspectives, creating a theoretical framework that allows for their systematic and efficient combination.

Regarding the systemic level, Neoclassical Realism converges with the main premises of Neorealism concerning the anarchic and independent structure of the international system and the decisive distribution of material capabilities among states, a factor that determines each country's position. The international system is, therefore, the predominant causal factor for both theories, which also converge on the conflictual nature of politics and the importance of power distribution among states.

The main difference between the two theories lies in the dependent variable, or the phenomenon they seek to explain: while Neorealists seek to discover recurring and similar patterns in interactions among states, such as alliance formation or the likelihood of war occurring in different systems, for instance, neoclassical realists aim to explain variations in the foreign policies of one or more states over time and under the same external constraints (TALIAFERRO; LOBELL; RIPSAN, 2009).

In summary, Neoclassical Realism has a multi-level approach that enhances the explanatory capacity of the theory, using the international system as

the independent variable and domestic factors as intervening variables. Concerning the independent variable, that is, the international system, it is important to emphasize that neoclassical realists disagree with the determinism of Neorealism, which states that structural constraints define the actions of states. Instead, they believe that the structure compels the behaviour of countries but does not determine their foreign policies, as these are also affected by other domestic variables, such as the perceptions of leadership and the pressure exerted by interest groups. In other words, Neoclassical Realism argues that

The foreign policy objectives of a country are driven by its position within the international system and defined by its material conditions (...) moreover, the impact of these capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex because these systemic pressures need to be translated to the domestic level. (ROSE, 1998:146).

The first contribution of Neoclassical Realism (NCR) to International Relations can be considered its ability to consider and explain foreign policy actions, which do not always adopt consistent positions in the face of systemic pressures. Domestic factors such as the personality of leaders, ideology, and perceptions also shape a state's external behaviour. Thus, NCR also incorporates non-material factors into the analysis, which constitutes a second important innovation of this school of thought.

The analytical framework of NCR can be summarized as a kind of "transmission belt" between the constraints present in the international system and the domestic scenario, where this information will be filtered by economic, diplomatic, and military forces (TALIAFERRO; LOBELL; RIPSAN, 2009). At the domestic level are the intervening variables, formed by the perceptions of elites regarding risks and opportunities in the international scenario that influence foreign policy formulation, taking into account that these preferences are selected based on the risk calculations that a particular choice presents to the elites and their willingness to confront them. The explanatory role of the intervening variables is very relevant but not fundamental within the NCR approach, as summarized by ROSE (1998) as follows:

The scope and ambition of a country's foreign policy are driven, above all, by its position in the international system and, specifically, by its relative material power capabilities. (...) the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level" (ROSE, 1998, p. 146).

In other words, the intervening variables are situated between the cause and effect of a phenomenon, affecting the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Selecting them within a research design is not an easy task, and no rigid criteria have been established for doing so, leaving

researchers to rely on their perceptions regarding the object of study. Götz (2021) warns that the IR literature has made little progress in defining intervening variables and how to use them appropriately. Special attention should be given to the weight assigned to intervening variables, as systemic imperatives should take precedence over domestic factors to avoid straying from the RNC framework.

The author proposes classifying intervening variables into three types: the first are moderating factors, meaning that the intervening variables condition the state's ability to respond to systemic pressures or opportunities; the second are complementary factors that influence how a state will respond to external stimuli; and lastly, there are intervening variables as primary causes (GÖTZ, 2021:06). Primary causes position intervening variables as those that have an immediate effect on the dependent variable, thereby reversing the RNC logic by prioritizing the domestic level over the systemic one, and have faced criticism when used within this theoretical framework.

Another interesting point of the RNC is the differentiation made between threats and opportunities that present themselves as options for states in the short and long term. Given that states operate within an anarchic international system where the relative distribution of power prevails, the interpretation of potential threats, for example, will be filtered by leaders and elites who will shape foreign policy. In the short term, elites may not always manage to guide state behaviour according to their desires in the face of a threat, and foreign policy may not correspond to the distribution of power, appearing erratic or disconnected from the international context.

Leaders may be more easily pressured by domestic factors to obtain responses or may need to mobilize elites to gain support for a particular foreign policy action they deem appropriate (ROSE, 1998). In the long term, however, foreign policy cannot deviate from systemic constraints, to which the state must necessarily adapt, or risk jeopardizing its security or missing out on significant opportunities.

According to ROSE (1998), the influence of systemic factors becomes more evident when analysed over the long term, as the limitations shaping a state's foreign policy decisions become more apparent. One can draw an analogy with a "menu" of options that the dynamics of the international system offer to states over a period; observing foreign policy choices with some temporal distance allows for understanding that, in most cases, a state was not forced to bend to a systemic factor, but rather had to make choices from a limited "menu" considering its relative power.

ROSE (1998) also warns of the difficult task that interpreting the options present in the international system poses for leaders and elites, as well as

assessing the relative power changes of their own state and others. Thus, understanding the interconnections between relative power and foreign policy requires an analysis of the international context in which foreign policy was formulated.

In addition to the contribution of the RNC to the Realist school in general, the advantages of using it as a theoretical framework are evident, especially for analyses that need to deal with a large number of variables. The RNC is particularly useful for research questions that present “puzzles” about a state's behaviour in the face of positive or negative options offered by the external environment.

However, the advantages of the theory do not exempt it from timely criticisms that should guide its improvement, as noted by various authors who discuss the excessive eclecticism of this current (SMITH, 2018), given that it combines the main tenets of Liberalism, Constructivism, and Neorealism. Beyond the epistemological and ontological issues of the RNC that have already been thoroughly discussed in the field (RATHBUN, 2008) and that this research has faced, confident that it would be the most suitable approach for the proposed problem, two criticisms are especially relevant for any work adopting the neoclassical realist perspective: the number of factors that will be analysed and the treatment of countries that are not great powers.

Regarding the first point, the number of intervening variables represents a permanent challenge for the RNC, at the risk of adding them in excessive quantity, creating what QUINN (2013, p. 165) termed “an explosion of state-level variables.” The use of the RNC demands a commitment to the supremacy of the independent variable and parsimony in the adoption of intervening variables, which should be included based on their relevance to the case analysed. In other words, “parsimony should be balanced with explanatory power, and the RNC is rigorous in formulating hypotheses and testing them in cases, thus maintaining the status of a progressive and scientific theoretical research agenda” (LOBELL ET AL, 2009, p. 23).

The second criticism to be discussed is the role reserved for small and emerging countries within the theory. Like other conventional IR theories, the RNC was created to explain the strategies of great powers, and its explanations for other countries in the international system are superficial and categorical. For example, the RNC is vague in addressing the impact of external constraints on the behaviour of small states or those with lesser relative power, merely reinforcing that they would be more vulnerable than great powers. Other characteristics of countries that are not great powers are not explored, such as states with large territories and little military strength.

An important contribution from Latin America to IR is Peripheral Realism (PR) developed by Argentine Carlos Escudé in the 1990s. This branch of Realism offers an explanation for countries that are not great powers and have national interests guided by economic development, rather than strictly by security, as the realist tradition posits. It is interesting to note that PR predates the emergence of the RNC and anticipates some of its trends, including the importance of domestic variables such as institutions and elites in IR analyses. Despite its originality, PR has not received the same attention as other theories arising from the U.S.-U.K. axis, which provide deep explanations only for the behaviour of great powers.

Returning to the discussion about the RNC, it is important to note that this theory follows the same explanatory line as other realist theories, but advances by recognizing that there are also emerging countries in the international system that must be included in the research agenda (TALIAFERRO; LOBELL; RIPSAN, 2016).

An important contribution to the application of the RNC in contexts outside the axis of developed countries was made by Gómez-Mera (2013), who analysed the evolution of Mercosur in light of the tension between interstate asymmetries and the domestic politics of member countries. Gómez-Mera's study sheds light on domestic processes that blocked or mitigated systemic effects in the bloc, and more works of this kind are needed. As Acharya (2015) observes, it is not necessary for mainstream theories to be discarded by researchers from the Global South; rather, these theories should be questioned and urged to think beyond their countries of origin, as well as being confronted with new theoretical approaches from other parts of the world.

Neoclassical Realism and International Trade

It is important to demonstrate how Neoclassical Realism (NCR) can contribute to the study of trade agreements. Although NCR was initially created to explain the behaviour of great powers and primarily concerns itself with security issues, in line with Realist tradition, RIPSAN, LOBELL, and TALIAFERRO (2016) argue that other topics can be analysed through its lens, including trade issues. The cited authors refer to MAYER's work (1998) on the negotiation process of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), a free trade agreement between the United States, Canada, and Mexico, to address the topic and explain the contribution of NCR. NAFTA underwent modifications and was renamed USMCA (United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement) in July 2020.

Interestingly, Mayer has previous works predating the establishment of NCR that already employed two-level analyses (domestic and international) and

questioned the exclusively systemic perspective of Realism and Neorealism, anticipating some of the criticisms that would emerge in the late 1990s with NCR. The author did not propose a hierarchy between the levels but provided a political analysis matrix that also considered domestic interests that arose against the agreement, contradicting the logic of economic studies that showed trade advantages for the three countries involved. In terms of synergy between the levels, Mayer's work can be considered a precursor to what would later be proposed by neoclassical realists, especially in the discussion by RIPSAN, LOBELL, and TALIAFERRO (2016) regarding NCR's ability to address issues such as trade flows or economic interdependence among states.

Mayer's works are examples of studies that diverged from the rigidity of Neorealism and sought to incorporate domestic factors in an organized and scientific manner. Gideon Rose coined the term "Neoclassical Realism" in 1998, based on the systematization of previous attempts to create convergence between levels of analysis, giving rise to a new theoretical current in International Relations (IR). It is interesting to note how Mayer's work identifies the need for a comprehensive analytical model to capture the nuances of trade agreements, while NCR, once established as a theory in IR, primarily focuses on security issues. From the second decade of the 21st century onward, NCR has resumed other research agendas that can benefit from its versatility, revisiting many of the assumptions previously discussed by Mayer.

Regarding other approaches to trade in the field of IR, these were generally explored by liberalism prior to the emergence of NCR. However, according to the criticisms made by neoclassical realists, liberal theory does not provide explanations that take into account the power struggle in the international system and the understanding that the state is a plural actor. In this sense, the liberal branches of IR utilize the same logic as the *innenpolitik* theories described by classical realists, given that liberals argue that foreign policy is determined by the preferences of domestic coalitions. In summary,

Our critique of liberalism is not that liberal democracy, international institutions, trade flows, or levels of economic interdependence between states are epiphenomenal. On the contrary, we argue that by minimizing the relative distribution of power and focusing on institutions, liberal democracy, and trade, while excluding power politics, liberal theories are limited in explaining many aspects of international politics." (RIPSAN; LOBELL; TALIAFERRO, 2016, p. 6).

The exclusion of systemic factors ignores the power struggles surrounding economic issues, operating under the assumption that the rationality of domestic institutions' decision-making processes will guide foreign policy choices toward cooperation, thereby generating peace and stability in the international system.

Neoclassical realism (NCR) recognizes the importance of domestic pressures but primarily adds systemic constraints to analyses that often limit states' options in terms of foreign policy actions, an argument that refers back to the previously used idea of a "menu." When economic discussions come into play, this "menu" of options available in the international system may become even more restricted or contain simultaneous political pressures, leaving little room for domestic actors to manoeuvre. An example of this situation, which illustrates NCR's ability to combine different levels of analysis, is the question posed by RIPSAN, LOBELL, and TALIAFERRO (2016) regarding the conditions under which a state opts for free trade or protectionism, a topic that connects with the current research.

While traditional realists believe that states always prefer protectionism, and liberals argue that the decision depends on the domestic coalition with greater influence over foreign policy, NCR asserts that the first factor impacting this judgment will be the international environment, followed by the preferences of domestic coalitions. If the alternatives in the international environment are limited or security is threatened, the choice will be for trade protectionism; otherwise, free trade may be the choice of domestic coalitions (GOWA; MANSFIELD, 1993). Obviously, there will be protectionist coalitions vying for the prerogative over foreign policy, and the balance of power with pro-free trade coalitions differs in each state. The group that prevails in this struggle will attempt to influence the executive branch and shape foreign policy in favour of its interests.

A traditional example used by NCR to demonstrate this dynamic is, once again, the negotiation and signing process of NAFTA. The analysis is centred on the United States because this actor was the main driver of the agreement, even though Mexico took the initiative to propose a dialogue on free trade in 1990, initially only with the Americans (Schott, 2001).

According to NCR, three systemic factors converged to make this agreement a reality: first, the collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR) in 1989, consolidating the United States' position as the main power. The threat posed by the USSR had dissipated, and security was abundant in the international system (RIPSAN; LOBELL; TALIAFERRO, 2016), a situation that allowed a state's preferences regarding trade policy to depend more on the pressure exerted by domestic coalitions.

Second, trade competition between the United States, then the European Economic Community (EEC), and Japan became intense between the 1970s and 1980s in the manufactured goods sector. Japan, in particular, caused significant concern when it began to be perceived as a rising power by the U.S. (FURSE,

2022), just as West Germany's high-tech exports raised alarm bells for other competitors.

The final systemic factor to mention was the negotiations taking place under the GATT to reform multilateral trade. The recessions of the 1970s had created a protectionist environment in the early 1980s, and the advances made by the Tokyo Round (1973-1979), such as tariff reductions by developed countries and the inclusion of regulations on non-tariff barriers, were still being implemented. Tension grew as the U.S. pressured its allies, particularly Europeans, for a new round of negotiations that included services, intellectual property, and agriculture. In summary, confidence in the multilateral trade system was declining, and uncertainty about its future loomed.

In light of these systemic factors, important domestic decisions in U.S. politics occurred, allowing for the creation of NAFTA. The deadlocks in GATT negotiations led the U.S. to negotiate free trade agreements with several countries simultaneously as an alternative (SCHOTT, 2001), allowing for the signing of an agreement with Israel in 1985 and another with Canada in 1988. Starting in the 1990s, the focus of these negotiations became Latin America, which was recovering from the previous decade's debt crisis. The U.S. strategy to diversify partners and promote free trade seemed to be the most suitable choice to navigate a moment of restructuring in international trade, and few anticipated the resistance from American society regarding NAFTA, an unprecedented situation given the consistent support for free trade from the American public since the end of World War II.

Free trade not only had the support of the Democratic and Republican parties but also enjoyed backing from public opinion, which trusted in trade's strategic role for the U.S. in the bipolar context. On the other hand, during this period, there was little citizen participation in discussions on the topic, unlike the direct and active involvement of businesses in trade negotiations. Public acquiescence came to an end with the NAFTA negotiations in 1990, when, for the first time, environmental and especially protectionist groups organized opposition to a trade agreement (Mayers, 2002).

American protectionist sectors, particularly represented by labour unions, small farmers, and heavy industry, opposed the agreement, arguing that it would lead to job losses and exacerbate the trend of companies relocating to Mexico, a country with more lenient taxes, environmental legislation, and labour laws than the U.S. The nationalist appeal behind these claims was apparent, and protectionists advocated for tariff and non-tariff barriers against imports, as well as subsidies for their activities.

The segment that advocates for free trade is the business community, which consists of sectors with greater competitive capacity in the international

landscape, such as light industry, agribusiness, and services (RIPSMAN; LOBELL; TALIAFERRO, 2016). These sectors advocated for the elimination of tariff barriers, and despite the unprecedented involvement of civil society and the uproar from protectionists who emerged victorious from the clash, NAFTA was signed.

Nevertheless, the scars from the clash between free trade and protectionist factions would linger in the public debate in the U.S., and the rupture of consensus regarding the benefits of free trade became entrenched in the country's politics (Mayers, 2002). This rupture intensified throughout the 1990s and had significant impacts in the second decade of the 21st century.

In concluding the example given by the case of NAFTA, NCR demonstrates its applicability in a multi-level analysis of trade agreements. Systemic factors such as the shift in the post-Cold War landscape toward a more permissive and secure international system, trade competition among developed countries, and insecurity regarding GATT allowed the U.S. to adopt a more aggressive stance in terms of trade policy.

This opened space for domestic protectionist groups, historically absent from the debate, to clash with free trade advocates. Protectionists lost the battle, and NAFTA was signed, but they found a voice in the American public debate and became increasingly vocal from this episode onward, gaining sympathy from the labour sectors. In other words, a keen look at the domestic scene not only responds to the U.S. insistence on signing NAFTA but also observes the beginning of a protectionist trend that, even after losing the initial clash, would remain active in the following years.

It should also be noted that, as a power, the U.S. had more leeway to defend its trade interests in the multilateral trade system through pressure against its partners within GATT, which signifies an important impact on a systemic factor, according to the terms used by NCR. Smaller powers or developing countries do not have this capacity and are more susceptible to the realities presented by the international system, possessing little ability to alter it in their favour.

Recent works also demonstrate the utility of neoclassical realism (NCR) in explaining variations in the agenda regarding protectionism or trade openness mentioned earlier, seeking to understand the different reasons for states' engagement in trade agreements and scrutinizing political decisions. The literature review indicated a growing number of analyses on free trade agreements from the perspective of NCR in the second decade of the 21st century. Noteworthy texts discuss agreements promoted by the European Union, agreements among Asian countries, and those focusing on China's role, reinforcing the argument that the increasing complexity of the international system requires more comprehensive and versatile analytical tools.

Below, I present two studies that exemplify this new trend, which has contributed to the resurgence of political issues in the study of agreements and the collaboration of international relations (IR) in these discussions.

SMITH (2016) investigated the strategic approach of the European Union towards Ukraine through a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA). Agreements of this kind were part of the strategy created in 2004 called the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The goal was to foster closer ties between the European Union and the countries of Eastern and Southern Europe. Comprehensive agreements are in effect with Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. Negotiations between the European Union and Ukraine began in 2008, and for many analysts, these were one of the triggers for increased rivalry with Russia in the region. According to SMITH (2016), there was a perception within the European Union that the bloc should position itself internationally as an economic power through a common foreign policy, promoting its values such as free trade.

Ukraine was understood as an important economic partner, while Russia was seen as a fragile economy unable to compete with the European Union and attract Ukrainians into its sphere of influence. Using NCR as an explanatory key, the author demonstrates how the European Union's misconceptions (analysed from a state-centric perspective solely for the purpose of examining its foreign policy) in exercising its normative power through trade exacerbated Russian hostility towards Ukraine, elevating tensions between the two countries. The European Union overestimated Ukraine's capacity to join the European integration project while underestimating Russia's response to this rapprochement, demonstrating the difficulty of European Union institutions in reacting to systemic constraints through consistent foreign policy actions.

Another example of a study on trade agreements that employs NCR is TERADA's (2019) analysis of Japan's role in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Known in the media by its English acronym TPP, the free trade agreement began negotiations in 2008 and aimed to bring together twelve countries belonging to the Pacific geographic region. The shift in U.S. domestic policy with Donald Trump's rise to the presidency (2016-2021) caused a significant change in foreign and trade policy, leading to the country's exit from the agreement in 2017.

China, in turn, sought to increase its influence in the region and encouraged the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a free trade agreement among the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and their main trading partners. The U.S. exit from the TPP created a deadlock regarding the future of the agreement, while the RCEP became a more promising alternative. TERADA (2019) argues that the systemic change brought about by the U.S. attitude paved the way for Japan to take the lead in the TPP, becoming an important counterweight to China.

The alteration at the systemic level allowed then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to strengthen his cabinet's ("Kantei") position against traditional domestic interest groups, giving Japan a leadership role in the continuation of the TPP (which came to be referred to as "TPP-11" in reference to the number of signatory countries). The author identified two intervening variables—the strengthening of the Kantei and the weakening of interest groups, especially in agriculture—as the main elements that enabled Japan's prominence. Regarding the independent variable,

In terms of Neoclassical Realism, the U.S.'s absence from the TPP strengthened Japan's relative power within the group. Japanese political leaders well received this situation, supporting the self-imposed task of concluding the trade agreement (TERADA, 2019:26).

The examples illustrate the theory's ability to organize the scenario being analysed, as various factors are considered simultaneously and at two levels. Works from other fields often emphasize geopolitics and examine the levels in an unsystematic manner, failing to explain the interaction that occurs between them and prioritizing one explanatory element over another without justification. The Realist contribution to Neoclassical Realism regarding the supremacy of the systemic level adds a distinctive element to the study of trade agreements because it presents the "menu" of international constraints and opportunities for countries; from this point, the perception and interpretation of domestic actors will determine what foreign policy action will be taken.

Conclusion

In the face of an increasingly complex international scenario and intricate trade agreements, the field of International Relations has much to offer for analyses that consider the power dynamics among countries. The struggle for power continues to govern international relations and has become even more relevant since the 21st century.

Trade agreements now encompass numerous issues beyond commerce and have become an important tool for projecting power, not just economically. Among the theories of IR, Neoclassical Realism has been used to analyse complex trade agreements affected by both the international system's context and domestic factors. Neoclassical Realism is useful for explaining why variations occur in a state's foreign policies over time and under external constraints, particularly concerning the actions of powers that impact the international system as a whole. According to this analytical lens, domestic actors "read" the situation based on the constraints and opportunities offered by the international system and adopt actions to address the challenges.

The theory allows for the selection and organization of the variables of a case within an analytical framework that facilitates working with various factors, providing a panoramic view of the phenomenon addressed. Moreover, it possesses the necessary flexibility to incorporate different explanatory elements.

Although Neoclassical Realism is not a new theory, it has been little applied in recent decades to analyse trade issues because the international context of the 1990s and early 2000s seemed to favour cooperation in this area, and globalization fulfilled the promise of prosperity, at least for the countries of the Global North. The second decade of the 21st century witnessed the overwhelming return of *realpolitik*, characterized by a technologically sophisticated trade war, analogous to the disputes among the great powers of the 1930s.

Thus, Neoclassical Realism has re-emerged as an alternative to deal with the complexity of this new scenario and to include in analyses the Global South countries, which have gained more voice in international negotiations in recent decades. This opens up space for a promising research agenda through the lens of Neoclassical Realism, such as the role of lobbies in the foreign policies of countries involved in negotiations; the impact of power struggles on trade negotiations; the role of ideologies in conducting trade negotiations; and the position of the new globalized far-right on trade agreements. This work aimed to contribute to expanding this research agenda through the analytical lenses of IR, given that politics has once again permeated economic issues intensely in recent years, necessitating analyses capable of explaining countries' positions beyond import and export tariffs.

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IRAN'S FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY TOWARDS POST-SADDAM IRAQ: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract. Iran and Iraq are the two neighbouring countries but with unfriendly relationships. They were engaged in several wars, including an eight-year-long war that ended in 1988, and this enmity continued throughout the following decades. Both countries followed hostile policy to each other and developed intimate relationships with each other's dissident groups. Iran provided political support and financial assistance to the Shi'ite and Kurdish resistance organizations, which had been fighting against Saddam Hussein and the Ba'athists. Iraq's resistance groups were also eager to receive Iranian aid. Ironically, the vacuum created in Iraq with the fall of Saddam in 2003 filled with the Shi'ites and Kurds and thus Iran's Iraqi allies assumed the power of Iraq. As a result of the regime change, Iran's policy towards Iraq has shifted into a new turn aimed at eliminating the traditional hostilities, and thus Iran-Iraq relations improved considerably. The two countries signed several cooperation agreements, including military cooperation agreements on new transportation and energy links and possibly future oil pipeline connections. While Saddam's Iraq was considered a security threat to Iran, now it has gradually been developed as a potential ally. Iran seeks to ensure that Iraq can never again become a threat to Iran. Iran wants to shape post-Saddam Iraq's political structure in Iran's favour to establish a pro-Iranian government at least no emergence of an 'anti-Tehran' government in Baghdad. Iran sees Iraq as providing lucrative investment opportunities and a growing market for Iranian products. Iran wants to suppress Iranian dissident groups located over the border inside Iraq. Iran also tries to exert its influence on Iraqi internal affairs to prevent the US from changing Iran's political system and threatening Iran's national security. Historical experience, national-regional interests, and geopolitical factors motivated Iran to follow this new policy strategy toward Iraq. Thus, the fall of Saddam became a turning point in Iran-Iraq relations, which ultimately changed Iran's foreign policy towards Iraq. This work exclusively aims at analysing the Iranian policy strategy towards post-Saddam Iraq.

Key Words: Iraq-Iran relation, Saddam Hussein, Shi'ite, Kurdish, politico-regional interests, Iran's policy strategy.

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Introduction

Due to its geo-political and geo-strategic characteristics, the Middle East has been one of the world's most significant regions of involvement. The Persian Gulf—which is regarded as the "heart" of the Middle East—has been a focal point of world politics for more than thirty years. Iran and Iraq, two of the Gulf's riparian countries, have different foreign policies, which is one of the key reasons for which the Persian Gulf has gained prominence in world affairs. With its revolutionary philosophy, strategic location as the political hub of Shi'ism, and abundant natural gas and oil deposits, Iran stands out as a representation of Persian culture and its political history. However, Iraq gains significance due to its unique role in the Arab World, its diverse ethnic and sectarian makeup, its pan-Arab philosophy, its status as the most powerful Arab country in the Gulf, and abundant petroleum resources. Iraq's 1920s secession from the Ottoman Empire marked the beginning of these two countries' struggle for regional predominance. After the UK left the region in the 1970s, the conflict grew more intense and in the 1980s, it became close-quarters fighting. But, the eight-year war ended without a winner. However, in the post-Cold War era, a number of regional and global events had a significant impact on the power dynamics between Iran and Iraq. The Russian threat to Iran essentially vanished in 1989 with the Soviet Union's departure from Afghanistan and subsequent collapse in 1991. Alternatively, during the First Gulf War, Iraq, the "eternal" opponent of Iran, was forced out of Kuwait in 1991, suffering severe damage to its military, political, and economic power. Consequently, Iran achieved supremacy over Iraq in the region. Since then, the US and its allies imposed UN Sanctions, no-fly-zones and provided support to Iraqi dissident groups to curtail the power of Saddam's Ba'athist regime. The US gave regime change in Iraq a high priority following the events of September 11, 2001. In a State-of-the-Union Speech on January 20, 2004, George W. Bush proclaimed, "And above all, we will finish the historic work of democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq so those nations can light the way for others and help transform a troubled part of the world" (WOOLLEY and PETERS, 2004). The US-led actions in 2003 resulted in the fall of the Ba'ath regime, the destruction of Iraq's military, the disruption of its political authority, and the transformation of its political system into a loose federation. The overthrow of Saddam Hussein in Iraq in 2003 made profound changes in the context of Iran-Iraq relations. Shi'ites and Kurds, who had close links to the Iranian leadership, were certain to inherit Iraq through the introduction of democracy, and the reinforcement of sectarian identities through new governmental institutions. With the fall of Saddam, Iran had a chance to pursue strategic

expansionism in the Middle East and began to forge cooperative ties with Iraq while also gaining more political influence in the country. Thus, the US policy in Iraq established the platform for the best Iran-Iraq relations in decades and accordingly, the Iranian policy towards Post-Saddam Iraq got a new dimension. This is pure qualitative research based on secondary sources of information. A descriptive method will be used to analyse the data collected through secondary sources, including books, journals, periodicals, and globally renowned news media. Content analysis method would be used to examine the collected data. The main objective of this study is to explore the Iranian perspectives in regard to its policy strategy toward post-Saddam Iraq.

Historical Background of the Iran-Iraq Relationship

Iran and Iraq have been competing states and empires since antiquity. Throughout history, the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Abbasid dynasties were based in Mesopotamia, which is now Iraq. The Achaemenid, Safavid, and early modern Qajar dynasties ruled over the Persian Empire. Shi'ite Islam, which originated in Iraq, was recognized as the state religion of Iran in the sixteenth century, during the Safavid dynasty. Religious pilgrims from Iran travel to the holy Shi'ite towns of Najaf and Karbala in Iraq, which are also ancient Shi'ite centres of study. Consequently, Iran considered, even when Iraq was under the sway of the Ottoman Empire, southern Iraq to be within its historical area of influence and to be a part of the Persian cultural basin.

Iran has existed as a distinct political entity for millennia, based on the remnants of the Persian Empire. In contrast, Iraq is a remnant of colonialism and consists mostly of the three provinces that were part of the Ottoman Empire's eastern region: Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. When Iraq's mandate authority was founded in the 1920s, Iran viewed its newly formed neighbour with distrust and refused to recognize the legitimacy of Iraq. Iraq had a strong desire to acquire control over the Shatt al-Arab Waterway and the Arab-populated area of Khuzestan, which was part of Iran. Iraq backed the "Arabia" state, which was established in Khuzestan. Iran responded to this by not recognizing Iraq until 1929 and supporting the Kurdish insurgencies led by Mahmud Barzanji, which lasted from 1919 to 1923 (KESKIN, 2008). Once the mandate government in Iraq came to an end in 1932, Iran launched an effort to identify the country's boundary with Iraq in the centre of the Shatt al-Arab. As per the agreement struck on July 4, 1937, between the two countries, Iraq's sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab River was affirmed. However, the mid-line (thalweg) was acknowledged as the boundary in the Abadan area along the eight-kilometre stretch of the river (ATAMAN, 2010 pp. 167–168). Iraq's first ambassador to Iran, Tawfiq al-Suwaidi,

listed three main issues that characterized relations between the two countries in the 1930s and persisted into the following decades: the state of ethnic Arabs in Khuzestan, the unguarded portion of the Iran-Iraq border in the Kurdish north, and, most significantly, the Shatt al-Arab waterway (ISMAEL, 1982 p. 14). Following the border's precise definition and mutual agreement in 1937, Iran and Iraq established a number of agreements and treaties that essentially made them friends. Iran, Turkey, Iraq, and Afghanistan signed the Saadabad Pact in 1937, a symbolic non-aggression agreement. The Treaty of Good Neighbourly Relations was signed by Iran and Iraq in 1949. Although these accords greatly improved relations, the membership of Iran and Iraq in the Baghdad Pact in 1955 marked the pinnacle of this relationship. The goal of the deal was to stop the Soviet Union from expanding throughout the Middle East. Nevertheless, the worst period of relations between Iran and Iraq began in 1958 when a new Iraqi government decided to support the Soviet Union during the Cold War. During this period, unresolved issues included disputed boundaries, access to the Shatt al-Arab canal, and heightened ethnic tensions, putting the two countries on the verge of war. The story of Iran-Iraq relations throughout the first three decades is one of the antagonistic neighbours coming to terms with their differences in order to face common challenges. At one point or another, Iran and Iraq's collaboration or animosity increased as a result of British colonization, the Cold War, and the War on Terror. The West and Iran were shocked when, in 1959, Iraq withdrew from the Baghdad Pact.

Meanwhile, Mustafa Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) was once again making waves in Iraq. The Iranian Shah began to back KDP, seeing this as a chance to weaken his regional enemy. Kurdish uprisings in 1963, 1965, and 1968 were not put down. Therefore, the Iraqi government was forced to grant the Kurds substantial political, economic, and cultural rights in 1970 (KESKIN, 2008). Given the challenges Iraq faced at this time, Iran unilaterally terminated the 1937 pact in 1969 and asserted its own sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab (ARI, 2007 p. 401). The US's new regional strategy was another significant factor that prompted Iran to take this action. The Nixon Doctrine, often referred to as the "Twin-Pillar Policy," assigned Saudi Arabia the political and economic responsibility for the security of the Gulf Area, while Iran was responsible for its military defence. Iraq's regional interests were harmed by Iran as it attempted to control the Gulf Area with the help of the US military and political support (ATAMAN, 2010, pp. 166-167). However, after seizing power in 1968, the Ba'ath regime attempted to align Iraq's foreign policy even more with Soviet doctrine. In 1972, Iraq signed a "Friendship Treaty" with the Soviet Union to secure military and political support. Iraq launched a fresh offensive against KDP soldiers in 1974 after re-arming its military with Soviet assistance. Acknowledging the KDP's lack of prospects against the Iraqi army, the Iranian Shah resolved the issue by

establishing a pact with Iraq (Rousu, 2010: 59). On March 6, 1975, the parties signed the Algiers Treaty, which said that Iraq would give up its sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab and that Iran would not assist Kurdish organizations in Iraq (ISMAEL, 1982 p. 61). In addition, on July 13, 1975, the two countries signed the "Treaty of Border and Friendship" in an effort to maintain cordial neighbourhood relations and avoid border transit (ATAMAN, 2010, p. 169).

However, the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, led by Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, completely altered the nature of ties between Iran and Iraq. Following the revolution, Iran's new government saw the US and the West as threats to their rule and severed ties with the US, a longtime ally. Furthermore, given their divergent ideologies, the Iranian leadership had no scope to ally itself with the Soviet Union when it broke away from the West Block. Iran consequently found itself at a disadvantage position versus its adversary Iraq as a result of becoming isolated in the international arena. The Saddam administration in Iraq was ready to benefit from the situation in Iran. Additionally, the elements of Iran's new leadership spread the concept of spreading the Islamic revolution to surrounding nations, which made the secular Baathist regime in Iraq feel threatened (RAMAZANI, 1988, pp. 24-27). Conversely, Iraq sought to attain total control over the Kurds, limit Iran's economic and political influence by severing the Khuzestani Arab population from Iran, and establish Iraqi sovereignty by achieving national unity (ARI, 2007 p. 404). Saddam Hussein launched an attack against Iran on September 1, 1980, seeing a weak Iran in the midst of domestic disarray. Iraq's early-war domination of the conflict was short-lived, notwithstanding the occupation of some Iranian territory in the south. The invasion that was carried out in 1981 gave Iran its territory back, and in 1982, Iranian forces began to advance on Basra (ARI, 2007, p. 406). An eight-year war that resulted from the invasion was protracted, violent, and ultimately fruitless, leaving well over a million people dead or injured (ARMAOGLU, 1991b, pp. 29-31). The battle ended on July 3, 1988, when Iran complied with UN resolution 598 (ARI, 2007, p. 409). Although the war was ended in 1988, Iran and Iraq never had a real peace.

First Gulf War of 1990 and the Iranian Policy

The balance in the region changed with Iraq's attack on Kuwait on August 2, 1990, claiming it as part of Iraq. Iran unequivocally denounced the invasion of Kuwait and supported the UN resolutions demanding that Iraq remove its forces from Kuwait without delay. The crisis' most significant result for Iran was that Saddam had to unconditionally accept the terms of the 1975 Algiers Treaty—the reason the eight-year conflict began—in order to secure Iran's border and install troops from the Iranian fore to the Kuwaiti front (CETINSAYA, 2002, pp.

302-304). Throughout the conflict, Iran maintained its position of neutrality. While Iran did not object to the US-led Coalition Forces' engagement, it was worried about the US forces' protracted presence in the region. The US-led ground assault began on February 24, 1991. Iraqi soldiers were driven out of Kuwait and soundly defeated within 100 hours. Iraq significantly weakened as a result of the intervention, and the Iraqi army entirely vacated the Iranian territory it had not left following the Iran-Iraq War. Following these events, Iran's position in the region strengthened, and it was able to negotiate a deal with Iraq that allowed them to return to the Shatt al-Arab on their own terms. Yet Iran did not take the lead in the Gulf following the defeat of its main regional rival, as the war unlocked access for the world's only superpower, the US. More than before, US policy became the main factor influencing relations between Iran and Iraq. Throughout the decade that followed the First Gulf War, Iran and Iraq cooperated on a few subjects to face their shared challenges in response to US policy in the region. Iran and Iraq were just adversarial neighbours who occasionally banded together to confront a common threat posed by an external force.

Second Gulf War of 2003 and the Iranian Policy

Following the September 11, 2001, attacks on the US, Iran and Iraq saw an increase in US jingoism as the US viewed them as two of its top foreign policy priorities. Iran and Iraq were designated as major adversaries in the War on Terror by George W. Bush, branding them as an "axis of evil" in his State of the Union speech on January 29, 2002 (WOOLLEY AND PETERS, 2004). Under the "axis of evil" doctrine, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea were declared to be the adversaries of world peace. Accordingly, the US possesses the lawful authority to mandate or coerce them to alter their conduct. In light of this, the US legalized its meddling in the Middle East following 9/11 under the pretext of combating terrorism. In the following months, Iran-Iraq relations improved in the face of the US impotence. Early in 2002, both Iran and Iraq swapped hundreds of soldiers' remains from the Iran-Iraq War, and Iran freed 700 Iraqi prisoners of war (RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, 2002).

Iran devised a two-pronged approach to oppose US policies in the months before the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The first was to oppose publicly the US military intervention in Iraq.

To carry out this mission, Iran made use of its diplomatic connections with Iraq and other countries in the region. Kemal Kharrazi, the foreign minister of Iran, visited Istanbul on January 23, 2003, to have meetings with counterparts from Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Turkey (RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, 2003A). In the end, Iran's diplomatic approach was unsuccessful.

Iranian President Khatami said on March 21, 2003, a day after the invasion, "We have opposed this move from the outset, and today we again clearly condemn this military attack" (PAYVAND'S IRAN NEWS, 2003). Ayatollah Ali Khamene'i, the Supreme Leader remarked, "The US claims that its objective is the elimination of Saddam and the Ba'athist regime. This is, of course, a lie. Its real aim is to appropriate OPEC and to swallow up the region's oil resources, to offer a closer support to the Zionist regime and to plot more closely against Islamic Iran, Syria, and Saudi Arabia..." (BODANSKY, 2003).

Second, Iran made a number of noteworthy early preparations to secure a significant role for itself in post-Saddam Iraq. Tehran hosted a meeting with a number of Iraqi opposition leaders in January 2003 who were working with the US, including well-known invasion proponent Ahmed Chalabi, to devise plans for a post-Saddam Iraq. Following a meeting with Iranian officials, over a dozen exiled leaders of the Iraqi opposition devised plans to enter northern Iraq. Iran promised to help the exiled Iraqis by granting them entry via its border into the Kurdish Autonomous Region (SCIOLINO, 2003). Another summit for the leaders of the Iraqi Shi'ite opposition was held in Tehran on March 6, 2003. The goal of the summit was to strengthen Shi'ite unity in post-Ba'athist Iraq (RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, 2003b). Iraqis' frequent meetings in Tehran serve as evidence of Iran's partial involvement in the overthrow of the Ba'athist regime. Although Iran supported Saddam Hussein's demise, it did not want the US to gain an advantage at his price. Similar to the First Gulf War, Iran adopted a stance that backed the US's end aim but not its methods. Iran was uneasy about the idea that US soldiers stationed in Afghanistan and Iraq would trap them in a massive vice. Despite Iran's concerns, the invasion gave Iran's closest supporters in Iraq the chance to take control of Baghdad. Iran thus faced threats and opportunities together as a result of the Second Gulf War in 2003.

Iran-Iraq Relations after the Fall of Saddam Hussein

The historical hostilities between Iran and Iraq have drastically shifted with the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 and with the ascendancy of Shi'ite majority in Iraq's political and economic spheres. Both the countries seem at their most amicable relations in the history. The two countries' relations have greatly improved due to the quick growth of business links and the flow of commodities, products, and people across the border, where violent conflicts were waged in the 1980s. Iraqi Politicians now often visit Tehran, and Iranian officials visit Baghdad. In addition to improved elite relations, cross-cultural and cross-religious interaction also enhanced. Every year, thousands of Iranians visit the Shi'ite holy sites of Najaf and Karbala in southern Iraq; Iraqis also travel to Mashhad, Qom,

and other sacred locations within Iran. For example, in the summer of 2006, Iranian consulates in Baghdad, Basra, and Najaf granted about 3,000 visas every day to pilgrims from Iraq (BARZEGAR, 2008).

Iran and Iraq had begun a new chapter of better relations after the coalition forces returned power to the Iraqi leaders. High-ranking officials from both sides conducted an unprecedented number of visits, stopped supporting each other's opposition groups, and adopted a warmer attitude to highlight the new relationship. Iran has vigorously worked to increase its political influence and economic assistance through both diplomatic and military measures, taking advantage of Iraq's unstable political environment and vulnerable security. On August 4, 2003, Iran was the first Iraq's neighbour country to send a team to meet with the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) (NASR, 2006, p. 2). The IGC sent a delegation led by Jalal Talabani on November 18, 2003, to meet with Iranian authorities. The meeting's main focus was on Iraq's derelict oil industry. According to Iranian authorities, they are prepared to receive up to 350,000 barrels of crude oil from Iraq each day, refine it, and sell it on the country's behalf (RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, 2003c). IGC delegate Muwaffaq al-Rubay'i gave an explanation of his extensive agenda for the meeting:

We want to establish tourist relations, exchange visits, and have cultural, economic and security relations to consolidate the situation at the border. We also want industrial relations to coordinate our foreign policies... [We want the] relationship between [the] new Iraq and Iran to be a model for Iraq's new relations with its neighbors and the other countries of the world (RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, 2003c).

Iran pledged to donate \$300 million to support Iraqi reconstruction efforts (FELTER AND FISHMAN, 2008 p. 39), and the two countries swapped ambassadors. The Interim Government was replaced in May 2005 by the Iraqi Transitional Government through election. Shi'ite parties performed remarkably well in the January 2005 parliamentary elections, nearly securing a majority in the newly elected legislature. Kemal Kharrazi, the foreign minister of Iran, travelled to Baghdad on May 17, 2005, to congratulate Ibrahim al-Ja'afari, the newly elected prime minister of Iraq. Additionally, Kharrazi was the first Middle Eastern minister to visit Baghdad after the 2003 invasion. Within two months of Kharrazi's visit, Iraqi officials made high-profile visits to Tehran. Ibrahim Ja'afari, the prime minister of Iraq, paid a visit to Tehran on July 16, 2005. A number of noteworthy agreements came from his discussions with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the president-elect, President Khatami, and Supreme Leader Khamenei. Iran offered to finance the newly elected Iraqi government up to \$1 billion and encouraged the building of a network of pipes between Abadan and Basra (KATZMAN, 2007 p. 5). Two countries also decided to reopen consulates in Iraq's primarily Shi'ite towns, including Karbala and Basra. In addition to the concrete outcomes of the discussions, Prime

Minister al-Ja'afari made a number of first-time remarks while in Iran, which enhanced their significance. He claimed responsibility on behalf of Iraq for initiating the Iran-Iraq War, something Saddam Hussein strongly denied (KATZMAN, 2007, p. 5). Jalal Talabani, the president of Iraq, made his first visit to Iran in November 2005. Following his November 21, 2005, meeting with Talabani, Ahmadinejad declared his support for the new Iraqi government: "A popular, independent and developed Iraq will be the best friend of the Iranian nation. We totally support the political process that the Iraqi nation is undergoing that will... guarantee its territorial integrity, independence and progress" (BBC NEWS, 2005). With almost 53% of the seats in the parliamentary elections held in December 2005, the pro-Iranian Shi'ite coalition United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) emerged victorious and established the permanent government of Iraq. During the first fifteen months of their terms in the permanent government of Iraq, both President Jalal Talabani and Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki made at least five trips to Iran. During these visits, several agreements were signed on issues like border migration, intelligence sharing, the pipeline project that would transport crude oil between Abadan and Basra, clearing mines, and jointly searching for soldiers who were lost in the Iran-Iraq War (KATZMAN, 2010a p. 10). Iraqi officials expressed their confidence that they could resolve disputes with other neighbours by using their relationship with Iran (BBC NEWS, 2007).

In March 2008, Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, made his state visit to Iraq as the first Iranian leader since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. An agreement on military cooperation was signed between Iraq and Iran, along with six other accords covering customs procedures, insurance, industry, environmental protection, education, and transportation (KATZMAN, 2010a p. 10). Concurrently, Iran declared the granting of \$1 billion in credits for Iranian exports to Iraq (which complemented the \$1 billion credit granted in 2005). Iraqi officials have supported Iran's right to pursue a peaceful nuclear program while they are against Iran obtaining nuclear weapons (REUTERS, 2006). The US and Iraq agreed to withdraw coalition soldiers from Iraqi cities by June 30, 2009, and from all remaining Iraqi land by December 31, 2011, when they signed the Status of Soldiers Agreement (SOFA). Iraq gave the Iranians the guarantees they were looking for. Al-Maliki previously assured the Iranians he intended to make the US military leave and that he would "not allow Iraq to become a platform for harming the security of Iran and neighbours" (RADIO FREE EUROPE/RADIO LIBERTY, 2008). Camp Ashraf, which was taken over by members of the Iranian dissident organization Mujahedin Khalq Organisation (MKO), was given until April 11, 2011, by the Iraqi government, to leave the country (REUTERS, 2011). Agreements to extradite convicts were signed on April 24, 2011, by Hassan al-Shammari, the justice minister of Iraq, and Morteza Bakhtiari, the justice minister of Iran. The accord permits MKO members to be extradited to Iran to stand

trial (PRESS TV, 2011). The 1975 Algiers Accord's provisions for defining land and sea borders are now accepted by both countries.

Economically, Iraq and Iran have established wide-ranging ties since 2003. Trade between the two countries has amplified tenfold since 2003, reaching \$8 billion in 2010 (Reuters, 2010a; Karim, 2010)). Iran has also led a number of Iraqi rehabilitation initiatives. A number of legislation aimed at strengthening inter-regional business contacts were developed, and the border trade between the two countries has expanded. Iran was awarded a \$1.5 billion contract to support the reconstruction of the city of Basra on February 20, 2009. An Iranian construction company consented to construct three hotels and over 5,000 homes (FARS NEWS, 2008; EVANS, 2009). While the \$150 million power plant in Shi'ite Sadr City was constructed by the Iranian company Saner, an agreement worth \$230 million was reached with the Iranian corporation ISP to develop schools in Iraq (REUTERS, 2010). The Basra Investment Commission in southern Iraq authorized the establishment of a free trade zone with Iran on April 14, 2010. A private company is expected to invest about \$16 million in the zone over the course of the next 25 years (IRAQ BUSINESS NEWS, 2010). The Legislative Council member for Iraqi Kurdistan, Ali Khorshid, declared on April 19, 2010, that trade between Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan reached \$4 billion in 2010 (FARS NEWS, 2010a). On June 14, 2010, Iran's Oghab Afshan Industrial and Manufacturing Company (OAIMC) pledged to produce 300 buses for export to Iraq (FARS NEWS, 2010b). A contract was reached between Iran and Iraq on January 25, 2010, whereby Iran committed to exporting about 19,000 barrels of diesel oil to Iraq daily. Speculators estimated the deal's potential value to be between \$500 and \$600 million (REUTERS, 2010b). A \$10 billion natural gas agreement was struck in 2011 by Iraq, Iran, and Syria, wherein the three parties committed to building a pipeline that would start in southern Iran and conclude in Syria. Iranian authorities said that the pipeline will eventually pass through Lebanon and into the Mediterranean. At first, 20 million cubic meters would be sent to Iraq daily, and 20 to 25 million to Syria (AFP, 2011). Iran and Iraq reached a deal on May 23, 2011, allowing Iran to provide natural gas to power plants in Iraq. Accordingly, Iraq would be able to buy 25 million cubic meters of gas per day to run its facilities in the Baghdad suburbs to the northeast (ASSOCIATED PRESS, 2011). Thus, Iran has extensively strengthened its ties with Post-Saddam Iraq through diverse means approaches.

Iranian Policy Strategy towards Post-Saddam Iraq

The fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 has presented a historic opportunity for Iran to increase its influence in Iraq and to improve relations. The important aspect

of Iran's policy during this time of transition was to transform Iraq from a historical threat to a future cooperative partner (WANG, 2007, p. 70). Iran, as a major player in the Middle East, certainly wants to establish its own security environment and expand its sphere of influence there. After being confined for so many years by the Arab countries led by Iraq, Iran is now in a good position to reclaim its leading role in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. To attain this aim, Iran has redesigned its policy strategy towards post-Saddam Iraq to build an extensive friendly relationship with Iraq and to influence the political structure in Iraq to Iran's favour by promising the political triumph of pro-Iranian politicians in Iraq. Since the number of Shi'ites in Iraq almost guaranteed Shi'ite domination of an elected government, Iran suited its interests to encourage the admission of Iraqi Shi'ite factions into the electoral process. Iran had a key role in the formation of the UIA, a Shi'ite Islamist alliance that includes the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), the Da'wa party, and the group led by the cleric Moqtada Al Sadr. This coalition won 128 out of 275 seats in the full-term parliament election held on December 15, 2005. Iran has also significantly reduced supporting the Shi'ite militia activity in Iraq. As of early 2009, according to the US Defense Department, "Tehran has selectively reduced the number of militants it supports" (KATZMAN, 2010b, p. 2). This US judgment has persisted throughout the course of the following years. According to Lt. Gen. Thomas Metz, there has been a noticeable decrease in the entry of explosive devices from Iran to Iraq (KATZMAN, 2010b, p. 4). Iran has managed to avoid fresh conflicts with its Arab neighbours and prevent the emergence of new security challenges in the region by playing a moderate and well-balanced role in post-Ba'athist Iraq. Iran, therefore, has adopted both pragmatic and ideological appliances in regulating its policy towards Iraq. On the one hand, Iran has made an effort to counter the perceived US threat in times of insecurity by supporting friendly Shi'ite groups. On the other hand, Iran has attempted to counteract the detrimental effects of Iraq's ideological, ethnic, and sectarian divides on Iran's national security by highlighting the country's unity. Thus, Iran has been keenly aware of its multi-dimensional interests in Iraq and has pursued a broad strategy to secure them. A number of geopolitical, economic, strategic, regional and international considerations persuaded Iran to develop this policy strategy towards post-Saddam Iraq.

Impact of Historical Events on Iran's Foreign Policy

Historically, Iran has been facing invasions and security threats from neighbouring countries due to its geo-strategic location in the Middle East. From the Allied occupation during World War II all the way up to the invasion of Iraq in 1980. Iran's pragmatic security policies towards its neighbours have been greatly

impacted by threats arising from its borders. A long-term pattern of Iranian pragmatic security strategy towards Iraq has been uncovered by three pivotal periods: the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 and subsequent Iraq-Iraq War in 1980–1988, and the First Gulf War in 1991. Iran viewed the Soviet Union as a greater threat under Muhammad Reza Shah, who countered it by allying with the US and signing the Baghdad Pact. While Iraq fell into the Soviet sphere of influence, Iran became one of the US allies against Soviet expansion in the Middle East. During this time, the historical animosities between Iran and Iraq combined with these external alliances widened the rift between the two countries. With the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, Iran severed ties with the US evaluating it as a threat to their regime. On the other hand, ideological disagreements prevented Iran from moving closer to the Soviet Union. Iran chose a "neither East nor West" foreign policy strategy in response to challenges from both superpowers. With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the creation of sovereign border states in Central Asia, Iran's northern border was no longer threatened by a superpower. But US-Iranian ties had deteriorated much worse, and Iran felt even more vulnerable in this new unipolar world (TAROCK, 1999 p. 62). Iran observed that even though Iraq attacked it initially during the 1980–1988 War, Iraq received support from other countries whereas Iran did not. Iraq instigated another regional crisis when it invaded Kuwait in 1990. An imminent threat to Iran was removed with Iraq's defeat and subsequent containment by a coalition led by the US. However, the US military presence in the region posed a bigger threat to Iran. All these historical experiences, combined with Iran's sensitivity to foreign interference and consistent regional threats, significantly impacted the designing of the country's foreign policy strategy today (TAROCK, 1999, p. 4).

Secure Neighbourhood and Regional Stability

Iran has paid a heavy price over the last few decades for living in a volatile neighbourhood. The core of Iran's unstable and insecure backyard is the ongoing sectarian conflict and instability across its western border (Iraq), unstable states in the east (Afghanistan and Pakistan), transforming states in the north (Central Asia and the Caucasus), and authoritarian regimes that rely on security in the south and the Persian Gulf. An unstable atmosphere might intensify local rivalries, military conflicts, crises, and eventually the deployment of foreign troops. Iran is devoting a significant amount of its political and economic stamina to fending off these many challenges from the region. The necessity to constantly retain a powerful military to protect Iran's national borders is ingrained in this dimension of Iran's national security demands (ALAM, 2003). Without reaping the benefits that come with maintaining regional stability, Iran is paying a heavy price.

Though the removal of Saddam from Iraq reduced the conventional military threat, new security threats centred on the development of insecurity and uncertainty, ethnic geopolitical enmities, religious and civil war, and the chance of territorial disintegration have developed. Building strong ties and collaboration at the state level is necessary to address these issues (BARZEGAR, 2008). Tensions have arisen both domestically and regionally as a result of the existence of three independent identities, such as Kurdish, Sunni, and Shi'ite, and the problem of how to balance them. However, Iran also realized that backing a centralized government in Baghdad would stop ethnic and sectarian strife from spreading outside of Iraq, particularly after that country's sectarian violence in 2006. Spreading insecurity in Iraq would mean insecurity for Iran (THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, 2007; THE JERUSALEM POST, 2006). A stable and secure Iraq means stable and secure borders for Iran. With this perspective, Iran's policy towards Iraq shifted from a hard strategy of mostly providing covert military backing to different Shi'ite militias to a soft strategy of influence, with the main goal being to influence Iraq's political and economic affairs. Thus, establishing a secure, stable, and balanced Iraq and preserving its territorial integrity has become one of Iran's foreign policy priorities to relieve itself from regional instability and secure Iran's interests in the region.

Preventing Future Security Threat

Iran has seen several invasions and threats across its borders in the north, west, and east throughout its history. Iran has experienced threats from the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the Taliban in Afghanistan, and Iraq under Saddam Hussein. The national Iranian psyche has been profoundly impacted by generations of foreign threats. Despite the fact that Saddam Hussein's regime was no longer a threat, Iran saw how his alleged threat of chemical and biological weapons failed to stop the US from launching a pre-emptive strike (BOWEN AND KIDD, 2004: 265). Iran's paranoia has also grown as a result of the Bush administration's "axis of evil" rhetoric and intention to change the Iranian regime (BOWEN AND KIDD, 2004, p. 26). The security of Iran is seriously threatened by the US military's presence in the region. Therefore, Iran's engagement in Iraq is aimed at preventing future security challenges. By supporting those political organizations in Iraq that are more amiable towards Iran, Tehran has tried to persuade Baghdad to play the role of a strategic partner in the region. Iran establishes good relations with Iraq to reduce potential threat perceptions (NAGHIBZADEH, 2002). The establishment of positive ties with Iraq could also assist Iran's efforts in harmonizing its role and power with the rest of the Arab world.

To Establish a Shi'ite-Led Iran-Friendly Government in Iraq

After Saddam, one of Iran's most crucial geopolitical objectives in Iraq is to support the rise of pro-Iranian political groups with Shi'ite leaderships to come into power. Iran prefers a central Iraqi government that will be powerful enough to hold the country together, but not so strong as to pose a threat to Iran and be relied upon to maintain friendly relations and ready to lessen US influence in the region (POUND, 2004). In this respect, Iran desires to have a Shi'ite-dominated government in Iraq, because they believe that Shi'ites don't fight the Shi'ites. Iran realized that Shi'ites dominated Iraq will be a reliable neighbour for Iran to secure its political, strategic and economic interests (SINKAYA, 2007, p. 56). Iran strongly desires of preventing an anti-Tehran government from coming to power in Iraq. Iran came to the conclusion that, as Iraqi Shi'ites make up 60% of the population, the best way to guarantee their dominance in a post-Saddam Iraq was to encourage general elections. Iran supported the national elections held in 2005 and worked hard to form UIA with the major Shi'ite groups. The UIA won the victory in the election and formed the government. After the polls, Iran applauded its outcome (COLE, 2005). The main strategic objectives have been, first, to assist in the establishment of an Iranian-friendly government in Baghdad, and second, to prevent Iraq from reclaiming the military might of the Ba'athist period or to stop Iraq from becoming a base for potential US military operations. Iran hopes to erase the long-standing label of Iraq as its counterweight in the Persian Gulf by converting it into a friendly state and establishing a "balance of interests" in the new relationship.

To Deter US Hegemony in the Region

One of the fundamental objectives of Iranian strategy toward Iraq is to challenge perceived encirclement by the US and to date US hegemony in the region. Following 9/11, the Bush administration's regional strategy has centred on pursuing a "regime change" agenda, forging hostile regional coalitions against Iran, and isolating Iran in its geopolitical domain (WOOLLEY AND PETERS, 2004). As a result of the political and security events in post-Saddam Iraq, Iran is faced with security concerns due to the US military presence near its borders, along with the potential for additional US military bases and US aims and strategies in the region. Despite Iran's deep relief at the fall of the Taliban and Saddam governments, there remained a feeling that a new and perhaps more dangerous security threat had taken their place (KHALILZAD, 2008). This has enforced Iran to confront the US in the region. Iran views, even the US, if not with the intention of overthrowing the regime, uses the threat to put pressure on Iran to stop its alleged nuclear weapons program and its

backing for Hizbullah and other anti-Israel organizations. Iran, therefore, fears that if the US genuinely succeeds in its endeavour in Iraq, Washington would take note of the advantages of regime change and try to implement it elsewhere in the East. Instead, Iran wants a powerful, nationalist, legitimate, Iran-friendly government in Baghdad so that the US will leave the region as soon as possible (Murphy, 2005). One significant Iranian tool to counter US hegemony could be the political dominance of Shi'ites in Iraq. It is in Iran's best interest to make sure that Washington's success in Iraq depends on collaboration with the Shi'ites, therefore lessening the US's capacity to exert pressure on Iran in other issues. Thus, establishment of friendly and cooperative relations with Iraq is also aimed at deterring the US hegemony in the region.

Spreading Influence across the Permeable Borders

Iran and Iraq have shared a long porous border, which has been a major source of contention between the two countries. Since Shi'ite beliefs originated in Iraq, Iranian pilgrims have historically been there to visit the holy shrines. Some have even married and established families after staying to attend one of the religious institutions. Since 2003, the number of Iranian pilgrims entering Iraq has been gradually rising. Many Iranians have relatives in Iraq and vice versa. Scientific and cultural exchanges have also increased. Trade and investment have flourished in certain sectors due to Iranian entrepreneurs seeking to capitalize on new prospects. Iranians have a long history of participating in charitable contributions, mainly supporting the preservation and development of sacred places. The border area of southern Iraq has seen a notable increase in Iranian influence, where Iran is sponsoring infrastructure projects, including schools and clinics. "Iranian influence is everywhere. Iranian money is being pumped in; pictures of Khomeini are common, even in government buildings. In many places, Persian seems to be the lingua franca rather than Arabic" (INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, 2005, p. 15).

Cross-border smuggling, an endemic occurrence in any age, has gotten worse in the absence of robust border controls enforced by the Iraqi government. Thus, there is a good chance that fighters and weapons may transit. Furthermore, Iran is said to have infiltrated the ranks of pilgrims with intelligence operatives (INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, 2005, p. 13). King Abdullah of Jordan alleged that in order to foster a pro-Iranian public mood, Iran has been giving unemployed Iraqis benefits and salaries (WRIGHT AND BAKER, 2004). Thus, the establishment of control over the porous border region has become one of the priorities of Iran in Iraq to secure its geopolitical interest and increase its regional influence.

To Preserve Leverage in Kurdistan and Maintain Stability in Iran's Kurdish Community

Iran and Iraq have a mutual interest in keeping the country from disintegrating due to war, insurgency, or secession. Iran's Kurdish community is composed of trans-border ethnic and tribal groups that have strong cultural and family bonds with the Kurds in Iraq. The main Kurdish parties in Iraq have had a conflicted relationship with both the Tehran and Baghdad regimes; they trust neither but occasionally feel compelled to turn against the other. The Kurdish community in northern Iraq was Iran's strategic partner against the Baghdad government throughout the 20th century. During the Barzani uprising in 1974–1975, Iraq's Kurds depended on Iranian assistance; nevertheless, the uprising was put down after the Shah withdrew his support following the agreement with Saddam Hussein. Kurdish groups allied with Iran in the 1980s Iran-Iraq war to press for a better arrangement with the Iraqi government. However, they were punished severely after the war ended (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 1995). Following the chemical assault on Halabja in March 1988 and the subsequent repression of the Kurdish uprising in April 1991, Iran provided support to Kurdish groups in Iraq (INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, 2005, p. 19).

Iran's strategy changed with the fall of the Saddam regime, which was the common opponent of Iran and the Kurds in Iraq. Iran wanted an Iraq during the Saddam era with a weak central authority, but following Saddam's overthrow, Iran now wants an Iraq with a strong central government and preserved territorial integrity. Siding with the Coalition Forces against Saddam, the Iraqi Kurds became the new ally of the US in the region (BAHCHELI AND FRAGISKATOS, 2008, p. 76). Thus, the traditional collaboration between Iran and the Iraqi Kurds lost its validity. However, Iran's main concern now is the Iraqi Kurds' growing demands for independence, which have an impact on the Iranian Kurds (ARIKAN, 2006 p. 176). The disintegration of Iraq may fortify transnational coalitions against the Iranian regime in its entirety. The Iranian Kurds are very much influenced by what is happening in the Kurdistan of Iraq and Turkey. A Kurdish state may, thus, unite Iranian Kurds or give them the confidence to look for a significantly better deal within Iran. Iran, therefore, worried about the possible influence of an independent Kurdish state on its own Kurdish populace. Iran has been supporting the Kurdish leadership's drive for suitable political demonstrations in Baghdad, hoping to discourage Iraqi Kurds from pursuing independence (International Crisis Group, 2005: 10). To put it another way, Iran is trying to bring Kurdish-leaning Iraqi players into the fold of the central state rather than confronting them. To safeguard its strategic interests, Iran also expanded economic relations with the Kurds. Cross-border trade has flourished; scores of contracts are signed with Iranian private companies. Iran has become the most significant

trade partner of the Regional Kurdish Administration (BAHCHELI AND FRAGISKATOS, 2008, p. 78). Iran's principal expectation is that the Kurds in Iraq would neither demand independence nor incite their Iranian counterparts to demand more autonomy (INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP, 2005, p. 19).

Iran's Religious-Political Interest in Iraq

Although Persian-speaking Iran and Arabic-speaking Iraq are very different from one another in terms of language and culture, they are connected by the shared religion of Shi'ite Muslims. In Iran, Shi'ite Muslims make up 89% of the entire population, while in Iraq, they make up around 60–65% of the population (CIA, 2003). Interaction between the Shi'ite communities of Iran and Iraq has always been significant. The holy cities of Najaf and Karbala in Iraq have been the centre of Shi'ite learning and theological education for centuries. Many of Iran's clerics have studied there, and the sacred sites are frequently visited by hundreds of thousands of Iranian pilgrims (BYMAN ET AL., 2001, p. 57).

In terms of religious-political ideology, a significant portion of Iraqi Shi'ites support Khomeini's vilayat-i faqih, which currently governs Iran. For instance, Sayyed Muqtada al-Sadr, the head of one of the two major Iraqi Shi'ite "camps" Jamaat Al-Sadr Al-Thani (the Sadr II movement), holds similar opinions. Sadr "...calls on Shi'ite spiritual leaders to play an active role in shaping Iraq's political future" (BBC NEWS, 2003). The Dawa Party's president, Ayatollah Baqir al-Sadr, encouraged the Shi'ite resistance in Iraq by endorsing Khomeini and his revolution (ARMAOGLU, 1991a, pp. 775-777). Even Shi'ite organizations who opposed vilayat-i faqih have positive relations with Iran. Iran has made an effort to cultivate harmonious ties with every Shi'ite group in Iraq. Iran's role was demonstrated on March 30, 2008, when it successfully mediated a conflict between the al Maliki administration and Shi'ite militants in Sadr City. Another excellent example is Iran's position and actions during the Basra crisis in March 2008 (HIRO, 2008). Iran has an interest in preserving its Shi'ite leadership role both worldwide and in Iraq. Many Shi'ite clergy members in Iraq have been greatly influenced by Iran's religious-political leadership role. Iran has attempted to influence Iraqi politics in order to install a Shi'ite-dominated government, while the Iraqi Shi'ites have also come to view Iran as a natural ally. Therefore, in order to strengthen their positions in the struggle for political dominance in Iraq, either the extreme right sect led by Ahmad Chalabi, the extreme left sect led by Muqtada al-Sadr, or the moderate sect led by Al-Sistani and Al-Hakim, attempt to cultivate an intimate connection with Iran and wish to depend on Iranian support (WANG, 2007, p. 71). Iran's role has been crucial in empowering the Shi'ite groups in Iraq's power distribution. As a result, the Shi'ites in Iraq have emerged as the main political force in the country since the overthrow of Saddam.

Concurrently, the Iranian government is focusing on depending on the Shi'ites in Iraq to prevent the US from threatening Iran (WANG, 2007, p. 72). Iran has also increased its soft power in the domains of information, religion, and the economy. Additionally, the Shi'ite groups have a long-term strategy of strengthening their strategic ties with Iran in order to balance their position of power within Iraq and to improve the relations of their government at the regional and international levels. Meanwhile, the leaders of the ISCI and Dawa party have deep emotional, intellectual, and organizational ties to Iran's executive political-security elites due to their extended stay in Iran during their exile. Only ISCI refrained from fighting on the side of the Ba'athist regime during the Iran-Iraq War (VISSER, 2008). Therefore, Iranians have faith and trust in these factions. Iran's objective is to unite all of Iraq's Shi'ite groups and to advance balanced relations with them so that they can translate their demographic weight into political influence, thereby consolidating Shi'ite primacy in Iraq.

Iran's Economic Interest in Iraq

Iran has significant economic interests in Iraq. Hasan Qashqavi, a member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian parliament, claims Improving "Iran's economic relation with Iraq is something which can bring about growth and prosperity to the economies of both countries" (GUTZWILLER, 2004, p. 61). "Iran sees Iraq as a critical trading pipeline with the rest of the Middle East, from which it has been locked out for decades" according to Hasan Qashqavi (GUTZWILLER, 2004, p. 63). Iran is looking for a means to make up for the money it lost when its profitable oil smuggling business with Saddam Hussein's regime was shut down. Iran urgently needs to diversify its own economy and lower its inflation rate, as the country's export of petroleum products accounts for 80% of its foreign exchange revenues. Iran's average inflation rate from 1998 to 2002 was 15.6% (GUTZWILLER, 2004, p. 65). Increased trade with Iraq will support Iran in accomplishing the task. Iran launched an ambitious program to increase trade, media, tourism, and cross-border migration. It also made significant investments in power plants, hotels, schools, and the rehabilitation of southern Iraqi cities, including Basra, Karbala, and Najaf. During Ahmadinejad's 2008 visit, a \$1 billion credit for Iranian exports was announced, leading to an increase in overall export revenue to \$8 billion in 2010. Iran benefited largely from the balance of commercial and technological exchange brought forth by this new economic partnership. Through a massive economic and political infrastructure, Iran now seemed to be able to accomplish what it was unable to do during the war: establish itself beyond the Iraqi border, particularly into the country's religious centres.

Additionally, Iraq has become a popular travel destination for religious visitors from Iran. Iran spends tens of millions of dollars a year building and upgrading tourist attractions for its pilgrims. Hiro observed that “Iranian Shi’ite is pouring into Iraq, which has six holy Shi’ite sites, across the unguarded border. They are thus bolstering the Iraqi economy to the tune of about \$2 billion a year” (HIRO, 2004). Iranian merchants consider certain parts of Iraq, especially predominantly Shi’ite areas, to be ideal markets for Iranian exports. According to some estimates, the range of economic activity brings in around \$5 billion a year (KATZMAN, 2010a, p. 11). However, Iran’s enormous economic potential puts it in a prime position to meet the needs of the regional markets, opening doors for new and emerging Iranian companies and young industries. Iran has substantial interests in the regional economy, including the transit of energy sources, the geopolitics of pipelines and other energy transference sources, and meeting the demands of regional markets in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and the Persian Gulf.

Conclusion

The historical hostility between Iran and Iraq was significantly altered in 2003 with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s Ba’athist regime in Iraq. Iran has since established cordial ties and adopted a cooperative strategy towards Iraq. As a result, political, economic, and cultural ties between Iran and Iraq have greatly improved. Iran’s policy toward Iraq immediately before and after the Second Gulf War of 2003 could be summarized with four strategies. First, Iran publicly opposed the US military intervention in Iraq, though Iran branded Saddam’s rule as a brutal regime (VAEIDI, 2003). Second, after the US invasion had begun, Iran said that it would remain impartial and not become engaged in the Iraqi crisis. At the same time, Iran said that it would prefer to actively participate in resolving the Iraqi crisis. Iran’s foreign minister declared the country to be “neutral but not indifferent” (BARZEGAR, 2005, p. 52). Third, Iran began preparing for post-Ba’athist Iraq in order to establish close ties with the newly elected Iraqi government following the war. Iran views post-Ba’athist Iraq as a potential ally to safeguard regional interests, especially to counter US hegemony, rather than as a threat. Fourth, Iran has made a significant effort to foster good ties with Iraq by putting a strong emphasis on social security, territorial integrity and stability in Iraq. Iran has been a major supporter of the electoral process in Iraq, hoping to include various ethnic and sectarian groups, particularly the Kurds and the Shi’ites, in the political power structure of the country. Iranian support for Iraqi Kurds is intended to prevent any possible instability among the Kurds of Iran. Iran has been fostering unity among the Shi’ite groups in Iraq and preserving cordial ties with all of them. With the goal of establishing security and territorial integrity in Iraq, Iran devised a cooperative strategy toward the Iraqi

government. Iran also bolstered the economic and commercial relations with Iraq. For Iran's economy, Iraq has grown to be a major destination for investment. Most of Iran's policy toward Iraq can also be viewed as pre-emptive to address the new political-security challenges in the region mainly created by the US military presence as well as geopolitical changes and shifting of security-political structure in Iraq. As a consequence, Iran and Iraq established their most amicable relationship in history.

Friendly relations with Iraq could relieve Iran's military and diplomatic burden in favour of economic development. As economic ties improve, interdependence will increase, and the potential for conflict between them will subsequently decrease. Iran has also found a way to strengthen its position in the Middle East. Iran should handle its comprehensive ties with Iraq through active interaction with the goal of maintaining the power balance in Iraq. A friendly Iraq should also look for cooperation with Iran. Furthermore, Iraq should work to resolve the challenges left by the war and work with Iran to resolve regional conflicts amicably. Iran's concern about the US strategy in the region should particularly be noted by Iraq. Iran needs to recognize that the establishment of a regional security framework would be unattainable without Iraq's active involvement. Iran, as a major player in the Gulf, should accept the regional position of Iraq and readjust its Iraq strategy in light of the changing circumstances following the War. Alternatively, without the cooperation of Iran, it is unlikely for Iraq to achieve any real security and stability in Iraq. Iran should assist Iraq in establishing a stable government in order to safeguard the national interests of both countries. The instability in Iraq could lead to the instability in Iran. Together, the two countries also have the opportunities to advance their oil project and improve collaboration in the OPEC. Both countries should also take the initiative to address outstanding issues, such as settling the Shatt al-Arab delineation, strengthening mutual land border control, ceasing to support groups that use violence against one another, fostering cross-border trade and cultural exchanges, and, in the end, formally terminating the state of war between them.

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EFFECTIVENESS OF MILITARY PEACE SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS IN STABILIZATION OF SOMALIA (1992-2022)

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Abstract. Military interventions are often conducted in the context of peace restoration, stabilization and humanitarian assistance. These are set out in the mandate objectives which guide the planning and conduct of peace support operations. However, there have been mixed outcomes and have often been characterized as ineffective. This paper examined the military interventions in Somalia since 1992 as well as the transition in conflicts in Somalia. The objective was to determine the effectiveness of the military interventions in stabilizing Somalia and restoring long-lasting peace. Quantitative data and qualitative data were collected and analysed to answer the objective. The findings indicated that despite marginal successes, previous military interventions were not effective in the stabilization of Somalia due to a lack of understanding of the operating environment. The plans and strategies were singled out as being responsible for the failures rather than successes. Furthermore, AMISOM largely attained the mandate objectives, more so the degradation of Al Shabaab, thereby significantly contributing to stabilization efforts in Somalia. The paper concluded that the lack of proper understanding of the operating environment leads to the misalignment of strategies in the employment of resources, thus leading to dismal outcomes. Therefore, the paper recommended that stakeholders should continue to engage in shaping the Somalia transition plan in order to ensure that all pitfalls are mitigated so as to guarantee proper stabilization.

Keywords: Military interventions, Peace Support Operations, Stabilization, Mandate, Strategy, Transition

Introduction

Military interventions and Peace Support Operations (PSO) have been undertaken to attain set objectives for the operations. In the context of the Global War on Terror (GWOT), the United States of America (USA) and its allied forces

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intervened in Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein's regime on the unsubstantiated claims of developing or possessing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) (KANAT, 2019). It was codenamed Operation Iraqi Freedom and conducted between 2003 and 2011. However, due to the urgency to intervene, there seems to have been no clear transition and exit strategy to guide the stabilisation and post-conflict stages. Notably, Operation Iraqi Freedom paid little attention to post-Saddam stability, the state of Iraq, and the regional and international implications of Iraq's destruction. This lack of a proper transition and exit strategy is affirmed by sentiments attributed to the then USA's Secretary of State, Donald Rumsfeld, that there was no exit strategy but a victory strategy (KANAT, 2019). A victory strategy is a subjective idea based on the USA's interests and conditions on the ground that are dynamic and prolong operations. The prolonged presence of an intervention force is inimical to public perception and support, jeopardises prospects of a post-facto transition strategy, and thus endangers state, regional, and international security.

As part of the GWOT engagement, there is noted hypocrisy of the USA in pursuing global hegemony (OKOTH, 20003). The eminent scholar observed that the government of the USA unilaterally invaded Iraq under the pretext of curtailing WMD, although none was found. The debacle is noted as a biased approach by USA intelligence agencies to effect regime changes in the Middle East and to cover up their apparent failures to forestall the 9/11 Al Qaeda attack (OKOTH, 2003, pp. 16-20). In the case of the USA in Iraq, the bungled intervention and subsequent exit led to protracted civil wars between Shia and Sunni Muslim sects and the collapse of the post-conflict Iraqi administration, leaving Iraq under the grip of Islamic State in Syria and the Levant (ISIS/L).

CROCKER (2021) observed that in Afghanistan, GWOT similarly motivated USA-led allied intervention to rout out the Taliban regime that was said to harbour Al Qaeda. As in Iraq, the USA did not have a proper exit plan from Afghanistan except on the condition of vanquishing the Al Qaeda-friendly Taliban regime (CROCKER, 2021). Similarly, JONEGÅRD (2019) interrogated the implications of the USA withdrawal from Afghanistan by examining four scenarios. The study used a 2 x 2 matrix as a framework to analyse possible consequences of an American troop withdrawal and as a tool for thinking strategically about the future.

The possible scenarios-outcomes combinations included Civil war and chaos (precipitant US withdrawal + No peace deal), Counter Terrorism (CT) and reversal of gains (precipitant US withdrawal + peace deal), the rule of warlords, (timely US withdrawal + no peace deal) and Fragile peace (timely US withdrawal + peace deal) (JONEGÅRD, 2019). The USA had four options to guide an ex-post facto exit from Afghanistan. Whereas scenario four was desirable, the turn of events in 2021 indicates that scenario two played out. The implications are the continued instability in Afghanistan, Taliban rule and the return of religious

fundamentalism and insecurity spill-overs to other countries such as Pakistan. While JONEGÅRD's (2019) analysis was good, it concluded pessimistically without offering a clear way forward. JONEGÅRD (2019) recommended different approaches to the exit, which is unclear to strategists. African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) ought to have taken a similar approach to consideration of possible exit scenarios so as to inform strategy.

In Africa, Peace Keeping Operations (PKO) and unilateral military interventions have been undertaken under UN, AU or regional mechanisms. FELTER AND RENWICK (2021) reviewed the role of UN missions in Africa. They noted that about half of the dozen UN peacekeeping missions are in Africa; including the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA); United Nations Multi-dimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA); United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA); and United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) in Western Sahara. Additionally, several peacekeeping or security missions are under the auspices of the African Union (AU), European Union (EU), and other regional blocs. Notable ones include AMISOM in Somalia, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad Basin, and the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) Joint Force (FELTER AND RENWICK, 2021).

Regarding PKO effectiveness, Felter and Renwick (2021) concede that many PKOs deployed in Africa have had mixed outcomes. Those who were deployed in countries such as Ivory Coast, Liberia and Sierra Leone were generally considered to have successfully attained their objectives of bringing stability to those countries even post-PKO. However, UNMISS in South Sudan ended without bringing stability to the country, characterised by fights between political factions and their allied militia (VAN-DER LIJN, 2010). Whereas the successes of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) cannot be readily attributed to its transition and exit strategy, the same could be inferred from the fact that there is stability post-UNAMSIL.

Among many other factors, the many dismal outcomes of PKOs have to do with a lack of clear transitions in-built into the mandates and plans, besides the fluid PKO environment that negates PKO principles (SALAÜN, 2019). It was a fact that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) admitted in 2002, when it discussed the need for a UN PKO exit strategy (UNITED NATIONS, 2000). Besides the affected state(s), immediate neighbouring countries withstand the worst of botched PKO exits that lead to a resumption of hostilities and spillover of conflicts.

As evident in the few PSO examples reviewed, transition plans are usually not built-in, but retrofitted. It is in response to the 'need to exit due' to the threat environment, the protracted nature of conflicts, the resource burden, and waning support for the operations. The lack of adequately executed exits has led to more instabilities that extend into neighbouring states, more so the immediate neighbours (GOLDMANN, 2005). It thus requires that military strategists for AMISOM and respective TCCs ensure that despite not having a clear transition and exit plan, the post-facto plans need to ensure more stability for Somalia Post-AMISOM PSO. It is then instructive that the proceeding sections highlight the nature of the Somali conflict and be put in perspective, including the attempted PSO interventions to contextualise the possible transition strategies.

Empirical Review of Literature

Transitions in Somalia conflict

Scholarly analysis indicates that the Somalia conflict has been through three distinct phases viz phase of the war, the phase of war and peace and the phase of extremism (KAGWANJA ET AL., 2020, pp. 23-45). The phase of war lasted from 1963 to 1989 and was marked by a frosty relationship between Kenya and Somalia. It is because Kenya accused Somalia of inciting secessionist movements in the then Kenya Northeastern Province (NEP) from 1963 to 1967 as part of the latter's 'Greater Somalia' expansionist ideology. The 'Greater Somalia' ideology aimed at uniting all Somali-speaking people found in Kenya's NEP, Southeastern Ethiopia and Djibouti (CHONKA & HEALY, 2021; KAGWANJA ET AL., 2020, p. 41). The phase of war and peace spanned from 1989 to 2004 and was characterised by the toppling of Siaad Barre's regime, followed by the warlords, civil wars and eventual collapse of the state of Somalia, including failed foreign interventions. During this period, Kenya was instrumental in searching for peace in Somalia by participating in and hosting peace meetings. The phase of extremism began in post-2004, corresponding with the rise of various Islamist extremist groups culminating with the rise of Al Shabaab in 2007.

The above phases can be construed as transitions in developing conflicts in Somalia. The stages shift from post-colonialism through nationalism and secularism to religious fundamentalism. All these Somalia conflict transitions have had implications for Kenya's national security, including the Shifta secessionist insurrections, banditry, and currently, Al Shabaab terrorist attacks.

Transitions in Military Intervention Efforts

JESS (2018) submitted that the Somali civil war flared from 1988 through the 1990s. The conflict pitted the ruling military junta led by Siad Barre and a mix of opposition-armed groups such as the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), Somali National Movement (SNM), United Somali Congress (USC) and the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM). All these groups used violence to challenge the junta.

KAGWANJA ET AL. (2020, p. 28), and CHONKA AND HEALY, (2021) noted the presence of other non-violent groups, which included the Somali Democratic Alliance (SDA) and the Somali Manifesto Group (SMG). It is the USC, led by General Mohamed Farah Aideed and businessperson Ali Mahdi Mohamed, which eventually toppled Siad Barre in January 1991. The ensuing instability saw a ruthless reign of warlords along clan lines and a counterattack by the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) to dislodge the warlords from Mogadishu, eventually leading to Ethiopia National Defence Force (ENDF) intervention in 2006 against the ICU.

During these phases of the Somalia Conflict evolution, several interventions were attempted by regional and international countries. According to WILLIAMS ET AL. (2018), five international military interventions were organised between 1992 and 2011. The first intervention was the United Nations Operation in Somalia I (UNOSOM I), which deployed between April to December 1992, comprising a multinational contingent of 54 military observers and 893 military personnel from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Egypt, Fiji, Finland, Indonesia, Jordan, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan and Zimbabwe. Notably, UNOSOM aimed to provide security to Humanitarian agencies for relief aid distribution, which was being hampered by the activities of various warlords. However, UNOSOM I failed to fulfil its objectives and ended prematurely.

The second intervention was launched in 1992 following the creation of the Unified Task Force (UNITAF) to replace UNOSOM I. UNITAF aimed to prepare for the return to peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding. It comprised about 37,000 personnel from 40 countries, with the bulk (approximately 25,000 personnel) from the USA (OLUOCH, 2018). While UNITAF was instrumental in creating an enabling environment for the negotiation and signing of the Addis Ababa agreement in early 1993, it failed to create sustainable peace. Thus, the civil war continued. Besides, OLUOCH (2018) noted that the lack of a robust mandate hampered the work of UNITAF and as such, UNITAF was short-lived and transited to UNOSOM II in March 1993

The third intervention by UNOSOM II comprised approximately 28,000 military personnel from 40 countries ALI AND MATTHEWS (2004, p. 253). The mission was mandated to secure continued humanitarian relief efforts, restore

peace, and rebuild the Somali state and economy. However, the mission suffered setbacks in implementing its mandate to the hostile activities by warlords such as Farah Aideed. The last straw in the string of setbacks was during the 'black hawk down' incident, where about 18 American Rangers Quick Reaction Force (QRF) were killed during a mission to capture Aideed. It is estimated that 150 UN personnel died during UNOSOM II. ALI AND MATHEWS (2004) surmised that the mission exited Somalia in March of 1995 and abandoned Somalia to local warlords and terrorists, thereby threatening the security of Somalia and neighbouring states such as Kenya. The implications to Kenya included incursions by bandits and criminal elements, the smuggling of contraband goods and refugee influx.

The fourth intervention took place in June 2006 when ICU militia defeated Western-backed warlords and captured the Capital city, Mogadishu, toppling the interim government of President Ali Mahdi (LIGAWA, 2018, p. 54). In December of the same year, Ethiopia sent troops to protect the interim government in Mogadishu. ENDF managed to route out ICU before officially withdrawing in January 2009. Consequently, the intervention by ENDF sparked off the Somali nationalism wave in which Al Shabaab, an offshoot of ICU, rode to power. Kenya was instrumental in participating in peace talks and hosting key peace conferences. The critical peace conference was the 2004 Nairobi peace conference that saw the formation of the Transition Federal Government (TFG). Kenya also played a significant role in forming the Federal Government of Somalia in 2012.

The centrality of the Inter-Government Authority on Development (IGAD) and AU characterised the fifth intervention as regional and continental bodies with the duty to bring about peace, security and stability in the spirit of "Responsibility-to-Protect". As de CONING, (2019) observed, the 1990s failures by foreign interventions in Somalia left the country to its own devices. As such, the Somali conflict gradually morphed into jihadism. Therefore, IGAD member states mooted the idea of deploying African forces to restore peace and order in Somalia.

The AU Peace and Security Council authorised IGAD to deploy a peace mission in 2005. However, the deployment did not occur due to policy differences between the IGAD and AU on the one hand and the UN on the other, mainly along the lines of the UN arms embargo and opposition to deployment by immediate neighbours (WILLIAMS, 2012). Eventually, AU assumed responsibilities from IGAD and contingents from Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti, and Ethiopia deployed in 2007 under AMISOM. Kenya joined in 2012 after the initial pursuit of Al Shabaab into Somalia during Operation Linda Nchi in October 2011. AMISOM mandate ended on 30 April 2022 and ushered the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), which is planned to gradually hand over security responsibilities to SSF in a phased manner until it exits at the end of 2024.

The preceding account of the various interventions is critical for this study as it indicates the transition markers for the intervention missions. Scholars such as KAGWANJA ET AL. (2020) did not explicitly refer to the shift to successive interventions as a 'transition'. Thus, they were not able to properly analyse the circumstances around the transitions and security implications to Somalia and neighbouring states such as Kenya. Having examined the intervention phases, a review of the conceptual aspects of the transition strategy is helpful for the study to contextualise the strategies employed by AMISOM, or the lack thereof, to appreciate the implications to Kenya's National Security.

AMISOM Peace Support Operations

Examining the challenges to AMISOM's exit from Somalia, WILLIAM AND HASHI (2016) submitted that it would be irresponsible for AMISOM to exit Somalia without leaving behind capable, legitimate and inclusive Somalia Security Forces. It was often underscored that AMISOM was not an occupation force and must eventually exit Somalia. However, such a governance and security responsibilities transition can happen in a well-formulated transition strategy that looks beyond post-AMISOM stability in Somalia and the national security implications on immediate neighbours.

According to MUSOMA (2021), military strategists often underscore the need for a transition plan built into Concepts of Operation (CONOP) for military operations in order to avoid falling into the hastiness of the 'need to intervene' in conflicts, which often entails retrofitting transition strategies. However, caution against having rigid transition strategies is crucial because conflict environments such as the Horn of Africa (HoA) are often unpredictable and thus require plans that can be adapted to unforeseen circumstances (MUSOMA, 2021). Despite this realisation, many military operations do not emphasise the transition plans but develop them as the operations continue. Where such are developed, they tend to be inadequate in considering all the possibilities that could affect the outcomes.

There have been plans mooted for AMISOM exit since 2017. The earlier plan was to have the mission by the end of 2020 on the condition that the SSF would have sufficient capacity to assume security responsibilities. The strategy emphasised territorial recovery and consolidation by AMISOM and Somali National Security Forces (SNSF) until October 2018 and a subsequent drawdown and transfer of security responsibilities to the SNSF from 2018 to December 2020 (AFRICAN UNION, 2016). However, the planned transition did not materialise at the projected timeline; an indication of gaps in planning and strategic considerations.

The then AU Special Representative for the Secretary-General (SRS), Ambassador Francisco Caetano José Madeira, articulated the identified challenges that could have hampered this transition. He highlighted the challenges as being; the enhancement of the 'AMISOM Model' to suit a transition Mission engaged in asymmetric warfighting, provision of the appropriate level of enablers and multipliers to enhance the operational efficiency of the new mission, and the importance of force generation (MADEIRA, 2022). However, whereas they may be expert observations, the challenges need scientific verification through research data to inform policy and academia.

Cognizant of the complex nature of the Somali conflict environment, the last challenge is significant for planners of AMISOM transitions as it hinges on the security aspects of solving the other two challenges as identified by Madeira (2022). Issues of force generation go beyond manpower provision. It entails capacity building and professionalization of the force to assume security responsibilities, albeit adequately graduated. Some scholars took note of the inadequacies of this initial transition plan. They aver that AMISOM [transition] and exit strategy should consider its ramifications for the security of Somalia's neighbours (KAGWANJA ET AL., 2020, p. 122). Observing that the future of Somalia will not rest on militarism but civilian rule in a law and order framework, they suggest that the AMISOM exit (and transition) strategy must be comprehensive, with clear timelines considering two key factors, viz, transition of AMISOM operations to Somali-led operations and transition from military to police led operations. These sentiments echo the line of thought by WILLIAM AND HASHI (2016), who submitted that the AMISOM transition must have two major distinct phases, i.e., a transition from operations led by foreign forces to Somali-led operations and second, a transition from military-led operations to police-led operations. However, such transition ought to be conditioned on the attainment of credible stability and governance, a matter not adequately appreciated by scholars.

This study notes the apparent arguments by military experts and scholars on the need for an AMISOM transition/exit strategy. CHUMBA (2016, p. 743) found that Kenya's interventionist Operations in Somalia attracted mixed perceptions, with the majority noting that it was a short-term strategy to a long-term problem. Moreover, the Kenya Defence Force (KDF) strategy in Somalia was unclear from the outset. However, it was noted that during the incipient stages, AMISOM was conceptualised to have four phases: an Initial Deployment phase, an expansion of deployment phase, a consolidation phase, and, finally, a redeployment/exit phase (WILLIAMS AND HASHI, 2016, p. 24). The confusion arose from the need to have AMISOM give way to a UN-led mission six months after its inception. The hurried need for transition failed to appreciate the complexities of the Somali operating environment and geopolitical imperatives. The

outcome has been constant extensions of AMISOM mandates due to the impracticalities of having a UN-led operation. The UN was relegated to logistics support through the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), while the EU provided funding through the Africa Peace Facility (APF).

Post-AMISOM transition to ATMIS

As earlier noted, various PSO efforts in Somalia and their transitions did little to resolve the Somali conflict. However, BLYTH (2019) noted that AMISOM has had some commendable contributions to the stabilisation of Somalia according to its mandate, which evolved from protecting the Somali authorities and facilitating a political process to warfighting and counter-insurgency and stabilisation with a mixture of state building. Ultimately, the governance and security responsibilities have to be assumed by Somalia. Such a transition has to be cognizant of previous pitfalls. Given this, any AMISOM transition plan should consider Somalia's post-AMISOM stability and regional peace and security. It would imply more time allocation for a phased handover, accelerated training of SSF, and the building of institutions; further weakening Al Shabaab (BLYTH, 2019).

Over time, the UNSC has been renewing AMISOM mandates for six months. In 2019 through UNSCR 2472(2019), redeployments and drawdowns of forces were initiated to conform to a possible exit in 2021. The last mandate extension was in 2020 through UNSCR 2614/2021, extending AMISOM's stay by three months as stakeholders agreed upon a transition plan per the Somalia Transition Plan (STP) (UNITED NATIONS, 2021). The STP to be implemented by ATMIS was developed in 2018 and revised in 2021 to transfer security responsibilities from AMISOM to the country's security forces over the next three years to 2024. However, LIGAWA (2018) pointed out that the frequent changes in mandate within short periods militated against Somalia's peacebuilding efforts. The PSO mandates are not given adequate time to realise any significant impact towards peacebuilding.

ATMIS effectively took over from AMISOM on 01 April 2022, in line with the decision of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) during its 1068th meeting on 08 March 2022. It inherited AMISOM's 18,000 troops, 1,000 police and 70 civilian staff (DESSU, 2022). The AU PSC mandated ATMIS to support the Federal Government of Somalia in implementing the STP and to transfer security responsibilities to the Somali security forces and institutions by 31 December 2024. The mandate included activities to: degrade Al Shabaab and other terrorist groups; provide security to population centres and open the main supply routes; develop the capacity of the Somali Security Forces to enable them to take over security responsibilities by the end of the transition period; support peace and reconciliation efforts of the Federal Government Somalia (FGS); and help

develop the capacity of the security, justice and local authority institutions of the Federal Government of Somalia and Federal Member States. As observed by DESSU (2022), there is pessimism that the ATMIS mandate does not significantly depart from its predecessor. The new mission will likely face political and funding challenges that hamper AMISOM. Whereas inferences can be drawn from AMISOM and preceding PSOs, it may be premature to dismiss ATMIS potential, hoping that past lessons informed STP CONOP.

The STP CONOP was designed into four phases (AFRICAN UNION, 2022). The first phase entailed reconfiguration to include redeployments of Forward Operating Base (FOB), downsizing, and reconfiguring forces to a mobile offensive posture. It was envisaged to take the initial nine months ending in December 2022. The second phase entailed joint shaping and clearing operations and the handing over some FOBs to SSF, while the third phase was to be decisive operations and handing over of the remaining FOBs. The two phases were to take nine months each up to October 2024. The last phase will be the withdrawal and liquidation of ATMIS by 31 December 2024.

This phasing of operations partly alleviates the concerns that hurried exit will repeat experiences like those in Iraq and Afghanistan. The consequences of a hasty exit from Somalia would be more instability and a threat to Kenya's national security. However, concerns remain regarding the state of FGS and Somalia Security Force (SSF) to credibly assume governance and security functions. The political wrangles and the Somali question (clannish political dynamics) have not been adequately resolved (NZAU, 2018, pp. 544-546). The capacity of SSF is not yet convincing for added security responsibility or independent operations. The lack of consideration of federal states' security forces as part of SSF in the STP is likely to inflame the situation, cause animosity, defections as well fighting between forces considered under SSF (SNA, SNP and Prison services) and federal state forces such as Jubaland Security Forces (JSF), Ras Kiamboni Brigade (RKB), among others. These are some of the outstanding pitfalls that ATMIS will have to contend with and address if they are to operate within the timelines envisaged by STP.

Analysis of Findings

Pre-AMISOM military intervention and recovery of Somalia's stability

Military interventions in the context of multilateral PSO are aimed at stabilizing the security and socio-political situation of the affected states. It was born from the need to ensure global peace and security as espoused in the UN Charter of

1948. In 2005, R2P was developed to implement lessons learnt from atrocities in Rwanda and Yugoslavia. Despite the noble intentions of PSO deployments, the results have been mixed. Scholars have noted that certain PSOs have failed in achieving the desired end state, for instance, in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia, among others (CROCKER, 2021; GOMPERT, BINNENDIJK & LIN, 2014). It has left more instabilities than the state of affairs in the pre-PSO period.

Some PSOs have been adjudged as being successful such as those conducted in Sierra Leone (GOLDMANN, 2014). Failure by PSOs to stabilize conflict situations has been attributed to a myriad of factors, such as what LIGAWA (2018) cites as a lack of understanding of Cultural Intelligence. It infers the understanding of the Communities within which PSOs are conducted. Other scholars have attributed the failures to a lack of local mission support, an understanding of Somalia clan dynamics by peacekeepers, and poor operation planning (KAREITHI & KARIITHI, 2008; Hersi, 2015; LIGAWA, 2018). Furthermore, SALAÜN (2019) attributed such dismal PSO outcomes to a lack of clear transition plans and the fluid PSO environment. In the context of Somalia, Pre-AMISOM interventions could be assessed as having failed to owe to takeover by warlords and the eventual collapse of Somalia. This assertion was supported by sentiments by a Senior AMISOM commander when he observed that:

Since colonial times, Somalia was divided into spheres of influence between the Italians and the British. After independence, the Somalia clannist dynamics influenced the governance and social aspects of the Country, eventually leading to conflicts. The earlier military interventions by the UN and IGAD did not adequately understand the operating environment regarding clan dynamics and cultural and religious sensitivities. It largely contributed to the resentment of the local community, which turned against the peacekeepers to the advantage of warlords. In essence, the peace missions worsened the situation as witnessed by the protracted instability in the Country (Interview with a Senior ATMIS Commander in Dhobley, on 26 November 2022).

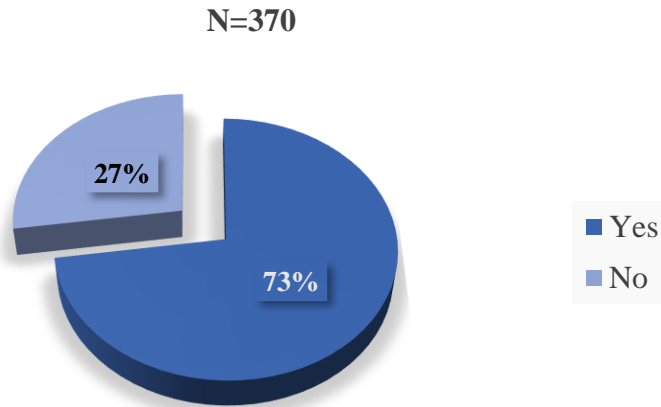
The assertion by the key informant affirms the argument by LIGAWA (2018) that cultural intelligence is critical in stabilization and peacebuilding efforts; which UNOSOM, UNITAF and IGASOM did not factor. Besides, these earlier PSOs did not have comprehensive CONOPs to cater for post-PSO Somalia and the failure of peace agreements such as the Addis Ababa agreement of 1993 (CHONKA & HEALY, 2021; OLUOCH, 2018). Moreover, MWASI (2022) noted that peace agreements, such as the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), have failed to end conflicts since they did not adequately address the root causes. The findings in Figure 1 indicate that the pre-AMISOM PSO interventions are assessed as having failed to stabilize the state of Somalia. Most respondents (73%) affirmed that pre-AMISOM military interventions and PSOs did help recover Somalia's stability. In comparison, 27%

EFFECTIVENESS OF MILITARY PEACE SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS IN STABILIZATION OF SOMALIA (1992-2022)

affirmed that pre-AMISOM military interventions and PSOs did not help recover Somalia's stability.

Scholars have attributed the failure of pre-AMISOM PSO and strategies interventions to various factors, viz; lack of understanding of the operating environment (cultural intelligence), lack of local support, poor planning and exit strategies, and lack of sufficient resources, among others (CHONKA & HEALLY, 2021; KAREITHI & KARIITHI, 2008). Additionally, the findings lend to the argument by William and Hashi (2016) that the aftermath of interventions in Somalia has been a deterioration in the Country's stability and the rise of fundamentalist extremists such as Al Shabaab and ISIL. Similarly, a study by MWASI (2022) established that the South Sudan peace agreements failed due to; a limited number of mechanisms to address impediments to the agreement, little agreement on the ownership of natural resources, inadequate modalities of navigating the interests of external actors, and poor handling of different political interests. However, despite the failures of pre-AMISOM PSOs, they helped set conditions and lessons upon which subsequent interventions were improved.

Figure 1: Whether pre-AMISOM Military interventions and PSOs were helpful in the stabilization of Somalia

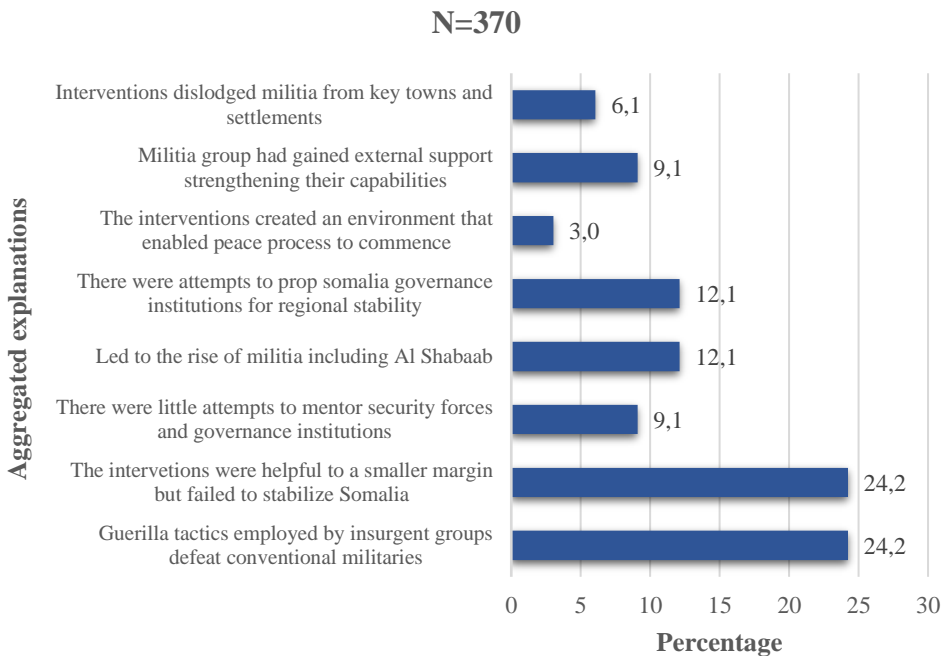


Source: Field data, 2022.

The findings further corroborate CHUMBA'S (2018) submission that purely militaristic PSO approaches are ineffective in the face of changing nature of contemporary threats to peace. Earlier PSOs in Somalia attempted to synergize efforts between the military and humanitarian agencies. However, they did not sufficiently engage the community by understanding clan and cultural dynamics within the Somali community. It failed in what LIGAWA (2018) called 'cultural intelligence'. Without the critical support of the community, UNOSOM I and II,

and UNITAF, eventually failed. IGASOM did not even deploy and had to change to AMISOM. To expound further on the issue, Figure 2 presents respondents' aggregated explanations on the issue of pre-AMISOM PSOs' usefulness regarding the stabilization of Somalia:

Figure 2: Aggregated respondents' explanations on the effectiveness of pre-AMISOM PSO in restoring the stability of Somalia



Source: Field data, 2022.

From the findings, the dominant opinion revolved around the fact that the guerilla (asymmetric) tactics of the Somali militia defeated superior conventional armies (24.2%) and the fact that stability was achieved by a minimal margin (24.2%). Notably, 9.1% of the respondents believed there was little attempt to build the capacity of SSF. In comparison, a paltry 3% assessed that the pre-AMISOM PSOs created an environment that enabled peace processes (future PSOs) to commence. Interestingly, the aggregated respondents' explanations converged around the notion that despite marginal successes, the pre-AMISOM military interventions and PSOs were largely unsuccessful in restoring Somalia's Stability.

According to ANGELL (2015), the failure of operational commanders to adapt their strategies to the unconventional nature of the Vietnam conflict

contributed to the failure of USA military operations. The assertion supports the respondents' view in Figure 2 that guerrilla tactics employed by the insurgent groups in Somalia defeated conventional militaries. This notion was conveyed by 24.2% of the respondents. The changing nature of conflicts has moved away from the trenches and fixed battle formations that characterized warfare during the world wars. Weaker entities (mostly non-state) have sought ways to offset the tactical advantages by targeting weaknesses (gaps) of a superior conventional adversary while minimizing losses on their part. Often state militaries have been slow to adjust to the unorthodox strategies of insurgent and militia groups (GOMPERT, BINNENDIJK & LIN, 2014). It was true of the experiences of UNOSOM, UNITAF and later IGASOM forces. A Key Informant noted that;

Subsequent operations in Somalia by AMISOM had to learn from previous operations' shortcomings and adjust to the threat environment. Al Shabaab does not conform to the laws of armed conflict and employs asymmetric tactics to offset the AMISOM military advantage. In addition, the contingents must engage the community, win their support and deny Al Shabaab the civilian terrain to hide and perpetrate atrocities. Compared to earlier operations, AMISOM has mainly been effective by learning from the failures of pre-AMISOM deployments (Interview with a Military Staff Officer in Dhobley, on 14 November 2022).

This view underscores the need to use failures in military operations as learning opportunities for subsequent deployments. Where repeat PSO deployments occur, such as in Somalia, comprehensive after-action reviews are crucial to the operational activities that should inform adjustments in ongoing and upcoming operations. It is in the form of lessons learnt that must be constantly updated since asymmetric threat environments are fluid. However, lessons learnt should not cause operational paralysis using the risk-averse approach (PATMAN, 2015). LIGAWA (2018) advised that tactical dispositions of AMISOM troops are essential in ensuring success in peacebuilding. Tactical dispositions are critical adjustments in deployments to ensure maximum operational effectiveness and achievement, which, according to LIGAWA (2018), is a strategic attack to achieve the end state. One Key informant observed that:

With the evolving nature of threats, continuous adjustments of plans are essential to ensure that we are better placed to address not only the enemy threats but also the community needs that enable more significant support for AMISOM operations. We can achieve our mandate only through plan flexibility (Interview with ATMIS Operations Officer in Kolbiyow, 20 November 2022).

The notion by the key informant reflects the need for flexible plans that can adjust to the threat environment. This view supports the argument by Luft (2020), who posited that critical military strategic planning models require a comprehensive appreciation of all possibilities, including a possible forecast of

outcomes to enable the development of branches and sequels. In essence, the notion advocates for flexibility in plans to address what Oluoch (2018) viewed as the 'what next' and 'what ifs' of PSOs. Pre-AMISOM intervention strategies lacked flexibility in adjusting to the operational environment and planning for the post-exit situation. It left the post-intervention Somalia cascading through decades of instability as a failed state (William & Hashi, 2016; Masese, 2012).

KAGWANJA ET AL. (2020, p. 121) made a similar observation regarding Operation Iraqi Freedom between 2003 and 2011. They noted that Operation Iraqi Freedom failed to factor in post-Saddam stability, the existence of the state of Iraq, and regional as well as international implications. As aptly noted by KAGWANJA ET AL. (2020), failed PSO interventions not only negatively affect the security of the primary state but also have negative implications regionally and internationally. The affirmation that pre-AMISOM PSO interventions failed to contain the security instabilities in Somalia meant that the spillovers were felt in Kenya and the IGAD region.

Influence of Plans and Strategies on pre-AMISOM PSO Outcomes

The strategic theory requires that a good plan be detailed enough to take care of all possibilities whilst remaining flexible enough to respond to the unforeseen (Shelling, 1984). Plans draw from strategies that should span the entire spectrum of the operation from the preliminaries, execution, termination and post-operation situation (DURCH, 2010). Scholars have often advised that responsible PSOs should operate to stabilize a conflict zone and exit after setting favourable conditions for capable, legitimate and inclusive governance and security institutions (KAGWANJA ET AL., 2020; WILLIAM & HASHI, 2016). It is upon a well-established security and governance platform that other state institutions can be rebuilt for national stability. Security and governance create a conducive environment for other socioeconomic processes. It hinges on an adequately planned PSO whose strategies, branches and sequels the established conducive environment. One Key informant aptly summed as follows:

Often we are told that failing to plan is planning to fail. However, the lack of proper and comprehensive plans for military operations is as disastrous as not having a plan. Half-baked plans give false hope for operations only to realize that many gaps exist, often too late. Unfortunately, military failures occasion costs in terms of time and resources; and, most tragically, human lives and livelihoods. More is demanded of comprehensiveness in military plans and operations since success depends on how thorough planners can be to avert tragedy (Interview with a Military Officer in Bojigaras, on 10 November 2022).

While it is humanly impossible to achieve a perfect plan, the Key informant's observations call for thorough planning and strategizing. The entire spectrum of operations must be adequately considered, no matter the level of operations or its attendant complexity. Poorly planned PSOs result in security, socio-political and economic turmoil that transcend the confines of the subject state (DESSU, 2022; KAGWANJA ET AL., 2020).

Pre-AMISOM PSOs are noted to have failed due to poor considerations of the operating environment, population support, cultural intelligence and exit plan (SALAÜN, 2019; LIGAWA, OKOTH & MATANGA, 2017; KAREITHI & KARIITHI, 2008). Military plans and strategies should be predicated on these primary planning considerations. At the crack of bullets, military operations tend to suffer what LIGAWA (2018) calls the 'contact dilemma', characterized by hostility, uncertainty and disorder, violence and danger, and human stress. Essentially, the simple becomes difficult, and the difficult becomes seemingly impossible. The situation gets disastrous when plans are poor. The hasty withdrawals of USA forces in Somalia and subsequent instabilities attest to this fact. The assertion was reflected in the sentiments of a Key Informant who pointed out:

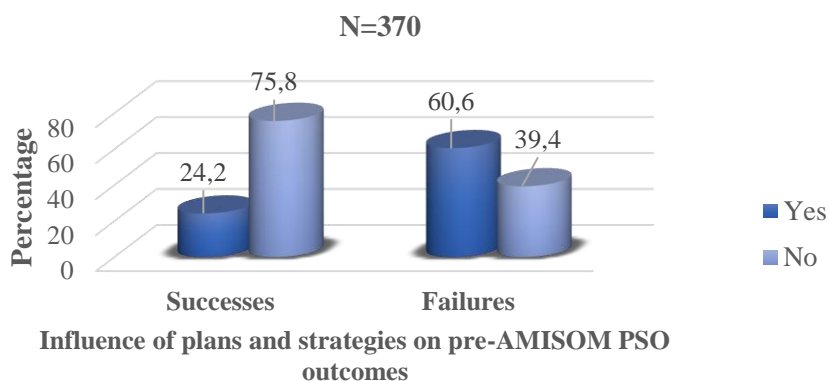
The initial interventions by the UN in Somalia under UNOSOM and UNITAF failed to consider Somalia's human terrain. The clan dynamics of Somalis are so entrenched and dictate even the most mundane of social affairs. Within the clans, some sub-clans equally antagonize other sub-clans within the same more prominent clan. Those inadvertently left outside automatically view engaging one clan or sub-clan with suspicion. It is a recipe for trouble for a foreign entity; the community can easily label that as a non-believer (kuffar) to rally opposition. Those UN missions' simplistic and rigidly structured approach underestimated the antagonism of ignoring such planning factors (Interview with a Senior Military Officer in Wajir, 02 December 2022).

The response by the respondents supported the argument that proper planning and having comprehensive strategies are critical in PSOs; and any military engagements in pursuit of national security. Besides, the sentiment conforms to HERSI'S (2015) observation that clan dynamics are central to Somali reconciliation efforts and thus require proper understanding by conflict management actors. Indeed, the peculiar nature of Somali Clannism indicates a strong leaning towards clan loyalty over nationalism.

Depicted in Figure 3 are responses by the respondents on whether the pre-AMISOM plans and strategies were responsible for their outcomes viz success or failure. Most respondents (75.8%) indicated that pre-AMISOM plans and strategies were not responsible for successes, and 60.6% affirmed that the plans and strategies influenced pre-AMISOM failures. The findings point to deficiencies in the outcome of the pre-AMISOM PSOs the respondents used to infer the

guiding plans and strategies, thus concluding that they were also deficient. It is because the plans and strategies write-ups are classified and likely not accessible to the respondents. Notwithstanding this analysis, the findings point wherein the problem lay resulting in failed outcomes of pre-AMISOM PSOs viz as plans and strategies as depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Pre-AMISOM PSO outcomes influenced by plans and strategies



Source: Field data, 2022.

NZAU (2018) submitted that any typical military venture must have a clear objective based on a sound plan to attain the assigned mandate. LUFT (2020) further averred that critical military strategic planning models require a comprehensive appreciation of all possibilities, including a forecast of outcomes to enable the timely development of branches and sequels. Furthermore, OPONDO (2018, p. 382) noted the need to adapt strategies of yesteryears to prevailing operational situations, thus underscoring the need for flexibility and adaptability of plans. The initial submissions by the scholars underscore the central argument of strategic theory for comprehensive planning and the need for adaptable plans that can ride the waves of a fluid asymmetric threat environment. As a Key Informant indicated:

Plans are guides and sensors for military operations. Therefore, they need to feel the threat environment and adjust to them to guide operations. Otherwise, operations will be executed blindly. Plans that lack this quality are even worse as they waste time and lead to otherwise avoidable pitfalls (Interview with ATMIS Staff Officer in Dhobley, on 15 November 2022).

The assessed failures of UNOSOM and UNITAF are attributed to poor planning. While the effect within Somalia was the collapse of the state, the security

implications spread to the Horn of Africa and continue to shape the geopolitical and security landscape. KAREITHI AND KARIITHI (2008) observed that Kenya's North-eastern parts continue to experience instabilities that, inter alia, are linked to the failed state of Somalia, ranging from attacks by militias, illegal trade, banditry, and refugee problems, among others. In light of the failed outcomes of pre-AMISOM stabilization efforts and their implications for Kenya's national security, a community elder opined that:

For a long time, the community has experienced insecurity and environmental hardships affecting human beings and livestock - problems coming from the other side of the border (Somalia). The area is also remote, most places do not get essential services such as security, and people have to arm themselves to protect themselves (Interview with a Community elder interviewed in Damasa, Mandera County, on 16 December 2022).

The Key informant's sentiment represents the broader problem facing the NFD, where the instability in Somalia coupled with harsh climatic conditions burden the inhabitants, thus reinforcing the notion of marginalisation. The indication that the community has to arm itself for its security portrays the resignation to fate due to long periods of persecution at the hands of militia from Somalia. The sentiment is also relevant to the assessment of pre-AMISOM PSO in that what the NFD communities are experiencing is essentially a ripple effect of bungled stabilization efforts in Somalia. Had the pre-AMISOM PSO been adequate to guarantee the stability of the state of Somalia, the situation of the people in Somalia and Kenya's NFD would have been different regarding security. The focus could be addressing economic development and the effects of climatic conditions, such as drought, rather than insecurity.

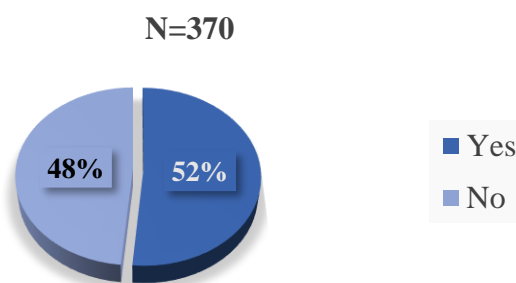
Achievements by AMISOM PSO

This paper argues that the assessment of AMISOM mandate achievements has been spasmodic at best without proper statistical indicators. As such, the section takes a cue from the findings by KAMAIS, OKOTH AND KIMOKOTI (2024, p. 270 – 276), which established that AMISOM had significantly attained its successive mandates over the years as periodically amended and extended. Furthermore, the critical strategic objective of degrading Al-Shabaab had been attained to a larger extent, while the creation of a conducive environment for stability and development had been attained to a lesser extent. This creates a conundrum on whether it was the ripe moment for the transition since the two aspects are crucial for the stability of Somalia since they hinge on the security and governance of Somalia post-AMISOM (KAMAIS, OKOTH & KIMOKOTI, 2024, p. 273).

Supportive of the positive appraisal of the achievement of the AMISOM mandate, a study by KAMAIS, OKOTH AND KIMOKOTI (2024) established that

AMISOM had achieved its mandate since inception until the transition to the African Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) in April 2022. The findings presented in Figure 4 depict respondents' perception of the achievement of the AMISOM mandate of degrading Al Shabaab and stabilizing Somalia. Most respondents (52%) affirmed that AMISOM had achieved its mandate, while 48% indicated that it had not. A split opinion on a question should attract a definitive opinion about success or failure. It indicates that while AMISOM has done well in attempts to stabilize Somalia, a significant portion of the population still feels that more has to be done. This onus has to fall on ATMIS as the shepherded transfer of responsibilities to FGS and SSF.

Figure 4: Achievement of AMISOM mandate



Source: KAMAIS, OKOTH AND KIMOKOTI, (2024, p. 272).

The findings indicate an almost equal split in respondents' perceptions of the achievement of the AMISOM mandate. AMISOM has liberated large swathes of territory under Al Shabaab's control, including capturing the strategic port city of Kismayu, Marka, and control of Mogadishu (LIGAWA, 2018: 281; KAGWANJA ET AL., 2020). Piracy along the Indian Ocean has been vanquished, thus saving Kenya's tourism sector and the economy. Other critical areas liberated from Al Shabaab include the coastal towns of Quday, Burgaabo, and Ras Kiamboni (WILLIAMS ET AL., 2018). These were the revenue bases for Al Shabaab, and their capture denied Al Shabaab finances to fund their activities. However, by the time of AMISOM's transition to ATMIS, critical areas such as Jilib, Jamaame, Buale, and Sakoow, among others, remained under Al Shabaab's control.

AMISOM transition and exit strategies

AMISOM PSO took over responsibilities from IGASOM in April 2007 (WILLIAMS, 2012). Deployed under APSA, AMISOM had operated in Somalia for

approximately fifteen years before transiting to ATMIS on 01 April 2022. As in any PSO and military operation, exit is an inevitable part of AMISOM's operational strategy. It is premised on the notion presented by KAGWANJA ET AL. (2020) that AMISOM was not an occupation force. WILLIAM AND NGUYEN (2018) observed that AMISOM had been mooted exit from Somalia since 2017, with various exit plans being broached for implementation. The standard in the plans was that the exit was conditioned on AMISOM, having created a stable environment in Somalia for the resumption of security and governance functions. However, the plans by AMISOM to exit Somalia were often delayed owing to non-attainment of desirable stability conditions for exit. A Key Informant concurred with this analysis, noting that;

Since Kenya crossed into Somalia in October 2011 and later re-hatted to AMISOM in August 2012, it has taken over ten years in the operation theatre. We have heard of plans to draw down and exit from Somalia since sometime in 2017, but there has not been any significant progress. Kenya Contingent forces exited from areas such as Busaar, Fafadun, Bardheere and Ceel Adde, but they only redeployed to other locations within Somalia proximal to the shared border. Al Shabaab immediately took control of the abandoned bases and areas (Interview with a Military Officer deployed in Gherille, on 15 November 2022).

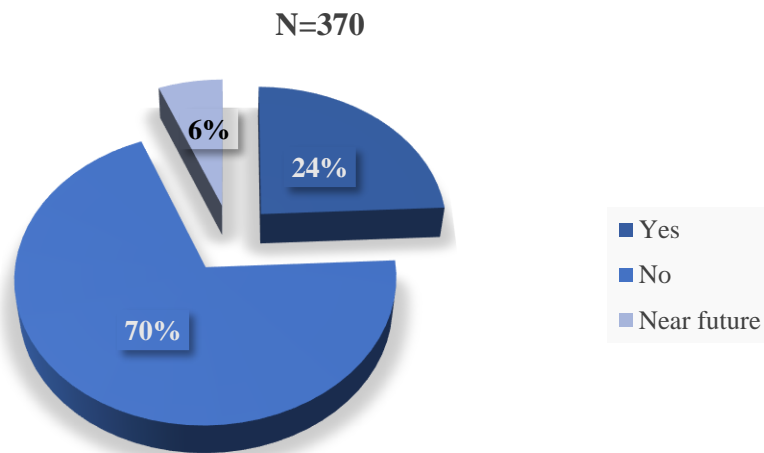
The sentiment expressed by the Key Informant affirms the existence of plans for an exit from Somalia. However, the Key Informant notes that the effectiveness of the plans has been questionable since implementation led to the recapture of territory by Al Shabaab. In a rebuttal to the argument on the lack of an AMISOM exit strategy, WILLIAM AND HASHI (2016) pointed out that AMISOM PSO plans included an exit strategy. The scholars pointed out that during the incipient stages, AMISOM PSO was conceptualized into four phases viz, initial deployment, deployment expansion, consolidation and finally, redeployment. The redeployment phase entails exit, conditioned on setting conditions favourable for stability in Somalia. However, the phase took five years to materialize (2017-2022), begging the question of whether AMISOM was adequately prepared for exit and whether it was the right moment for AMISOM to transit to ATMIS and eventually exit.

On the first concern, KAMAIS, OKOTH AND KIMOKOTI (2024) posited that, in contrast, the AMISOM mandate and attendant objectives were met mainly to warrant an assessment of mission success; crucial factors relating to security and governance still leave much to be desired. On the second question of whether it is the right time for AMISOM, including the Kenyan contingent, to exit Somalia, the finding in Figure 5 presents the respondents' view on the issue. Most (70%) respondents indicated it was not the right time for AMISOM to exit Somalia. In comparison, 24% indicated it was the right time for AMISOM to exit Somalia.

Only 6% of the respondents noted that it was not yet the right time for AMISOM to exit from Somalia but should do so soon.

The findings in Figure 5 present a paradox for AMISOM PSO. While it was noted to have been successful in mandate achievement (52% in Figures 4.9 and 4.11), the prevailing notion is that it is not the right time for the PSO to exit Somalia. It is ironic since an assessed success in mandate achievement should invite the triggering of subsequent phases to either exploit the successes or conclude the operations while offering support to the post-PSO dispensation. This paradox lends itself to the analysis that the critical security and governance AMISOM mandate objectives have not been sufficiently attained. The doubts expressed by KAGWANJA ET AL. (2020) and LIGAWA (2018) on the capacity of FGS and SSF to assume security and governance functions persist. Therefore, the finding that it is not the right time to exit Somalia is apt, notwithstanding the assessed success in mandate achievement.

Figure 5: Whether it is the right time for AMISOM to transit and exit Somalia



Source: Field data, 2022.

This study agrees with the argument posed by scholars that, ultimately, the future of Somalia is the responsibility of its people and government, thus requiring that such responsibilities be handed over in a gradual and measured manner (KAGWANJA ET AL., 2020; WILLIAMS & HASHI, 2016; NZAU, 2018). As in any PSO, KAGWANJA ET AL. (2020) reassured that AMISOM was not an occupation force in Somalia, refuting the propagandist line of argument hitherto employed by Al Shabaab. Whereas the AMISOM exit was delayed, the eventual exit plan did not consider the exit pitfalls of predecessor PSOs such as UNOSOM I and II, UNITAF and IGASOM.

EFFECTIVENESS OF MILITARY PEACE SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS IN STABILIZATION OF SOMALIA (1992-2022)

The examples of protracted PSOs in Iraq and Afghanistan ended in exits that worsened the post-intervention state of affairs (JACKSON & AMIRI, 2021; CROCKER, 2021; KANAT, 2019). Besides poor alignment of ends and means, operational fatigue and the urge to exit were prompted by the threat environment, protracted conflicts, resource burden, and waning support for the operations (SOPKO, 2021). Furthermore, JONEGÅRD (2019) observed that the agreement between the USA and the Taliban contributed to the reversal of gains in Afghanistan. Some of these factors could have informed the transition of AMISOM despite favourable conditions for Somalia's stability having not been established adequately. A Key Informant opined that:

Even if the Kenya Defence forces have been in Somalia for over ten years, their exit will make Kenya vulnerable. It is not the appropriate time for KDF to exit from Somalia. If they do, they must deploy within the immediate vicinity of the common border on the homeland side. As for the Somali, they will be back under the control of Al Shabaab the very minute we [KDF/AMISOM] exit. Their security forces will likely join Al Shabaab or flee into Kenya, especially those deployed close to our border areas. Somalia will likely experience what happened in Afghanistan when USA forces exited (Interview with a Military Commander in El Wak, on 15 December 2022).

The sentiments conveyed by the Key Informants corroborated the responses provided by the respondents. In essence, they portray the fears that the exit of KDF from AMISOM will likely lead to a deteriorated security situation. Before the transition of AMISOM in April 2022, scholars had observed that while the FGS and SSF had been created through the efforts of AU and AMISOM, the institutions only had weak influence in Mogadishu. WILLIAMS ET AL. (2018) placed this assertion into perspective by noting that Somalia was mainly under the mercy of Al Shabaab, save for a few cantonments secured by AMISOM troops and SSF.

However, there were more gains by AMISOM during Operation Juba Valley Corridor involving KDF, ENDF and SNA. The operation was collaboratively conducted in 2015 to flush out Al Shabaab in part of Jubaland, i.e. Gedo, as well as areas of Bay and Bakool (KAGWANJA ET AL., 2020, p. 99). Most of the gains by AMISOM were later reversed through draw-down [downsizing] and redeployments, leading to Al Shabaab's re-occupation of critical areas such as El Ade, Busaar, Fafadun, Bardheere, among others, thereby bringing the threat even closer to the shared border with Kenya. This trend creates the perception that the gains made by AMISOM, more so the Kenyan contingent would be reversed immediately upon exit since FGS and SSF cannot maintain the Country. Therefore, the finding that it was not the right moment for AMISOM to transition and exit finds grounds for justification.

The aggregated respondents' views depicted in Figure 6 further provides corroboration to the preceding finding and analysis. In elaborating their responses as to

whether it was the right time for AMISOM to transition and exit Somalia, a majority (48.4%) of the respondents held that it was not the right time since Somalia had not fully achieved stability and that skirmishes [with Al Shabaab] were still being experienced. Similarly, 27.3% of the respondents explained that, SSF was not ready enough to take over security responsibilities and that they could not fight Al Shabaab. More explanations aggregated around the fact that suitable conditions for long-term stability and development of Somalia had not been attained, as held by 6.2% of the respondents. These explanations tend to support concerns over the security and governance capacity of SSF/FGS, as expressed by NZAU (2018), LIGAWA (2018) and KAGWANJA ET AL. (2020).

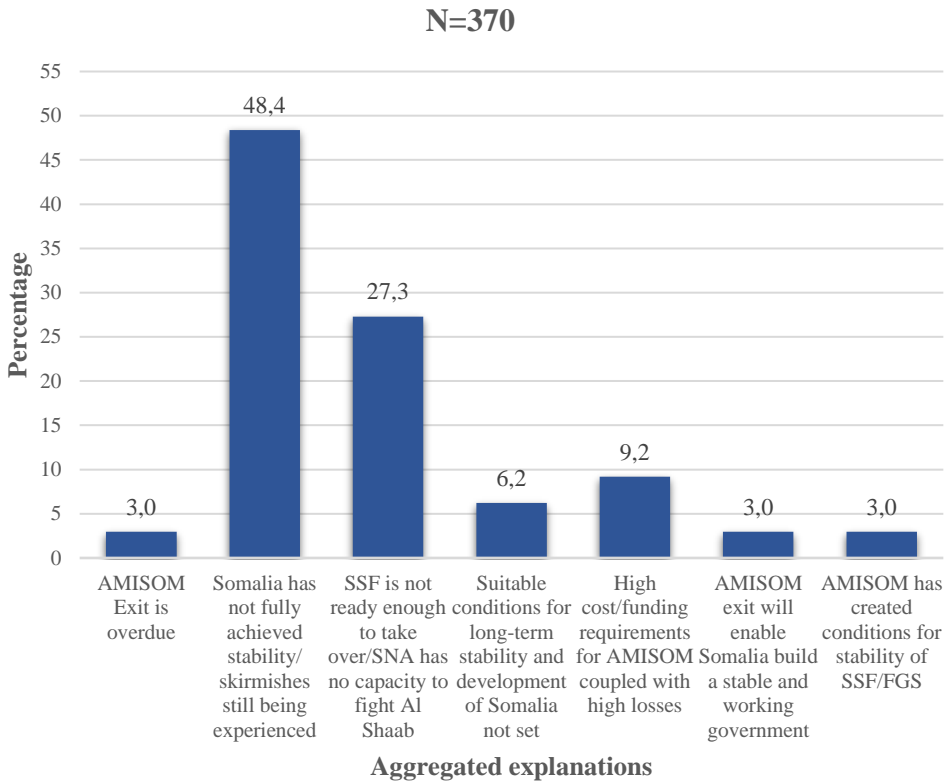
Those who concurred that it was the right time for AMISOM to transition held that; high cost and funding requirements for AMISOM coupled with high losses (9.2%), AMISOM has created conditions for stability of SSF/FGS(3%), AMISOM exit will enable Somalia to build a stable and working government (3%) and that AMISOM exit was long overdue (3%). To a marginal extent, the optimistic assessment by Williams et al. (2018) is echoed in the respondents' views that there has been significant attainment of AMISOM mandate objectives. KAGWANJA ET AL. (2020) held a similar assessment when they highlighted that large swathes of territory had been liberated from Al Shabaab and some economic activities restored through CIMIC. However, the achievements stated are not solid enough to allow for the immediate exit of AMISOM without reversion to instability. This is due to the persistent lack of capacity of SSF and FGS as guarantors of a conducive environment for stability and development.

The critical explanations in Figure 6, as held by most respondents, revolve around the capacity of SSF and FGS to assume security and governance of Somalia post-AMISOM PSO and create suitable conditions for Somalia's long-term stability and development. This study holds that the security and governance functions are core mandate aspects for AMISOM. They ought to form the bedrock upon which the future of Somalia's stability is predicated.

For a proper assessment of successful mandate achievements, more weightage ought to be given to the security and governance criteria. Only then can the fears expressed by KAGWANJA ET AL. (2020) and WILLIAM AND HASHI (2016) be allayed. The scholars cautioned that it would be irresponsible for AMISOM to exit Somalia before the Country attains good capacities to assume governance and security responsibilities. Furthermore, LIGAWA, OKOTH, AND MATANGA (2017) posited a need to realign AMISOM PSO activities to support the development of peace and stability in Somalia. Besides, Williams et al. (2018) point out that without a successful political process, AMISOM would not have a practical pathway out of Somalia. Therefore, transition and exit for AMISOM ought to have hinged, inter alia, on the complete stabilization of Somalia's governance and security and vanquishing or reformation of extremist groups such as Al Shabaab.

EFFECTIVENESS OF MILITARY PEACE SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS IN STABILIZATION OF SOMALIA (1992-2022)

Figure 6: Aggregated explanation on whether it is time for AMISOM to transition/exit



Source: Field Data, 2022.

Whereas protracted engagements in PSOs are costly in terms of financial, human and other resources, once launched, the only way out is the mission strategy as espoused by GILPIN (1997). It requires that achieving an operation's mission form the basis for subsequent operational developments, including exits. Therefore, a determination for the appropriate time to transition or exit ought to be dictated by mission achievement. In this case, the mission of AMISOM is derived from its mandate, which consequently drives the strategy.

Hurried PSO exit endeavours urged by factors other than the mission will only work against the mandate and strategy. Interestingly, KAGWANJA ET AL. (2020) noted that IGAD member states are cautious that premature withdrawal from Somalia will repeat earlier experiences in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan. Similarly, CRISIS GROUP (2022) is critical of the hurried need for transition

in Somalia that failed to appreciate the complexities of the Somali operating environment and geopolitical imperatives.

AMISOM transition and exit strategy

Military operations are guided by, and executed in line with, laid-out strategy. The strategy informs the mission, objectives and end states, forces to task, resource requirements, and roles of engagement, success criteria, and timelines from launch to termination of operations. The strategic theory requires that to optimize outcomes, all the possibilities and forces at play, including costs, risks, decisions and consequences, should be considered against those of the adversary (SCHELLING, 1984). Essentially, strategising is an endeavour to correlate ends and means (SMITH, 2008). To enable such an endeavour, Military planning processes are customarily cyclical, beginning from; observation (identifying the threat/problem), orientation (Securitisation as well as mental and positional adjustments relative to the threat), the decision on the action to take after due consideration of planning factors, taking appropriate action to neutralize the threat; then the process begins all over again (LUFT, 2020). The model is often called the OODA loop and considers the entire operational continuum from launch to exit.

Since PSOs are deployed for specific objectives, they cannot operate in theatre indefinitely. Therefore, an exit strategy is critical and essential to any PSO planning process. GILPIN (1997) and DURCH (2010) advocated for immediate military operation transition strategies to be built into the plans. However, scholars of military strategy have noted the ambiguities around the issue of the exit strategy for military operations, which eventually are left to the imagination, creativity, originality, and, indeed, initiative of individual planners augmented by case studies and experiences (WILLIAM & NGUYEN, 2018; YAGER, 2006). Despite such planning ambiguities, NZAU (2018, p. 538) observed that there are no straightforward theoretical models for military PSO strategies, and thus they should be adapted to the prevailing situation. This notion infers the flexibility of plans that must be adaptable to the threat environment through sequels and branches.

From 2017 onwards, AMISOM started having clear timelines for projected transition and exit, albeit conditioned. The observation by the Key Informant on missing set transition timelines is thus explainable in the context of the various extensions. The complex Somali politics and clan dynamics mean that creating consensus around governance and security issues will be arduous. The issue of aligning ends and means to set suitable conditions for the exit, funding, capacity building, post-conflict peacebuilding, and reconstruction is not straightforward

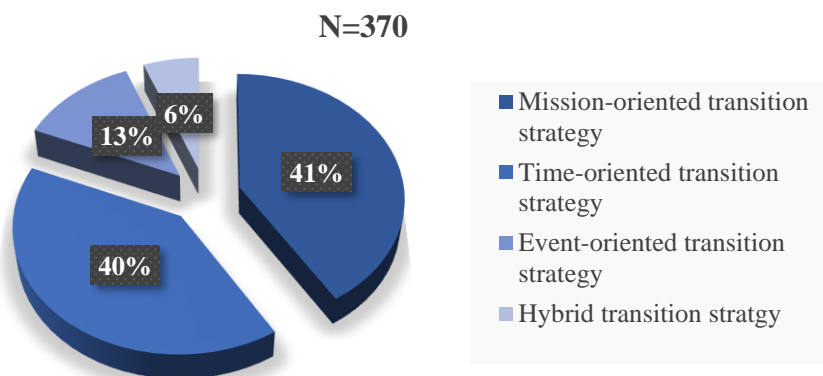
and is complicated by a multiplicity of actors and interests (SOPKO, 2021; LIGAWA, 2018; CLARK, 2006).

Furthermore, MADEIRA (2022) attempts to explain that the transition could have been hampered by the failure to enhance the 'AMISOM Model' to suit a transition mission engaged in asymmetric warfighting, provision of the appropriate level of enablers and force multipliers, and force generation. Indeed, the explication by MADEIRA (2022) considers the need to adjust to an asymmetric threat environment (ANGELL, 2015) and have strong mission forces and Somali Security and Governance institutions. A Key informant explained that:

The question of AMISOM and the Kenyan Contingent exit from Somalia is not straightforward. There are many factors at play, mainly along the line of interests. There are internal interests around clannism, power struggles and the need for resource control. External interests entail issues around the business in contrabands, arms proliferation, and access to resources in the Indian Ocean. The Somali forces are weak, and the governance structures are still fragile for them to assume responsibility for Somalia. On the other hand, there is an urge to have the Country return to normalcy after the protracted instability. We hope that this urge prevails for the sake of regional stability. Considering these factors, it is obvious why the set transition deadlines are not attained, necessitating extensions. Exiting Somalia may take a while (Interview with a planning Officer at Sector 2 headquarters, Dhobley, on 03 January 2022).

Despite the explanations provided by scholars and analysts as to the extensions to AMISOM PSO, the views by the Key Informant reinforce the prevailing perception that AMISOM transition and exit may not be concluded soon. Despite the AMISOM having changed into ATMIS according to UNSCR 2628(2022), the conditions within the theatre of operations remain significantly unchanged. In the transition to ATMIS, it is yet to be apparent if it will be effective or just a designation change as was with UNOSOM, UNITAF and IGASOM, which according to Nzau (2018), did little to address the Somali problem. To this end, it would be of interest to establish the form of exit strategy that the AMISOM PSO activities espoused based on the estimation of respondents. The respondents were asked to characterize the AMISOM PSO along the military operation transition/exit typology by GILPIN (1997) viz event-oriented strategy, mission-oriented strategy, time-oriented strategy or hybrid strategy. The findings were as depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Transition Strategy adopted by the AMISOM PSO



Source: Field data, 2022.

Depicted in Figure 7, the 41% of the respondents viewed that AMISOM transition strategy could be characterised as mission oriented. Comparatively, 40% of the respondents thought that AMISOM has a time oriented transition strategy. On the other hand, 13% of the respondents felt that AMISOM transition strategy was event oriented and 6% viewed that AMISOM has a hybrid transition strategy. The characterization of the exit strategy by the majority 41% of the respondents affirms that assertion by MUSOMA (2021) that, AMISOM PSO ought to achieve its mission as outlined in the mandate before exiting Somalia. As propounded by GILPIN (1997), a mission-oriented exit strategy is pegged on the achievement of the mission irrespective of the length of time. In essence, the desired end state of the mission ought to be achieved before considerations to windup the PSO either at a go or in a graduated and phased manner.

In contrast, a time-oriented exit strategy focuses on operations within a specified timeline, irrespective of whether the mission is attained. This was the characterization of 40% of the respondents based on the six-month mandate extension interval. However, the mandate extension did not lead to termination of the mission at the lapse of assigned timelines. In fact, the extensions were conditioned on the establishment of suitable conditions for long-term stability and development of Somalia. Therefore, this would indicate a hybrid transition strategy that encapsulated both time and mission indicators for transition as characterized by 6% of the respondents. AMISOM PSO seems not to be event-orientated since deadly attacks such as in El Adde, Kolbiyow, Jannaale, Miido, Ceel Baraaf, among others, did not prompt exit from Somalia. In contrast, UNSOM II PSO withdrew following the ‘black hawk down incident and therefore it could be characterised as event oriented (Bass & Zimmerman, 2013; Patman, 2015). After characterising the AMISOM PSO transition

strategy, an issue of interest would be the sufficiency of the AMISOM transition and exit strategy for the long-term stability of Somalia, a matter forming the focus of the following sub-section.

Consideration of the long-term stability of Somalia in the AMISOM transition strategy

Scholars have long argued that Military PSO transition and exit strategies should sufficiently consider the long-term stability of the post-PSO Country (KAGWANJA ET AL., 2020; WILLIAMS ET AL., 2018; WILLIAMS & HASHI, 2016). In essence, the PSO transition strategy's nature and formulation should sufficiently factor in the key aim of ensuring a long-term post-PSO state. In the regional context, the post-intervention stability of the subject Country ensures that the security of the immediate neighbours is not adversely affected.

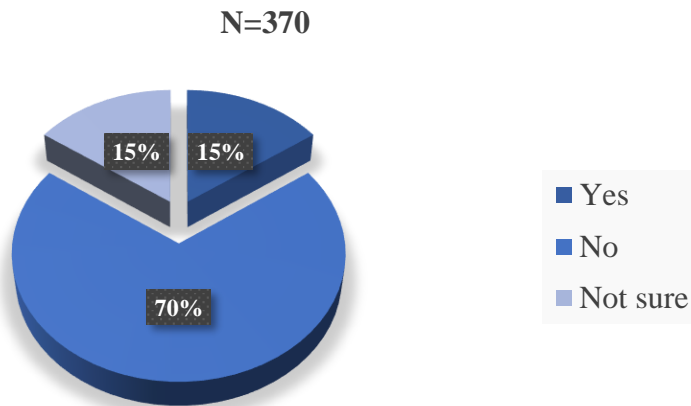
As guided in the functionalist theory, the society (in this case, HoA in the macro sense) is a sum of its constituent parts (states) performing interdependent functions and dysfunction in one or more of the constituent parts functionally affects the rest of the system. It has to be adjusted to remedy the anomie (LEVIN, 2021). MIGUE ET AL. (2012) and KAGWANJA Et Al. (2020) alluded to the functionalist notion when they argued that Kenya had to intervene in Somalia over the concern for her security. Therefore, security and stability needed to be restored in Somalia to guarantee the security of Kenya.

The question that begs, therefore, is whether the PSO transition strategy was adequate for the desired long-term stability and development of concerned countries and their neighbours. The observations made, and conclusions arrived at, from the cases of interventions in Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, DRC, and Sudan, among others, indicate that the military interventions and PSOs did not sufficiently cater for the post-intervention situation (SALAÜN, 2019; CROKER, 2021; FELTER & RENWICK, 2021). Where the PSO outcome was assessed to have been successful, such as in UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone, the exit plan sufficiently considered pertinent issues relating to the post-PSO state of the Country (GOLDMANN, 2005). It underscores the importance of having a proper exit strategy that accounts for post-exit stability, not only of the subject state but also of the neighbours and the particular region. The adequacy of PSO transition and exit plans should be evaluated based on the degree to which they account for factors that would ensure long-term stability and development of the post-intervention period.

Concerning the AMISOM transition and exit plan, their adequacy is assessed in the findings depicted in Figure 8. A majority (70%) of the respondents held the view that AMISOM transition and exit plans were not sufficient for

the long-term stability of Somalia, 15% indicated that AMISOM transition and exit plans were sufficient for the long-term stability of Somalia, while 15% were not sure.

Figure 8: Adequacy of AMISOM transition and exit strategy for the long-term stability of Somalia



Source: Field data, 2022.

The issues around the adequacy of AMISOM transition and exit plans call into question whether lessons were learnt from previous PSOs. Scholars have noted the critical failures of pre-AMISOM PSOs. WILLIAMS ET AL. (2018) indicated that while UNOSOM I was meant to provide security and humanitarian agencies for relief aid distribution, it failed to contain the activities of saboteur warlords in Somalia and ended prematurely. UNITAF was to prepare for the return of peace-keeping and post-conflict peacebuilding in Somalia. However, due to a lack of robust mandate, it failed to create sustainable peace despite creating an enabling environment for negotiating and signing of the Addis Ababa agreement in early 1993 (MATHEWS, 2004: 253; OLUOCH, 2018; JESS, 2018, pp. 142-143;). UNOSOM II had a similar mandate to UNOSOM I but ignominiously ended shortly after the infamous 'black hawk down' incident (Adam, 2004; Oluoch, 2018). It left local warlords and terrorists to riot in Somalia, thus threatening the Security of Kenya and HoA.

In 2005, IGASOM deployed in the context of the 'African Solutions to African problems' philosophy, but there were disagreements by TCCs over issues of Arms embargo between IGAD and AU on the one hand and UN on the other (OCHA, 2005; WILLIAM & NGUYEN, 2018; DE CONING, 2019). These rafts of pre-AMISOM PSOs and their premature exits left Somalia at the mercy of warlordism that gradually morphed into Jihadism. After over fifteen years in Somalia, it is concerning that AMISOM PSO, though assessed to be successful, it is viewed to

have not catered sufficiently for the long-term stability and development of Somalia in its transition and exit strategy. It is reflected in the view of a Key Informant, that:

When KDF [and AMISOM] exit Somalia, the Country will be back under the control of Al Shabaab. Another problem may arise on top of the Al Shabaab threat. Community defence militia known as Maacawisely are organizing to repel Al Shabaab in areas without AMISOM and Somali forces. These Maacawisely will eventually engage in rivalry over control of territory and resources, thereby creating warlord-controlled areas. Since they are not regulated and do not operate under any rules, they will become a security threat in themselves or form alliances of convenience with other Maacawisely or even Al Shabaab. If not addressed, AMISOM operations and exit will not have helped. The threat to Kenya will continue, and the affected communities along the border will continue suffering (Interview with a Planning Officer at Sector 2 headquarter, Dhobley, 06 January 2022).

While novel and innovative in tackling the complex Somalia security situation, clan militia may precipitate warlordism after Al Shabaab is vanquished. There will likely be no well-coordinated measures to include a post-operation dispersal plan for the Maacawisely. The apprehension that AMISOM transition and exit will not necessarily leave a stable Somalia is sobering, especially for a protracted PSO in the Country for over fifteen years. Post-AMISOM stability factors majorly revolve around security and governance, a fact established by the findings of this study as having insufficiently been addressed. As NZAU (2018, pp. 544-546) analysed, the Somali question must be adequately addressed to ensure it does not continue destabilizing. This aspect appears to be ignored in the conceptualization of 'the AMISOM Model' by MADEIRA (2022). The 'AMISOM model' to be adopted for transition emphasizes the need to suit operations to asymmetric warfighting, provision of operational enablers and force generation.

The overemphasizing of a militaristic approach, when the focus should be on gradual handover to SSF and FGS, indicates a deficiency in the AMISOM operational strategy and its transition and exit strategy. It is an inadvertent admission by planners that by the time of transition, the suitable conditions were not set and, therefore, the need to fast track through the robustness of military operations that may run the risk of overshadowing and even precluding political processes.

Conclusion

The study concludes that concluded that the lack of proper understanding of the operating environment leads to misalignment of strategies in employment of resources thus leading to dismal outcomes. AMISOM transition strategies have

not adequately addressed the governance and security aspects of Somalia's stabilization, posing a threat to Kenya's national security. Whereas the overall AMISOM stabilization efforts can be adjudged as successful, the crucial mandate objective of creating suitable conditions for Somalia's long-term stability and development has not been adequately attained. The capacity of SSF and FGS remains weak and thus will be unable to credibly assume security and governance of the country in the post-AMISOM era. It poses a threat of failed stabilization and threatening to Kenya's National Security.

As part of the transition strategy, the study concludes that the STP does not adequately factor in the cohesion of Somalia with due consideration of the clan dynamics, more so in the security architecture. The transition CONOPs risk failing due to such omissions besides short transition timelines, lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the attainment of critical transition targets and lack of a coherent transition programme of action, among others. The apprehension that it is not the ripe moment for AMISOM/ATMIS to exit Somalia is informed to a large extent by the inadequacy in achieving sufficient socio-political stability. This militates the crucial mandate objective of creating a conducive environment for long-term stability and development of Somalia.

As established by the study, the study concludes that preferred model is a transition to AU-UN hybrid mission focusing on peacebuilding with the ability to muster sufficient resources. Such a model is best encapsulated within a mission-oriented exit strategy as established by this study. Gradual capacity development of the Somalia political and security architecture is necessary in ensuring long-term stability. This is achievable through concerted efforts that draws from broad-based legitimacy and resource support and thus the preference for a hybrid mission. In sum, owing to the inadequacies, Somalia's PSO transition strategies (including AMISOM) have a significant negative correlation and influence on Kenya's national security.

Recommendation

The study recommends that stakeholders should continue to engage in shaping the Somalia transition plan in order to ensure that all pitfalls are mitigated to guarantee proper stabilization. Government of Kenya need engage AMISOM to review the transition strategy as reflected in the STP and ATMIS CONOPs to cater for the security forces of federal member states such as JSF and RKB, among others. The SSF and FGS capacity must be developed sufficiently before the transition is finalized. Additionally, allocate sufficient timelines for the transition shepherded by an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism to ensure transition targets are attained and resources are utilized effectively. A mission

oriented exit strategy should be adopted within the context of AU-UN hybrid mission. This should be explored with the view of developing a strong FGS with sufficient capacity to secure Somalia's peace and stability.

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NAVIGATING INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY: UNRAVELING INDIA'S STRATEGY, FUTURE PROSPECTS, AND INSIGHTS FROM THE INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FORUM

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Abstract. This study examines India's strategic engagement with the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), analysing its policies and implications within the context of regional economic diplomacy. India, a significant player in the Indo-Pacific, has selectively engaged with IPEF's pillars on supply chains, clean economy, and fair economy while opting out of the trade pillar due to concerns over binding conditionalities. The manuscript evaluates India's bilateral and multilateral agreements in the region, focusing on partnerships with Australia, Japan, the United States, and ASEAN, and highlights their alignment with India's broader goals of sustainable economic growth and geopolitical stability. Through a comparative analysis, the research identifies policy divergences between India and IPEF, such as trade liberalization, environmental standards, and digital trade frameworks, and proposes strategies to harmonize these differences. The findings emphasize India's pivotal role in fostering inclusive, sustainable development in the Indo-Pacific while safeguarding its national interests.

Keywords: Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), India's Economic Diplomacy, Regional Cooperation, Sustainable Development, Geopolitical Strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Today, India, as a developing country, has gained high diplomatic status worldwide (TOI NEWS DESK, 2024). The same can be observed in the Indo-Pacific region where the diplomatic relations between India and various other Indo-pacific countries are growing with the passage of time (DARSHANA M. BARUAH, 2020) and acknowledgement of the same can be inferred from the statements of Indian Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh that "India stands for a free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific as it is important for the economic development of not only the region but also the wider global community" (PRESS INFO BUREAU 2022).

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The statements provided above can be inferred to be true because the Indo-Pacific region, not only has geographical significance but economic and political significance also, the same can be attributed to the major countries like India, China, Australia, Japan, and Indonesia, which through its large population base is emerging more and more predominant in their political and economic sphere (GHOSH, SARKAR, AND BASU RAY CHAUDHURY, 2022). The same was duly acknowledged by the West when the United States of America (USA) proposed a new framework, known as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) (GOODMAN AND REINSCH, 2022). The main intention behind the formation of this framework was to strengthen economic engagement among partner countries with the goal of advancing growth, peace, and prosperity in the region. Further, the framework was structured around four pillars relating to Trade (Pillar I); Supply Chains (Pillar II); Clean Economy (Pillar III); and Fair Economy (Pillar IV) (PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU, 2023).

India, which was one of the 14 partner countries in this agreement had mixed stances on it, as it joined the II to IV pillars of the agreement but assumed the role of the observer in the I pillar, the reason behind this was attributed to some binding conditionalities, which can affect the national interest of the country (SINHA, 2022). The move to join the framework but with limits reflected upon India's socioeconomic interest and the same being applied in parallel with the diplomatic tactics of India.

By taking into consideration the same, the authors through this research paper will try to determine the effectiveness of India's economic diplomacy strategies by, first, generally examining the bilateral and multilateral agreements framework of India and how it works, second, how India had specifically applied it concerning the Indo-Pacific region and how it can result in the creation of futuristic scenarios for India with the implementation of the IPEF in the Indo-Pacific region. At last, the authors will try to analyse the factors that can help create a complementary framework between India's growing economic diplomatic agreements and IPEF future policies and what measures can be taken for its smooth development.

INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK FOR PROSPERITY (IPEF) AND ITS FUTURE ROLE IN REGIONAL STABILITY

The United States of America established the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) on the date of May 2022 with 13 other countries comprising of Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, 2024). The total countries under the IPEF

NAVIGATING INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY: UNRAVELING INDIA'S STRATEGY, FUTURE PROSPECTS, AND INSIGHTS FROM THE INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FORUM

comprise 40 per cent of the Global GDP and 28 per cent of the global goods and services.

In September 2022, during the Senior Officials and Ministerial meetings, the Partners of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) achieved consensus on Ministerial Statements outlining objectives for each of the four pillars. This marked the beginning of text-based negotiations, which commenced in Brisbane in December and persisted thereafter. Recognizing the urgency of their mission, the Partners committed to an ambitious negotiating schedule for 2023. By May of that year, negotiations for Pillar II were substantially concluded, followed by negotiations for Pillar III, which were concluded in November 2023 and will have an inaugural IPEF Clean Economy Investor Forum meeting in Singapore on 05-06 June 2024 (PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU, 2022). This concerted effort reflects the commitment of the Partners to address environmental challenges comprehensively and expediently through international cooperation.

Now, when talking about the reason behind the formation of the IPEF, the same can be attributed to the countenance of the growing Chinese influence in the region (LIPTAK, 2022). In the Financial Times, it was reported that countries in the region urged the Biden administration to develop an international economic policy framework to combat China's influence (SEVASTOPULO AND INAGAKI, 2022). The same request goes back to the reign of Barack Obama as the president of the USA, when the USA started the strategy of "Pivot to Asia" (BLACKWILL, n.d.). (the rebalancing towards Asia-Pacific) and negotiated a trade proposal with the twelve Pacific Rim countries and the same trade proposal in the future was known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) (UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE, n.d.). Further, when the Donald Trump government came into power in the year 2016, it issued an executive order pulling the United States out of the TPP, which Congress had not ratified (BBC NEWS, 2017), and also started upon a new strategy, known as "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF JAPAN, 2023) under which America first version was adopted, in response to the same in 2018 the remaining eleven countries of the TPP signed a revised version of the agreement, known as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (HOUSE OF COMMONS LIBRARY, 2024). But when Biden's government came into power, it realised the growing influence of the Indo-pacific region in world economic politics, and to form a more resilient supply chain among these countries, revived the old policy (SINGH, 2022) of "Pivot to Asia" as well as proposed the idea of the formation of a framework in the form of Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity.

In discussing the future role of IPEF in regional stability, it is firstly important to acknowledge that in the past there has been a significant change in the centre of gravity from the Atlantic to Asia, and a new geopolitical discourse has been entered in the form of the Indo-Pacific. Secondly, it has been established that the Indo-Pacific region contains great geographical importance because it encompasses both the Pacific and Indian Oceans and its geographic boundaries stretch from East Africa to the west coast of the USA. Third, as already discussed above, the countries in the Indo-Pacific region have great economic and trade value, which results in making the Indo-Pacific one of the world's most dynamic regions. Hence it can be said that the Indo-Pacific region assumes a critical position in the present as well as in the future, and the political and economic effects in this region can have perpetual consequences for the whole world.

In furtherance of the points described above, the IPEF can work as a perfect tool for maintaining stability in the Indo-Pacific region because it tries to mutualise some of the pertinent points like supply chain and Clean and Fair Economy (INDIA NEWS NETWORK, 2023) among major countries in the Indo-Pacific and works in the creation of an equal power structure between West and East by promoting the "Asia first" or "Pivot of Asia" strategy. While adopting this strategy, U.S. also promotes the interest of other small countries side by side with it by providing them with the opportunity to trade goods and information without having any effect upon their trade sovereignty, environment, and welfare of the people (THE WHITE HOUSE, 2022). Further, the IPEF promotes a balance of power structure in the Indo-Pacific by containing the influence of China (BANERJEE, 2022) and its policies like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and String of Pearls Theory because in contemporary times China is moving towards the trajectory of gaining high economic and political power in the world and the same growing power can cause instability in the Asia and the Indo-Pacific region.

BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL TREATIES OF INDIA

India has taken the lead in advancing and forming a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region as one of its main proponents. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's June 1, 2018, address at the Shangri La Dialogue in Singapore was one of the first moves in that direction. "At the core of the new Indo-Pacific are inclusiveness, openness, and ASEAN centrality and unity," he said (MISHRA, 2021). India does not view the Indo-Pacific region as a limited membership club or as a strategic alliance.

Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) was launched by the Indian Prime Minister on November 4, 2019, in Bangkok, Thailand. The primary goal of the IPOI is to guarantee the stability, safety, and security of the maritime domain. Seven pillars have been established to achieve this goal (UNITED SERVICE INSTITUTE, 2020). This initiative is important for India because it includes all major dialogue partners of ASEAN. It is a non-treaty-based global initiative and focuses on promoting practical cooperation in existing regional architectures like the EAS (East Asia Summit) framework, IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association), PIF (Pacific Islands Forum), etc.

India and Australia

India and Australia both envision an Indo-Pacific region that is free, open, inclusive, and governed by international law. This region will enable overflight, freedom of navigation, and peaceful, cooperative use of the oceans by all countries. Relations between India and Australia have never been closer. Australia is only one of three countries with which India holds annual leader-level summits. India and Australia are working together through various plurilateral mechanisms, including various trilateral meetings with other countries. They underlined their commitment to continuing Quad conversations and welcomed the first-ever Quad ministerial meeting with the US and Japan in September 2019 (MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF JAPAN, 2019).

India is a rising power in the Pacific region and has emerged as an important security power for Australia, particularly in the maritime domain. Both countries announced a Joint Declaration on a Shared Vision for Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific in 2020 (DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT, 2020). With Australia joining the Malabar exercises alongside other Quad nations in 2020 and the regular bilateral exercises AUSINDEX between the Indian and Australian fleets, the two nations' navies have interacted often.

Growth in India brings opportunities for Australian goods and services, including agricultural products, minerals, resources, education, and skills training. The Australia – India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA), which entered into force in December 2022, has deepened our economic ties and furthered opportunities for Australian and Indian businesses. Australia and India have begun negotiations on a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA). India and Australia going forward with cooperation on an entire range of areas like critical minerals, health, critical technology, science, and agriculture. In May 2024, the Australian Government announced consultations to develop a future roadmap for Australia's economic engagement with

India, drawing together and supercharging work and aligning efforts with state and federal governments, businesses, and community organizations. By collaborating, they may take advantage of new possibilities and challenges and further the region's common goals and interests.

India and Japan

In the Indo-Pacific area, the alliance between Japan and India has been expanding gradually and is crucial for economic growth, strategic collaboration, and regional stability. They reiterated that strong collaboration between Japan and India is the key to attaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, acknowledging that peace, stability, and development in the region are important to their national security and prosperity.

India and Japan announced “Japan and India Vision 2025 Special Strategic and Global Partnership Working Together for Peace and Prosperity of the Indo-Pacific Region and the World” which guided the new era in Japan–India relations. In 2008, India and Japan issued “the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India” and various frameworks including Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting (2+2 meeting). Both countries also announced the “India – Japan Industrial Competitiveness Partnership” for the enhancement of supply chains.

Acknowledging India as the most populous democracy and rapidly expanding major economy in the Asia-Pacific area, the Japanese government expressed their endorsement of India's APEC membership as a beneficial development for the region's economic integration. Japan is also a member of the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) (GIRISANKER, 2021). As reflected in the Joint Japan-India Vision Statement during Prime Minister Modi's October 2018 visit to Japan, two leaders have reaffirmed their "firm commitment" towards collaboration for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific". To maintain security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region and to shape its geopolitical dynamics, the alliance between Japan and India is essential.

India and the US

The Indo-Pacific cooperation between the United States and India has grown in importance in recent years as a result of growing concerns about regional security and stability as well as common strategic objectives. Both countries started a maritime security dialogue in 2016 and also part of the Malabar exercise, which was started in 1992 as a naval exercise between both countries. Later, in 2015, Japan and in 2020, Australia also became part of this exercise (INDIAN NAVAL STRATEGY, 2023).

Ambitious 2030 targets for climate change and clean energy by both the US and India set a shared vision for deploying clean energy at scale. The U.S.-

India New and Emerging Renewable Energy Technologies Action Platform (RE-TAP), had its first meeting in August 2023. Under the platform, our two nations will join forces and work together in the laboratory to develop and test renewable energy technologies and systems and harmonize policy and planning.

The USA and India have built quite a robust defence industrial partnership, which has on its table prospects of the joint development and production of critical military assets for both countries. The United States and India also cooperate through the Defence Policy Group and the bilateral U.S.-India Counterterrorism Joint Working Group. The USA and its defence allies have signed four "foundational" agreements. "Routine instruments that the U.S. uses to promote military cooperation with partner-nations" is how the Pentagon characterizes the accords. The first of the four agreements, the General Security of Military Information Agreement, or GSOMIA, was entered into by India and the United States in 2002. Under the agreement, each country will protect the classified material of the other, and the two countries can exchange military intelligence.

The second accord was the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Accord, signed on August 29, 2016, by both nations. LEMOA allows making use of the bases of both nations by the armed forces either for maintenance or resupply. Signed in 2018, the third accord is the Communications Compatibility and Security Accord, otherwise referred to as COMCASA. It provides for secure communication during bilateral and multinational exercises and operations and the exchange of information between the two countries on authorized equipment. The fourth agreement, the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), was signed in 2020 and allows the sharing by India and the US National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency of unclassified and restricted unclassified geospatial goods.

Furthermore, the two sides have pledged to oppose China's aggressive actions in the Indo-Pacific region, including the South China Sea. In the Indo-Pacific region, US-India cooperation must also uphold the values of unimpeded passage and amicable resolution of maritime conflicts.

India and Singapore

Singapore and India share centuries-old historical and cultural ties. The social and economic fabric of Singapore has benefited greatly from the contributions of the Indian diaspora. Over 20 routine bilateral mechanisms, discussions, and exercises are in place. Both of them are members of the Commonwealth, the East Asia Summit, the G20, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) (MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, 2018). They also have a great deal of agreement on a wide variety of international issues.

Both nations acknowledge the Indo-Pacific region's strategic significance. Freedom of navigation and stability in the waterways of the region are important interests shared by India, a major regional power, and Singapore, a maritime hub. Among the important agreements are the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) (2005) and its Second Review (2018); the CECA eliminated tariff barriers and double taxation and also promoted trade and economic partnerships (DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, 2007). "SIMBEX" is an exercise held annually since 1994 as a naval combat exercise between Singapore and India. There were many warships participating from Singapore and India in this interoperability combat drill. A Defence Cooperation Agreement was struck in 2003 between Singapore and India that allowed the Singapore army and air force to train on Indian land. A naval cooperation agreement was signed by both nations on November 29, 2017, in regard to maritime security, cooperative exercises, and reciprocal logistical support. It would further help ships of either navy to replenish, refuel, and rearm at military installations in the other.

In general, the Indo-Pacific cooperation between Singapore and India is complex, involving aspects of economic, strategic, and cultural ties. Mutual respect, common interests, and a dedication to advancing regional peace, stability, and prosperity define it.

In addition to serving to further India's strategic, economic, and security objectives, bilateral agreements with other nations in the Indo-Pacific area also support stability, collaboration, and growth in the area.

Through the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, the US tries to create an economic circle exclusive of China in China's neighbourhood and focuses on creating a new structure for regional cooperation. IPEF is essentially a diplomatic signal, purposefully issued by the US at a specific moment to show its partners and allies in the Eurasian region that the US is committed to and capable of initiating a full-scale containment of China.

MULTILATERAL TREATIES

India integrated activity about the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), ASEAN, and the Quad into the establishment of an Indo-Pacific branch inside the Ministry of External Affairs.

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD):

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or QUAD for short, is a non-formal strategic conference that brings together the four main democracies in the Indo-Pacific region: Japan, Australia, the United States, and India. The idea was first

proposed by Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe in 2007 and referred to the Indo-Pacific as a strategic space because of the dynamic coupling of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. In 2017, its 1st official talks took place in the Philippines (SMITH, 2021). The goal of the Quad is to prevent any military or political influence from being felt along the vital water routes in the Indo-Pacific region. In essence, it is viewed as a strategic alliance with the goal of lessening Chinese dominance.

For India, the Indo-Pacific strategy extends from the eastern coast of Africa to the western South Pacific and includes parts of the Middle East. In contrast, the United States does not include Africa or the Middle East in its strategy for the Indo-Pacific region. Despite these complications, India is an important part of the QUAD grouping; without India, QUAD is less credible in Asia. India sees the QUAD as a platform for advancing regional security, stability, and prosperity, especially in the Indo-Pacific area, and as having great strategic importance.

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

India places strategic importance on the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), which reflects its maritime interests and aspirations for regional collaboration. To promote regional economic cooperation, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) was established as an intergovernmental organization in 1997 (INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION, 2024). IORA has 23 member states and 12 dialogue partners. IORA mainly focuses on the areas of economic cooperation and encourages sustainable development among member states and the region. All IORA members expressed interest in Blue Economy at the 14th IORA Membership Meeting in 2014 due to its potential to enhance business processes and economies of both large and small member states and provide employment, food access, and poverty alleviation. Development of the Blue Economy policy led by India and Australia focuses on the research and development of marine, cooperation on eco-tourism, and the creation of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission.

IORA is crucial to India since it supports SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and the country's ambition for a sustainable future in the region. India promotes its policy of "coordination, cooperation, and partnership". In its twenty years of existence, IORA has failed to gain significant traction ('India's Role in the Indian Ocean Region and Its Links to the Indo-Pacific', 2023). China's recent increasing involvement in the Indian Ocean Region through the Belt and Road Initiatives has raised significant concerns for the IORA. China increases its economic and military presence in the IORA member states, this

might lead to a shift in regional alignments, potentially diminishing India's influence in the association. Once more, India has taken the initiative to revive IORA's position in the area. To do this, India has assumed the lead and announced significant initiatives in all areas that are both high priorities and areas that the IORA member states find concerning.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok. In 1992, India became an ASEAN Sectoral Partner; in 1996, it became a Dialogue Partner; and in 2002, it became a Summit-level Partner (ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS, 2024). Since then, the ASEAN-India Summit has been held annually. In 2022, ASEAN and India celebrated the 30th anniversary of their relations and also formed the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Under the ASEAN-India dialogue relations, important cooperation frameworks were initiated, such as the Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), which enhanced ASEAN partners' regional dialogues and increased regional integrations. At the 18th ASEAN-India summit, they adopted the ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Cooperation on the ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific for Peace, Stability, and Prosperity in the region. The 20th ASEAN-India Summit, held in 2023, adopted the ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Maritime Cooperation to promote maritime cooperation, and ASEAN also supported the ASEAN-Indo-Pacific Forum.

By focusing on connectivity, commerce, and culture, India's "Act-East Policy" has increased its interaction with other ASEAN member states. One of India's strategic goals is to improve connection with ASEAN, particularly land and marine connectivity. The ASEAN Connectivity Coordinating Committee (ACCC) and India have regular communications regarding connectivity. ASEAN is one of the largest trading partners of India and a key pillar of India's Indo-Pacific Vision (MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, 2018). In 2003, the ASEAN-India Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation was signed in the 2nd ASEAN-India Summit. This agreement also forms the basis for the ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement. India's engagement with ASEAN is multifaceted driven by mutual economic interests and strategic imperatives.

FUTURISTIC SCENARIOS OF IPEF AND INDIA IN THE PACIFIC REGION

India's active participation in Indo Pacific region positions it as a central player in shaping the futuristic scenarios of IPEF. During her 2012 visit to Australia, US

NAVIGATING INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY: UNRAVELING INDIA'S STRATEGY, FUTURE PROSPECTS, AND INSIGHTS FROM THE INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FORUM

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also praised India as a significant actor in the Indo-Pacific region that needs to take a more active part in the affairs of the region (Khurana, 2019). The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized a few crucial elements of New Delhi's policy stance on the Indo-Pacific, such as inclusiveness and openness, during his address at the 2018 Shangri la Dialogue.

The Indo-Pacific region's strategic location and important marine trade make it a crucial area for other countries. Over 65% of the world's GDP is generated in the Indo-Pacific area, and these two oceans handle half of all trade worldwide. Two to formulate strategic policy, the Pacific and Indian Ocean regions have long been regarded as distinct entities (DE, 2021).

The main aim of IPEF is to frame strategic and economic initiatives that are driven by the desire for a Pacific region as open, rules-based, inclusive, and so forth. IPEF also focuses on the economic growth of the member countries. The Indo-Pacific economic framework works on four main pillars – Trade, Supply chains, Clean economy, and Fair Economy (MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY, 2023). The main focus of countries is on supply chains. The United States will spearhead efforts on all four pillars, with the Department of Commerce overseeing the third and the US Trade Representative heading the work on the linked economy pillar (UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE, 2022).

IPEF is a framework that focuses on economic interests, particularly for all the members, and tries to mitigate China's tendency to utilize economic routes in Indo Pacific region. The IPEF will not progress as a traditional free trade agreement; it will focus on a new approach, which is offering reciprocal preferential access to domestic markets of the member countries through tariff cuts. Diversification of the supply chain has gained prominence after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. After this, most of the countries, like Japan and Australia, have started working on supply chain diversification in Indo-Pacific strategies.

The economic interests of most of the member countries are directly or indirectly dependent on China. IPEF is also willing to improve transport connectivity with Indo-Pacific countries. IPEF seeks to offer a cooperative substitute for the Belt and Road Initiative, which is funded by China while concentrating on increasing the availability of infrastructure funding for Indo-Pacific nations (LUTHRA, 2023).

India's stance on the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework was primarily shaped by strategic interests and regional dynamics. India's final decision will be taken keeping the national interest of the people and businesses in mind. India decided not to join the trade pillar of IPEF due to its justifiable concerns about the potential for legally binding conditions that would tie trade to labour and environmental issues.

The simplification of import and export procedures in the Pacific region is important for promoting jobs and growth, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The future of SMEs is important. SMEs make up 60-70% of the workforce in the Indo-Pacific region, but there is much space for expansion. They only contribute 35% or less to direct exports (GOODMAN, 2022). India can help in the growth of SMEs by providing support measures like improving market access, enhancing digital infrastructure, and promoting innovation and development.

The supply chain pillar of IPEF is important it enhances regional stability and economic growth. IPEF partners signed the IPEF Supply Chain Agreement in November 2023 in San Francisco and the agreement entered into force in February 2024. IPEF partners announced the setting up of the Supply Chain Council, Crisis Response Network, and Labor Rights Advisory Board in 2024 (US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, 2023). India is an important partner in this agreement due to its strategic location and manufacturing capabilities. India did not sign this agreement because of the incomplete domestic approval processes which were most likely completed after the formation of the new government. By becoming a member, India can make a crucial contribution to the efforts to create a supply chain that is more effective and sustainable in Indo Pacific region and which will help the local and global economy.

The Clean Economy pillar of IPEF is essential for the reason that it addresses the critical issues related to environmental sustainability and energy security. IPEF Partners signed the IPEF Clean Economy Agreement (US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, 2023), which is in line with their paths to net zero emissions and improved climate resilience, the IPEF partners are continuing to strengthen their cooperation and set up efforts to hasten their transitions to clean economies.

On June 6, 2024, IPEF partners launched the IPEF Clean Economy Investor Forum. Opportunities to invest \$23 billion in sustainable infrastructure projects in the Indo-Pacific region emerged from the first-ever Forum (PRESS RELEASE, 2024). Key investors overseeing trillions of dollars told the Forum that they are seeking to expand further and accelerate the pace of capital flows into the IPEF economies. The IPEF Catalytic Capital Fund, which uses concessional financing, technical assistance, and capacity-building support to expand the pipeline of high-quality, resilient, and inclusive clean economy infrastructure projects in emerging and upper-middle-income economies party to the IPEF Clean Economy Agreement, was officially launched by the IPEF Partners and the Private Infrastructure Development Group (US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, 2022).

It has taken the initiative and leadership in fostering collaboration in clean energy and climate-friendly technology research, development, commercialization, and application. One of the numerous projects currently under development is an Indian platform for renewable energy. India engages actively in this

framework, apart from following its goals of meeting its sustainable development, to contribute towards the Indo-Pacific's collective goals of transitioning towards a clean and sustainable economy.

The fair economy is a critical pillar for the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity to deliver on equitable, inclusive, and sustainable economic conditions in the region. IPEF partners signed the IPEF Fair Economy Agreement. Then came the welcome announcement of new Technical Assistance and Capacity Building (TACB) programs of a Catalogue of TACB Initiatives for the IPEF Fair Economy Agreement (US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, 2024). It is rightly seen as something that was inductively important to the effective implementation of the IPEF Fair Economy Agreement to enhance predictability and transparency in doing business and boost trade and investment in IPEF economies. It makes the role of India in the fair economy pillar of the IPEF multi-faceted and, at the same time, critical for its success. Contributions by India include Digital Forensics and System-Driven Risk Analysis which has been offered under the TACB catalogue (MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY, 2024). Without the active participation and leadership from India, there wouldn't be any equitable and sustainable economic growth for all the member countries; regional stability and prosperity would suffer also.

India is important to many aspects of the scenarios of the IPEF, beginning with its economic potential, capabilities in innovation, commitment to sustainability, and strategic geopolitical role. As the Indo-Pacific Region finds its way through complex challenges and opportunities, India's proactive participation and leadership will, therefore, assume all the greater importance for shaping a future characterized by prosperity, inclusivity, and sustainability for all member countries.

CREATION OF A COMPLEMENTARY FRAMEWORK BETWEEN THE INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK FOR PROSPERITY (IPEF) AND INDIAN ECONOMIC DIPLOMATIC STRATEGIES

The pillars of IPEF are extensive and comprehensive. The policies provided under them are given in detail by taking into consideration the needs of the members. However, still, some policies are non-aligning with the interests of countries. The third pillar of the framework, which deals with the clean economy, contains highly ambitious decarbonization targets that might run counter to their personal development goals. For Instance, India has consistently opposed the inclusion of labour and environmental standards in trade agreements as it directly runs against its domestic labour and industrial welfare and for the same reasons India has not adopted

the trade pillar of the IPEF for its concerns regarding the possibility of the binding conditionalities linking to issues like environment and labour. Hence it can be observed that there are still some differences persisting between the policies of the IPEF and the economic ambitions of India. Under this head, the determination of differences between the policies of India and IPEF will be done by making a comparative analysis between them. Further, the factors that can be used to streamline the differences between India and IPEF policies will be highlighted by creating a mutually complementary model between them.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE POLICIES OF INDIA AND INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK FOR PROSPERITY (IPEF)

The first and foremost difference that can be observed between the policies of India and the IPEF is related to the trade aspect, which forms as first pillar of the agreement. It aims to establish a strong trade zone within the region, its plan involves lowering tariffs, providing easier market access for participating nations, and ensuring fair competition by addressing subsidies, intellectual property, and competition rules. This framework aims to foster economic growth throughout the region. IPEF focuses on areas such as cutting tariffs, addressing trade barriers (like complicated customs processes), fostering e-commerce with clear rules, and aligning member countries on intellectual property and labour standards. Notably, IPEF offers flexibility, allowing nations to customize their level of involvement (UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE, n.d.). But the same has not been joined by India because the terms which are described are not clear and India had sought time to preponderate on it in detail so that the policy of reciprocity (WANG, 2022) as can be inferred from the framework does not affect the national interest related to domestic competition and labour of the country.

The second contradiction that can be observed under the IPEF framework is its market-driven approach related to the limited role of state-owned enterprises (SOEs). When talking about India, it has a large public sector with SOEs playing a significant role in key industries. However, as per neo-liberalistic ideas, extensive SOE presence can potentially distort markets, reduce competition, and hinder efficiency, and concur on the same, the IPEF promotes the minimum control by the government upon the economic-related policies. However, India's approach to state-owned enterprises (SOEs) differs from the (IPEF), even aftermath of the LPG policies of 1991, due to India's belief in their role in national development (SINGH, 2009). India sees SOEs as essential for developing key industries and promoting social welfare. While IPEF advocates for market-driven economic models, India's reliance on SOEs creates a conflict between these two

perspectives, as SOEs may not always prioritize profit over national objectives. Moreover, the entities under the liberalistic market-driven approach in India can promote the flourishing of the Western industry giants, which can cause negative repercussions for the domestic industries and can promote exports as well as foreign exchange for the developed world.

The third difference that can be observed is related to the strong environmental emphasis of IPEF, which involves sustainability under its framework, the third pillar of IPEF talks about a clean economy, which might result in the creation of fiction with aspects of India's current economic policies. The third pillar of IPEF aims to accelerate a clean energy transition for member countries. This involves collaboration to identify opportunities, develop clean technologies, and reduce emissions in key sectors. It emphasizes public-private partnerships to create incentives for clean products, secure funding for climate projects, and manage climate risks. It also offers to share expertise on clean energy policies and support transition for workers and communities impacted by the shift to a more sustainable economy. Overall, the clean economy pillar seeks to establish a framework for IPEF partners to work together on achieving shared climate goals (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, n.d.). Though India has adopted this pillar, there is persisting confusion related to its applicability as India's primary focus is on achieving rapid development in its economy to lift the millions out of the web of poverty and this prioritization can sometimes result in differences with strict environmental regulations and enforcement (PALIT, KALACHELVAM AND YADAV, 2022). The businesses and industries are given concessions on pollution control to promote competition in society. Further, fossil fuel subsidies provided by India for coal and other fossil fuels to maintain low costs for consumers results in the creation of excess greenhouse gas emissions and it violates the IPEF environmental goals and the waste that is created through these pollutions and emissions may also be forced to managed and transferred into the cleaner technologies, which can add potential business costs and adjustment in the current economic and environmental policies of India.

The last and Fourth difference that can be observed between them relates to digital trade and space, where IPEF tries to emphasize upon harmonization of digital trade and standards leading to a "connected-economy" (TRIPATHI, 2022) but on the other hand, India had emerged as one of the key stakeholders in the digital service trade, does not have its own digital trade rules (MISHRA, 2023), resulting in the creation of confusion in the minds of other stakeholders. Further, India's concerns about protecting its data and its domestic industries with the promotion of localization of data had caused difficulty for it to agree upon the international rules related to digital trade and space. The same can be seen with

IPEF policies, where the differences between the digital policies of India and IPEF need to be streamlined by forming a consensus between them.

FACTORS IN THE REMOVAL OF DIFFERENCES AND CREATION OF A COMPLIMENTARY MODEL BETWEEN INDIA AND IPEF

As observed above, there are pertinent differences between India and IPEF policies, which need to be countered for the creation of a mutually complementary framework between them. Under this head, first, the factors involved in the creation of differences among policies will be examined, and Second, the solutions for rectification of these factors will be proposed by providing a complimentary framework between them.

The Solution Towards the Trade Dilemma

The trade differences between India and IPEF mainly align with three factors. First, Market Access and Tariff Reduction: Here IPEF focuses on lowering tariffs and promoting easier access to member nations, but India hesitates on adopting it because of the damage it can cause to the domestic industries and the economic sovereignty of the country. Further, it can work in support of the LPG policies, whose rippling negative repercussions can be seen till now. Second, Reciprocity and Protectionism: IPEF emphasizes reciprocity, which means the trade and tariff concession provided by other countries will get the same reciprocal concession in its trade and tariff policies from India. However, the same can work negatively because the concession provided by the developed countries cannot be matched by India, which is still a developing country, and the same can result in a trade deficit for India and a weakening of its foreign exchange reserves. Third, the labour standard proposed by IPEF might be proposed by taking uniform aligning standards among its members, which can work as an obstacle in the development of India, because the labour standard currently adopted in India is based upon four labour laws (SIRWALLA, 2024) and replacing them with the standard of IPEF might affect its industrial growth and law-making capability.

The solution to the above problems lies in the creation of a dynamic trade framework under IPEF where trade-related aspects among the countries are moulded upon their specific needs. For example, the adoption of a proportionality mechanism, where the tax and tariffs imposed upon a country are based upon its specific economic and social conditions, for instance, taxing a developed country more in comparison to a less developed or a developing country.

Further, a liberalized framework can be adopted under IPEF where member countries can be independent to adopt the trade pillar of the framework as per their own specific needs (SINGH, 2022), providing a wider perspective on their participation. At last, the countries can be motivated for the future mutual benefits under the trade pillar by providing them with the technical and financial assistance to understand the IPEF standards and acknowledge its positive effects like increased export prospects, balance of power through the interrelated economy, and healthy trade competitiveness (MINISTRY OF ECONOMY, TRADE AND INDUSTRY, 2022).

Creation of Balance Between State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and Market-Driven Approach

The issue between state-owned enterprises and the market-driven approach has been lingering upon the basis of primary factors, First, the Capitalist versus socialist approach, it can be seen that the approach adopted by IPEF is more resented towards the capitalistic structure where the markets are liberal and free to do Economic activities in the Member countries without any hindrance (EAST ASIA FORUM, 2024), but in India, the approach since independence can be seen dented towards a socialist structure where the state is having a greater role in the economy (BHAGWATI,1975) of the country through its enterprises like State Bank of India (SBI) and Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL). Second, As already known IPEF is a framework adopted by various countries for their benefit and profits, the effect of the same can be seen in its policies which are more oriented towards the creation of profits and the distribution of same among its member countries, whereas the policies adopted in India are made with nationalistic motives to cater the basic economic and social needs of its domestic population, which can help in the formation of foundational and formal equality in society

Several strategic steps can be taken to foster cooperation in the SoE's context while creating the basis of the mutually beneficial partnership within the IPEF framework. The level playing field is crucial; hence, IPEF may result in suggesting reforms to Indian SOEs' behaviour to bring fairness in their operations with private firms by calling on the Indian side to introduce performance indicators that would help to increase the efficiency of SOEs' activities and their transparency. This would require India to determine sectors vital for development and where SOEs are indispensable while liberalizing other private-sector investments (MISCHKE ET AL., 2023) – a model that McKinsey has described as the mixed economy. Bilateral understandings could be reached on the way that IPEF will interact with the Indian economy through restrictive measures at state-

owned enterprises in certain sectors, clearly define states of expected behaviour and set measures to prevent antisocial actions that distort competition. Stressing partnership, IPEF could build upon extending TA and expertise to help in the re-evaluation of the GOI's SOEs and their governance, which creates a troublesome feeling of market distortion and boosts performance outcomes. To avoid any interruptions, India can implement the reforms of SOE in stages so that reforms can be adjusted according to changing needs. As such, the gradual approach would allow the IPEF member countries to avoid disruption in the operation of essential industries and consequently create a less unstable environment for critical sectors in the participating countries' economies. In terms of benefiting economic reform and Liberalization, the proposed five-polar collaboration model strategy has been expected to act as the key driver of the new 'Triple Helix' regional development regime and sustainable development across the South East Asia region (PAN, 2016).

Equilibrium Between the Development and Environmental Protection

Considering the case of IPEF and evidentiary materials, it is possible to identify several critical factors that explain the divergence of policy portfolios for India, showing that the quest for reconciling economic development and environmental sustainability is far from trivial. First of all, being an assembly of progressive economies, IPEF immediately stresses climate and sustainability and creates a clean economy, which can run counter to India's present course that advocates for fast growth (NATALEGAWA, 2022). India is a country that has made improving its economic development rate a priority in its policies; to achieve this goal, the government has consistently sought to adopt less rigid political and legal measures for environment protection, which are essential to promote industrial competitiveness, impelling a conflict between the IPEF proposal for sustainability standards (WORLD BANK, 2016).

Second, IPEF seeks to provide greater impetus to a shift to clean energy through cooperation in such sectors as technologies for clean energy, emission cuts, and promotional action on private-sector partnerships. In many instances, India prefers to negotiate these strategies and accept compromises on anti-pollution measures to sustain industrialization. The resulting industrial policies might not fit appropriately with the direction of IPEF overall and the clean energy goals it seeks to achieve, setting up a potential misfit in policy practice.

In addition, Indian subsidies in coal and other fossil fuels to maintain low consumer prices make a high contribution to the greenhouse gas emissions that are fatal to the environment, in not conformity with the agenda of the IPEF

(INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, n.d.). While the subsidy policy helps maintain both the economic and social stability of India, the notion of compliance with IPEF's ambition of a low-carbon economy poses a huge problem to this country. This has the potential of imposing additional business costs of transitioning to cleaner technologies to meet these environmental Stock Standard assemblies; this will complicate India's economic policy settings.

Finally, the regulatory measures also shed contrasting governance structures altogether; while the regions under IPEF provide stringent environmental standards and enforcement procedures possibly conflicting with the Indian economic strategies for growth. Any policy measure that is stringently controlled could indeed pose some hurdles since the Indian approach to regulating policies is more liberal to promote more commerce. The situation in which environmental regulations collide with economic interests might cause some problems in the process of synchronizing the policies of the IPEF and India, thus, a sensible approach to reconcile these policies must embrace the enhancement of both environmental and economic sustainability.

Formation of a Harmonious Construction Between Digital Data Protection and Connected Economy

The last and fourth important difference is associated with the sphere of digital trade and the digital economy between India and IPEF. The IPEF concentrates on improving digital trade rules as it seeks to drive the creation of a 'connected economy' by creating unity in regulation and standards in the participating countries (CHEN, 2022). This harmonisation is expected to promote the integration of the region by creating effective and efficient digital transactions and trade. On the other hand, the Digital service's trade partner, India, does not possess a sound set of formal digital trade rules. This aspect of no regulatory framework fosters uncertainty among international stakeholders on India's position on digital trade policies and may, in the long run, hamper collaboration and efficiency of trade (MISHRA, 2023).

India's position is more complex due to its fear of data protection and the support of its domestic industries through policies that encourage data localization. The primary concern of India is the protection of its data, thus supporting data localization to grow its domestic digital market. These protectionist measures are a major concern when it comes to the process of harmonizing with international electronic commerce policies that often encourage cross-border data transfer. Therefore, the existing conflict between India's digital policies and the IPEF means that there is a need to agree on which policies should be used.

India should have extensive and prolonged discussions with the IPEF to understand each other's policy concerns and interests to build a synergistic framework. Hence, it becomes important for India to have well-defined and structured digital trade rules which are consistent with its data protection regime and, at the same time, can be easily coordinated with international regulation. It could mean that one set of standards could be arranged whereby all the parties involved have their rights protected, domestic industries receive the necessary support, and international digital trade is encouraged.

However, maintaining positive cooperation through these dialogues will also prove to be crucial. India and the IPEF must understand each other's goals and the benefits of integrating a common digital trade policy. In this way, the parties concerned will be able to strive towards creating an efficient and mutually beneficial digital trade environment for all the participants. This approach will not only improve trade effectiveness and the integration of the region's economy but also improve the quality of the regulatory framework for sustainable and inclusive development of the digital economy.

CONCLUSION

Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) is a comprehensive and coherent platform that is necessary and suitable to stabilize the economic cooperation of the region. The four pillars of the framework: trade, supply chain, clean, and fair are essential because every member country has different requirements and the framework encompasses every aspect. But there are areas of divergence, too, as seen in India's non-support of some policies of the IPEF, and hence, the need for focus. These differences are especially evident in the fields of trade, SOEs, environment, digital trade, and diplomacy. It is critical for India and the IPEF to create and foster common understanding and objectives since India adopted a more reserved approach to boosting the partnership, primarily because of its priorities regarding domestic politics and economic growth.

However, it is presently participating in the promotion of cooperation in clean energy and climate-friendly technological innovation, advancement and use, meaning that despite the cultural differences, India is not only willing to fully commit to the purposes of the Indo-Pacific region but is already doing so. Moreover, India stands for the importance of the fair economy pillar, as a significant number of its contributions were made in the field of technical assistance and capacity building to support the IPEF. India must play an active role and remain involved in the ever-evolving issues within the region as the Indo-Pacific region seeks a better and improved future, one that is bright for all the member countries in the region.

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NAVIGATING INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY: UNRAVELING INDIA'S STRATEGY, FUTURE PROSPECTS, AND INSIGHTS FROM THE INDO-PACIFIC ECONOMIC FORUM

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