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The publication may be of interest for social scientists, experts and students.

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TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

LILIT HARUTYUNYAN

PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS IN LEBANON: GOVERNANCE AND VIOLENCE

Abstract: The paper focuses on the violence affecting Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. It investigates leadership failures which make them objects of state governance and subjects of interpersonal violence. It contends that the violence is not only the result of an Islamist militant ideology for a specific political or social cause, but also of horrible living conditions. The lack of legitimate governance structures in the refugee camps has prevented any improvement in living conditions. This has generated types of violence that compromise the security of Lebanese and Palestinians living in Lebanon, especially in the neighborhood of refugee camps. Long-term deprivation and marginalization are mainly the results of state policies towards refugees that have generated unique forms of violence in the refugee camps.

Keywords: *Palestinians, Lebanon, camps, violence, governance, refugees, Islamic movements, Hizballah*

Introduction

Post-Taif¹ Lebanon is a country with a confessional political system in which the Palestinians constitute a minority. However, they do not have a recognized place in the confessional system of the country. This makes them politically, economically and socially marginalized. However, the main problem for this group of refugees is that they are mostly “enclaved”. The right-wing Lebanese political party leaders and Lebanese security and military agencies enclave undesirable groups and confine them in what (following Giorgio Agamben) can be called “spaces of exception”.² This applies not only to refugee camps, but also to violence-prone, well-known quarters such as Bab al-Tabaneh and Jabal Mohsen in Tripoli. It is considered a necessary measure for ensuring Lebanon’s security.

¹ The Taif accord (National Reconciliation Charter) is the document adopted by the Lebanese parliament at their session in Taif (Saudi Arabia), in October, 1989 to resolve the issues at the core of the Lebanese second civil war (1975-1990). See Dilip Hiro, *The Essential Middle East*, “National Reconciliation Charter”, (New York, 2003), 364-365.

² Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1985). See also Sari Hanafi and Taylor Long, “Governance, Governmentalities, and the State of Exception in the Palestinian Refugee Camps of Lebanon”, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 23, no. 2, (2010), 34-60.

In “Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life”, Giorgio Agamben described this kind of condition as living under a “state (space) of exception”.³ The paradox of the camp-based Palestinians in Lebanon today is that they are “excluded from rights while being included in law-making”.⁴ They enjoy neither the civil rights of the Lebanese, upon whose territory they reside, nor those of foreigners living in Lebanon. Excluded from the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, which stipulates that refugees have the right to work without a specific work permit, Palestinians in Lebanon have to not only secure this permit, but are also required to pay a rather high fee. By virtue of their statelessness refugees represent a disquieting element in the ordering of the modern nation-state. For all practical purposes, in that it is only rarely and arbitrarily enforced, Lebanese law has been suspended within the confines of the refugee camps. In this sense, the camps have become “spaces of exception”. The residents live in a “zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exception and rule, licit and illicit, in which the very concepts of subjective right and juridical protection no longer make any sense”.⁵

Order and governance in the Palestinian refugee camps

There are currently 15 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. The most violence-prone are Ayn al-Hilweh (near Sidon (Sayda), South Lebanon), Burj al-Barajneh (near Beirut), Burj al-Shemali (near Tyre (Sour), South Lebanon), Nahr el-Bared and Beddawi (near Tripoli, North Lebanon). The creation of “popular committees” in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon was based on the Cairo Agreement (1969).⁶ Before the agreement, the camps in Lebanon were governed by a state of emergency and were under the control of the Lebanese security agency (Deuxieme Bureau). Between 1970 and 1982, the Cairo Agreement stipulated that the police had to negotiate access to the camps through powerful “popular committees”, which granted or refused entry on a case-by-case basis. At the time, traditional authority structures remained in place, as did customary forms of dispute settlement. However, the camps thereafter witnessed the emergence of a new elite, whose legitimacy was based on the Palestinian national

³ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 121.

⁴ Stephanie Silverman, “Redrawing the Lines of Control: Political Interventions by Refugees and the Sovereign State System”, *conference paper “Dead/Lines: Contemporary Issues in Legal and Political Theory”*, University of Edinburgh, (2008), 10.

⁵ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 121.

⁶ Article 2 of section 1 of the agreement calls for a reorganization of “the Palestinian presence” in Lebanon through “the foundation of local administrative committees in the refugee camps, composed of Palestinians, in order to defend the interests of the Palestinians residing in those camps, in collaboration with the local authorities and within the framework of Lebanese sovereignty”. See Palestinian refugee research Net “*Appendix: The Cairo Agreement (1969)*”, http://prn.mcgill.ca/research/papers/brynen2_09.htm (accessed April 07, 2019)

struggle. This situation changed after 1982, when the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) military bodies had to leave Lebanon and move to Tunisia.⁷ After the forced departure of the PLO headquarters and leadership from Lebanon, the PLO's "popular committees" and security committees were dismantled (except in the camps in the south) and were replaced by committees that were weaker and largely pro-Syrian. The new committees lacked legitimacy because their members were not elected as before, nor were they recognized by the Lebanese authorities. The camp residents instead resorted to traditional power brokers such as imams, local notables (*wujaha*) and local security leaders to resolve quarrels and disagreements before turning to the police. While such informal conflict resolution methods were mostly successful in the past, the refugee camps are no longer communitarian and headed by local notables. This is mainly because of urbanization and migration. The continual transformation of power-sharing within the camps is critical, especially after the departure of the PLO in 1982.

The current situation of the refugee camps in Lebanon has demonstrated a fundamental crisis of governance in the camps⁸, which suffers from the presence of dozens of competing factions fighting for power and influence. The committees are comprised of representatives from each faction who are appointed, while those not elected yet are expected to keep the peace, solve internal disputes, provide security, interact with the Lebanese government and aid agencies, and administer the camp in coordination with UNRWA.⁹ In some camps, such as Ayn al-Hilweh, an additional education council was established, composed of representatives from all factions as well as local religious authorities. However, although there were very rare cooperation and coordination between the many popular committees, some focus group participants complained that these committees largely did not agree on important issues nor coordinate their activities, did not enjoy popular legitimacy and were not recognized by the Lebanese government. The committees were neither able to protect their constituents from harassment by the Lebanese security forces controlling the camp perimeters nor hold UNRWA accountable for its shortcomings.

⁷ Julie Peteet, "Socio-Political Integration and Conflict Resolution in the Palestinian Camps in Lebanon", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2, (1987): 29-44.

⁸ Sari Hanafi, "Governance of the Palestinian Refugee Camps in the Arab East: Governmentalities in Quest of Legitimacy", *working paper*, Issam Fares Institute for Public and International Affairs, AUB, (2010).

⁹ The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) also maintains its own administrative apparatus in the camps. The highest-ranked UNRWA official wields significant power. In at least one of the focus groups, this official referred to himself as "director of the camp" ("*mudir al-mukhayim*"). UNRWA typically appoints members of the new educated elite to leadership positions, such as engineers, teachers, and pharmacists, many of whom have a history of political activism and enjoy good relations with the camp residents.

Briefly, committees promoted factional infighting and supported patron-client politics, causing Palestinian disunity. As Knudsen observed during his field research in the camps in 2003, “Both among the secular and Islamist lobbies we find a plethora of smaller and larger groups, often with conflicting views and sometimes involved in fratricidal battles that weaken the refugee community and ultimately undermine their quest for political hegemony. None of them are able to speak on behalf of the whole refugee community and this serves to “compartmentalize” and therefore weaken the Palestinian national struggle to regain their homeland”.¹⁰

During the last few years, little has changed in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. Today, Ayn al-Hilweh has two popular committees and two security committees, which represent the camp's 70,000 actual residents.¹¹ Recently, a new layer of governance was created - a “follow-up committee” composed of representatives from all the camp factions, both secular and Islamist. Yet, there is still a lack of a political reference - a unified Palestinian position in the camps.

In 2007, the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp was destroyed in a 15-week battle between a militant Islamist group, Fatah al-Islam, and the Lebanese Army. The focus group participants warned that unless Palestinians in Lebanon are permitted to strengthen their own political and security authorities, they will not be able to prevent a similar outbreak of violence. One of Nahr al-Bared residents argues, “There has to be a higher council ... to represent the Palestinian people as a whole, especially in the diaspora camps in Lebanon such as Nahr al-Bared, Ayn al-Hilweh, and Beddawi, because we are no longer sure that the developments of Nahr al-Bared could not happen elsewhere”. Another resident agreed, stating, “If the Lebanese state had permitted politicians or the PLO leadership to form a Palestinian security force, Fatah al-Islam would never have gained a foothold in the camp”.¹²

Indeed, in the months leading up to the conflict in Nahr al-Bared (December 2006 to March 2007), the residents of the camp tried repeatedly to remove Fatah al-Islam members from their camp. To this end, the PLO engaged in armed clashes with the militants in March.¹³ However, the outcome of these clashes was inconclusive and was dismissed by the Lebanese authorities as merely “routine” Palestinian infighting, in spite of the fact that Fatah al-Islam was largely comprised of non-Palestinians.¹⁴ The

¹⁰ Are Knudsen, “Islamism in the Diaspora: Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon,” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2, (2005): 216-34.

¹¹ According to the UNRWA, officially, number of residents is 47,500.

¹² Sari Hanafi and Sheikh I.Hassan, “Constructing and Governing Nahr al-Bared Camp. An “Ideal” Model of Exclusion,” *Majallat al-Dirasat al-Falastiniyya*, No. 78, (2009): 40.

¹³ Samet Abboud, “The Siege of Nahr al-Bared and the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon,” *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No 1-2 (2009): 31-48.

¹⁴ According to the Lebanese Judiciary Council, Fatah al-Islam was composed of 69 Lebanese nationals, approximately 50 Palestinians (43 from Syria), 43 Saudis, 12 Syrians, one Tunisian,

security committee of Nahr al-Bared and the PLO lacked both the resources and the mandate to deal with Fatah al-Islam on their own. The popular committees lacked resources, which prevented them from fulfilling their municipal functions. Moreover, the committees lacked skilled technicians with expertise on urban regulations, water, sanitation and electricity.

There is a tapestry of multiple sovereignties, which include “real sovereignties”, such as the Lebanese government, but also “phantom sovereignties”, such as the PLO and other factions, as well as the UNRWA and other humanitarian agencies, which also contribute to the “state of exception” and participate in the suspension of the law through various emergency measures. These measures are contradictory. Rather than creating order in the camp, they leave it in a state of chaos. Each government-actor, faction or agency must compete, not for the allegiance of each Palestinian resident, but instead for control over each refugee. “Contrary to our modern habit of representing the political realm in terms of citizens’ rights, free will, and social contracts, from the point of view of sovereignty, only bare life is authentically political”, suggests Giorgio Agamben.¹⁵

Among the refugees, there is conviction that the popular committees and the factions, in their current form, do not represent the interests of Palestinians in Lebanon.

Political disenchantment in the camps

The focus groups testified to a low degree of political activity among the youth in the camps. Out of eighteen people, only three had engaged in political activities in recent years. This differs significantly from the situation in the past, when most people participated in a variety of political activities. Among those in the youth focus group, some were busy securing life’s necessities, while others appeared weary of politics and disinclined to join political factions. The only exceptions are the Hamas supporters, who are quite active both in the Nahr al-Bared and Beddawi camps. One of the indicators of the strength of each faction can be inferred from the results of the election of the UNRWA Staff Union. In the election of April 2009, Hamas won the majority of seats in the north of the country, while Fatah¹⁶ won in Beirut and in the south.

The consequences of the disillusionment are very important for the long-term relationship between the youth and their community and society, as well as for social cohesion within the community. The tendency to favor migration is another indicator of this political disillusionment. According to

one Algerian, one Yemeni and one Iraqi. See Hanafi and Hassan, “Constructing and Governing Nahr al-Bared Camp. An “Ideal” Model of Exclusion,” 39-52.

¹⁵ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 106.

¹⁶ Fatah (Arabic: acronym of Harakat al Tahrir al Falastini, Movement for Liberation of Palestine). It was founded in 1958 by Yasser Arafat, Salah Khalaf and Khalil Wazir in Kuwait.

the International Information survey, if a Palestinian state were declared without acknowledging the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland, 36% of respondents would prefer resettling in a Western country, about 11% moving to an Arab country, whereas about 32% would prefer to remain in Lebanon.¹⁷

Typically, young people expressed anger and pessimism toward the Lebanese and Palestinian polities. They considered the popular committee lacking in relevant experience to manage the camps, and felt that the committee members had “lost contact” with their constituency. Many of the Palestinians felt that the unpopular Palestinian political authority reflected a crisis of substantive moral purpose. They asserted that it demonstrated the ways in which the Lebanese authorities undermined the popular committees. Yet a few of them believed that Islamic conceptions of good governance were not being followed. Many felt unrepresented by the political factions.

When the International Information survey asked respondents which “Palestinian factions live up to their expectations”, 37.4% of surveyed youth named Fatah, 25.5% named Hamas and the more marginal secular and Islamist factions got only 18%. The remaining 19.1% of the respondents stated that none of the factions were performing according to their expectations.¹⁸ Young people are not necessarily “depoliticized”, but rather disillusioned with the fragmented and factional political structure (except for Hamas, which is considered an alternative to the traditional Palestinian factions).

Violence in the camps: Attacks on property and individuals

Investigating social and political violence in the Palestinian camps in Lebanon is not an easy task as there are very few statistics on the subject. The only statistics are in the report on violence monitored by the Palestinian Human Rights Organization (PHRO).¹⁹ Additionally, other reports provide indicators of violence, such as the annual reports of the Palestinian Association for Human Rights²⁰ and the “Najdeh” Association²¹, which

¹⁷ International information Survey of Media and Communication Channels, Actors and Messages in Palestinian Camps. Unpublished report, 2009.

¹⁸ Karma Nebulsi, *Palestinians Register: Laying Foundations and Setting Directions*, (Oxford: Nuffield College, 2006).

¹⁹ Palestinian Human Rights Organisation. *Report on Violence. January-May 2010*. Unpublished report, 2010. Palestinian Human Rights Organisation. *Report on the Lebanese Restrictions on Freedom of Movement: Case of Nahr al-Bared*, November, (2010).

²⁰ Palestinian Association for Human Rights (Witness). *2009 Annual Report* Unpublished report, 2009.

²¹ Association Najdeh, *Domestic Violence Program Annual Report January-December 2007*.

include information on domestic violence. Additional data can be found in Lebanese newspaper articles on violence in the camps.²²

The PHRO report for the first five months of 2010 shows three types of violence: the Lebanese authorities' violence, attacks on individuals and property and violence between factions (see table 1). The large majority of the incidents, about 84 % (62 out of 74 incidents), were in the Nahr al-Bared camp in the north.²³

| Type of violation | North | South | Beirut | Total |
|--|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| Attack on individuals | 2 | 5 | 2 | 9 |
| Arbitrary arrests, torture and humiliation | 16 | - | 1 | 17 |
| Hindering mobility | 11 | - | - | 11 |
| Violation due to discrimination against refugee status | 1 | 1 | - | 2 |
| Violations of the right to decent housing | 11 | - | - | 11 |
| Violations of the right to education and social care | 2 | 2 | 1 | 5 |
| Violations of the right to health ²⁴ | 19 | - | - | 19 |
| Total | 62 | 8 | 4 | 74 |

Source: Palestinian Human Rights Organisation (PHRO), *Report on Violence, January-May 2010*.

As the table shows, thirty out of seventy-four incidents of violence (40% of the total violence in the refugee camps) were perpetrated by the police and army intelligence. This violence is under-reported by the media. The statistics indicated many arbitrary arrests and the obstruction of freedom of movement for the refugee population. This is persisted by another PHRO report²⁵ that shows a systematic pattern of violating Palestinians' right to unrestricted movement, especially in Ayn al-Hilweh and Nahr al-Bared camps. This not only hinders individual mobility, but also business. According to a recent Fafo survey²⁶, the checkpoints at the camp perimeters

²² See Kortam, Marie, *Jeune et violence dans le camp de Baddawi et le banlieu parisien*, PhD Thesis, University of Paris VII, Paris, (2011).

²³ Palestinian Human Rights Organisation (PHRO), *Report on Violence, January-May 2010*.

²⁴ This category includes all forms of medical malpractice and refusal by UNRWA to subsidize medical treatment.

²⁵ Palestinian Human Rights Organisation, *Report on the Lebanese Restrictions on Freedom of Movement: Case of Nahr al-Bared*, November 2010.

²⁶ Zhang Huafeng, Tiltmes Age A., "Socio-economic Assessment of Ein El-Hilweh Refugee Camp", *Tabulation report*, Fafo, December 2009.

hamper business activity and prevent customers and suppliers from entering, adding to the daily suffering of the resident refugees.²⁷

In the absence of a formal mode of law enforcement and camp policing, different Lebanese security agencies are intervening. One UNRWA area officer reported that, historically, “I used to receive calls from one or two agencies of the camp’s security administration in case there was a problem. Now there are at least four such agencies. This shows how far the Lebanese security agencies have infiltrated the camp and appointed collaborators”. One member of the popular committee in the Beddawi camp confirmed this account, stating that “a few years ago, we used to denounce and isolate the collaborators. Now who is not a collaborator?” Instead of bringing attention to the asymmetrical power structures and collusion between the popular committees and military intelligence, the media, particularly newspapers, emphasize a mode of cooperation between them.²⁸

Former Prime Minister Fuad Siniora²⁹ has referred to Nahr al-Bared as a model of camp governance to be implemented in other camps. The Vienna document issued in 2008 by the Lebanese government for the donors’ conference to rebuild the ruined Nahr al-Bared camp uses the term “community policing”. However, in practice, the Lebanese authorities have opted for a militarized governmental regime in the form of counter-insurgency policing. Some refugee camps, such as Ayn al-Hilweh, are under siege by the army, which monitors entry and exit points. The Nahr al-Bared camp and its surrounding area are a military zone governed by the Internal Security Forces (ISF) through the semblance of a police station.³⁰ However, the camp residents seek to resist such militarized governance and a few resort to violence. In the new governance plan, a division of labor emerges through which the army ensures a regime of separation and control, while the ISF controls the economic and political status of the camp, facilitating economic extraction and exploitation.³¹ State governmental control is characterized not by the enforcement of well-defined rules and laws, but by the suspension of these rules through a bureaucratic apparatus that imposes different modes of intervention and whose very unpredictability is the key to its effectiveness. The intervention takes the form of real or suspended violence. Some researchers and human rights activists were arrested in 2010 because of their criticism of the Lebanese Authorities Forces’ (LAF’s) role

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ For the army declaration after the theft of a gun from a policeman, see Abdel Khafi Samed, “Attack on a Security Officer”, *al-Akhabar*, September 2, 2008.

²⁹ Fuad Siniora was Prime Minister of Lebanon from July 18, 2005 till November 9, 2009.

³⁰ Hanafi, “Constructing and Governing Nahr al-Bared Camp”, see Lebanon’s Palestinian Dilemma: The struggle over Nahr al-Bared, International Crisis group, *Middle East Report No 117*- March 1, 2012.

³¹ Susan Buck-Morss, *Thinking Past Terror: Islamism and Critical Theory on the Left*, (New York: Verso, 2003).

in governing the Nahr al-Bared camp³², and another activist reported staying away from his home in the Nahr al-Bared camp for more than three months because he was afraid of being arrested by the LAF.

Militarized camp governance is based on two principles: nominal inclusion of the camp under Lebanese sovereignty, with simultaneous geographic exclusion. The inclusion is institutionalized by discrimination, especially through the 2010 law on “the right to work” for Palestinian refugees and the 2001 ruling that limited their access to “property ownership”. The material outcome of separation and its twin pillars of legal persecution and enclaved geography create a deep sense of spatial exclusion and disorientation for both the Lebanese and Palestinians.

The inclusion and the separation of the camps both presuppose the exclusion of their residents from the pale of law and the normalization of a “state of exception”, in which the Palestinians collectively, as well as individually, are subject to arbitrary violence and coercive regulation of their daily lives. In some cases, Nahr al-Bared in effect becomes an experimental “laboratory” for control and surveillance by the LAF and ISF.

According to a PHRO report, minor offences against property and individuals represent a very small part of the violence in the camps (only nine out of 74 offences during the first five months of 2011).³³ In 2007, a local NGO undertook a study of domestic violence based on data from counselling centers that worked with 209 female victims, the majority of them single women (52%). Some 89% of this violence was of a psychological nature. Young girls between 15 and 19 years are the main sufferers of domestic violence (38% of the victims).³⁴ This illustrates the problem of gender-based violence in Palestinian society inside the camps.

Some of the above-mentioned violent incidents are localized familial disputes which escalate into problems between political factions. An example from the Ayn al-Hilweh refugee camp began as a quarrel between two youths over the outcome of a game of pinball, which sparked a clash between Fatah and a local Islamist group.³⁵ We should also take note that vandalism targeting schools reveals communitarian tension and a problematic relationship between this camp and its non-Palestinian neighbors. In mid-July 2010, a Christian school in the Burj al-Shemali camp near Tyre was vandalized by graffiti praising Imam Ali. The culprits were a group of young men from adjoining neighborhoods.

On September 14, 2010, a clash erupted between armed men in a street in the Ayn al-Hilweh camp, wounding one bystander. Reports attributed the scuffle to a crack-down on drug dealing after the head of the

³² See Lebanon’s Palestinian Dilemma: The struggle over Nahr al-Bared, International Crisis group, *Middle East Report No 117*- March 1, 2012.

³³ Palestinian Human Rights Organisation, *Report on Violence*, January -May 2011.

³⁴ Association Najdeh, *Domestic Violence Program Annual Report* January-December 2007.

³⁵ See Palestinian Human Rights Organisation, *Report on Violence*, January -May 2011.

PLO's armed militia had promised that drugs would be eradicated from the camp and drug dealers handed over to the Lebanese judiciary.³⁶

Violence between Palestinian factions

In 2009, about 700 homicides were reported in Lebanon (most of them politically motivated), but only a few of them took place in refugee camps.³⁷ Thus refugee camps are not the major sites of violence in the country, nor are refugees the only agents of violence. Still, factional in-fighting remains a major source of violence inside the camps.³⁸ However, political factions can be sources of disorder in the camp. In recent years, political violence in the refugee camps has increased because of heightened tensions of violence between different factions. The only camp where there has been no such increase is Ayn al-Hilweh. This is due to a certain political rapprochement between the political factions and the establishment of a “follow-up committee” composed of all political factions, including the Islamists. According to International Information survey³⁹ in 2009, some 89 % of the camp residents found that the security situation was bad or very bad”. The deteriorating security situation came as the second most pressing problem (37.4 % of the respondents), followed by the lack of jobs and the terrible economic situation. The Pursue survey, conducted in 2010 in the Ayn al-Hilweh camp, showed a significant reduction in the camp’s security situation.⁴⁰

When there are clashes in the Ayn al-Hilweh refugee camp, employees stay away from work and checkpoints, schools and shops are closed and medical services are disrupted.⁴¹ The following examples illustrate the nature of violent encounters, particularly concerning “strategic” areas (such as mosques) inside the camps. In September 2010, three people were wounded in the al-Buss refugee camp near Tyre, after a dispute between clerics loyal to either Fatah or Hamas resulted in armed clashes. The clerics disagreed on who would lead prayers at the camp’s mosque.⁴²

³⁶ See “Ayn al-Hilweh Killing Raises Fears of Deteriorating Security in Camp”, *The Daily Star*, September 15, 2010.

³⁷ Jawad Adra; “The Oppressive, The Marginalized and The Missing Third”, *Information International Monthly*, No. 98, September 2010.

³⁸ Marie Kortam, *Jeune et violence dans le camp de Baddawi et le banlieu parisien*, Omn. Univ. Europ, Paris, 2011, 362.

³⁹ International Information Survey of Media and Communication Channels, *Actors and Messages in Palestinian Camps*.

⁴⁰ Interview with Edward Kattaura, a political consultant affiliated with Pursue Ltd., Beirut, April 2012. See Palestinian Human Rights Organisation, *Report on Violence*, January -May 2011.

⁴¹ Zhang and Tiltnes, *The Socio-economic Assessment of Ein Al-Hilweh refugee camp*, Vol. II, *Summary of Survey statistics*, 2012.

⁴² The dispute started after an argument between Sheikh Hussein Qassem Maghreb (the imam of the mosque), who is loyal to Farah, and members of the mosque committee, who are loyal

Another clash over the control of a mosque happened in 2008 in the Burj al-Barajneh camp between Islamic Jihad and Fatah that resulted in the death of one person.

Some incidents involve violence by Palestinian political factions directed against the camp residents. An example of this is the murder of Reem, a 17 year old female living in the Shatila refugee camp (Beirut).⁴³ A Palestinian from Syria residing in Lebanon, she was reportedly afflicted by psychological problems and drug addiction. At around 4:15AM on July 1, 2008, at the western entrance of the Shatila camp, Reem was stopped at the gate and asked by the head of the security committee in the camp why she was entering at night with her boyfriend. When she replied that it was none of his business, she was shot by the personal bodyguard of the head of the local security committee. The security committee came to the scene to review the incident, but left her bleeding for 45 minutes before an ambulance arrived and took her to the hospital. A coroner came to the hospital to investigate the murder, but quickly closed the file. Soon afterwards, her family was authorized to pick up her body and she was buried later the same day. The PHRO fieldworker asked the security committee whether the murderer would be handed over to the Lebanese security forces. They replied that they were waiting for a response from Reem's family whether they would file a formal complaint or accept financial compensation (*fidyya*). What is particularly interesting in this story is the complicity between the Palestinian security committee and the Lebanese police, both treating Reem as a person who can be eliminated by anyone without punishment.⁴⁴

Still, political factions can and occasionally do play a positive role by mediating between parties in conflict and enforcing certain community norms and customs. Indeed, some focus group participants, the members of security committees in particular, insisted that the security situation in the camps would be worse without the political factions, stating, "The factions have their advantages. They serve the people in the camps and act as a buffer. The factions stand in the way of those who want to create havoc".⁴⁵

"Globaljihad" groups in Ayn al-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp

Over the past decade, the refugee camps in Lebanon have been the scene of a religious revival, influenced by the growth of conservative Sunni Islam in urban areas such as Tripoli and Sidon, where Lebanese Islamist

to Hamas. See " Hamas, Fatah Clash in Refugee Camp after Prayer Dispute", *The Daily Star*, August 24, 2010.

⁴³ Palestinian Human Rights Organisation, *A Case to Register in the Name of Humanity: Where are our Camps Going? Whom to Serve? And Until When?*, Unpublished document.

⁴⁴ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

groups such as al-Jamaa al-Islamiyya, the Muslim Brotherhood and various Salafist preachers have been competing for new bases of support. This conservative Islamic ideology has also been aided by the growth of satellite media, especially Saudi ones like Iqra, al-Majd, Annaas etc. This religious transformation has at times also featured elements of sectarian rhetoric, which takes aim at Shia Hizballah in order to foster a sense of unity within the Sunni community. Additionally, the Lebanese authorities' discrimination against refugees and the lack of a coherent refugee policy have left the camp residents in a state of poverty. Finally, there is growing bitterness at the retreat from the Palestinian national project due to the infighting between Hamas and Fatah in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as well as the American occupation in Iraq in 2003 and their military and political intervention in the region.

The research work of Laleh Khalili concerning Palestinian commemorative practices widely illustrates these changes.⁴⁶ According to her, in the 1970s these practices were related to transnational ideologies and world events. At that time, the PLO was a liberation movement connected to other world liberation organizations. However, from the 1990s onwards, the collapse of the communist bloc and the rise of Islamism interacted with the fragmentation of the Palestinian national movement to modify commemorative themes. The guerrilla hero melded with the image of the martyr, and heroic battles were replaced by massacres, which demonstrated a lack of hope and a prevailing retreat from the development of the national project.

In an attempt to understand to what degree Islamic movements are supported by young Palestinians in the camps, the International Information survey asked them "which of the main Islamic movements" projects performed up to their expectations". The majority of the youth (74.7%) responded that no one group lived up to their expectations, while a tiny percentage opted for the Islamist groups.⁴⁷

In contrast to the picture transmitted by the media, the vast majority of the youth do not believe violence against civilians to be "always justified". However, about 70 % maintain that they consider what is referred to as Palestinian suicide bombings to be martyrdom operations against their Israeli enemy and thus always justified. A smaller number (about 20%) find martyrdom operations to be "sometimes justified". Based on the latter two findings, it is obvious that the youth distinguish between resistance and terrorism. While the majority rejects indiscriminate violence, they consider martyrdom operations legitimate.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine: The Politics of National Commemoration*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁴⁷ *International Information Survey of Media and Communication Channels, Actors and Messages in Palestinian Camps*.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

The focus group interviews with members of two of the Islamist movements, *Usbat al-Ansar*⁴⁹ and the Islamic Jihadist Movement⁵⁰, demonstrated that these groups are playing a major role in curtailing camp-based violence and not, as the Lebanese media would have it, simply generating it. Moreover, there is no evidence that camp-based Islamist groups are connected to al-Qaida, as stated by many Lebanese politicians and the media. Some of the Islamist groups inside the camps, while unaffiliated with al-Qaida, may nevertheless espouse rhetoric of “global jihad” similar to that of al-Qaida, and some groups have even sent men to Iraq to fight against the coalition forces. Let us argue that in 2000’s tremendous change has been observed in the organization and outlook of these Islamist groups: the dissolution of *Jund al-Sham*⁵¹, the near-elimination of *Fatah al-Islam* and the political transformation of *Usbat al-Ansar* into a more mainstream Islamist group with a local social agenda rather than a global *jihadist* one.⁵² Thus, this paper is trying to debunk the sweeping image of Ayn al-Hilweh as a stronghold of al-Qaida⁵³, and the claim that there is a significant shift in the identity of camp residents from national identity towards a broader Islamic identity.⁵⁴ Even if there is an unresolved problem of “fugitive” Palestinians inside the camp, their purported contribution to a “global jihad” is no different from that of any Sunni locality in the region. Recently, the PLO, Hamas and other political groups sought to consolidate the camp’s many factions and organized a follow-up security committee composed of all the secular and Islamist parties. In December 2011, the PLO established a new police force in the camp that included most, but not all factions, yet the internal divisions within *Fatah* remain the main impediment to this effort. The case of Ayn al-Hilweh is therefore different from that of *Nahr al-Bared*, where the presence of *Fatah al-Islam* was primarily a phenomenon in the camp and not of the camp, that is, the militants used the camps for “strategic localization”⁵⁵ in order to wage guerrilla warfare. Thus, *Fatah al-Islam*’s presence in *Nahr al-Bared* was an exception rather than a typical case. There is no global al-Qaida phenomenon among the Palestinians in Lebanon.

⁴⁹The League of Partisans (*Usbat al-Ansar*) was founded in 1986 and boasts a strong presence in the Ayn al-Hilweh camp.

⁵⁰The Islamic Jihadist Movement (*al-Harakatal Islamiyya al-Mujahida*) was very popular in the 1980s, but lost influence after being banned in Lebanon in 1991.

⁵¹*Jund al-Sham* is an *Usbat al-Ansar* splinter group. Its members were originally located in the Taamir neighborhood adjoining Ayn al-Hilweh camp before moving to the Tawareh area in the camp.

⁵²A PLO official claimed that there were plans to transform the camp into a stronghold of al-Qaida

⁵³Hazem Al-Amin, *The Lonely Salafist: A Palestinian Face of the Global jihad and al-Qaida* (in Arabic), Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, 2009.

⁵⁴Bernard Rougier, *Everyday Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam among Palestinians in Lebanon*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁵⁵Knudsen, “Islamism in the Diaspora: Palestinian refugees in Lebanon”, 216-234.

The Islamists in Ayn al-Hilweh do not have a military agenda in Lebanon. Instead, a lot of Palestinian refugees in mid-2009 found that they were staying operational, waiting for the day to fight for Palestine. A leader of Usbat al-Ansar argued that the Ayn al-Hilweh camp was being targeted by the media and Lebanese politicians in order to destabilize Lebanon and create sectarian tensions (Sunni-Shia). A leader of the Islamic Jihadist Movement claimed, “The objective of some Lebanese authorities is to make Ayn al-Hilweh become like Nahr al-Bared in order to destroy it”. However, Islamist actors recognize the specificity of Ayn al-Hilweh, arguing that unlike the other camps, “the presence of Islamists in Ayn al-Hilweh is an integral part of camp life. We have been here since the 1970s. We are not foreigners. Our main objective is to help people to abide by Islamic values. Historically, our social environment is plagued by alcoholism, delinquency and drugs”.⁵⁶

The Islamist Party of Liberation (Hizb al-Tahrir) is also active in the Ayn al-Hilweh camp. A party member in the camp stated, “Since its establishment, Hizb al-Tahrir has denounced any participation in the political system, such as joining committees or other elected councils. Hizb al-Tahrir thus does not have any political agenda in Lebanon. We are a party that preaches the good of Islam and is interested in a social agenda. We do not have even light arms in Lebanon”.⁵⁷

On behalf of Islamic Jihad, which is a nationalist Islamist group, the group’s leader in Ayn al-Hilweh declared, “Yes, we are supported by Iran but we have an independent position. Our agenda is exclusively Palestine. We don’t even wish to operate from Lebanon. We are here to support our brothers in Palestine. We only have light individual arms here”.⁵⁸

Despite the fragmentation of the Islamic scene in Ayn al-Hilweh, there is one figure who is very influential and respected by the majority of the camp residents and political factions. He is Sheikh Jamal Khattab, the leader of the Islamic Jihadist Movement and imam of the camp’s al-Noor Mosque. For the past twenty years, he has intervened in all sorts of family, neighborhood and social problems. During his interviews about the security of the camp, Sheikh Khattab declared, “We cannot afford to threaten the security of the camp or its residents in order to protect one or more people. Safety of the camp is the most important consideration”. He was aware that some Lebanese authorities wanted to use Ayn al-Hilweh as a stronghold against Hizballah and emphasised the good relationship with this party by stating, “We have held several meetings with Hizballah and we supported

⁵⁶ Are Knudsen and Michael Kerr, eds, *Lebanon after the Cedar revolution*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 118.

⁵⁷ Rosemary Sayigh, “A House is Not a Home: Permanent Impermanence of Habitat for Palestinian Expellees in Lebanon”, *Holy Land Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, (2005): 17–39.

⁵⁸ Meltem İnce Yenilmez, The Impact of Forced Migration in the Middle East: Syrian and Palestinian Refugees, *PERCEPTIONS*, Vol. XXII, No 4,(2017):183-201.

them in the 2006 war by welcoming those displaced (from the south) to Ayn al-Hilweh. People here gave them blankets and food. We even sent blankets to Sidon. We didn't participate with Hizballah in the war because it was fought with rockets and not fighters. We only have light arms which would have been useless anyway. We have a very good relationship with some Lebanese Islamist groups".⁵⁹

Ayn al-Hilweh cannot be considered a hideout for al-Qaida fighters, nor does al-Qaida's "global jihad" find support among the camp population. Its influence among the residents is also insignificant, as the findings from the International Information survey demonstrate. They asked respondents (youth from the four camps) whether murdering civilians was justified in order to solve grievances with their government. The large majority, about 73 %, answered that such actions were "never justified" and only about 5% answered that they were "always justified".⁶⁰

Conclusion

The paper has aimed to challenge the misunderstanding that the Palestinian refugee camps are "islands of insecurity". As we have noted, the everyday violence prevalent in the camps is not the result of a militant ideology, but rather of discrimination, urban segregation and state violence. Both political and everyday violence are found in the camps.

The paper has demonstrated that internal camp governance in Lebanon is in a deep crisis. The popular committees have been delegitimized by both the Lebanese authorities and the camp population. This governance crisis may be aggravated in the near future. The recent uprising and crisis in Syria has resulted in refugees flowing across the border into Lebanon, and these new regional developments threaten the uneasy truce between the PLO and the many pro-Syrian regime factions in the camps. Weakened Syrian influence in Lebanon, likely a result of the "Arab spring" uprisings, could provoke conflict over power and authority within the camps, as opposing factions, including the PLO, seek greater influence at Syria's expense.

Islamism has emerged during the past decade and has become a new and powerful force in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. On the one hand it has compelled the people to behave in "sound" and "Islamic" ways, abating violence, delinquency and moral degeneration while simultaneously encouraging increased cooperation among neighbors, as well as improved health and social services. On the other hand, the Islamist factions have brought new problems with them, especially the inability to engage with existing or historical modes of governance, both Lebanese and Palestinian.

⁵⁹ Knudsen, *Lebanon after the Cedar revolution*, 119.

⁶⁰ International Information Survey of Media and Communication Channels, Actors and Messages in Palestinian Camps.

**DIMINISHING INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY OF TURKISH
ARMED FORCES:
IS POLITICIZATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF ITS
INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY ON THE WAY?**

Abstract: This article analyzes the interconnectedness of the transformation of the institutional autonomy and identity of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF), asserting that by losing its institutional autonomy within the state system, the TAF now faces difficulties to sustain their institutional identity, based on secularism and Kemalist ideology. The transformation of civil-military relations and socio-political processes after the July 15 failed coup pave the way for the politicization of the TAF. The politicization of the armed forces, will have an important impact on both the internal and foreign political processes of that country, simultaneously contributing to its institutional identity and value-oriented transformation. The ruling AKP party and President Erdoğan's authoritarian regime, not only attempt to induce their political dominance and control over the TAF, but also strive to reshape its identity in accordance with their own ideological and cultural assumptions. The maintenance of the TAF's identity and secularism now becomes more challenging.

Keywords: *Turkish Armed Forces, General Staff, AKP, institutional autonomy, institutional identity, civil-military, coup d'état*

Introduction

The Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) are in the process of large-scale modernization and transformation, which involves both armament and military-technical renovation, as well as structural, institutional and legislative changes. During the rule of the Justice and Development Party (hereinafter referred to as the AKP), the modernization and armament programs of the TAF were put on new bases and scales.¹ Simultaneously, the introduction and strengthening of civilian control over the army have been replaced by a new dimension in the civil-military relationship in

¹ For more details on the modernization of the TAF, see Levon Hovsepyan, "*Turkiyai pashpanakan hamakargi ardiakanatsumy ev anvtangtyan volorti barepokhummery*", (Yerevan: EPH hratarakhutyun 2014, in Armenian), "*Modernization of Turkish Defense System and Security Sector Reforms*", (Yerevan: YSU Publishing, 2014).

Turkey, which was unprecedented in the history of the Turkish Republic. As a result, the army was deprived of its traditional dominant positions and levers of social and political life. The AKP government has gradually managed to neutralize the powerful role of the army in the country's social and political spheres. The factor of the role of the army in Turkey and the relations between the military and the civil authorities continue to be topical in scholarly and analytical discussions. The experience of the *coup d'état* on July 15, 2016 and the subsequent developments have also raised a number of questions related to the trends and prospects of the TAF's institutional identity change and systemic transformation.

The civil-military relationship in Turkey is in the limelight of researchers and numerous studies have been conducted addressing the political role of the army, its interference in political life, its diminishing role during AKP rule and the increase of civilian control. Despite the diversity of research, studies on the transformation of the TAF's value system and identity, current trends and the factors affecting them are quite scarce. Within the analytical framework issues related to the process of the transformation of the army's identity and tendencies accompanying this process have been discussed in recent years, a number of questions about the transformation of the army's institutional identity have arisen. Therefore, the subject is topical in terms of revealing current realities and trends.

From the Loss of Institutional Autonomy to Institutional Identity Transformation

The institutional identity of the TAF, where Kemalism and secularism have been of foundational significance, is undergoing a continuous transformation, which is *inter alia* associated with the weakening and neutralization of institutional autonomy in the state system. Ü. C. Sakallioğlu, a well-known specialist in civil-military relations in Turkey, considers the TAF's autonomy at two levels: institutional and political. According to her, the first refers to the protection of the professional sphere of the army from external undesirable interventions, and on the second level, to the ideological and behavioral role of the latter, which enables the TAF to refrain from civilian control and to interfere in social and political processes.² It was ideological autonomy and behavior that enshrined the guardian's role of the army in Turkey. We see the Turkish army in the state system as an institution in terms of the level of its autonomy, combining its professional and value-oriented components. The institutional autonomy of the TAF and the belief in the national state and republican regime as the defender and guarantor of Kemalism's value system were formed by the long-standing single-party regime (1923-1950) of Mustafa Kemal's

² Ümit Cizre Sakallioğlu, "The Anatomy of the Turkish Military's Political Autonomy", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 29, No. 2, (1997): 152

Republican People's Party (RPP) and the subsequent legislative and institutional fixation of its guardianship and after recurrent military coups and political interventions.³

The transformation of the institutional identity of the TAF is directly related to the weakening of its strong autonomy in the state system. Parallel to the weakening of autonomy, the preservation of a uniform system of values in the army and the identity built upon it becomes a serious challenge. The ideological and value transformation in the country does not bypass the army as it has already lost its former leverage, and thereby the highly ideological political power will try to impose its values on the army as well. Significant steps have been taken in Turkey to revise civil-military relations and establish democratic control, but modern processes show that along with the weakening role of the army, there is a process of establishing political influence over the latter. This is also accompanied by its transformation.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was reelected as president in the snap elections held on June 24, 2018. As the AKP was unable to secure a simple majority in the Parliament necessary to form a single-party government⁴, the wide powers assigned to the president within the framework of the transition to a presidential system gained crucial significance for the political viability of that force.⁵ Consequently, this means that in the future, during Erdoğan's presidency, to which too much power has been assigned, the ongoing transformations of the country's social and political spheres will continue, including those in the defense and security sector. The authoritarian tendencies in Turkey and their own ideological-value system prioritizes that the authorities require a new approach to the relationship between the army and the civilian authorities, where the army is to be considered the "*protector of its own regime*" for authoritarian regimes.

The legislative and institutional reforms launched by the 1999 Helsinki process that restrict the political role of the armed forces also created favorable conditions for the AKP government as they gave an opportunity to influence and revise the collective identity of the army.⁶ The

³ Tuba Eldem, "Democratic Control and Military Effectiveness of the Turkish Armed Forces", in *Reforming Civil-Military Relations in New Democracies: Democratic Control and Military Effectiveness in Comparative Perspectives*, eds. A. Croissant, D. Kuehn, (Springer International Publishing AG, 2017), 173.

⁴ Erdoğan was reelected president by 52.59% of the vote. As the AKP was unable to secure a simple majority, the electoral bloc (Cumhur İttifakı) enabled the party to have a majority in parliament, forming a coalition government. "24 Haziran 2018 Seçim Sonuçları: YSK kesin sonuçları açıkladı", <https://indigodergisi.com/2018/07/24-Haziran-2018-secim-sonuclari-ysk/> (accessed July 6, 2018)

⁵ Amanda Paul and Demir Murat Seyrek, "Constitutional changes in Turkey: A presidential system or the president's system?", (Commentary, European Policy Center, 24 January 2017), (Accessed May 1, 2017) http://aei.pitt.edu/83866/1/pub_7374_conschangesinturkey.pdf.

⁶ At the EU Helsinki Summit in 1999, Turkey was granted the status of candidate for EU membership, assuming commitments to reform democracy, rule of law, and socio-economic reforms. Within this framework, the reform of military-civilian relations in line with

General Staff⁷, which has been deprived of legitimate leverage and lost its autonomous role, has an ideologically disintegrated, disunited top brass, and changes in public perceptions of the role of the army pave the way to redesign the latter's value orientations and system. The TAF, as an institution, does not have the capacity and capabilities to confront alternative ideological penetrations into the army.

The primary issue of the Turkish army's ideological transformation is the existence and future viability of Kemalism and secularism as a dominant ideology in the army. The collective value system of the TAF is changing, which would be misleading to associate with the attempted *coup d'état* of July 2016 or to consider the event as the start of that transformation. For many years, the Turkish high-ranking officer staff was no longer homogeneous in its value orientations, geopolitical and ideological thinking and mentality, or rather did not represent the consistency that existed historically.⁸ This transformative process has been going on for a long time, and the systemic changes in the AKP over 17 years of power have contributed to those changes. Certainly, since the July 15 coup attempt, the process has been accelerated and more importantly, has become open and unrestrained, with no obstacles on the authorities' way.

The period between 2009-2010 can be truly described as a phase of power base consolidation for the AKP when the judiciary and the police as counter-forces were transformed, as the Kemalist-secular cadres were replaced by pro-AKP or pro-Islamist ones.⁹ According to M. Sezal and I. Sezal, the previous praetorian and guardian military was replaced with a politicized law enforcement system loyal to Erdoğan. There were some suspicions in Turkey that the AKP's hidden objective with the Constitutional amendment of 2010 was, in fact, to have a final showdown with the secular establishment and clear the way for an Islamist transformation.¹⁰

democratic standards was one of Turkey's important commitments. For more details, see Ersel Aydınli, Nihat Ali Ozcan, Dogan Akyaz, "The Turkish military's march towards Europe", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, no. 1, (Jan.-Feb. 2006):

⁷ The General Staff was fluent in informal and non-formal mechanisms and levers of control over socio-political life, and the Chief of Staff was the 3rd most influential state official after the President and Prime Minister in accordance with state hierarchy and protocol.

⁸ For a long time, there were differing ideological and geopolitical visions and orientation poles, with which there was tough competition. Still, in 2003, one of America's secret documents, released by Wikileaks, describes the approaches and visions of groups in Turkey, according to which three major groups, Atlanticists, Eurasianists and extreme nationalists formed the supreme command. "The Turkish General Staff: A fractious and sullen political coalition", *Wikileaks*, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/03ANKARA2521_a.html (accessed May 5, 2016). Nowadays, the wing of conservative in the army can be added to these groups, which is mostly inclined towards religious values.

⁹ Mustafa Sezal and Ihsan Sezal, "Dark taints on the looking glass: Whither 'New Turkey'?", *Turkish Studies*, Vol.19, No.2 (2017): 9

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

The processes taking place in the socio-political, cultural and informational fields of the country directly affect the army as an institution, causing value-based transformations. Formerly, state institutions embodied the Kemalist value system and ideology, including the Constitutional court, the judicial system, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Kemalist-oriented parties and the RPP, the secular press, but have now essentially been changed, weakened or neutralized. Together with the army, they were the main defenders of the country's Kemalist movement. In this sense, Turkish researcher, A. Kuru, has correctly linked a gradual decline in the political role of the army and the gradual diminishing of the institutional autonomy with the weakening and neutralization of the allies' role and influence in the political field and state system, noting that the autonomy and the political power of the army stemmed from those institutions and actors being a serious factor that united the overall vision of the country and existing threats. Ideological allies in the judiciary, the political parties, and the media, in addition to some segments of society, provided the Turkish military with necessary political power and encouragement.¹¹ Along with the weakening of the army's position during the AKP's rule, the influence of its allies in the socio-political field has been significantly limited (or neutralized), which is interconnected and interchangeable. The significant growth of the Islamist, conservative elite, as well as its socio-political, socio-economic influence and sudden dominance in the judicial, media field took place at the expense of the old, ideologically close-to-the-army secular elite. Thus, the army was deprived of its supportive segments within the state structure.¹² In this regard, it should be stated that the army in Turkey was also “a system-instituting” body that was in organic communication with other state institutions, and the role of the army was positioned within that general system. The weakening of these systemic ties, as well as those in the social and public domains, contributed not only to the elimination of the army's systemic function, but also to the weakening of political levers.

In its turn, the diminution (or *elimination*) of institutional autonomy may lead to the transformation of identity and values. In other words, the Turkish army is moving to a new way of post-modernist modernization where the axis of primary transformation is the revision of the previous collective value system. It can be stated that maintaining the institutional identity of the army was directly related to its role (*role-playing character*) and autonomy. Therefore, the neutralization or limitation of this functional role of the army challenges the viability and the possibility of further existence of a single or unitary value system. For many years, it was the Supreme command's strategic priority to keep the army officers free from various public ideologies and currents, forming and preserving the officers'

¹¹ Ahmet Kuru, “The Rise and Fall of Military Tutelage in Turkey; Fears of Islamism, Kurdism, and Communism”, *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 14, no. 2 (2012): 37-57.

¹² Ibid.

value system and worldview homogeneity under strict control.¹³ According to analyst M. Gurcan, the conservative majority in Turkey now believes that after the recent military coup attempt, the army has started to shrink the burden of secularism, a process that the political elite must support. The TAF is known for its hard-line secularist character and for decades, it adhered strictly to the principle that the army should be kept off-limits from political Islam.¹⁴ Additionally, the Islamization of the army is rather a troubling issue for the secular circles. They view the secularism and the relationship of the army to Islam not only in terms of military culture, but also in the context of socio-cultural transformation of the country. The concern is that if the TAF leave their traditional secularism, the public will also follow it.¹⁵

We believe that it is not the abandonment of the secular identity by the army that will lead to the Islamization of society and the weakening of secular identity, but vice versa. The social, socio-cultural, and value transformations, one way or another, have their own influence on the identity and military culture of the army. In this transforming(ed) environment, the socio-cultural and, dominant ideological values more easily penetrate the army since the latter has been deprived of its institutional autonomy and the levers of resistance deriving from it.

The Final Blow to the Institutional Autonomy of the TAF

The army is no longer “a system-basing institute” in Turkey and has lost its role as the most important autonomous institution. Especially after the failed July 15 coup, the undertaken legislative and structural changes in the military and defense spheres could not only be a serious blow to the institutional autonomy of the army, but also opened a new way for its collective identity and value transformation. Formerly, the unified army value-base (Kemalism, secularism) and institutional self-cognition, as well as institutional culture, served to carry out its coordinating mission, and now the systemic functions have been distributed between state, political and social actors. The vivid proof of the above was the transfer of three main commands of the TAF (Land Force, Air Force and Naval Force) from the General Staff under the control of National Defense Ministry (hereinafter referred to as the NDM), as well as the full integration of the Gendarmerie and Coast Guard commands to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.¹⁶

¹³ Aydinli, Ozcan, Akyaz, “The Turkish military's march towards Europe”, 80-82.

¹⁴ Metin Gurcan, “Turkish military’s tradition of secularism facing tough test”, *Al-Monitor*, Sep. 4, 2018, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/09/turkey-military-facing-tough-secularism-test.html#ixzz5X32O4bkS> (accessed September 6, 2018).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Kuvvet Komutanlıkları MSB'ye bağlandı”, *Hürriyet*, July 31, 2016, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/kuvvet-komutanliklari-msbye-baglandi-40176771> (accessed August 10, 2016).

Additionally, the military education system was essentially reorganized, removing it from the General Staff's control to the NDM and the Ministry of Education and Science.¹⁷

One of the key components and pillars of the army's institutional autonomy was the self-contained military education system, which was of crucial importance for the formation and maintenance of the collective identity and value of the TAF. Military education was exclusively under military jurisdiction and ideological control.¹⁸ On the other hand, the transformation of the institutional identity of the army contributes to the new phenomena that were previously under strict supervision and control, which were considered threats to the state, such as the reversal of the ban on religious headscarves in the army, the possibility of Imam-Hatip school graduates being promoted to the rank of officer, the permission for mass prayers in military units and more.¹⁹ The authorities are continuing to take steps to eliminate the former taboos in the army, as the solid Kemalist value system undergoes revision. The Islamic-conservatism (*irtica*), which used to be a threat and a "red line" for the TAF, penetrates into the army with different manifestations. Some analysts and secular circles began to speak out regarding the threat of Islamization of the army. While discussing the consequences of the July 15 coup attempt in the military, S. Waldman and E. Caliskan argue that "the opportunity of Imam-Hatip graduates higher up in the military would have significant repercussions for the identity of the armed services, challenging their traditional self-perceived role as staunchly secular bastions of the Turkish state".²⁰

In regards to the institutional autonomy of the TAF, the problem of socio-economic self-sufficiency is also very important. This is ensured by the Army Assistance Organization (OYAK - Ordu Yardımlaşma Kurumu). It is an important system that offers solutions to the social problems of around 300,000 military personnel, which also has considerable financial and economic resources in the country's economic and industrial life. OYAK employs around eight dozen different companies and businesses, with more than 30,000 employees. As of 2015, OYAK's total economic capital is estimated at about \$20 billion, with annual exports of more than

¹⁷ "Kapatılan Harp Okulları ile ilgili sürpriz gelişme!", *InternetHaber*, November 2, 2016, <http://www.internethaber.com/kapatilan-harp-okullari-ile-igili-surpriz-gelisme-1728028h.htm> (accessed November 7, 2016).

¹⁸ Muge Aknur, "Civil-Military Relations During the AK Party Era. Major Developments and Challenges", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 15, no. 4, (2013): 145.

¹⁹ "TSK'da artık turban serbest", *Oda TV*, November 11, 2016, <http://odatv.com/tskda-artik-turban-serbest-1111161200.html> (accessed November 11, 2016), "Bakan Fikri Işık: İmam hatipliler de TSK'ye girecek", *Birgün*, <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/bakan-fikri-isik-imam-hatipliler-de-tsk-ye-girecek-122146.html> (accessed August 1, 2016).

²⁰ Simon Waldman and Emre Caliskan, "*The New Turkey and its Discontents*", (New-York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 47.

\$3 billion. Due to OYAK's existence, the TAF has been characterized as “a large industrial and economic entrepreneur” in the country for many years.²¹ In May 2016, OYAK's governing board's chairman, O. Özbahadır, and General Director, C. Ulusoy, unexpectedly resigned. S. Erdem, who worked during Erdoğan's premiership as well as in his presidential administration, was appointed to be the new head of this organization. The Turkish media qualified these reshufflings as “a step towards the AKP's self-control over the OYAK and an attempt to remove it from the army”, noting that the army's era ended in that structure. The AKP's era is being launched instead.²² OYAK has always been a factor in the socio-economic self-sufficiency of the army, under the strict control of the military, where the entry of unwanted civilians was banned. OYAK personnel changes sparked questions about the secret agenda of the AKP, which not only falls under the control of civilian authorities, but directly moves under Erdoğan's control.²³

The legislative and structural changes aimed at reducing the political role of the army through the years have essentially affected the role of the latter as an autonomous and self-sufficient institution. In Republican Turkey, the army had a special "veto" right in the political system when it nurtured society and the bureaucratic apparatus and imposed its values, thus making the military hegemonic and dominant in the political system.²⁴ Reforms on the establishment of civilian control over the army and the reduction of its political role scaled down the role of the army as an autonomous institution, which changed the essence of the civil-military relations.

Apart from systemic changes, social-value processes that affect the transformation of the latter's institutional identity are also crucial. The army as a social system also carries the influence of the social processes that affect the collective identity of the army. Taking into account the traditions of the civil-military relationship and the role of the army, it should be noted that despite the fact that legislative and institutional reforms in the sector significantly contributed to the weakening of the role of the army, non-

²¹ Arsen Avagyan, “Banaky dery Turkiayi tntesakan hamakargum”, *Haykakan banak*, 4 (50), (2016), in Armenian, (“The Role of the Army in the Turkish Economic System”, *Armenian Army*, 4 (50), Yerevan, 2006).

²² Metin Münir, “OYAK'ta ordu dönemi bitti, AKP dönemi başladı”, *T24*, May 26, 2016, <http://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/metin-munir/oyakta-ordu-donemi-bitti-akp-donemi-basladi,14641> (accessed May 26, 2016); Şehriban Kırış, “AKP, OYAK'ı böyle ele geçirdi”, *Cumhuriyet*, June 12, 2016, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/549749/AKP_OYAK_i_boyle_ele_gecirdi.html (accessed June 13, 2016).

²³ Metin Gurcan, “OYAK'ta rutin görev değişimi mi yoksa sivil darbe mi?”, *Al-Monitor*, May 31, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/originals/2016/05/turkey-civilian-coup-military-owned-enterprise-oyak.html#ixzz4a1CRtfjy> (accessed June 2, 2016).

²⁴ Metin Gurcan and Megan Gisclon, “From Autonomy to Full-Fledged Civilian Control: The Changing Nature of Turkish Civil-Military Relations”, *IPC-Mercator Policy Brief*, (August 2016): 15.

formal institutions, traditions, norms and military culture still play an important role. According to Turkish researcher Z. Sarigil, "legislative, institutional reforms are necessary, but insufficient factors ... and it is necessary to pay more attention to the institutional culture of the Turkish army, which also defines the collective identity of the military."²⁵ In this context, deprived of its leverage and powers in political life, the army cannot remain indifferent to the processes taking place in Turkey's social and political life. As a result of favorable or persistent impositions of ideological authoritarian regimes, the ideology of the ruling regime penetrates into the army. Such regimes typically seek not only to subdue the army, but also to maximize their own control over it in order to bring it into their own ideological field. In such a situation, the control of the army, even though it may legally belong to the parliament, is actually passed into the hands of the ruling regime. Gradually, the "conquest" of the army and the political regime occurs when the army is not only in the ideological field, but is also the beneficiary and defender of that system. In case of such consolidation, when the mechanisms of democratic control do not work, the army becomes an instrument for the authorities both in internal and foreign policy. Typically, such systems become more unpredictable and aggressive, as the army is entirely under the control and influence of the government, and the internal mechanisms of detention are absent or not functioning. As some analysts mention, the generals who survived the massive purges following the abortive coup were so terrified of President Erdogan's vengeful wrath that they moved troops into Syria²⁶ — a prospect they once resisted — without a whimper.²⁷

The legislative weakening of the role of the army caused changes in the self-consciousness of an officer relating to their former role. The consciousness of an ordinary officer, regarding the army as a dominant institution of political life, was changed. No matter how strong the traditions are, the self-consciousness of the officer is formed within the framework of those realities. On the other hand, in the army, a group of officers with new guidelines appears, which is a consequence of the prolonged governance and socio-cultural policy of the ruling Islamist power. Of course, it should be stated that the formation of such a class requires a certain period of time. The transformation of the social and cultural life of the country does not overlook the army as a social organism over time. In other words, the dominating system of values inside society penetrates state institutions, including the

²⁵ Zeki Sarigil, "Civil-Military Relations Beyond Dichotomy: With Special Reference to Turkey", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 12, no. 2 (June 2011): 273.

²⁶ A month after the coup attempt, the Turkish army launched a cross-border operation (named Euphrates shield) with aligned Syrian opposition groups in Syria which led to the Turkish occupation and control of northern Syrian territories.

²⁷ Leela Jacinto, "Turkey's Post-Coup Purge and Erdogan's Private Army", *Foreign Policy*, July 13, 2017, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/07/13/turkeys-post-coup-purge-and-erdogans-private-army-sadat-perincek-gulen/> (accessed August 10, 2017).

army, when it is deprived of its systemic levers and its role. The society and the ruling party gradually nurture the army by their ideology and value preferences, in an attempt to bring it to their own ideological field.

Ü. C. Sakallioğlu observes that non-democratic regimes, in the context of civil-military relations, as a rule, tend to subject themselves to the military elite, and although civilian control over the army is exercised by civilians, it is not always democratic. The Erdoğan-model of civil-military relations is more like the one-party regime of the Turkish Republic in the 1920-30s,²⁸ when together with the ruling party and the state apparatus there was a coalescence of the supreme command of the army and the political elite, and the army was the protector and the pillar of the regime. Large-scale reshuffles undertaken by the Turkish government in the army and defense since the July 15 coup attempt widely opened the door for Erdoğan to establish direct control over the General Staff and power agencies, as well as to transform the army into his own power source.²⁹ Such a statement becomes more convincing in the case of a change in the governing system of the country and transition to the presidential system, which heralds a return to the civil-military power relations to the model of the 30-40s of the previous century.

The Turkish President's decrees of July 15, 2018, made serious changes to the defense system, which was the logical continuation of the transformations that took place in 2016. Particularly, the General Staff, as well as the commanders of the three main military units, were attached to the NDM. A number of civilian members of the Supreme Military Council (YAŞ) were also added and the NSC General-secretariat was attached to the president.³⁰ The unprecedented powers and levers given to the president by the Constitution within the framework of the transition to the presidential system enable total control over the armed forces. According to one of the decrees, the President of the country can issue orders to the Chief of the General Staff and Commanders of the Army, which, without the approval of any state institution, should be immediately implemented. One Turkish journalist qualified that decree as a victory proving supremacy over the

²⁸ Ümit Cizre, "Turkey in a Tailspin, The Foiled Coup Attempt of July 15", *Middle East Report*, August 10, 2016, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero081016> (accessed September 1, 2016).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ "Bakanlıklara Bağlı, İlgili, İlişkili Kurum ve Kuruluşlar ile Diğer Kurum ve Kuruluşların Teşkilatı Hakkında Cumhurbaşkanlığı Kararnamesi" (Kararname Numarası: 4), "Yüksek Askeri Şûranın Kuruluş ve Görevleri Hakkında Cumhurbaşkanlığı Kararnamesi" (Kararname Numarası: 8), "Millî Güvenlik Kurulu Genel Sekreterliğinin Teşkilat ve Görevleri Hakkında Cumhurbaşkanlığı Kararnamesi" (Kararname Numarası: 6), *Resmî Gazete*, <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/main.aspx?home=http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2018/07/20180715.htm&main=http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2018/07/20180715.htm> (accessed December 20, 2018).

military by political power.³¹ Earlier, the amendments to the law regarding the Staff of the Armed Forces in order to adjust to the presidential administration system gave broad powers to the President, in particular with regard to personnel interference, such as extension, reduction or dismissal of officers. According to the Turkish press, the President was granted the authority to carry out any high-ranking officer raids and abductions in the TAF without a decision by the YAŞ.³² On that occasion, one of the opposition newspapers released a publication titled. "*Erdoğan's Turkey. with full powers in the TAF*", noting that granting such powers to the President is unprecedented in the history of the Republic.³³

Current Trends and Future Prospects

The process of transition to a strong presidential system of governance, the trends towards authoritarianism and profound value system transformations not only deprive the army of its traditional Kemalist character, but also introduce and impose a new image of value. The coup attempt in 2016 gave Erdoğan a new opportunity and freed his hands to reshape the state system and TAF. It can be argued that Erdoğan turned the threat to an opportunity and started his own "*unprecedented coup*". In this context, the loyalty of the supreme command of the army to the current authorities of the country gives the opportunity to lead the full and collective transformation of the army in a smoother way. In the circumstances of such tendencies, which is highly probable to occur, and in the context of the current logic in Turkey, the convergence of the army and political authority can take place. The army appears to be not only under the full political control of the AKP, which has the power of the country in its hands, but is also under its ideological influence.

In April 2018, the Turkish press published information regarding the head of the Turkish General Staff, H. Akar, and Turkey's 11th President, A. Gül's, meeting. The opposition circles qualified it as an intervention by the army – "*a military memorandum*" – to Gül.³⁴ Opposition RPP MP B. Yarkadaş stated that by President Erdoğan's instructions, the aim of the visit

³¹ "Son dakika: Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, Milli Savunma Bakanlığına bağlandı", *Habertürk*, <https://www.haberturk.com/son-dakika-genelkurmay-baskanligi-milli-savunma-bakanligina-baglandi-2059351> (accessed July 15, 2018).

³² "TSK'daki terfi ve atamalarda düzenleme... Bir üst rütbeye atamalar Cumhurbaşkanı tarafından yapılacak", *Hürriyet*, July 10, 2018, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/tskdaki-terfi-ve-atamalarda-duzenleme-bir-ust-rutbeye-atamalar-cumhurbaskani-tarafindan-yapilacak-40891755> (accessed July 10, 2018).

³³ Sertaç Eş, "Erdoğan Türkiye'si: TSK'de de tam yetkili", *Cumhuriyet*, July 10, 2019, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/siyaset/1022056/_Erdogan_Turkiye_si_TSK_de_de_tam_yetkili.html (accessed July 10, 2018).

³⁴ "Vahim iddialar", *Sözcü*, <https://www.sozcü.com.tr/2018/gundem/vahim-iddialar-2377300/> (accessed April 30, 2018).

was to keep Gül away from running in the upcoming presidential elections.³⁵ For a long time, the media circulated information according to which Gül could be nominated as a presidential candidate by the “Saadet” party. After the aforementioned meeting, Gül announced that he would not be running.

In May of the same year, during a pre-election rally in Malatya, Erdoğan's sharp speech directed at M. Ince, the presidential candidate from RPP, was applauded by the Commander of the 2nd Army of the Land Forces, T. Metin.³⁶ This act by a high-ranking officer became a source of serious debate in the political field and in the press. The Speaker of the RPP, B. Tezcan, announced the need to investigate T. Metin, calling on the Chief of General Staff and the prosecutor's office to challenge.³⁷ The presidential candidate, M. Ince, promised to "tear the general strap" after being elected.³⁸ The General's behavior was interpreted as interference by the army in the electoral process and support for the ruling AKP. One of the opposition newspapers ran the headline, "*The party commander of the army*".³⁹

The above-mentioned two cases make the tendencies of the Turkish army's politicization process clear as the army becomes a political instrument for the authorities. After the July 15 coup attempt, a number of analyses on the consequences of the reorganization of the TAF began to raise the issue of establishing political control over the army by the authorities and the trends and prospects of bringing it into their political-ideological field. In his observations, Norwegian researcher, L. Haugom, notices that the government, along with the increasing the civilian control mechanisms over the TAF, has the objective of establishing political control upon the latter, as opposed to civilian democratic control, due to the weakness of the parliamentary mechanisms. Instead, the executive power and the president assume a serious role in that regard. As a consequence of this, the Armed Forces will become more politicized, with stronger

³⁵ “Kalin ve Akar'ın Abdullah Gül'ü ziyaretinin perde arkasını CHP'li vekil açıkladı”, *Cumhuriyet*, April 27, 2018

http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/siyaset/965386/Kalin_ve_Akar_in_Abdullah_Gul_u_ziyaretinin_perde_arkasini_CHP_li_vekil_acikladi.html (accessed April 27, 2018).

³⁶ “Komutan dört köşe: Erdoğan, İnce'yi eleştirdikçe Korgeneral Temel alkış tuttu”, *Diken*, June 2, 2018, <http://www.diken.com.tr/komutan-dort-kose-erdogan-inceyi-elestirdikce-korgeneral-temel-alkis-tuttu/> (accessed June 10, 2018).

³⁷ “CHP'li Tezcan Erdoğan'ı alkışlayan 2. Ordu Komutanı için savcılar görevi çağırdı: Derhal işlem başlatılmalıdır”, *T24*, June 4, 2018, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/chpli-tezcan-erdogani-alkislayan-2-ordu-komutani-icin-savcilar-goreve-cagirdi-derhal-islem-baslatilmalidir,643449> (accessed June 4, 2018).

³⁸ “2. Ordu Komutanı'na ağır sözler: Senin apoletlerini sökmezsem ben de Muharrem İnce değilim”, *HaberTürk*, June 2, 2018, <http://www.haberturk.com/tv/gundem/haber/1997800-2-ordu-komutani-na-agir-sozler-senin-apoletlerini-sokmezsem-ben-de-muharrem-ince-degelim> (accessed June 3, 2018).

³⁹ “Partili ordu komutanı!”, *Birgün*, June 3, 2018, <https://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/partili-ordu-komutani-218197.html> (accessed June 4, 2018).

competition among the existing groups.⁴⁰ In his interviews, Turkish analyst N. Ali Özcan pointed out that military appointments and promotions carried out by the civilian government pursue political objectives, so that the ruling party can increase control that will lead to the politicization of the army.⁴¹ A researcher of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, S. Çağaptay, believes that as a result of the military coup failure, President Erdoğan was able to complete his takeover of the army and the police by turning them into so-called “*pro-Erdoğan*” in the context of Turkey's socio-political polarization. Moreover, according to him, in the future, political intervention by the army will not be directed to overthrow Erdoğan, but to protect him.⁴² According to Turkish researchers G. Tol and O. Taşpınar, Erdoğan's plan for the influence of conservative values and the inclusion of Islam in the army and the loyal elements invested by the current authorities in the army structures, may politicize the army officer ranks and contribute to a decline in the professionalism of the army. In addition to this, Erdoğan's primary goal is to establish loyalty and full control over the army, which is already underway.⁴³ Besides politicization trends within the military, it is obvious that politicization affects the institutional identity of the TAF, leading to further ideological transformation.

Institutional and legislative mechanisms for the weakening of the role of the army and socio-political processes undoubtedly pave the way for a change of the collective identity and value-system of the army. However, over the past decade, due to formal and informal influences, the army has found itself in the domain of institutional transformation, value and ideological imposition of the current authorities. Despite the reforms in the civil-military relationships in Turkey, where the center of gravity is tilting towards the civilian authorities, it does not imply civilian and democratic oversight of the army, as they do not ensure the involvement of state and civil institutes in civilian control mechanisms. In this case, a monopoly of control over the army taking place, where exclusive jurisdiction is given to the president's institution. With the constitutional amendments of

⁴⁰ Lars Haugom, “The Turkish Armed Forces Restructured”, *The Turkey Analyst*, September 30, 2016, <https://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/566-the-turkish-armed-forces-restructured.html> (accessed October 15, 2016).

⁴¹ Nihat Ali Özcan, “Post-coup attempt restructuring means Turkish army may no longer be functional”, interview by B. Yinanc, *Hurriyet Daily News*, November 7, 2016, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/post-coup-attempt-restructuring-means-turkish-army-may-no-longer-be-functional-ozcan-105805> (accessed March 15, 2018).

⁴² Soner Çağaptay, “Erdoğan is dividing Turkey against itself”, *The Atlantic*, March 31, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/03/turkey-erdogan-kurds-pkk-isis-syria-coup-gulen/521487/> (accessed May 9, 2017).

⁴³ Gonul Tol and Omer Taspınar, “Erdoğan’s Turn to the Kemalists. How it will shape Turkish Foreign Policy”, *Foreign Affairs*, October 27, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/turkey/2016-10-27/erdogans-turn-kemalists> accessed (December 20, 2016).

April 2017, the transition to the presidential system and the increasing power of the president, especially in the context of modern trends, control over the army can be placed into the hands of the president and the presidential administration. This, in its turn, assumes the politicization of the TAF, simultaneously contributing to its institutional identity and value-oriented transformation, which will have a major impact on both the internal and foreign political processes of that country.

SAUDI ARABIA ON THE ROAD TO MODERNIZATION: REALITY OR MYTH?

Abstract: In June 2017, King Salman of Saudi Arabia has appointed his son Mohammed bin Salman (also known as MBS), as crown prince replacing his nephew, Prince Mohammed bin Nayef¹, as first in line to the throne. King Salman bin ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, a son of King ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Al Saud the founder of Saudi Arabia, acceded to the throne in January 2015 after the death of his half-brother Abdullah bin ‘Abd al-‘Aziz. Mohammed bin Salman is currently serving as the country's deputy prime minister (the title of prime minister being held by the King) and is also chairman of the Council for economic and development affairs, chairman of the Council of political and security affairs, and minister of defence. In 2016 Mohammed bin Salman set out a possibly over-ambitious development plan "Saudi Vision 2030". Bin Salman's progressive advancement was suggesting that the matter of succession in Saudi Arabia was already resolved, and that King Salman intends to surmount the possible royal intrigues and fierce competition to make his son King of Saudi Arabia. Prince Mohammed bin Salman could, potentially, lead Saudi Arabia for decades.

Keywords: *Saudi Arabia, reforms, moderate Islam, Iran, Shi'ism, Wahhabism, ultra conservatism, religious fundamentalism, human rights*

Introduction

Mohammed bin Salman has offered a plan for the modernization of Saudi Arabia. The reform programme aims to overhaul most aspects of social, economic and religious life in the Kingdom. According to official data, the Crown Prince is working on improving the rights of women in the Kingdom and expanding their role in the work force. Women's appointment

¹Prince Mohammed bin Nayef (born 30 August, 1959) is a prominent member of the House of Saud. He was the Kingdom's security chief for many years and was known for his strong stance against jihadist militants. As deputy prime minister and interior minister, he headed up the counter-terrorism portfolio. Muhammad's father Nayef was one of the Sudairi Seven, a power bloc of sons of the Kingdom's founder, King Abdel Aziz (known as Ibn Saud), and Hussa bint Ahmed Al Sudairi. Thus, Prince Muhammad was born to an especially privileged position in the House of Saud dynasty: a paternal grandson of the founding monarch, and child of one of the original King's favourite sons. Two of Prince Muhammad's full uncles, Fahd and Salman, have reigned as King during Muhammad's lifetime.

to various political posts has increased in recent times. A number of key appointments have been made on political levels, such as Princess Reema Bint Bandar as President of the Saudi Federation for Community Sports, making her the first woman to lead a sports federation in the Kingdom, and Fatimah Baeshen, spokesperson for the Saudi embassy in Washington DC, USA, the Kingdom's first female spokeswoman abroad. Women have finally been allowed to enter public stadiums, and the country's longstanding prohibition on women motorists that had been in place since 1990 was also lifted. Women's involvement in sports has grown. There is a trend toward not wearing the abaya and niqab and only wearing the hijab. It should be noted that there are small changes related to women's rights. It is a fact that women have the right to drive not only cars, but also motorcycles and even airplanes. The crown prince has encouraged more public entertainment in the Kingdom and relaxed rules on gender segregation in public places. He has also limited the power of the "religious police," who enforced those strict rules of gender segregation and "proper" behavior in the public sphere. The religious police was previously focused on imposing modest dress on women and preventing interactions between unrelated women and men.²

Information on the construction of the "sci-fi" city, Neom, was also no less interesting. Saudi Arabia said it will start building the first residential area in a proposed \$500 billion futuristic city that has become a symbol of Crown prince Mohammed bin Salman's ambitions for life after oil. The planned megacity, unveiled in 2018, is part of the prince's grand plan to bolster non-oil revenue and attract foreign investment with eye-popping proposals to transform the economy, including two other tourism developments. Neom is to be financed by the Saudi government, its sovereign wealth fund, and local and international investors. The first phase of residential development will be completed by 2020.³

It was with this backdrop that the crown prince, in November 2017, ordered the arrest of over 300 of the country's economic and political elite, including a number of members of the ruling family. The anti-corruption scandal caused a huge international shock. The prisoners were rounded up and detained at the Ritz Carlton hotel in Riyadh. Among them was one of the world's billionaires, Prince Waleed bin Talal, who was released a few months later after signing a confidential "confirmed understanding" with the

²"Crown prince Mohamamed bin Salman champions women's right," *About her*, <https://www.abouthere.com/node/9306/people/features/crown-prince-mohammed-bin-salman-champions-women%E2%80%99s-rights-saudi-arabia> (accessed March 5, 2019).

³Sarah Algethamy, "Saudi Arabia to Begin Building Homes in \$500 Billion Futuristic City Neom," *Bloomberg*, January 16, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-01-16/saudi-arabia-to-begin-building-homes-in-futuristic-city-neom> (accessed February 20, 2019).

government.⁴ The anti-corruption commission headed by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman referred more than 60 people for prosecution, according to a royal court statement. Saudi authorities said they've recovered about \$107 billion from people implicated in what the government has described as a crackdown on graft that has rattled the Kingdom's business elite and weighed on economic growth.⁵

The de facto leader of Saudi Arabia also swept away many of the ineffective timeservers in government offices and replaced them with young Western-educated technocrats.⁶ There are now fewer members of the ruling family in the cabinet than at any time in modern Saudi history. MBS has cultivated support among the next generation of the royal family, princes close to his own age who are often from the family's fourth generation - the great-grandsons of the founding King. He has appointed them to governorships and deputy governorships in the provinces and to sub-cabinet positions in Riyadh.⁷

Can Mohammed bin Salman transform one of world's most retrograde autocracies from its status as an exporter of oil and terrorist ideology into a force for global progress? Over the course of three years since his father became King, bin Salman has ruthlessly consolidated control over the Kingdom's economic and security power centers. He has introduced modest liberalization and sharply escalated a proxy war with Iran across the region, creating a humanitarian crisis in neighbouring Yemen. "He is an ambitious young man willing to act aggressively and decisively to consolidate power," says Chas Freeman, a former U.S. ambassador to Riyadh under President George H.W. Bush.⁸

"Moderate" Islam vs. ultra-conservatism

The Saudi Kingdom has long been an absolute monarchy that does not tolerate public debates. The system was intolerant and harsh against political

⁴Vivian Nereim, "Alwaleed promises more details on settlement to calm investors," *Bloomberg*, March 19, 2019, <https://www.bloombergquint.com/business/alwaleed-promises-more-details-on-settlement-to-calm-investors> (accessed April 3 2019).

⁵Zaid Sabah and Sarah Algethami, "Saudi Arabia Collects \$107 Billion as Prince Ends Crackdown," *Bloomberg*, January 30, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-01-30/saudi-arabia-recovers-107-billion-in-anti-corruption-campaign> (accessed March 15, 2019).

⁶"Saudi King's son Mohammed bin Salman is new crown prince," *BBC News*, June 21, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-40351578> (accessed January 9, 2019).

⁷"After the Killing of Jamal Khashoggi: Mohammed bin Salman and the Future of Saudi-U.S. Relations, *Center of Strategies and International Studies*," December 12, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/after-killing-jamal-khashoggi-muhammad-bin-salman-and-future-saudi-us-relations> accessed (April 5, 2019).

⁸Karl Vick, "The Saudi Crown prince Thinks He Can Transform the Middle East. Should We Believe Him?," *The Time*, April 5, 2018, <http://time.com/longform/mohammed-bin-salman> (accessed April 2, 2019).

and human rights activism and made it difficult for the religious authorities to allow a more pluralistic and moderate practice of Islam. Nevertheless, the old system allowed limited channels to express opinions. Those channels have been closed during the reign of King Salman and his son, Mohammed. The new rulers have reorganized agencies and rewritten the laws on counterterrorism - a legitimate security concern - to gain more power to quash dissent and imprison people for long periods on the slightest pretext.⁹

The Crown Prince purged his cousin, Mohammed bin Nayef, who controlled the interior ministry. In its place a powerful new agency, the Presidency of State Security, was created, which reports directly to the King and can conduct “search, investigation, seizure, criminal and administrative prosecution” without judicial oversight.¹⁰ In October 2017, the Kingdom updated its counterterrorism law, which was already overly broad, to add a host of tripwires to criminalize free expression. For example, the definition of terrorism was extended to those who “describe” the King or crown prince “in any way offensive to religion or justice”.¹¹

However, the highly noteworthy thing for us is Mohammed bin Salman’s noteworthy intention to uproot the country from religious extremism and to return to “moderate Islam.” This is the matter which is of great interest to the outside world, since Saudi Arabia is viewed as a religiously conservative state that holds and “exports” extremist ideas. Saudi Arabia is an absolute Sunni monarchy, a “God-state,” a country that practices Wahhabism, which is one of the most conservative directions of Sunni Islam with foundations laid back in the 18th century. It was in this period that the founder of the Saudi dynasty, Ibn Saud, concluded an agreement with Wahhabi religious preacher Muhammad ibn Abdal Wahhab, and this became the foundation for the birth of the Emirate of Diriyah, and later, in 1932—for the creation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In fact, Saudi Arabia’s tradition of countering terrorism goes back to the founding of the Saudi state. Saudi efforts to counter extremism (*ghuluw*) emerged for the first time in response to the *Ikhwan* revolt in 1927-30. On the other hand, the contention that Wahhabism is part of the problem seems correct. It remains to be seen if Saudi counter-discourse can effectively fight its “inner demons” with basically the same religious reasoning on which radical currents draw their justification for violence.¹²

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Rosie Bsheer, “How Muhammad bin Salman has transformed the Saudi Arabia,” *The Nation*, May 21, 2018, <https://www.thenation.com/article/how-mohammed-bin-salman-has-transformed-saudi-arabia> accessed (April 2, 2019).

¹¹ United States Department of State, Country reports on terrorism 2017- Saudi Arabia, September 19, 2018, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5bcf1f85c.html> accessed (April 7, 2019).

Roel Meijer, “Saudi Arabia religious counter terrorist discourse,” *Middle East Institute*, February 15, 2012, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/saudi-arabias-religious-counter-terrorist-discourse> (accessed April 1, 2019).

Over the course of the 20th century through the beginning of the 21st century, Wahhabism in many cases has become the ideological basis for religious-political radical movements and militant Islamism, spreading to various corners of the world. Petrodollars were contributed for the purpose of “exporting” Wahhabism in the 1960’s. This contributed to the weakening of the position of national Islam in favor of the Wahhabi interpretations of Islam in different parts of the world, including in Europe and the USSR, and, after the latter’s collapse, in separate post-Soviet republics. It is perhaps no surprise that 15 of the 19 participants in the well-known September 11, 2001 New York terrorist attacks were Saudi Arabian citizens.¹³

“We are returning to what we were before - a country of moderate Islam that is open to all religions and to the world,” Mohammed bin Salman said to international investors in Riyadh in October 2017 during the FII summit. The crown prince told the Guardian that “what happened in the last 30 years is not Saudi Arabia.” He explicitly blamed the Kingdom’s turn towards ultraconservatism on the Iranian revolution in 1979 and Tehran’s attempts to spread the revolution across the Middle East.¹⁴

Mohammed bin Salman asked for global support to transform the hard-line Kingdom into an open society that empowers citizens and lures investors. He said the ultra-conservative state had been “not normal” for the past 30 years, blaming rigid doctrines that have governed society in response to the Iranian revolution, which successive leaders “didn’t know how to deal with.” “We are a G20 country. One of the biggest world economies. We’re in the middle of three continents. Changing Saudi Arabia for the better means helping the region and changing the world. So this is what we are trying to do here. And we hope we get support from everyone”.¹⁵

Bin Salman’s remarks on “moderate Islam” came a month after Saudi Arabia made a landmark decision to allow women to legally drive vehicles starting in June 2018, a move that was criticised by some conservative voices among the Wahhabi ulama and social media, but welcomed by human rights activists. Saudi Arabia was the only country in the world where women were not allowed to drive.¹⁶

¹³Uri Friedman, “Where Americas terrorists actually come from,” *The Atlantic*, January 30, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/01/trump-immigration-ban-terrorism/514361/> (accessed April 4, 2019).

¹⁴“Saudi Crown prince promises return to moderate Islam,” *Al Jazeera*, October 25, 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/saudi-crown-prince-promises-return-moderate-islam-171024182102549.html> (accessed March 30, 2019)

¹⁵“I will return Saudi Arabia to moderate Islam, says crown prince,” *The Guardian*, October 24, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/24/i-will-return-saudi-arabia-moderate-islam-crown-prince> accessed (April 5, 2019).

¹⁶“Saudi Crown prince promises return to moderate Islam,” *Al Jazeera*, October 24, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/saudi-crown-prince-promises-return-moderate-islam-171024182102549.html> (accessed March 28, 2019).

Accusations against Iran

Mohammed bin Salman's plans to modernize and reform Saudi Arabia became a subject of extensive discussions beyond the borders of Saudi Arabia — both in academic and political circles. During this period, several questions were raised as to what extent such assurances were sincere and realistic, and, ultimately, to what extent Saudi Arabia was more open and moderate throughout its entire history; that is, the period of time until 1979 that Mohammed bin Salman was speaking about. Let us note once more that he believed that until the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, Islamic interpretations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia did not come from radical positions. It was noted that the Saudis were living in the same way as in the other Arab countries, they were going to movie theaters, and the women were driving cars.

It should be noted that after the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, the situation somewhat destabilized in the Middle East, especially in the Gulf area. The political awakening of Islam entered a new international phase. The religious regime of Iran had the objective of “exporting” the Khomeini interpretation of political Shi'ism to the outside world. Political Shi'ism created an opposition, even a competition, with Sunni Islam's conservative directions that were rooted in the Gulf region, including in Saudi Arabia. This caused serious concern, first and foremost, in the Gulf's Sunni monarchies, where there were Shi'ite confessional communities, as well as in Iraq, where more than 60 percent of the population was Shi'ite. Besides the fact that the Sunni regimes of the Gulf were concerned that the wave of revolution would also spread in their countries and make the local Shi'ite communities become active, there was another important fact which was making what occurred in Iran more unacceptable: Wahhabism's traditionally intolerant approach toward Shi'ite Islam. This created a completely new tension and distrust in relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Some time after the Islamic revolution in Iran, the situation became extremely destabilized in Saudi Arabia. On November 20, 1979, under the influence of the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Great Mosque of Mecca was seized by a group of revolutionaries, whose leader was Juhayman al-Utaybi (1936-1980). The seizure lasted for two weeks and caused a great shock, both in the Kingdom and in the region. The crisis was overcome by French Special Forces.¹⁷ However, the more religious and conservative circles of society protested against foreign intervention just as they did in August 1990, during the days of the second Gulf crisis, when the US-led coalition

¹⁷Stephen Rakowski, “How the 1979 siege of Mecca haunts the House of Saud,” *Stratfor*, July 2, 2017, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/how-1979-siege-mecca-haunts-house-saud> (accessed March 27, 2019).

armed forces used the territory of Saudi Arabia to prevent Iraq's aggression against Kuwait.

Starting from the 1980s, the royal family in Saudi Arabia further tightened control over internal dissident movements that were formed on religious grounds, and which have existed since the inception of the Kingdom. The royal family has fought and in some cases cooperated with members of the same Ikhwan, or Sahwa, as well as the Islamic movements.

After the Islamic revolution in Iran, Saudi Arabia further intensified the Islamic vector of its foreign policy, which most likely had an objective of not only strengthening Saudi Arabia's position in the outside world, but also to take the conservative and radical sources out of the country's borders. The proof of this is Saudi Arabia's active intervention in the war that began after the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan on December 24, 1979. With the help of the Wahhabi ulama, Saudi Arabia declared Jihad against the infidel Soviet forces, and acted in that country with assistance by military groups that were inspired by Wahhabism.

It should be taken into consideration that Mohammed bin Salman was quite right when he was saying that the Islamic revolution in Iran changed the situation in the region by forming a new religious agenda. However, MBS' remarks stating that Saudi Arabia was more open as a society and state, do not sound so valid.

Human rights under Mohammed bin Salman

Returning to Mohammed bin Salman's plans for Saudi Arabia's modernization and reforms, it should be noted that the most important precondition that would inspire confidence toward this process should have been the drastic and radical changes in the domain of human rights, surmounting the climate of fear and terror, and formation of free speech. According to human rights groups, arrests of human rights activists have risen under Mohammed bin Salman.¹⁸ The situation in the Kingdom has grown even worse in terms of free speech. According to media publications Mohammed bin Salman has reportedly created the Tiger Squad (*Firqat al-Nemr*), a team of assassins that act as a death squad, to target Saudi critics inside and outside Saudi Arabia.¹⁹

¹⁸ "Rights groups condemn Saudi arrests as crackdown on dissent," *Reuters*, September 15, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-arrests/rights-groups-condemn-saudi-arrests-as-crackdown-on-dissent-idUSKCN1BQ1RR> (accessed April 3, 2019).

¹⁹ Mustafa Abu Sneineh, "The Saudi death squad MBS uses to silence dissent," *Middle East Eye*, October 22, 2018, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/revealed-saudi-death-squad-mbs-uses-silence-dissent> (accessed April 6, 2019).

In June 2017, three months after becoming crown prince, MBS launched the arrests of several well-known clerics.²⁰ Among them were Sahwa movement²¹ representatives Salman al-Ouda and Awad al-Qarni. There were also opposition activists and journalists among the arrested. Several international human rights organizations have reacted to the domestic policy of Mohammed bin Salman. His biggest and most risky move may yet prove to be his bid to curb the power of the conservative religious establishment.

Sarah Leah Whitson, Executive Director of Middle East and North Africa Division at Human Rights Watch, made a statement noting that Mohammed bin Salman's pledges to uproot extremism are solely a showcase if people continue to be imprisoned. Severe violations of human rights, including not only torture, but also travel bans, terrorism, judicial proceedings, fraudulent schemes, etc., continue as before.²²

It is noteworthy that violence against women, which was already widespread, continues.²³ Human Rights Watch has documented numerous escape attempts by Saudi women over the years. Women face systematic discrimination and are left exposed to domestic violence under the male guardianship system and have few places to turn when they face abuse, leading some women to undertake dangerous escape attempts to flee the country.²⁴

To this day, it has not become clear as to what MBS meant when he was speaking about returning to moderate Islam. It is interesting that Mohammed bin Salman replaced clerics having dissenting voices with younger clerics from his circles so that they will not be able to obstruct the process of those reforms, the boundaries of which have been outlined by the crown prince. His appointments to the clerical establishment, particularly

²⁰“Saudi Arabia. Prominent clerics arrested,” *Human Rights Watch*, September 15, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/15/saudi-arabia-prominent-clerics-arrested> (accessed April 6, 2019).

²¹Sahwa is a Saudi term that refers to all political Islamic movements whose major umbrella is the Muslim Brotherhood. It's a faction of Saudi Qutbism. In Saudi Arabia Sahwa movement has been involved in peaceful political reforms. The representatives of this trend are active on social media and have earned some support amongst the more educated youth. The leader of the new national vision MBS intend to end the chapter of “Sahwa” promising to destroy extremists (accessed April 6, 2019).

²²“Saudi Arabia. Prominent clerics arrested,” *Human Rights Watch*, September 15, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/15/saudi-arabia-prominent-clerics-arrested> (accessed April 4, 2019).

²³“Allow to access to detained women activists,” *Human Rights Watch*, December 6, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/12/06/saudi-arabia-allow-access-detained-women-activists> (accessed April 2, 2019).

²⁴“10 Reasons Why Women Flee,” *Human Rights Watch*, January 30, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/30/saudi-arabia-10-reasons-why-women-flee> (accessed March 30, 2019).

Sheikh Muhammad al-Issa, the new head of the Muslim World League, reflect a relative liberality in the interpretation of Islam.²⁵

In the meantime, human rights defenders continue demanding to review several cruel Shari'a punishments that are envisaged for infringing upon God's rights. There is a public demand in the country to set a minimum age of marriage, prohibit polygamy, dissolve religious police in general, etc.²⁶

A shadow was cast on Mohammed bin Salman's reforms' process by Saudi dissident writer and publicist Jamal Khashoggi's shameful murder in 2018 at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. The Central Intelligence Agency has concluded that the Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, ordered the killing of the journalist, Jamal Khashoggi. The C.I.A. made the assessment based on the crown prince's control of Saudi Arabia, which is such that the killing would not have taken place without his approval.²⁷

In the meantime, the topic is taboo in the Kingdom where restricted speech, climate of terror and fear, and a ban on criticizing the royal family is in effect. According to separate viewpoints, to maintain its international standing, Saudi Arabia should have renounced MBS and the prospect for his becoming King. Madawi al-Rasheed, one of the best-known dissident academics of the Saudi diaspora and who is the author of numerous works on the history of Saudi Arabia, noted that the ruling Saudi elite should find a solution to removing MBS, since some of Ibn Saud's sons, such as Prince Ahmed (who is King Salman's brother), who are eligible to become the successor, are alive.²⁸

The assassination of Khashoggi was a huge blow not only to Riyadh's standing, but also to the crown prince's aspirations to become the King of Saudi Arabia, while he is represented as an architect of reforms in the social and political domains of Saudi Arabia. Madawi al-Rasheed, a Saudi author,

²⁵ John Irish, "Wiping out extremist ideology is my mission: head of Saudi-based Muslim body," *Reuters*, November 24, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saudi-islam/wiping-out-extremist-ideology-is-my-mission-head-of-saudi-based-muslim-body-idUSKBN1DO1JV> accessed (April 5, 2019).

²⁶ "Saudi Arabia advisory body aims to end child marriage, setting minimum age limit of 15, but loopholes remain," *South China Morning Post*, January 11, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/news/world/middle-east/article/2181608/saudi-arabia-advisory-body-aims-end-child-marriage-setting> (accessed April 3, 2019).

²⁷ "C.I.A. Concludes That Saudi Crown prince Ordered Khashoggi Killed," *The New York Times*, November 16, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/16/us/politics/cia-saudi-crown-prince-khashoggi.html> (accessed April 8, 2019).

²⁸ Why King Salman Must Replace M.B.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/18/opinion/saudi-arabia-jamal-khashoggi-crown-prince-murder-king-salman-must-replace-mbs-stability.html> (accessed March 27, 2019).

said that Saudi Arabia should replace its crown prince in order to save its reputation and avoid becoming a pariah state.²⁹

Conclusion

The current human rights situation and solely cosmetic changes in Saudi Arabia show that Mohammed bin Salman's plans are not sincere and they do not inspire confidence, since the tough restrictions on free speech, as well as violence, torture, imprisonments, and travel bans continue in Saudi Arabia. Just like in most recent years, harsh persecutions against female activists who fight for women's rights continue. In many cases, a large number of women human rights defenders, who favor radical transformations in women's rights and in the country's patriarchal society, have found themselves in prison. Paradoxically, several reformist clerics are also in prison.

At the same time, the question of what support Mohammed bin Salman's reforms have in Saudi Arabia within the society and the Wahhabi ulama is of interest. It is a fact that it is virtually impossible to conduct public opinion polls in Saudi Arabia, in connection with the peculiarities of the political system of this state. According to scattered data, there are circles in Saudi society, especially among the youth, who defend the reforms and support Mohammed bin Salman. At any rate, this is how many of them respond to the surveys. I tend to believe that if there were a chance to speak freely and to oppose in Saudi Arabia, the same youth would take to the streets, just like in other Arab countries, and protest against the ruling Saudi family.

Even though the definitions of "moderate" Islam are not so clear, every change is viewed as a retreat from ultra conservatism. It is worth mentioning that radical changes will hardly be made in Saudi Arabia as long as it is still a "God-state" and the ruling royal family governs the country together with the Wahhabi elite, as long as the alliance between the Wahhabism and the Saud family is not dissolved, and while Wahhabism lies at the foundation of state ideology.

Finally, to what extent is the theory that Saudi Arabia was an open and moderate country before the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran true? This theory will not withstand any criticism, since Wahhabism has been an inseparable part of Saudi Arabia's education, ideology, public and political system - an ideology that disputes the truthfulness and orthodoxy of the non-Wahhabi interpretations of Sunni Islam. It can be stated that the Islamic revolution in Iran did not change or cause Islamic extremism in Saudi

²⁹Madawi al-Rasheed, "Why King Salman must replace MBS," *The New York Times*, October 18, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/18/opinion/saudi-arabia-jamal-khashoggi-crown-prince-murder-king-salman-must-replace-mbs-stability.html> (accessed April 1, 2019).

Arabia, but rather it changed the nature of geopolitical processes in the Middle East.

A huge rivalry began between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and Iran and Arab states with a Sunni orientation. Saudi Arabia began to more intensively “export” the Wahhabi trend of Sunni Islam to the outside world, with the objective of defending its own positions in the outside world. The rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia also exposed some tension in inter confessional relations, which have (since 2003) become acute in Iraq, and then, during the “Arab Spring”, they continued in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere. MBS’s regional foreign policy initiatives have not worked out as he had hoped. The *Trump administration’s* unwavering *support* for the Crown Prince despite all this has helped him successfully consolidate power in his own hands in a way that is unprecedented in recent Saudi history.

SMALL STATES BETWEEN GREAT POWERS

MAXIMILIAN OHLE, RICHARD J. COOK,
ZHAOYING HAN & RYSBEK MAMAZHANOV

CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE: WHAT IS BISHKEK'S HEDGING STRATAGEM?

Abstract: The contemporary *topos* of Sino-Russo relations is one of cooperation and *entente*. The alternative view is that Russia and China are now locked in a long-term structural peer rivalry over the Eurasian rim-lands, both offering various net benefits to subordinate states in the area in order to induce them into their respective orders. Traditionally a Kremlin-centric order's stomping ground, this theatre is undergoing a major systemic change as China's Belt and Road Initiative penetrates deeper into the region. Simultaneously, Russia is concerned with maintaining its great power status. It has been essentially re-establishing a sequel political and economic order to fill the void left by the Soviet Union – with the inception of the Commonwealth of Independent States and its related sub-institutions such as the Eurasian Economic Union (economics), as well as the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (security). This situation has left Kyrgyzstan caught in the middle, yet also in a position to seek the best set of net benefits. Taking into consideration David A. Lake's hierarchy formula, this paper will focus on Bishkek's hedging stratagem – searching for the best range of net benefits from both prevalent powers in the region – with regards to their interests and preferences. Additionally, the paper will identify an overlapping dual order arrangement for the region as Russia retains a dominant security position and China provides various economic development projects (BRI), needed by states such as Kyrgyzstan.

Keywords: *Kyrgyzstan, Russia, China, Regional Power Hedging, Hierarchy*

Introduction

Following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the emergence of the Russian Federation, Russia has sought to retain what it sees as its periphery or the 'Russia-plus zone' comprised of various subordinates of the Kremlin-centric Eurasian order.¹ The relationships conform to a hierarchical

¹ Dmitri Trenin, *The End of Eurasia: Russia on the border between Geopolitics and*

order in which Russia has been obliged to re-bargain social contracts with the post-Soviet satellite states in order to maintain its authority.² Despite a certain degree of Russian leverage over the Central Asian Republics, the aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the simultaneous rise of China has caused a geopolitical shift in the region, resulting in the question whether China is currently challenging Russia in its traditional stomping ground. The initial synopsis hints at a potential clash of hierarchies, in which the Kremlin-centric order is being undermined by a new rival Chinese political order, which can provide a better range of net benefits to the various actors in the region, primarily based on economic development assistance under the 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI).³ Although China's substantial economic power is driving its potential as a geopolitical contender, it arguably lacks both security deployment capability and willingness, as Russia retains a degree of security leadership in the region.⁴ Considering these assumptions, it appears that various Central Asian republics are seeking Chinese engagement whilst simultaneously incurring the outcome of regional power hedging between Moscow and Beijing, in order to address politically volatile instabilities i.e. ethnic separatism, transnational terrorism and economic underdevelopment.⁵

Concordantly, Russia and China's advances for the dominant position in Central Asia necessitate deliberation. Russia has traditionally put emphasis on political supremacy - in other words, domination - over its subordinates, being committed to, as Gvosdev puts it, "reconstituting a Russian-led Eurasian zone" by incorporating the latter and compelling it to acknowledge Moscow's authority.⁶ This has been evident throughout the historical scope of the Grand Duchy of Muscovy, the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Historically, the Chinese Empire, by contrast, had orchestrated a tributary system that upheld China as a regional hegemon and afforded a defensive insulation mechanism to the core imperial territory, further providing a regional conflict management apparatus and expanding

Globalization (Moscow: Carnegie Moscow Center, 2002), 110.

² David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in international Relations* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009), 44.

³ Stephen Blank, "Russia's Failure in Asia", UNISCI Discussion Papers No. 24 (October 2010).

⁴ Dmitri Trenin, *Post-Imperium: Evraziyskaya Istoriya [Post-Imperium: A Eurasian History]* (Moscow: Carnegie Center, 2012), 15; Dmitri Trenin, *Mir Bezuslovniy: Evro-Atlantika XXI. Veka kak soobshchestvo bezopasnosti [Unconditional Peace: The 21st Century Euro-Atlantic as Security Community]* (Moscow: Carnegie Center, 2013), 223.

⁵ Alexander Korolev, "Systemic Balancing and Regional Hedging: China-Russia Relations", *The Chinese Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (2016): 376-384, 391.

⁶ Nikolas Gvosdev, "The Sources of Russian Conduct", *The National Interest*, No. 75 (Spring 2004), 29-38, here 34. & Dmitri Trenin, "Russia Reborn: Reimagining Moscow's Foreign Policy", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88, No. 6 (November/December 2009): 64-78.

inter-state cooperation.⁷ Nevertheless, as Chinese imperial power declined, many outer-rim tributaries were left unchecked and fell under the Kremlin-centric orders. Recognising the historical trends and developing contemporary dynamics, Central Asia constitutes a suitable issue-specific domain in which to perform an analysis, as several small states appear to be caught in the middle of this geopolitical contest. As Kyrgyzstan occupies a strategic position in the Eurasian heartland, located on the border of China and being a passageway or transit actor between the two geopolitical contenders, it has been selected for this case study, namely for security and economic considerations. This paper will pose the following questions: is China able to expand its hierarchical relations by negotiating a specific type of social contract with Kyrgyzstan? What are the potential benefits provided by China and do they exceed those offered by Russia? Finally, why and to what extent is Kyrgyzstan, from a subordinate's perspective, incurring regional hedging, recognising the geopolitical rivalry and the presumable "intervention" of China into Russia's conventional sphere of influence and attempting to incorporate Kyrgyzstan into its hierarchy by expanding its economic and security commitments? This investigation also aims to contribute to works that are attempting to determine how China's hierarchical order is being shaped and scrutinizes a developing epistemic community centred on hierarchical research.

As for the centripetal bargaining interaction of the Central Asian republics, in this case, Kyrgyzstan, vis-à-vis the dominant cores in Moscow and Beijing, David A. Lake's conception of social contracting dynamics is applied. It specifically illustrates how subordinates confer a certain degree of authority upon the dominant enshrined in a social contract that has to be constantly renegotiated.⁸ Kyrgyzstan is currently weighing whether to maintain its traditionally firm links with Russia or aligning itself with China, whilst inducing regional power hedging by seeking the best set of net benefits in the security and economic domains. In this context, Bishkek's engagement with the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) (security) as well as the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the BRI (economics) is critically reflected. Taking into account its institutional commitments, specific social contracting dynamics can be identified that legitimise the respective dominant's legitimacy to generate political order.

"Anarchy" and "Hierarchy" as sui generis Hegemonic Order Categories and Kyrgyzstan's Alignment Predicament

The conceptual dichotomy between anarchy and hierarchy has long

⁷ Yongjin Zhang and Barry Buzan, "The Tributary System as International Society in Theory and Practice", *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 5, (2012): 8-9.

⁸ Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, 44.

subsisted in international relations, but nevertheless has recently gained prominence as a significant alternative to the dominance of formal legal sovereignty approaches and international relations centring on a “culture of anarchy”.⁹ In this sense, anarchy and hierarchy operate as opposite poles, with varying gradients of authority: anarchy <-> loose hierarchy <-> tight hierarchy.¹⁰ Hierarchical relations are primarily created to generate a political or economic order by having conferred authority upon the dominant state, which is recognised by the approving subordinate(s). These hierarchical (H) bargains can be conducted as dominant (D) to subordinate(s) (S^1/S^n), i.e. $H^1=D^1(S^1+S^n)$. Under these conditions, actors *per se* are not conceived as equal entities in the international system as Jonathan Renshon argues, “the fundamental ordering principle of international relations is hierarchy, not equality”.¹¹ David A. Lake, in conjunction with several like-minded scholars, acknowledges that states engage in hierarchical settlements and conventions, which establish a dominant to provide political order in exchange for the conferment of authority recognised by subordinates. The latter, by complying with the rules set out by the dominant, will legitimise the arrangement, nevertheless consistently seeking to gain the best set of net benefits without offsetting the political order, as long as the order conforms to their interests, incentives and preferences.¹² In

⁹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948); John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. & Norton, 2001); Victor Cha and David C. Kang, *Nuclear North Korea. A Debate on Engagement Strategies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 169-170; John M. Hobson, “The Twin Self-Delusions of IR: Why ‘Hierarchy’ and Not ‘Anarchy’ is the Core Concept of IR”, *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (2014): 557-575; David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009); Edward Keene, “A Case Study of the Construct of International Hierarchy: British Treaty-Making Against the Slave Trade in the Early Nineteenth Century”, *International Organization*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (2007): 311-339.

¹⁰ Joseph M. Parent and Emily Erikson, “Anarchy, Hierarchy and Order”, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (March 2009): 136-137.

¹¹ Jonathan Renshon, *Fighting for Status: Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 1.

¹² Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, chapters 1-3; William Clapton, “Risk and Hierarchy in International Society”, *Global Change, Peace & Security*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (February 2009): 19-35, here 26. Here, the discussion follows Ayşe Zarakol ed., *Hierarchies in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Brandon K. Yober, “Hedging for Better Bets: Power Shifts, Credible Signals, and Preventive Conflict”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (2018): 1-27; David C. Kang, “Hierarchy, Balancing, and Empirical Puzzles in Asian International Relations”, *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 3, (Winter 2003/2004): 165-180.; John M. Hobson and J. C. Sharman, “The Enduring Place of Hierarchy in World Politics: Tracing the Social Logics of Hierarchy and Political Change”, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 11, No. 1, (2005): 63-98.; Evelyn Goh, *The Struggle for Order: Hegemony, Hierarchy and Transition in Post Cold War East Asia*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); John M. Hobson, “The Twin Self-Delusions of IR: Why ‘Hierarchy’ and not ‘Anarchy’ is the Core Concept of IR”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3, (2014): 557-575.

this instance, the subordinate views the political order as valuable and a better alternative to the conditions of self-help. If interests, incentives and preferences de-align or disequilibrium occurs between the dominant and the subordinate, the political order may break down, as the subordinate moves to help itself, defects to a differing political order, or by the dominant ejecting the subordinate.

Inherently, authority, here principally rationalised as “rightful rule”, requires the maintenance of political order via the dominant’s ability to enforce rules, if necessary by coercion.¹³ This pattern shadows Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan* i.e. the dominant, as recognised as the supreme authority by the subordinates that have relinquished their “rights”, in order to escape from the state of nature.¹⁴ Robert Dahl attempts to operationalise this process as “the ability of A to get B to do something he would otherwise not do”, therefore implying that a dominant would be able to assert legitimate leverage through a social contract.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the subordinate would retain the ability to conduct various actions, as the dominants’ authority is never absolute, invalidating the notion that sovereignty is indivisible.¹⁶ As such, this intra-hierarchical arrangement operates through the transfer of varying degrees of the subordinate’s authority to the dominant. The more authority bestowed, the tighter the hierarchy i.e. the greater the influence of the dominant possesses over the subordinate’s policies. Nonetheless, a dominant must not overstep its authority, and in turn, allow the subordinate to undertake certain duties under the framework of the political order to reinforce its rational functionality and dilute the notion of an overpowering hegemon. The aesthetics of the hierarchical bargain must mutually conform to both the dominant and subordinates interests, incentives and preferences, which in turn reinforce the performance, procedural and principles of the political order. This delivers incentives for better net benefits and mutually strengthens the hierarchical order, as the social contract remains active, deterring anarchical relations.¹⁷

¹³ Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, 8; David A. Lake, “Escape from the State of Nature: Authority and Hierarchy in World Politics”, *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Summer 2007): 47-79, here 50; David A. Lake, “Hobbesian Hierarchy: The Political Economy of Political Organization”, *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 12 (2009): 264.

¹⁴ Thomas Hobbes, Richard Tuck eds., *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), chapters 13 and 17.

¹⁵ Robert A. Dahl, “The Concept of Power”, *Behavioral Science*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (July 1957): 201-215, here 202. A similar observation has been made by Richard E. Flathman, stating “If A has the authority X, those persons who are under A’s jurisdiction therefore have an obligation or obligations Y”; Richard E. Flathman, *The Practice of Political Authority: Authority and the Authoritative* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), 35 and chapter 5.

¹⁶ Alexander Cooley and Hendrik Spruykt, *Contracting States: Sovereign Transfers in International Relations* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009).

¹⁷ Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*, 8-16.

As the investigation has stated, Russia and China have emerged as two distinctive contenders for the dominant position over Central Asia, both with contrasting designs of political order. The re-emergence of Russia has specifically focused on its geographical periphery, tasked with reviving as much influence over the former Soviet territories. This constitutes large scale geopolitical re-structuring for what has been dubbed the 'Russia-plus' apparatus, insinuating the re-emergence of a Kremlin-centric order insulated by subordinate buffer states under a tight or significantly dominant security arrangement with overlapping economic dependency, largely fuelled by cognitive insecurity of buffer failure in the Second World War.¹⁸ Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has been striving to regain its global power status, legitimising this post-Cold War grand strategy by putting forth its "privileged interests". In this context, Dmitri Trenin observes that Russia has reiterated its engagement strategies with the "near abroad" and claims geopolitical supremacy. The Kremlin clearly emphasises its leading role in regional institution-making and military presence, despite a significant dearth of power capabilities.¹⁹ Taken as a paradigm, it can be suggested that a Kremlin-centric hegemony desires a high degree of authority over subordinates in matters of security and economy.²⁰ China, on the other hand, was historically focused on establishing tributary relations as a radial hierarchical order, thereby establishing insulator states that protect the inner core of the empire, as outlined by Zhang Yongjin and Barry Buzan.²¹

¹⁸ Dmitri Trenin, *The End of Eurasia*, 109-110; Raymond Pearson, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998), chapters 1, 6 and 7.

¹⁹ Dmitri Trenin, "Russia's Spheres of Interest, Not Influence", *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (October 2009): 3-22.

²⁰ Nikolas Gvosdev, "The Sources of Russian Conduct", 34; Dmitri Trenin, *Post-Imperium*, 15; Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Premature Partnership", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (March/April 1994): 67-82, here 80; Dmitri Trenin, "Russia Reborn: Reimagining Moscow's Foreign Policy", 64-78; Robert Donaldson, Joseph L. Noguee and Vidya Nadkarni, *The Foreign Policy of Russia. Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*, 5th Edition (New York and London: Routledge, 2015); Bobo Lo, *Russia and the New World Disorder* (London: Chatham House, 2015); Hanna Smith, "Statecraft and Post-Imperial Attractiveness: Eurasian Integration and Russia as Great Power", *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (2016): 171-182; Inessa Baban, "The Transnistrian Conflict in the Context of the Ukrainian Crisis", *NATO Defence College (Research Paper No. 122, December 2015)*: 1-12; Nataliya I. Kharitonova, "Pridnestrovskie Stsenarii: Perspektivy rasresheniya pridnestrovskogo konflikta [Pridnestrovian Scenarios: Perspectives on Resolving the Pridnestrovian Conflict]", *Problemy Natsional'noy Strategii*, No. 5 (2015): 147-167, here 152; Andre W. M. Gerrits and Max Bader, "Russian Patronage over Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Implications for Conflict Resolution", *East European Politics*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2016): 297-313; John Berryman, "Russian Grand Strategy and the Ukraine Crisis: A Historical Cut", in *Power, Politics and Confrontation in Eurasia. Foreign Policy in a Contested Region* eds. Roger Kanet and Michael Sussex (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 186-209; Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk, *Ukraine between the EU and Russia: The Integration Challenge* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

²¹ Yongjin and Buzan, "The Tributary System as International Society in Theory and Practice", 24.

Recalling the ancient Silk Road spirit, China is seemingly attempting to re-establish a form of radial regional hierarchy – Central Asia being a focus – through the use of economically orientated bargains, primarily based on energy security.²² This signals a fundamental shift from its decades-old “keeping a low profile” stance, to a “regional power with global ambitions” and furthered by the desire to “take initiatives to shape its environment in a favourable direction”.²³ Considering these developments, David A. Lake argues that China has been seeking to legitimise its power capabilities to expand its influence along and beyond its borders, including Central Asia, demonstrating its dedication to retaining a regional hegemonic position.²⁴

The age-old “Great Game”, originally referred to the Russo-British geopolitical rivalry, has long dominated notions of great power competition between various regional hegemonies in the Eurasian heartlands, driven by the geopolitical expansion of influence in this region. As stated by Alexander Cooley, “Central Asia has been viewed as an arena of high-stakes geopolitical sparring, while its location at the crossroads of multiple empires has subjected it to a rich array of pressures, influences, and cultures”.²⁵ A “Contemporary Great Game” nevertheless has different ramifications. As Russia views itself as a legitimate successor to the dominant Eurasian position, traditional IR thought would consider China, with its briskly expanding relative capabilities and its encroaching BRI programs as a significant opposition.²⁶ Here, typical patterns of power shift generally fall around either (1) rivalry, often illustrated as a Thucydides Trap or (2) peaceful change, both potentially inferring at a clash of hierarchies. However, due to the Sino-Russian *entente*, there is the insinuation that (3) economic zonal cooperation is also a major theme surrounding the

²² Alessandro Arduino, *China’s Private Army. Protecting the Silk Road* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 69-72, 76.

²³ Yan Xuetong, “From Keeping a Low Profile to Striving for Achievement”, *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (April 2014): 153-184. As for Chinese assertiveness, see Alastair Iain Johnston, “Is China a Status Quo Power?”, *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (2003), 5-56; Thomas J. Christensen, “The Advantages of an Assertive China”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, Issue 2 (March/April 2011); Andrew Scobell and Scott W. Harold, “An Assertive China? Insights from Interviews”, *Asian Security*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2013): 111-131; Alastair Iain Johnston, “How New and Assertive is China’s New Assertiveness?”, *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (2013), 7-48; Aaron L. Friedberg, “The Sources of Chinese Conduct: Explaining Beijing’s Assertiveness”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (2015): 133-150; Oriana Skylar Mastro, “Why Chinese Assertiveness is Here to Stay”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Winter 2015): 151-170; Björn Jerdén, “The Assertive China Narrative: Why It is Wrong and How so Many Still Bought into It”, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2014): 47-88.

²⁴ David A. Lake, “Domination, Authority, and the Forms of Chinese Power”, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Winter 2017): 357-382.

²⁵ Alexander Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules. The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3-4.

²⁶ A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), 10; Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 186-210.

“Contemporary Great Game”. The latter suggests an overlapping of hierarchies, potentially a dual collaboration of regional management as each dominant assumes various responsibilities and respective projects hemmed to one another.²⁷ As both share a conditioned rivalry with the West, in particular, the United States of America (USA), the Sino-Russian *entente* forms the basis of a global balance against US hegemony, a far greater priority than the “Contemporary Great Game”.²⁸

Despite the prospects of rivalry, peaceful change or gradients of cooperation, Russia and China are competing for regional influence, denoting a range of hedging dynamics for the subordinates of Central Asia with substantial bargaining potential. Subordinates are seeking various political/security and economic incentives due to the “three evils” of ethnic separatism, religious extremism and terrorism and their dependency on the export of respective natural resources further aggravated by their landlocked geographical location.²⁹ Therefore, numerous hierarchical apparatuses have been established, in order to enhance the bargaining dynamics in both dominant-subordinate and dominant-dominant interactions, namely the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in the security domain or respectively the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the BRI that conform to economic institutionalisation.³⁰ The subordinates are expected to bandwagon from a

²⁷ Li Yongquan, “The Greater Eurasian Partnership and the Belt and Road Initiative: Can the Two be Linked?”, *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2018): 94-99.

²⁸ Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell and Norman M. Ripsman, “Is Peaceful Change in World Politics Always Desirable? A Neoclassical Perspective”, *International Studies Review*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (June 2018): 283-291; Alexander Korolev, “Systemic Balancing and Regional Hedging: China-Russia Relations”, 375-397; Robert Ferdinand, “China and Russia: Converging Responses to Globalization”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 4 (2007): 655-680; Bobo Lo, *Axis of Convenience. Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics* (London: Chatham House, 2008); Robert Sutter, “China-Russia Relations. Strategic Implications and U.S. Policy Options”, National Bureau of Asian Research, NBR Special Report No. 73 (September 2018); Vidya Nadkarni, *Strategic Partnerships in Asia. Balancing without Alliances* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 53.

²⁹ Zhao Huasheng, “Central Asia in Chinese Strategic Thinking”, in Thomas Fingar, *The New Great Game. China and South and Central Asia in the Era of Reform* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 171-189, here 173.

³⁰ Yevgeniya V. Klevakina, “Organizatsiya Dogovora o kolektivnoy bezopasnosti v kontekste national'nykh interesov stran-uchastnits [The Collective Security Treaty Organisation in the Context of National Interests of Its Participants]”, *Vestnik mezhdunarodnykh organizatsii*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (2013): 111-129; Charles E. Ziegler, “Central Asia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and American Foreign Policy From Indifference to Engagement”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (May/June 2013): 484-505; Stephen Aris, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: 'Tackling the Three Evils'. A Response to Non-Traditional Security Challenges or Anti-Western Bloc?”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (May 2009): 457-482; Roy Allison, “Protective Integration and Security Policy Coordination: Comparing the SCO and the CSTO”, *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Autumn 2018): 297-338; Ekaterina Entina, “Russia's Return to the International Arena: How the Eurasian Economic Union Should Be

dominant's apparatus after signaling a commitment to the bargain.³¹ The signal marks the initial assentation and/or periodically reinforces the social contract.

Due to Kyrgyzstan's traditional conformity to Russian domination, the arrival of China's push into the region with their own hierarchical package has installed an ability to delicately hedge, specifically aiming to acquire better economic benefits. However, Bishkek is aware that shifting or defecting from one dominant to another 'totally', may destabilise its position with the Moscow, something that may result in punishment, which Moscow has periodically carried out. Furthermore, maintaining alignment with Russia in both the CSTO and EAEU aids the balance of hierarchy and allows Bishkek to become a key land-linking actor.³² Despite the hedging opportunities, Kyrgyzstan, as the most democratic state in the region, remains apprehensive towards the autocratic features of both Eurasian giants. Memories of the territorial settlements with China and the Tulip Revolution are fresh and recent notions of debt trap diplomacy under the BRI are a cause for concern.³³

The Orchestration of a Hierarchical Dual-Architecture

The Security Domain: The CSTO and the SCO

Estimated?", *Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (2014): 536-544; Houman D. Sadri, "Eurasian Economic Union (EEU): Good Idea or A Russian Takeover?", *Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali*, Vol. 81, No. 4 (2014): 553-561; Biliang Hu, Qingjie Liu and Jiao Yan, "Promoting the Belt and Road Initiative by Strengthening the '5+1' Cooperation", in *China's New Sources of Economic Growth. Human Capital, Innovation and Technological Change* eds. Ligang Song, Ross Garnaut, Cai Fang and Lauren Johnston (Canberra: ANU Press, 2017) 409-429; Maximilian Mayer ed., *Rethinking the Silk Road. China's Belt and Road Initiative and Emerging Eurasian Relations* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

³¹ Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In", *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1994): 72-107; Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 106; Jessica Weeks, "Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Types and Signaling Resolve", *International Organization*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Winter 2008): 35-64; James D. Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests. Tying Hands versus Sinking Costs", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (February 1997): 68-90; Thierry Balzacq and Robert Jervis, "Logics of Mind and International System: A Journey with Robert Jervis", *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (October 2004): 559-582; Robert Jervis, "Signaling and Perception: Drawing Inferences and Projecting Images", in *Political Psychology* ed. Kristen Renwick Monroe (Erlbaum, Mahwah and London, 2002), 293-312.

³² Zhenis Kembayev, "Implementing the Silk Road and the Economic Belt. From the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to the Silk Road Union?", *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (September 2018): 36-50.

³³ Sebastian Peyrouse, "China and Central Asia", in *The New Great Game. China and South and Central Asia in the Era of Reform* ed. Thomas Fingar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 216-239; Sam Parker and Gabrielle Chefitz, "China's Debtbook Diplomacy: How China is Turning Bad Loans into Strategic Investments", *The Diplomat*, May 30, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/chinas-debtbook-diplomacy-how-china-is-turning-bad-loans-into-strategic-investments/> (accessed 17 December 2018).

Following the post-Soviet *smuta* [time of troubles] and the collapse of the Soviet Union as the dominant Eurasian hegemon in 1991, a geopolitical power void emerged, contributing to various security challenges in Central Asia that consequently became a highly volatile region. These conditions have been primarily constituted by transnational organised crime, divisive clan politics and – most substantially – the so-called “three evils”. Kyrgyzstan, along with the other Central Asian republics, recognised the necessity to re-establish a political order, embracing bargaining interactions with dominants amidst the domestic struggles for power and the quest to find its place in the international system.³⁴ Bishkek has traditionally formulated multidirectional foreign policy, seeking comprehensive engagement with potential dominants (i.e. Russia, China, the West) as a post-independence grand strategy, in order to obtain substantial security and economic bargains.³⁵ Facing inter-ethnic tensions in the domestic dimension, as well as on-going threats stemming from the war in Afghanistan since the USA launched its War on Terror, Kyrgyzstan has reiterated its signals of security commitment to containing the subversive forces in Central Asia. In particular, it is committed to the enhancement of regional institution-making, primarily (1) the CSTO and (2) the SCO.

(1) In order to combat the aforementioned threats in the post-Soviet space appropriately, the Collective Security Treaty was signed in 1992 as the basis for comprehensive military engagement, which was further enhanced by the creation of the CSTO in 2002.³⁶ Within the framework of the CSTO, Russia is recognised as the prime force concerning its formidable military capabilities, compared to the other members. The inception of the CSTO can hence be regarded as a “social contract”. Since Russia provides sufficient military armament and equipment and displays its significant deployability by increasing the number of military bases in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, it does simultaneously contribute to the generation of a regional security order. Due to the establishment of a permanent consultation platform, the member states are, in turn, able to renegotiate the bargains corresponding to their respective security preferences and interests with Russia.³⁷

Kyrgyzstan's commitment is, thereby, of particular significance for

³⁴ P. Stobdan, *Central Asia. Democracy, Instability and Strategic Game in Kyrgyzstan* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2014), 105-106.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁶ CSTO, “Dogovor o kolektivnoy bezopasnosti ot 15 maya 1992 goda [Treaty of Collective Security of May 15th 1992]”, online available at <http://odkb-csto.org/documents/> (accessed June 23 2018); CSTO, “Ustav Organizatsii Dogovora o kolektivnoy bezopasnosti ot 23 oktyabrya 2002 goda [Charter of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation of October 23rd 2002]”, online available at <http://odkb-csto.org/documents/> (accessed June 23 2018).

³⁷ Vladimir M. Zakharov, “Sostoyanie i perspektivy razvitiya Organizatsii Dogovora o kolektivnoy bezopasnosti [Status and Perspectives of the Development of the Collective Security Treaty Organisation]”, *Problemy national'noy strategii*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2012): 84-97.

regional security developments, as the Tulip Revolution in 2005, one of the so-called Colour Revolutions, caused the ousting of the pro-Russian Akayev regime as the consequence of election rigging, necessitating the restoration of political order. As opposed to the Colour Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, there was essentially no anti-Russian sentiment, enabling Moscow to mediate between the conflicting actors. In the aftermath, Akayev was granted asylum in Russia, whilst Bakiyev took over governmental responsibilities.³⁸ In April 2010, however, the Bakiyev administration was similarly overthrown, contributing to subsequent ethnic clashes between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks that revealed the need for governmental consolidation.³⁹ Thereupon, the CSTO has recognised that the Colour Revolutions and similar events constitute a substantial threat to the post-Soviet regional order in Central Asia. It was estimated that such events might have spilled over, amplifying the detrimental impact on regime legitimacy. Subsequently, Russia had mobilised its subordinates to suppress any uprisings aimed at disturbing the political order provided. It was assumed that the West was allegedly supporting such movements, so that the military bases established by the West in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan had to be shut down in July 2005 following the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan and the Andijon Massacre in Uzbekistan.⁴⁰

Analogously, Bishkek is keenly aware of Russia's tremendous commitment to regional security and the preservation of Eurasian authoritarianism, acknowledging the authority conferred upon the Kremlin to resolve relevant security challenges within the framework of the CSTO.⁴¹ Expounding upon this, distinct characteristics of dominant-subordinate bargaining are identifiable. In exchange for granting the Kremlin the ability to establish military bases and despatch Russian troops on its soil, Kyrgyzstan receives an annual financial dividend and military equipment as compensation, which has been subject to renegotiation within either bilateral or multilateral-institutional contexts.⁴²

Ergo, the CSTO functions as a foreign policy instrument of the Kremlin to reassert its leverage over post-Soviet subordinates, leading to a

³⁸ Stobdan, *Central Asia. Democracy, Instability and Strategic Game in Kyrgyzstan*, 2-7.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 9, 20.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴¹ Alexander Lukin, "What the Kremlin is Thinking: Putin's Vision for Eurasia", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 4 (July/August 2014): 85-93, here 91; Alexandros Petersen and Katinka Barysch, "Russia, China, and the Geopolitics of Energy in Central Asia", *Centre for European Reform* (2011), 34; Andrew Monaghan, "'An Enemy at the Gates' or 'From Victory to Victory': Russian Foreign Policy", *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1944-)*, Vol. 84, No. 4 (July 2008): 717-733, here 719, 727; Lilia Shevtsova, "Post-Communist Russia: A Historical Opportunity Missed", *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, Vol. 83, No. 5 (September 2007), 891-912, here 900; Joseph Cheng, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: China's Initiative in Regional Institution Building", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (November 2011): 632-656.

⁴² Stobdan, *Central Asia. Democracy, Instability and Strategic Game in Kyrgyzstan*, 148, 175.

substantial security dependency on Moscow. This has become evident in view of (a) information-sharing platforms and joint military exercises that have enabled the Kremlin to identify regional vulnerabilities vis-à-vis its subordinates to make them more docile; (b) the establishment of military bases to conduct clandestine operations, sabotage actions and hybrid tactics, as well as (c) the potential to launch cyber attacks and information warfare in case of dominant-subordinate discord.⁴³

(2) Running parallel, the SCO, founded in 2001, is committed to expanding military cooperation, despite the fact that it also involves cultural activities and economic coordination. Similar to the CSTO, it aims to resolve regional security issues that require the harmonisation of common security preferences and interests within a multilateral institutional framework under the informal leadership of Russia and China as regional dominants.⁴⁴ In terms of solidifying regional security order, which has been severely threatened by the “three evils”, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) was adopted in 2002. This measure involves the encouragement of information sharing, provisions of advice and proposals on combatting terrorist forces, training of personnel, the maintenance of contacts with other international organisations related to containing terrorism, as well as conducting joint actions. However, it has to be emphasised that the SCO does not function as a military alliance.⁴⁵

Recognising these implications, China and Russia, as dominant states, have been concerned about the volatile frontiers in Central Asia, especially in Kyrgyzstan due to the highly unstable political environment following the Tulip Revolution stemming from ethnic clashes and terrorist threats. Particularly Beijing has reiterated and increased its bilateral ties with Bishkek by enhancing the latter's military capabilities within the cooperative framework of the SCO. This primarily involved the modernisation of Kyrgyzstan's intelligence service and armed forces as well as numerous bi- and multilateral military exercises. China considers this engagement vital for

⁴³ Arman Kaliyev, “Why is Russia Building up Its Military Presence in Central Asia”, *Caravanserai*, May 11, 2018, http://central.asia-news.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_ca/features/2018/05/11/feature-01, (accessed June 23, 2018).

⁴⁴ Stephen Aris, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: 'Tackling the Three Evils'. A Response to Non-Traditional Security Challenges or Anti-Western Bloc?”, 460-461; Susan Turner, “Russia, China, and the Multipolar World Order: The Danger in the Undefined”, *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (2009): 159-184, here 174-176; Charles E. Ziegler, “Central Asia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and American Foreign Policy From Indifference to Engagement”, 497; Peter Ferdinand, “Sino-Russian Relations: An Analytical Overview”, in *Russia-China Relations: Current Stage, Alternative Futures, and Implications for the West*, Finnish Institute of International Affairs Report, Arkady Moshes and Matti Nojonen, No. 30 (Helsinki, September 2011): 22-37, here 27.

⁴⁵ Marc Lanteigne, “In Medias Res: The Development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as Security Community”, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (2006/2007): 605-622, here 606-609, 615; Zhao Huasheng, “China's View of and Expectations from the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (2013): 436-460, here 440.

its national security due to Kyrgyzstan's proximity to Xinjiang, as Uyghur separatists are able to cross the porous Kyrgyz-Chinese border to evade prosecution. Increasing intelligence cooperation would contribute to a more comprehensive containment of subversive forces, undermining the regime legitimacy of SCO member states. Kyrgyzstan in this context is a vulnerable spot, prompting China to legitimise its leverage over Bishkek by enhancing the bilateral security cooperation in exchange for "reciprocally beneficial" economic prospects. In a broader dimension, Kyrgyzstan functions as China's outpost to restrain the activities of its geopolitical rivals, primarily the USA and India, as well as Russia in a regional dimension. Accordingly, China may be regarded as one of the protective forces of the political order in Central Asia, along with Russia, despite the fact that Kyrgyzstan puts more emphasis on its commitments within the framework of the CSTO, as it provides the scope of more comprehensive military engagement.⁴⁶

Therefore, the SCO has emerged as a checks-and-balances theatre for Moscow and Beijing in the security domain, leading to particular hedging dynamics in the Eurasian rimlands. Russia is commonly recognised by the Central Asian republics, including Kyrgyzstan, as the prime protective force of the regional security order because its security commitments exceed those of Beijing. As both Beijing and Moscow are competing for geopolitical influence, Kyrgyzstan is weighing up the respective incentives that correspond to its multidirectional foreign policy and its balancing moves between the two regional hegemon. Despite the institutional limitations of both the SCO and the CSTO, sufficient scope is given to constitute a "social contract", involving the establishment of respective platforms for renegotiations of the bargains in the security domain.

The Economic Domain: The EAEU and the BRI

Inextricably intertwined with security aspects, the economic development of Kyrgyzstan has been of particular interest for both Russia and China. In contrast to the other Central Asian republics, Kyrgyzstan's pursuit to overcome the economic and political transition involved the establishment of liberal democracy and a comparatively well-functioning market economy, albeit the Akayev administration failed to sustain the reform ambitions.⁴⁷ Subsequently, the political instabilities, the high unemployment, the obsolete technologies as well as nepotism and rampant corruption reveal an essential need for economic order and development, specifically considering the aftermath of the Tulip Revolution and the second governmental overthrow five years later. These conditions

⁴⁶ Stobdan, *Central Asia. Democracy, Instability and Strategic Game in Kyrgyzstan*, 65, 184, 192-194.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, xiv-x.

contributed to a dearth of foreign investments, despite Kyrgyzstan's considerable hydropower resources and its location in the heartland of Central Asia.⁴⁸ Recognising the necessity to enhance its land-linkedness, in order to generate economic development, Bishkek is committed to regional cooperative frameworks – namely (1) the EAEU initiated by Russia, as well as (2) the BRI launched by China.

(1) In 1994, Nursultan Nazarbayev, former President of Kazakhstan, emphasised the significance of Eurasian integration for the post-Soviet republics, commencing subordinate bargaining interaction with Russia as dominant.⁴⁹ The latter has since then been engaged in shaping the regional institution-making within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States by establishing numerous sub-organisations. This involved the foundation of the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) and the finalisation of the Customs Union between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan in 2010, in order to ensure the harmonisation of economic interests and policy coordination. Stressing the importance of embracing multilateral cooperation and diversifying trade exchanges from a resource-based to an innovation-based economy, Moscow, Minsk and Astana signed the Declaration on Eurasian Economic Integration to initiate the Common Economic Space (CES) 2012. The signatories aimed to provide unified legislation, free movement of goods, services, capital and labour, subsidies for industry and agriculture, transport, power engineering, tariffs of the natural monopolies, as well as several privileges for entrepreneurs (such as free access to the common market, free and independent choice of registration within the CES and the sale of their products in any CES member state). The Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) has been set up as a supranational organ in this context to regulate the economic relations within the CES. Thereupon, the treaty on the creation of the EAEU was signed, having emerged from the hitherto existing EurAsEC. Acknowledging the potential economic benefits, Armenia's and Kyrgyzstan's accessions were approved in 2014 and 2015 respectively by insinuating their interests and preferences in bargaining processes with Russia and its subordinates that have already been recognised as member states.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Bishkek was aware that not joining was not an option, as economic isolation was widely feared.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, xv-xvi

⁴⁹ Mikhail Alexandrov, *Uneasy Alliance: Relations Between Russia and Kazakhstan in the Post-Soviet Era, 1992-1997* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 1999): 229.

⁵⁰ Tigran Sargsyan, "Eurasian Economic Integration: Facts and Figures", Eurasian Economic Commission, 2016, [http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/Documents/Брошюра%20Цифры%20и%20факты%20ит%20\(Англ\).pdf](http://www.eurasiancommission.org/ru/Documents/Брошюра%20Цифры%20и%20факты%20ит%20(Англ).pdf) (accessed June 23 2018), 3-30; Sadri, "Eurasian Economic Union (EEU): Good Idea or A Russian Takeover?", 553-561; Stobdan, *Central Asia. Democracy, Instability and Strategic Game in Kyrgyzstan*, 142-147; Entina, "Russia's Return to the International Arena: How the Eurasian Economic Union Should Be Estimated?", 536-544.

It is discernible that Russia has been maintaining its prevailing role by exploiting the economic dependencies of its subordinates since the inception of the institutional frameworks, especially in terms of the trade volume in bilateral economic exchanges.⁵¹ Despite notable domestic economic difficulties, Russia is preoccupied with its role as economic hegemon, as it is able to provide more appreciable financial contributions to the EAEU, which manifests its significant influence in the decision-making processes. Its preponderant role is implied by the fact that the EEC is located in Moscow, so that Russia determines the settings of the contractual arrangements with other relevant international actors and third countries.⁵²

With regard to revolution-stricken Kyrgyzstan, Russia has been able to provide tangible enticements by promising economic development as an engine for political order in exchange for Bishkek's commitment to the EAEU.⁵³ In this context, the founding treaties of the Eurasian economic institutionalisation projects can be regarded as a social contract. As Kyrgyzstan confers a certain degree of authority upon the supranational institutions that to some extent serve Russia's interests, they are given approval to enact policies to generate economic development. Due to Russia's prevailing role, Kyrgyzstan has been *de facto* compelled to contribute, in order to obtain certain benefits amidst the slump of its economy. Nevertheless, the EAEU should not be overestimated, as the economic integration is still in its initial stage, pressuring Bishkek to seek further diversification of capital influx and markets.⁵⁴

(2) The BRI under the auspices of China is a distinct alternative to the institutionalisation framework, having been launched and substantially shaped by Russia. Due to China's insufficient oil, gas and other natural resources that are vital to satiate the domestic market, Beijing is striving to develop the diversification of its trade routes and energy efficiency.⁵⁵ This is amplified by its dependency on the Strait of Malacca and the corresponding geopolitical vulnerabilities, as its geopolitical rivals may suffocate the

⁵¹ For instance, the trade volume between Russia and Kazakhstan was estimated USD 7,930.2 million in the first half of 2015, whereas the trade volume between the latter and Belarus barely reached USD 302.1 million in the same period. Tigran Sargsyan, "Eurasian Economic Integration: Facts and Figures", 14.

⁵² Rilka Dragneva and Kataryna Wolczuk, "The EAEU: Deals, Rules, and the Exercise of Power", Chatham House, May 2017, <http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2017-05-02-eurasian-economic-union-dragneva-wolczuk.pdf>, (accessed June 23, 2018), 2, 13-17.

⁵³ Stobdan, Central Asia. Democracy, Instability and Strategic Game in Kyrgyzstan, 155, 229.

⁵⁴ Ksenia Kirkham, "The Formation of the Eurasian Economic Union: How Successful is Russian Regional Hegemony", *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2016): 111-128, here 125.

⁵⁵ Bernard Cole, *China's Quest for Great Power. Ships, Oil, and Foreign Policy* (Naval Institute Press: Annapolis, MD 2016), 134; Petersen and Barysch, "Russia, China and the Geopolitics of Energy in Central Asia", 11.

Chinese seaborne imports by obstructing the way through this volatile chokepoint.⁵⁶

By expanding westwards, China's engagement with Kyrgyzstan is deemed essential for long-term leverage by constituting a social contract based on "economic development for natural resources" patterns, in recognition of Bishkek's interests and preferences. Kyrgyzstan itself does not expose substantial amounts of natural resources, compared to Kazakhstan or Turkmenistan. However, it does play a significant role within the framework of Beijing's "railway diplomacy" by providing natural resources and unconditional loyalty in exchange. China has launched the construction of railways and roads as a gateway to Central Asia, connecting Kashgar (Xinjiang) with Andijon in Uzbekistan via the Kyrgyz cities Osh and Irkesham, in order to avoid the dependency on the transport corridor via Kazakhstan. Consequently, Beijing obtains the advantage of transferring its goods on alternative routes, in case of a deterioration of relations with either Kazakhstan or Russia. In view of the governmental reconsolidation after 2010, Kyrgyzstan has induced substantial investments, grants and the extensions of credits from China. These aspects related to Kyrgyzstan's role as a transit country contribute to the connection with markets in Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, as Bishkek is able to overcome the "transport deadlock" by becoming a land-linking country. Simultaneously, Kyrgyzstan acknowledges that it has to abide by certain regulations set by China, in order to ensure Beijing's long-term leverage. This primarily involves adherence to the one-China policy, unconditional support of China concerning issues related to Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan, as well as combat against the "three evils" in the security domain.⁵⁷ In addition to allowing Kyrgyzstan to increase electricity exports, China is also committed to providing loans to construct hydropower stations and power transmission lines. As Kyrgyz technology does not suffice to produce the amount that Beijing needs to satiate its domestic market, Bishkek made considerable concessions, as it has enabled China to expand its investments in Kyrgyzstan, notwithstanding domestic resistance and concerns about a potential Chinese takeover.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Cole, *China's Quest for Great Power*, 135-137; Philipp Andrews-Speed and Roland Dannreuther, *China, Oil and Global Politics* (London: Routledge, 2011); Chen Shaofeng, "Has China's Energy Quest Enhanced Its Energy Security?", *The China Quarterly*, No. 207 (September 2011): 600-625.

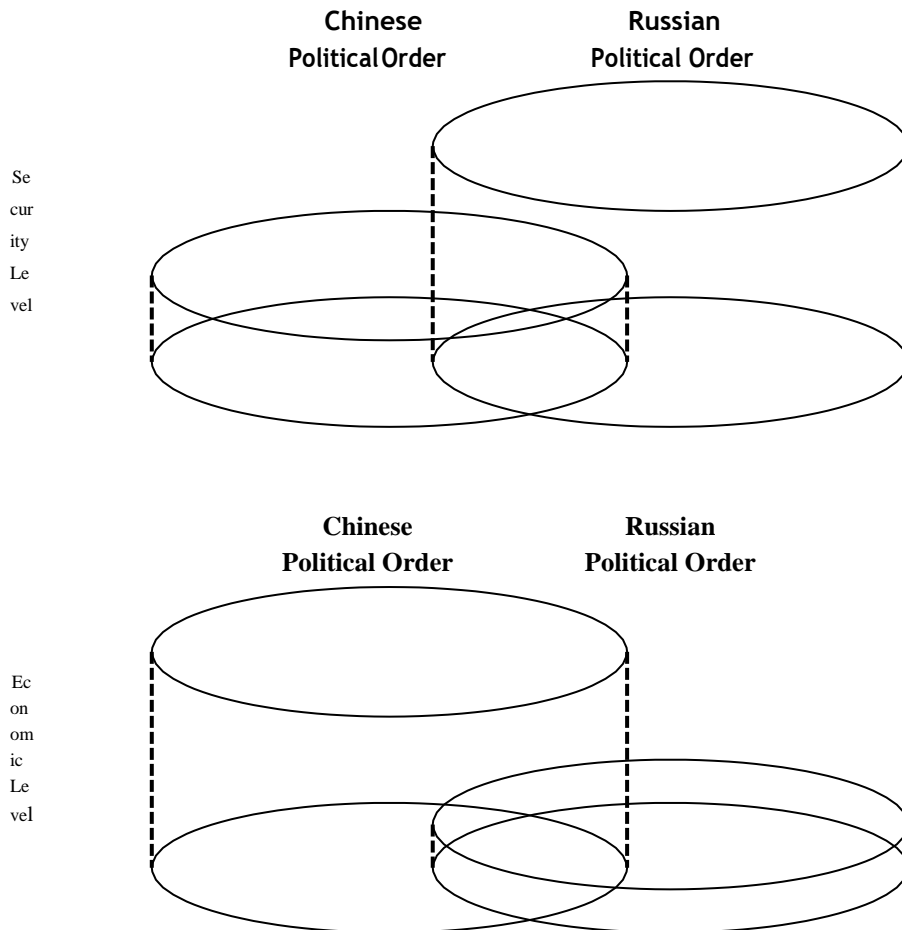
⁵⁷ Timur Dadaev, "'Silk Road' as Foreign Policy Discourse: The Construction of Chinese, Japanese and Korean Engagement Strategies in Central Asia", *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2018): 30-41, here 38; Stobdan, *Central Asia. Democracy, Instability and Strategic Game in Kyrgyzstan*, 184-188.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 188-192.

A Collision Course or Overlap with Russia or China?

Clearly, Bishkek’s strategy of hedging is seemingly paying dividends in both security and development capital. The hierarchical overlap, though understandably complex, allows Kyrgyzstan various avenues for diplomatic manoeuvres, so long as the Sino-Russo *entente* remains balanced. Kyrgyzstan’s security alignment with the Kremlin clearly orchestrates protective means against the “three evils” and other such issues, while Russia’s economic integration projects provide another layer, despite the Kremlin’s deficiency in comparison to Beijing, as seen in fig 1’s abstraction.

Fig 1: The Dual Architecture of Eurasian Hierarchy: Security vs. Economics



As for the Bishkek-Beijing relationship, the dual stratagem of security cooperation in the SCO and economic association with the BRI is also paying dividends. After longstanding Territorial Border issues were resolved with China, despite a lingering resentment of the Kyrgyz people for the final settlement, the door is open for Bishkek to rally around the BRI for substantial infrastructure development. The ramifications conform to a complex Chinese desire to establish the BRI as a core foreign policy priority, at least for the coming years in which Kyrgyzstan plays a key role.⁵⁹ Certainly, Bishkek feels they have given enough to warrant a friendly posture from Beijing, to incur a positive bargain for a good range of BRI benefits.

Despite the burden of forgoing a truly independent foreign policy, by hedging in both security and economic frameworks, Bishkek is keeping its options open in the long-term, a sound strategy for a state in a volatile geopolitical environment. It must carefully correlate its actions in accordance with the Kremlin and Beijing, for the sake of national interests and the sake of the Sino-Russian *entente*. Kyrgyzstan, on a path of newfound stability, can consider itself a fulcrum on which both Moscow and Beijing's interests can be assessed. The dual nature of hierarchical overlap here can be judged and the strength of the Sino-Russian *entente* can be evaluated.

⁵⁹ Zhimin Chen, Guorong Zhou and Shichen Wang, "Facilitate Leadership and China's New World Role in the World", *Chinese Political Science Review*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (March 2018): 22.

IMPERATIVES OF GEORGIAN DIPLOMACY AND THE COOPERATION OF TBILISI AND BEIJING

Abstract: The article considers the characteristics and key aspects of cooperation between Georgia and China. It celebrates the success of these countries in the institutionalization of economic contacts, which is the core of Beijing's initiative to form a pool around its project, "Economic Zone — the new Silk Road". At the same time, it emphasizes that the potential for cooperation between the Georgian and Chinese sides has only just started gaining momentum. Its rapid development in the near future promises to change the configuration of some of Georgia's foreign policy doctrine, which is now focused exclusively on the Western community of nations. The country of the Golden Fleece is clearly looking at themselves as the main partner of China in the South Caucasus region. The active participation of the Georgian side in the implementation of China's geo-economic models in the near future promises to make the issue of accession of Georgia to NATO and the EU not as relevant as it is today. Georgia's foreign policy strategy will be influenced by agreements signed in the framework of the partnership between China and Russia on the multi-vector model of transportation of goods and resources within the framework of the convergence of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road Economic Belt.

Keywords: *Georgia, China, cooperation, transit corridor, alternative project, economic zone*

Introduction

The modern system of international relations is at the design stage, undergoing various modifications, stimulated by centripetal and centrifugal tendencies. The world is becoming increasingly fragmented, and conflict and uncontrollability are increasing in world politics. The West-centrist scheme of international relations no longer corresponds to the realities of the 21st century, turning into only one of the diverse segments of the global space of international relations. Eurasian space is, apparently, in the process of forming entirely new geo-economic and geo-civilizational models, which certainly requires going to completely different geopolitical perimeters and principles of cooperation. In this regard, the design of a new security structure should be a condition for achieving stability and peaceful development in the South Caucasus. Integration processes can play a significant role in this, provided that they are not the result of bloc

confrontations. Integration strategies should be based on a pragmatic policy of the realization of national interests.

The Georgian choice of foreign policy is based on finding not only a reliable partner and faithful ally, but also to some extent a defender and patron. Given the problems and challenges that the European Union has faced in recent years, it may not have made enough effort to convince Georgia to become part of the European community. After winning the elections in October 2012, the coalition, “Georgian Dream”, came to power, clearly recognizing the need for a balanced foreign policy to ensure the security of the state. The main priorities of the forces united around B. Ivanishvili were: the reassessment of the results left over from the previous government in the field of economics, finance, foreign policy and management, the formation of a new political and economic elite capable of making rational decisions, and revising the policy of the previous leadership, which adhered to a radical pro-Western course and considered only the US and the European Union as main strategic allies.

Imperatives of Georgian Diplomacy in Uncertain Times

On the eve of the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008, the former president, M. Saakashvili, stated confidently, “When we speak about the European future of Georgia, we must understand that this is not only today’s choice <...> European and Georgian civilizations are so intertwined that it is difficult to determine whether Europe is our roots or on the contrary”.¹ In his message to the Parliament of Georgia, Foreign Minister G. Bezhuashvili noted that the main strategy of the foreign policy of this country in the 2000s would be aimed at “turning Georgia into a European State with strong institutions, fully integrated into European and Euro-Atlantic structures”.² After the changing of the guard at the presidential palace in Tbilisi, no rebuttal followed against the declared route under the leadership of the current head of the country, Salome Zurbishvili. Moreover, in frame of «Eastern Partnership» Georgia, as we know, the only South Caucasian state to recently sign an association agreement with the EU. As you can clearly see, it was decided to consider Georgia first and foremost a European country (and hence not a post-Soviet state). They wanted not only to dissociate themselves from any Soviet legacy as soon as possible, but also from the failed project of the 1990s – the “Shevardnadze era”. Thus, the basic concept of modern Georgian state ideology is known as the “Westernization” of the country, and this promise is mainly opposed to the

¹ Thomas De Waal, “Georgia's Choices: Charting a Future in Uncertain Times” (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., 2011): 31.

² “Foreign Policy Strategy 2006-2009”, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=562 (accessed June 15, 2015).

reintegration of former Soviet formations.³

The current National Security Concept of Georgia stresses that the country “is a part of the European and Euro-Atlantic space. Therefore, the expansion eastward of NATO and of the European Union is important for Georgia”.⁴ This concept explicitly states that the integration into NATO and the European Union is a top priority of Georgian foreign and security policy.⁵ It also includes a fundamental element of the thesis of the very close relations between Tbilisi and Washington, which are based on the “strategic partnership charter” signed in January 2009 between the two countries. The same concept stated that Tbilisi also intends “to make the utmost of the potential of strategic partnership with Ukraine”.⁶

Thus, despite significant shifts in global politics and economy, the foreign policy of Georgia has remained virtually unchanged since 2004. The pro-Western trend aimed at integration into Euro-Atlantic structures still dominates the foreign policy view of the ruling elite in Georgia not only after the “Rose Revolution”, but also after the end of “the era of Saakashvili”.

Summing up, we can conclude that the main idea of the minds of the majority of the Georgian political elite remains the same – to speed up integration into the Western community of nations. But even in this situation, it is possible to distinguish close enough aspects of the same paradigm unambiguously. Firstly, although Georgia is not entirely a European country politically, it is no longer a post-Soviet state. Secondly, the most important project remains the modernization of the country to Western standards. Thirdly, this upgrade is only possible through close cooperation with European and Euro-Atlantic military-political institutions.⁷

However, today Georgia is facing with a larger dilemma than a few years ago, the solution of which depends on the nature of the future development of the country. Despite all the promising statements, hereinafter “European” perspectives of Georgia are still uncertain. For example, the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008, some countries, including Germany, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands, expressed that Georgia's

³ Benjamin Mailyan, “Rossiysko-gruzinskiye otnosheniya i vopros chlenstva Gruzii v SNG. Istoriko-kul’turniye osnovi social’no-politicheskoy modernizacii. Sbornik nauchnikh statey”, (in Russian), [Russian-Georgian relations and the issue of Georgia's membership in the CIS. Historical and cultural bases of social and political modernization. Collection of scientific articles]. Yerevan, Rossiysko-Armianskiy (Slavianskiy) Universitet, (2012): 87.

⁴ “National Security Concept of Georgia”, *Government of Georgia*, <https://mod.gov.ge/uploads/2018/pdf/NSC-ENG.pdf> (accessed April 10, 2019).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Benjamin Mailyan, “From the history of the formation of the post-Soviet foreign policy orientations of the ruling elite of Georgia: a retrospective look”, *Contemporary Eurasia: clash of political interests*, Vol. III no.1 (2014): 101-102.

membership in NATO will have to wait.⁸ We have to admit that since then, little has changed. Tbilisi is still on its pro-Western course for the sake of the future development and security of Georgia, is still very critical towards the policy initiatives of Moscow, and at the same time does not allow any rapprochement with Russia at the expense of the possibility of their country's entry into NATO and the EU.

The concept of the New Silk Road and Georgia

However, the marked success of Georgia and China in the institutionalization of their economic contacts, which is the core of Beijing's initiative to form a pool around its project "Economic Zone – the new Silk Road" (SREB) or "One Belt One Road" (OBOR). The potential for cooperation between the Georgian and Chinese sides has received a positive reaction. Its rapid development in short time apparently promises to change the configuration of Georgian foreign policy doctrine, which is now focused exclusively on the Western community of nations. China's relations with the South Caucasus, including Georgia, were exclusively expressed in very random economic, trade and cultural ties for centuries. The geopolitical interests of China had never been served before. To say that it has now become one of the priorities of China's foreign policy would not be accurate. However, the significant increase in Georgian-Chinese contacts makes one take a closer look.

China was among the first countries to recognize the independence of Georgia. Officially, China-Georgia diplomatic relations were established in June 1992 with the signing of the relevant protocol. In subsequent years, political relations between the two countries developed steadily. They try to establish close contacts and consult with each other in the UN and other international organizations. Georgia certainly supports the policy of "one China" and the position of China on the issues of Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang. China, in turn, stands for the integrity of Georgia, as it considers Abkhazia and South Ossetia an internal affair.⁹ In the article, "The traditional friendship between China and Georgia are strengthened", Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Tszechi stressed that the Chinese side intends to continue to make constant efforts for the development of stable cooperation between Beijing and Tbilisi.¹⁰ On the other hand, Georgia also considers

⁸ "Ukraine i Gruzii prideotsja podozdat'. Na sammite NATO ne udalos' dostignut' soglasija", (in Russian), ["Ukraine and Georgia will have to wait. The agreement was not reached at the NATO summit"], First Channel, April 4, 2008, <http://www.1tv.ru/news/world/23303> (accessed June 15, 2015).

⁹ Van Czingo and Van Chshiczun, "GUAM i KNR". (in Russian) ["GUAM and PRC"] *Central Asia and Caucasus* (special issue), no. 3–4, (2008): 208.

¹⁰ "Tradicionnaja družba meždu Kitaem i Gruziej ukrepljaetsja — 15-ja godovščina ustanovlenija diplomatičeskikh otnošenij meždu stranami", (in Russian), ["The Evergreen China-Georgia Traditional Friendship — In Commemoration of the 15th Anniversary of

good relations with China a possible counterweight to Russia's dominance in the region.

In the modern world, there is enough variety of alternative projects that could easily complement other and even become platforms for the development of completely new integration processes. In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward a new strategic idea of reviving the Silk Road and the association of his country into a single economic zone – the “Silk Road Economic Belt”. At the core of this initiative lies the idea that the world-famous ancient trade corridor still has plenty of untapped opportunities. The concept of “Economic Zone – New Silk Road” is based on a number of key points – political cooperation, sharing of road networks, free trade, unrestricted circulation of money and the pooling of interests of different nations. It emphasizes that the coordination of their actions will be with the unconditional preservation of existing natural differences between them. Accumulated experience in the period of “reform and openness” has allowed Beijing to make the conclusion that economic penetration is more important than direct political control. This follows ancient principles of Chinese strategy – “win without fighting”, to be flexible, accurate dosage and direct impact on the key points of different regions and countries. The method of implementation of this strategy is the ancient doctrine, “Wu wei”. Its essence: no dictates and cooperation. Chinese leaders say that the Celestial Empire is committed to developing their relations on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence with all countries of the international community without exception.¹¹ For the successful implementation of their ambitious economic reforms, this great Eastern country needs a long-term and lasting international order based on the stability of relations. Chinese experts believe that the “Silk Road Economic Belt” will also give a new boost to the development of China's economic cooperation with Russia and the Central Asian countries and its integration in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). <...> China will be able to gain more access to the CIS markets, which will assist its sustainable economic development and create conditions for forming a free trade area within the borders of the SCO member states. <...> By putting forward its project, the PRC is in no way aiming to damage the interests of Russia, bilateral relations with which it highly values. The main motivation behind this project is a natural desire for economic cooperation. <...> Cooperation is the best format for meeting the interests of both countries; competition aimed at pushing out the rival will be detrimental for both of them. <...> It is

Diplomatic Relations Between China and Georgia”], *Rénmín Ribào*, June 8, 2007, <http://russian.people.com.cn/31521/5840911.html> (accessed April 5, 2019).

¹¹ “Posol KNR w Gruzii vystupil s lekciej «Vnešnjaja politika Kitaja»”, (in Russian), [“Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Georgia Delivered a Lecture on “China's Foreign Policy”], *Rénmín Ribào*, March 16, 2012, <http://russian.people.com.cn/31520/7760357.html> (accessed April 2, 2019).

gratifying that, thanks to the agreement that China and Russia have reached, these two projects are not competing with each other (at least not in the near future). On the contrary, both Russia and the PRC are showing a certain amount of willingness to cooperate, which should lead to a high level of economic integration in Eurasia.¹² Indeed, the two great Eurasian powers are trying to find a modus vivendi in the convergence of their innovative projects. The joint statement between Russia and the PRC about the new stage of relations in universal partnership and strategic interaction of May 20, 2014, states the following: «Russia believes that China's initiative to form a Silk Road Economic Belt is very important and highly values the willingness of the Chinese side to keep Russian interests in mind during its development and implementation. The sides will continue to look for ways to combine the Silk Road Economic Belt and Eurasian Economic Union projects».¹³

If all this happens as planned initiators of the “New Silk Road”, one of the largest economies in the world may become the center of gravity of the global investment world.

This initiative successfully coincided with some projects which had enjoyed official support earlier by Tbilisi. As noted back to February 2007, the former Georgian leader Mikhail Saakashvili noted that the construction of the Kars-Tbilisi-Baku railway is a “version with proper formatting of Contemporary Silk Road”, as it will link the South Caucasus region and Central Asia with the EU.¹⁴ The concept was put forward by National Security back in 2011. It was stressed that “Georgia considers the strengthening of its transit role is particularly important”.¹⁵ The current government is now also in accordance with the opinion that Georgia needs need to strengthen its role as a transit country, which is also one of the main priorities in the national economic development strategy, “Georgia – 2020”.¹⁶

¹² Wang Shuchun and Wan Qingsong, “The Silk Road Economic Belt and the EEU — rivals or partners?”, *Central Asia and the Caucasus*. Vol. 15, Issue 3, (2014), http://www.cac.org/online/2014/journal_eng/cac-03/01.shtml (accessed April 2, 2019).

¹³ “Sovmestnoe zjavlenie Rossijskoj Federacii i Kitajskoj Narodnoj Respubliki o novom etape otnosenij vseob'emljuščego partnerstva i strategičeskogo vzaimodejstvija”, (in Russian), [“Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on a New Phase of Comprehensive Partnership and Strategic Cooperation”], *Prezident Russii*, May 20, 2014, <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/1642> (accessed April 2, 2019).

¹⁴ “Gruzija, Turcija i Azerbajdžan dogovorilis' stroit' «Novyj šjelkovyj put'», (in Russian), [“Georgia, Turkey and Azerbaijan have agreed to build a “New Silk Road”], *Lenta. Ru*, February 8, 2007, <http://lenta.ru/news/2007/02/07/railways/> (accessed April 3, 2019).

¹⁵ “National Security Concept of Georgia”, *Government of Georgia*, <https://mod.gov.ge/uploads/2018/pdf/NSC-ENG.pdf> (accessed April 10, 2019).

¹⁶ “Novyj velikij šjelkovyj put' – kakuju on pol'zu prinesjet Gruzii?”, (in Russian), [“The New Great Silk Road. How will Georgia benefit?”], *Geoinfo – Georgia is always with you*, August 12, 2014, <https://www.geomigrant.com/2014/08/12/> (accessed March 3, 2019).

Thus, the old idea of the Georgian passageway denoted exclusively as the transit for energy resources to the West now gains a completely different essence. The current leadership of Georgia has fully supported the new Chinese direction in its foreign policy, which inevitably reinforces the policy of strengthening multilateral ties with China. Georgia's readiness to participate in the project extended by the leadership of China, was confirmed by the official visit of Deputy Prime Minister and Economy Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili to the PRC in March 2015. Officials of the two countries signed an agreement to work together for the implementation of project "Economic Zone – New Silk Road". The Georgian minister also visited the "Silk Road Fund", which was established in 2015. There are 40 billion US dollars at the immediate disposal of this fund. The Celestial Empire intends to use this fund on those countries that have already expressed their desire to become members of the Chinese project. Thus, the delegation that arrived in Tbilisi became the first in a country in the South Caucasus. They had a business meeting directly with the head of the fund, Wang Changjiang. During the long conversation, the two sides discussed the significance of this project not only for the participating countries, but also its future impact on international processes on a global scale. G. Kvirikashvili announced the establishment of an international summit in Georgia, "Forum of the Great Silk Road", which is annually held in Tbilisi with the participation of all countries included in the pool¹⁷. Moreover, in the framework of this visit, the two sides signed an agreement that confirms the desire of the parties to begin negotiations on free trade between Georgia and China as soon as possible.

For Georgia, the SREB project creates an opportunity to transform its role as an energy resources transportation hub to a regional economic hub. In this regard, it should be emphasized that with the agreement signed between the EU and Georgia, products exported from Georgia to the EU must be produced in Georgia. This, therefore, makes Georgia attractive to all countries without free trade agreements with the EU to invest in Georgia and export the products manufactured there to the EU market.¹⁸ This includes China, which is already investing in Georgia.

Chinese-Georgian business projects in the context of the New Silk Road

The significance of Georgia in the region is determined primarily by

¹⁷ "Ministr ékonomiki i ustojčivogo razvitija Gruzii Georgij Kvirikašvili v ramkakh rabočego vizita v Kitaj vstretilsja s rukovoditelem Fonda šelkovogo puti Vangom Janczy", (in Russian), ["Mr. Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development, within the Framework of his working visit to China met with the head of the Silk Road Foundation, Wang Yangtze"], *Sputnik Georgia*, March 9, 2015, <http://sputnik-georgia.ru/economy/20150309/217434851.html> (accessed April 3, 2019).

¹⁸ Vladimir Papava, "One Belt One Road initiative and Georgia", *Expert opinion*, No. 93, (Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, 2017): 9.

its geographic location, which makes the country a central link in transport communications. In May 2015, Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili reiterated that China and Georgia begin a completely new stage of relations, which, according to the prime minister, will restore Georgia's historical function as a link between Europe and Asia to his country. "The strategic location, existing in Georgia will receive even more applications, that is why we also intend to develop a new Silk Road. The implementation of this project was of interest for China. <...> We are beginning the construction of a deepwater port in Anaklia, which will enable us to take larger vessels, using the existing potential more widely, which certainly has our country»¹⁹, – said the Prime Minister.

It seems that Georgian officials have expended a lot of effort to convince the Chinese side of the seriousness of their intentions. This is evidenced by the recent statement of the Ambassador of China in Tbilisi, Yue Bin, who noted that the Caucasian country has obvious geographical advantages. "I'm not just talking about the concept of 'economic belt of the Silk Road' with the Georgian politicians and their attitude was always positive"²⁰, said the Chinese diplomat. However, the contours of the pool of those countries that have agreed to join the Chinese initiative are still very amorphous and conceptually are not marked. We can only make assumptions on them based on official visits, as well as already signed trade and economic agreements and joint declarations.

Against the backdrop of excellent Georgian-Chinese political relations, the Sino-Georgian trade and economic commission was established in Tbilisi in 1999. In 2005, the parties have already recorded a fairly high level of mutual contacts, which resulted in the signing of agreements on the avoidance of double taxation. Slowly but surely, bilateral trade began to increase. In 2010, the two sides signed an intergovernmental agreement on economic and technological cooperation.

The volume of direct Chinese investments in Georgia is still relatively small, but has a constant and stable tendency to increase. The most important aspect that radically distinguishes assistance provided by China is that the recipient countries are considered equal partners. However, it never interferes in the internal affairs of the recipient of its assistance and respects the chosen path of their development.²¹ Of course, this makes Beijing in all

¹⁹ "Šjelkovyj put' Gruzii", (in Russian), ["Georgia's Silk Road"], *New Caucasus*, May 29, 2015, <http://newcaucasus.com/?newsid=7267>(accessed April 3, 2019).

²⁰ "Jue Bin: Konceptija ékonomičeskogo pojasa Šjelkovogo puti Kitaja sovpadaet s nacional'noj strategiej razvitija Gruzii", (in Russian), ["Yue Bin: The concept of "Silk Road Economic Belt" coincides with Georgia's national strategy"], *New Caucasus*, March 5, 2014, <http://newcaucasus.com/index.php?newsid=6895>(accessed April 3, 2019).

²¹ Marija Potapenko, KNR kak noviy meshdunarodniy donor: osobennosti politiki sodeystviya meshdunarodnomu razvitiyu, *Vestnik RUDN. Seriya Meshdunarodnie otmošheniya*, ["China as a new international donor: features of the policy of international development assistance"], no. 1, (2014): 23.

respects an attractive partner. For the first three quarters of 2014, China carried out direct investments to Georgia in the amount of \$157 million.²² As a result, the Celestial Empire became a major investor in the country. Chinese companies have carried out a number of important construction projects. Among the most successful are the Pankisi Gorge HPP «Kaduli» and wood-processing plant near Zugdidi built in 2004.²³ Georgian businessmen took part in the success of the international fair “China-Eurasia”, which opened in September 2012 in Urumqi (Xinjiang). The President of the Chamber of Commerce of Georgia, K. Baidurashvili, noted that the Chinese market is becoming increasingly important, and Georgian exporters need to do a lot to be able to continue to work on it.²⁴ The Counselor of the Chinese Embassy in Georgia, Liu Bo, reported in an interview with “The Financial” that over the next few years, China expects to invest about \$1.7 billion in Georgia. According to him, “Georgian wine has huge potential in China. In 2011, it exported 580 thousand bottles of wine, a growing number of Georgian companies, who want to investigate the Chinese market”.²⁵

In December 2013, the “On economic and technical cooperation” agreement was formalized between the governments of Georgia and China. The document was signed by Nodar Khaduri, Georgia’s Finance Minister, and the Chinese ambassador to Georgia, Yue Bin. The Chinese Government pledged to provide about 4.9 million US dollars according to the agreement.²⁶ “The dynamics of bilateral cooperation between China and Georgia – as claimed by the Georgian Ambassador to China David Aptsiauri – is developing rapidly. It is important to note the visit of the Minister of Agriculture Han Changfu to Georgia in May [2015]. It was the first visit of the representative of the Chinese Government that ranks not only in Georgia but also in the South Caucasus. It signed a document on joint action plan in

²² “Gruzino-kitajskie otnošenija razvivajutsja stabilno”, (in Russian), [“Georgian-Chinese relations are developing steadily”], *Svobodnaya.info*, Desember 20, 2014, <http://svobodnaya.info/index.php?option=comcontent&view=article&id=6485:lr&catid=42:politics&Itemid=85VVzEQbmqqko>

(accessed April 3, 2019).

²³ “Doklady Rossiyskogo Instituta Strategicheskikh Issledovaniy (RISI)”, (in Russian), [“Reports of the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies (RISS)”], http://www.riss.ru/upload/news/554/Reports%20of%20RISS_2012_1.pdf. (accessed June 15, 2015).

²⁴ “V Tbilisi sostojalsja gruzino-kitajskij biznes-forum”, (in Russian), [“Tbilisi hosted Georgia-China Business Forum”], *China Radio International*, May 10, 2012, <http://russian.cri.cn/841/2012/05/10/1s426634.htm> (accessed April 3, 2019).

²⁵ “Kitaj investiruet v Gruziju na summu počti 2 milliarda dollarov?”, (in Russian), [“China invests almost \$ 2 billion in Georgia”], *Kavkazoved.info*, April 16, 2012, <http://www.kavkazoved.info/news/2012/04/16/kitaj-investiruet-v-gruziju-na-summu-pochti-v2milli-arda.html>. (accessed April 7, 2019).

²⁶ “Pravitel’stvo Kitaja vydelit Gruzii v vide granta \$4.9 millionov”, (in Russian), [“The Chinese government will provide Georgia \$ 4.9 million as a grant”], *Georgia Online*, November 20, 2013, <http://www.apsny.ge/2013/pol/1387246130.php> (accessed April 5, 2019).

the field of agriculture. Currently, it is the Chinese actions in the priority for the Georgian winemakers. Thus, the sale of Georgian wine in China by 2014 increased by 34%. An important event was the fact that this year, Georgia became one of the founders of the Asian Bank of infrastructure investment, which was established in China in 2014. Its authorized capital is \$100 billion”.²⁷

Indeed, it was not without pride when the Statistics Department of Georgia reported that, in January-July 2014, the volume of exports from Georgia to China exceeded the sum of 43 million dollars, which is 11% more than in January-July 2013.²⁸ From January-February 2015, the volume of exports from Georgia to China increased by 271% and amounted to 4.5% of the total exports of Georgia. Foreign trade turnover between the two countries during this period reached more than 112.2 million dollars, which is 5.4% more than in January-February 2014.²⁹ Thus, China has now taken its place firmly among the major trade partners of the «Land of the Golden Fleece» and will not surrender its positions.

Georgia is becoming more attractive for Chinese tourists as well. The number of Chinese tourists increased almost five times from 2010 to 2016. Visitors from China to Georgia increased by 75% in 2018. In total, 18,179 Chinese tourists visited Georgia in 2017, and 31,855 visitors in 2018.³⁰

However, one of the most promising areas of Georgian-Chinese cooperation is still the transportation. In 2010, the Chinese company “China Sino-Hydro Corporation” and “China Railway 23rd Bureau Group” took over the reconstruction of the Rikoti Tunnel – strategically important for the transport infrastructure of Georgia since it connects the eastern and western parts of the country.³¹ According to some estimations China is also interested in the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project, although specific investment steps on the Chinese side have not yet been made. China is ready to invest hundreds of millions more for the development of necessary transport routes. It is already working on two main areas. The first route is through Russia, and the second - Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Experts in Tbilisi

²⁷ “Šjelkovyj put’ Gruzii”, (in Russian), [“Georgia's Silk Road”], *New Caucasus*, May 29, 2015, <http://newcaucasus.com/?newsid=7267> (accessed April 3, 2019).

²⁸ “Kitaj zainteresovalsja Gruziej”, (in Russian), [“China is interested in Georgia”], *Politrus*, September 9, 2014, <http://www.politrus.com/2014/09/09/georgia-china-2/> (accessed April 7, 2019).

²⁹ “V janvare-fevrale 2015 goda ob’jem éksporta iz Gruzii v Kitaj povysilsja na 271%”, (in Russian), [“In January-February 2015 Georgian export to China rose by 271%”], *Sputnik Georgia*, March 31, 2015, <http://sputnik-georgia.ru/economy/20150331/217493960.html> (accessed April 7, 2019).

³⁰ Iza Gigauri, Nino Damenia, Economic Expectations of the Belt and Road Initiative for the South Caucasus, with Emphasis on Georgia, *Business and Economic Research*, Vol. 9, Iss. 1, (2019): 194, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331411291> (accessed May 22, 2019).

³¹ David Babayan, “Nekotorie aspekti politiki KNR na Kavkaze”, (in Russian) [“Some aspects of China's policies in the Caucasus”], *Central Asia and Caucasus*. Vol. 14, Iss. 1, (2011): 86.

believe that Georgian and Azerbaijani authorities have to work more coherently and synchronously to offer China the most favorable conditions for its cooperation. As scheduled, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway will be able to cut 20-25 days off the transit time of Chinese goods to Europe. In 2014, in Astana, an important agreement on the establishment of a coordinating committee to organize the Aktau (Kazakhstan) - Baku (Azerbaijan) - Batumi (Georgia) route was signed.³² This rather ambitious new trade route between China and Europe has been referred to as the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TIRT).³³ Thus, the concept of “Economic belt – New Silk Road” coincides with the national strategy of the Georgian government – to make the country the trading crossroads of Eurasia.

As you can see, the Georgian side is not sitting idle and is working hard on the quick implementation of these projects, for there is a second, alternative route from China to Europe via Kazakhstan and Russia. If this route begins to function earlier, Georgia risks losing its unique chance. Officials met the first freight train from China in Tbilisi in February 2015. Its arrival was called a historical event by the Georgian press. The freight train travelled 6000km in just 9 days. “Georgia will become a transit hub. The containers will continue the path to Europe from the Georgian port. At the first stage it is expected that in this way 50-60 thousand containers will be exported from Georgia each year, which certainly has a positive impact on our economy”³⁴, said Mamuka Bakhtadze, General Director of JSC «Georgian Railway».

In May 2015, the head of the «Anaklia Eco Park and Port» consortium, Teimuraz Karchava, visited Beijing, where he signed a strategic partnership agreement with “PowerChina” corporation. Consultations with the leaders of “Silk Road Found” were held, which discussed Chinese financial interest in the port of Anaklia, Eco Industrial Park, the airport and the free economic zone, as well as other transport infrastructure³⁵.

Hence, the expansion of trade between the EU and China will enable Georgia to become a logistical hub connecting China with Europe (for which the implementation of the Anaklia Black Sea Deep Water Port project will

³² “Novyj velikij šjolkovyj put’ – kakuju on pol’zu prinesjet Gruzii?”, (in Russian), [“The New Great Silk Road. How will Georgia benefit?”], *Geoinfo – Georgia is always with you*, August 12, 2014, <https://www.geomigrant.com/2014/08/12/> (accessed March 3, 2019).

³³ Mariam Zabakhidze, Giorgi Bakradze, Batu Kutelia, “Georgia and China: Carry away small stones to move a big mountain” (Economic Policy Research Center-EPRC, Tbilisi, Georgia, 2017): 24.

³⁴ “Gruzija vstretila pervyj gruzovoj poezd iz Kitaja”, (in Russian), [“Georgia met the first freight train from China”] *Mir 24. tv*, Desember 14, 2015, <http://mir24.tv/news/economy/12137548> (accessed April 7, 2019).

³⁵ “Glava Anaklia Eco Park vedjet peregovory v Kitaje po voprosu porta Anaklija”, (in Russian), [“The head of “Anaklia Eco Park” has been negotiating in China on the port of Anaklia”], *Sputnik Georgia*, June 30, 2015, <http://sputnik-georgia.ru/economy/20150530/227732058.html#ixzz3fzG6SVq2> (accessed April 7, 2019).

have vital importance) and increase the level of its security at the same time.³⁶

Georgian Prime Minister, I. Garibashvili, met the head of the NPC Standing Committee, Cheng Changchi, in June 2015. Such a high-level visit of a representative of China to Georgia has not occurred over the last decade. Both sides re-emphasized the importance of the «New Silk Road» strategic project. The representatives of the PRC expressed their willingness to actively participate in the «Forum of the Silk Road», which was held in Tbilisi in October 2015³⁷ and November 2017.³⁸ Thus, Georgia can play the role of an economic hub in the SREB project as it already has free trade agreements in place with both the EU as well as China. The level of Chinese investment in the Georgian economy is growing practically day by day, and this trend, as economists predict, will have an irreversible character in terms of the implementation of the SREB project.³⁹

The government of Georgia wants to promote Chinese engagement for both economic and strategic reasons. Not only can trade and investment links with China help spur economic growth, they also have the potential to ease pressure applied by Russia. Experts believe that “Chinese investment in Georgia does provide certain unanticipated security benefits”.⁴⁰

Thus, it is already impossible to ignore the fact that the Georgian establishment has been fully aware that the focus on the unique projects of NATO and the EU has serious conflicts of interest with its new trend in the development of multilateral cooperation with China. The country of the Golden Fleece is clearly looking to be the main partner of China in the South Caucasus. The active participation of the Georgian side in the implementation of China's geo-economic models promises to make the issue of Georgia's accession to NATO and the EU not as relevant as it is today.

³⁶ Vakhtang Charaia, Vladimer Papava, Fanmei Wang, “China-Georgia Economic Relations in the Context of the Belt and Road Initiative”, *Bulletin of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 12, Iss. 1 (2018): 157.

³⁷ “Pervij forum Šjelkovogo puti startoval v Tbilisi”, (in Russian), [“The Silk Road First Forum has started in Tbilisi”], *News Georgia*, October 15, 2015, <https://www.newsgeorgia.ge/pervyj-forum-shelkovogo-puti-startoval-v-tbilisi/> (accessed April 7, 2019).

³⁸ “Šjelkovyj put' po-gruzinski – itogi meždunarodnogo foruma v Tbilisi”, (in Russian), [“Silk Road” in Georgian - the results of the international forum in Tbilisi”], *Sputnik Georgia*, Desember 1, 2017, <https://sputnik-georgia.ru/reviews/20171201/238377112/> (accessed April 7, 2019).

³⁹ Vakhtang Charaia and Vladimer Papava, “Belt and Road Initiative: Implications for Georgia and China-Georgia Economic Relations”, *China International Studies*. Vol. November/December (2017): 139, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321193299> (accessed May 22, 2019).

⁴⁰ Joseph Larsen, “Georgia-China relations: The geopolitics of the Belt and Road” (Georgian Institute of Politics, Georgia, Tbilisi, 2017): 20.

Conclusion

In sum, it can be stated that Georgian authorities have to pay special attention to the development of the transit-service functions of the country for a long time. In this regard, foreign political priorities seem to require rethinking. It is not an easy task for Tbilisi to find an acceptable *modus vivendi* between the previously valued foreign policy focus on the EU and the US and their current extremely active participation in the geo-economic projects of China. In addition, the current Georgian leadership, unlike the previous leaders of the country, have modified their foreign policy tactics. Their previous strategic doctrine – joining NATO and the EU – would see them in confrontation with the Kremlin. Leading Georgia into a new phase of intense conflict with its northern neighbor would disrupt its hopes of becoming a transit corridor. All these open up the prospect of Georgia's foreign policy to make more in agreement with current international processes. In the next decade, there will be a crucial need to be more clearly defined by international imperatives.

While Georgia has the capacity to help build regional infrastructure, the success of the initiative depends on effective cooperation between large regional actors and their ability to acknowledge the prospect of the SREB initiative. For developing the importance of the Belt and Road Initiative to Beijing's relations with Moscow, it is very important for China to promote the paradigm of the compatibility of economic corridors for their harmonic development. Moreover, there is some reason to believe that in the near future of the strategic partnership between China and Russia, a parity agreement can be reached between the two powers of the multi-vector model of transporting goods and resources within the framework of the convergence of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEC) and the SREB. It should also be noted that the very real possibility of the growth of China's role in Eurasia based on the SREB initiative has also put forward a new vision for the theoretical construction of Chinese Eurasianism which begs further study.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

YULONG DAI

STRATEGIES ON TERRITORIAL ACQUISITION- A CASE STUDY ON THE PEDRA BRANCA DISPUTE

Abstract: In May 2008, the International Court of Justice announced the decision of the case concerning disputes over the sovereignty of Pedra Branca, Middle Rocks and South Ledge. The two disputed islands, Pedra Branca and South Ledge, were respectively awarded to Singapore and Malaysia while South Ledge remained undecided. Singapore's size is comparatively tinier than Malaysia. Its winning of sovereignty over Pedra Branca has manifested a possibility of how a smaller and weaker country could peacefully acquire a disputed territory from its stronger opponent while maintaining amicable relations with it. Singapore has reached the maximization of its interest though it was not awarded all the disputed islets by the Court. This article aims to examine these four strategies adopted by Singapore and the dynamics of how they helped promote Singapore's success.

Keywords: *Strategy, Territorial Acquisition, Pedra Branca Dispute*

Background

In contemporary international society, it is generally more acceptable and necessary that territorial disputes be resolved in a comparatively peaceful way rather than settled with violence. As a rational decision maker who is willing to maximize its interests, any claimant in a territorial dispute should carefully balance its interest in the disputed territory as well as its relations with the opponent. In many cases, claimants are deeply interdependent, sharing common interests in fields such as economic development, security cooperation, common foreign policies, etc. It is especially necessary that claimants whose power is significantly weaker than its opponent in a territorial dispute should act in a peaceful way.

Similar to territorial disputes in other developing regions, the dispute of Pedra Branca, Middle Rocks and South Ledge between Singapore and Malaysia was caused by obscure territorial divisions implemented by European colonial powers. Due to the lack of advanced technologies in exploring unknown lands and managing islets, Great Britain failed to carry out the division of these three maritime features in the region of the Malacca

Strait. However, as a new case, Singapore fully manifested how a comparatively weaker claimant could acquire the disputed territory while maintaining its amicable relationship with Malaysia in a legal and peaceful way. Singapore's success in winning sovereignty over Pedra Branca benefited from the strategies it has adopted.

There is little existing research on the Pedra Branca case illustrating the details of the dispute with its historical context and legal basis. Haller-Trost's research examined the sovereignty status of Pedra Branca 15 years before the 2008 judgment of the Pedra Branca case, based on the detailed evidence and geographical features of this island.¹ Wang probed into the effectiveness of evidence adoption for Singapore during the proceedings of the Pedra Branca case, in terms of balancing Singapore's relationship with Malaysia and the acquisition of interests from the disputed islets.² Beckman and Schofield further analyzed the difficulties and possibilities of maritime demarcation relating to the disputed islands regarding this case in accordance with the result of the 2008 judgment.³ Hamid later discussed the difficulties and challenges involving the implementation of the Pedra Branca judgment from the perspective of the Malaysian government.⁴

Using the previous studies as a basis, this article aims to analyze how Singapore, as a comparatively weaker claimant, successfully and peacefully acquired sovereignty over the disputed island of Pedra Branca from its stronger neighbor—Malaysia. There were four main strategies adopted by Singapore that facilitated its territorial acquisition to a great extent, including peaceful contact and negotiation, claim expansion, gradual resolution, and skillful advocacy. Although Singapore was not awarded all the disputed islets by the Court, it has won the most significant one—Pedra Branca and also gained potential sovereignty over this island's territorial waters. In this case, Singapore's successful winning of sovereignty over Pedra Branca manifests the probability of acquiring disputed territories in a peaceful way for weaker and smaller claimants.

¹ See R. Haller-Trost, *Historical Legal Claim: A Study of Disputed Sovereignty over Pulau Batu Puteh (Pedra Branca)*, *Maritime Briefing*, International Boundaries Research Unit, University of Durham, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1993.

² Wang Zichang, "The Judgement of International Court of Justice on Territorial Disputes between Singapore and Malaysia and Its Inspirations", *Southeast Asian Studies*, 1 (2009): 13-18, 25.

³ Robert Beckman and Clive Schofield, "Moving Beyond Disputes Over Island Sovereignty: ICJ Decision Sets Stage for Maritime Boundary Delimitation in the Singapore Strait", *Ocean Development & International Law*, 40, no. 1 (2009): 1-35.

⁴ Abdul Ghafur Hamid, "Pedra Branca Judgment and Beyond: Issues and Challenges in its Implementation by Malaysia and Singapore", *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law* 26 (2011): 335-342.

Summary of the Pedra Branca Case

Pedra Branca, Middle Rocks and South Ledge are three granite islets located at the east entrance of the Singapore Strait, facing the Southern-most part of the South China Sea.⁵ These three maritime features lie approximately 25 nautical miles to the east of the island of Singapore, 7.7 nautical miles to the southeast of Malaysian Johor State, and 7.6 nautical miles to the north of Indonesian Bintan Island. All these islets belong to one geographical entity, sharing the same underwater base. Pedra Branca and Middle Rocks, which respectively are the largest and the second largest islets involved in this case, are defined as islands while South Ledge is only a rock formation visible at low-tide.

Pedra Branca attracted the most attention from both parties in this dispute because Singapore has managed this island and has maintained a lighthouse on it for a long period. In 1851, the British Colony of Singapore, which was part of the British Straits Settlements, set up a lighthouse named Horsburgh on Pedra Branca. This act was consented by the Johor Sultanate, which was one of the predecessor states of modern Malaysia. Thenceforth Singapore began to manage the lighthouse as well as the island of Pedra Branca. Its control and management lasted about 130 years. During this period, Johor and Malaysia not only remained silent on Singapore's conduct, but also admitted the latter's ownership over Pedra Branca in an official letter regarding the legal status of this island in 1953.⁶ It was on December 21, 1979, that Malaysia first marked Pedra Branca as one of its territories on an official map. This act received protest from Singapore soon after on February 14, 1980. Then the dispute of sovereignty over Pedra Branca was crystallized. Later in 1993, the dispute over Middle Rocks and South Ledge was added in a bilateral meeting held by the officials of both parties.

Negotiations over the Pedra Branca dispute lasted more than 20 years. They can be divided into two stages. The first stage started from the critical date, when this dispute was crystallized, in 1992. During this period, it was Singapore that unilaterally tried to contact Malaysia and called for the exchange of documents while the latter remained silent. The second stage began when premiers of both parties initiated the first meeting regarding the dispute in January 1992. After several meetings, they both failed to reach a compromise and then finally agreed that the legal status of the three disputed islets should rest in the hands of the International Court of Justice. Later, a special agreement was signed in 2003, binding on the parties that they should comply with the Court's judgment on the dispute.

⁵ The Singapore Strait is the east part of the Malacca Strait.

⁶ Sovereignty over Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh, Middle Rocks and South Ledge (Malaysia/ Singapore), Judgment, I.C.J. Reports 2008, p. 73, para. 192. [hereinafter Pedra Branca Judgment]

The 2008 judgment on the Pedra Branca dispute is de facto unfinished, leaving a more challenging and complicated result for the two claimants to deal with. According to the Court, Pedra Branca and Middle Rocks were respectively awarded to Singapore and Malaysia, while the legal status of South Ledge remains undecided because it falls within overlapping territorial waters of Pedra Branca and Middle Rocks. The Court only provided that South Ledge's sovereignty should be decided when the territorial waters in this area are determined.⁷

The final settlement of this dispute is still ongoing. Singapore and Malaysia established a joint technical committee to delimit the maritime boundary of Pedra Branca and Middle Rocks. In June 2017, Malaysia applied to the Court for the revision and interpretation on the 2008 Judgement, based on three new pieces of evidence it had acquired in 2016 and 2017. According to Malaysia, the documents decoded by the National Archives of the United Kingdom in 2013 indicated that the British and Singaporean administration previously considered Pedra Branca not a part of Singapore.⁸ Singapore officially questioned and protested Malaysia's application while the Court responded to this and initiated the public hearing process soon after. However, Malaysia withdrew this application later without disclosing any reason, leaving its right to challenge Singapore's sovereignty over Pedra Branca abandoned permanently.⁹

Strategies Adopted by Singapore

Peaceful contact and negotiation

Singapore persisted in its contact and negotiation strategy for about 20 years before both parties agreed to submit the Pedra Branca dispute to the Court. By adopting this strategy, Singapore manifested long-term patience and proactivity in a peaceful manner during this period. During the first stage of the process of the Pedra Branca dispute, Singapore unilaterally tried several times to contact Malaysia and requested the exchange of documents while the latter remained silent. When the second stage began in early 1992,

⁷ Ibid., 101, paras. 298-299.

⁸ See Channel Newsasia, "Malaysia files new application to ICJ on Pedra Branca ruling; Singapore says it's 'without merit'", *CNA*, July 1, 2017, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/malaysia-files-new-application-to-icj-on-pedra-branca-ruling-8995044>; and "3 UK documents cited for Malaysia's application to revise Pedra Branca decision", *CNA*, Feb. 4, 2017, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/3-uk-documents-cited-for-malaysia-s-application-to-revise-pedra--7615510>.

⁹ The Straits Times, "Malaysia withdraws Pedra Branca case; Singapore 'happy to agree', says Vivian Balakrishnan", *The Straits Times*, May 30, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/politics/malaysia-withdraws-pedra-branca-case-singapore-happy-to-agree-says-vivian-balakrishnan>.

premiers of both countries agreed and initiated formal meetings on the dispute. Singapore and Malaysia held several negotiations on the disputed islets. However, they could not reach a final agreement after years of efforts. Then a special agreement regarding submitting the dispute to the Court was made and the arbitration process was initiated in 2003.

Malaysia mainly remained silent during the first stage. The only mutual contact between Malaysia and Singapore took place in 1981, when the prime ministers of both countries agreed on resolving the dispute bilaterally.¹⁰ Thereafter Singapore kept contacting Malaysia and calling for the latter's response unilaterally for about 10 years. In fact, lacking strong evidence limited Malaysia's reaction to Singapore's request after the Pedra Branca dispute was crystallized. Compared to its obvious long-term peaceful control of the disputed islands in the Sipadan and Ligitan case, Malaysia could not provide strong evidence of showing similarly effective conduct on Pedra Branca.¹¹ On the other hand, Malaysia's request of the Court for revision on the Pedra Branca judgment in 2017 indicates that it lacks sufficient proof while even relying on its opponent's newly decoded archives regarding this disputed island.¹² As a result, it is rational that Malaysia remained silent and waited patiently for new evidence.

However, there were two factors that forced Malaysia to respond to Singapore's request for bilateral negotiations on this dispute. The first factor was that Pedra Branca was officially marked as Singaporean territory, which immediately pushed the Malaysian central government to respond. Singapore introduced Pedra Branca as one of its territories in its official publication "Singapore Facts and Pictures" in January 1992.¹³ Then the dispute was revived to some extent by Malaysia's protest. The second factor was that two indirect events drew the Malaysian central government's attention to the dispute. The first event was Singapore's first unilateral proposal in 1989 suggesting that the dispute should be submitted to the Court. The second event was that in a public statement, a United Malays

¹⁰ Case Concerning Sovereignty over Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh, Middle Rocks and South Ledge (Malaysia/Singapore), Memorial of Singapore, International Court of Justice, 2004, 25. [hereinafter Memorial of Singapore]

¹¹ See Case Concerning Sovereignty over Pulau Ligitan and Pulau Sipadan (Indonesia/Malaysia), Judgement, I.C.J. reports 2002.

¹² In fact, Malaysia's premier Tun Hussein Onn admitted "Malaysia is not clear about the sovereignty over Pedra Branca" in a mutual meeting between premiers of Singapore and Malaysia. This news was firstly reported by Singapore's Channel Newsasia in November 2007, but it was withdrawn later. However, the article was reprinted by another media, see Property Highlights of Singapore, "S'pore Says Malaysia Has No Evidence To Show It Owns Pedra Branca", Nov. 7, 2007, <http://propertyhighlights.blogspot.com/2007/11/spore-says-malaysia-has-no-evidence-to.html>.

¹³ Case Concerning Sovereignty over Pedra Branca/Pulau Batu Puteh, Middle Rocks and South Ledge (Malaysia/Singapore), Memorial of Malaysia. International Court of Justice, 2004, pp. 102-103. [hereinafter Memorial of Malaysia]

National Organization (UMNO) political leader who was also an officer of Johor State claimed that Pedra Branca belongs to Malaysia.¹⁴

It is obvious that Singapore's persistence in adopting the strategy of peaceful contact and negotiation changed Malaysia's attitude eventually. However, it is possible that Malaysia would not have responded actively or initiated a peaceful resolution to the dispute with Singapore if the latter took action during this period that was recognized as unfriendly by the former. Furthermore, the process of bilateral negotiation would not be taken so seriously with the interference of violent events such as conflicts if any of the claimants, especially Singapore that de facto controlled Pedra Branca adopted radical policies towards the dispute. In fact, both Singapore and Malaysia remained restrained and behaved peacefully even during the process of settling maritime demarcation in this region after the 2008 judgment.

It is of great importance that Singapore proactively adopted a peaceful way of settling the dispute. This behavior is rooted in Singapore's deep dependence on Malaysia. For Singapore, this is a well-calculated strategy to successfully prevent Malaysia's potential unfriendly actions against it. Specifically, there are three reasons quoad hoc. Firstly, Singapore's prosperity benefited from a peaceful regional environment. As a small city-state, Singapore was unwilling to face threats from an unfriendly Malaysia that has more population, land and resources. Territorial disputes might generate conflicts, which would lead to an economic recession that Singapore would not be able to bear. In order to ensure its security, Singapore had to prudently consider its policies relating to Malaysia and the latter's possible reactions regarding the dispute. Secondly, Singapore relies on Malaysia's support in many economic sectors. The latter provides resources such as fresh water, electricity, construction soil, as well as human labor to Singapore. Besides, there is a considerable amount of Singaporean citizens' relatives living in Malaysia. These economic and social links limited Singapore's policy options against Malaysia. Thirdly, as the de facto sovereign of Pedra Branca, Singapore was in favor of long-term peaceful conduct on this island without Malaysia's protest. Moreover, the key evidence that Johor recognized Singapore's ownership over Pedra Branca in 1953 strongly supported Singapore's claim. Based on the evidence, Singapore was confident in competing for sovereignty over Pedra Branca through either bilateral negotiations or international arbitration.

Claim expansion

Singapore's attempt of expanding its claim to Middle Rocks and

¹⁴ See *Memorial of Singapore*, Singapore Online Archive, "MFA Press Statement Regarding the Important UMNO Political Leaders in Johor Claiming that Pedra Branca Belongs to the State of Johor", 36, <http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/data/pdfdoc/552-1991-09-16.pdf>

South Ledge was smart and ambitious, though it eventually failed on the surface. Both Singapore and Malaysia's claims of these two deserted islets are based on insufficient evidence. Singapore's claim failed because it could provide no proof of effective control over them. Nevertheless, it could be inferred that Singapore had de facto predicted this possibility when it first questioned Middle Rocks and South Ledge's sovereignty status, for the reason above.

At the beginning of the case, the legal status of these three islets in the era before the establishment of Horsburgh Lighthouse was uncertain. Moreover, the result of Middle Rocks' judgment was comparatively more difficult to predict compared to Pedra Branca, which was effectively controlled and managed for more than a century. Middle Rocks is too small for human habitation. This islet attracted little attention from any governments in its long history. Singapore's claim to this islet was only based on the principle of contiguity that all the disputed islets actually belong to the same underwater maritime entity so that they were geologically the same. It was rejected by the Court because geographical contiguity is not a valid reason to claim sovereignty over adjacent territory, as judge Max Huber explained in the *Island of Palmas* case one century ago.¹⁵ As it can be seen from the proceeding of this case, Malaysia's winning of sovereignty over Middle Rocks was supported by the previous judgement of Johor having the original title to islands that lie north of the southern bank of Singapore Strait in this region, which was evaluated by the Court from only two indirect and vague pieces of evidence.¹⁶

Based on the analysis above, the motivation of Singapore's putting forward the dispute of Middle Rocks and South Ledge was aimed at changing the game result and enhance its success rate of winning Pedra Branca. Both claimants faced a zero-sum game when Pedra Branca was the only target to compete for. The game then evolved into a more complicated one with three more results after the dispute of Middle Rocks and South Ledge were crystallized. The four possible results were:

1. All islets belong to Singapore;
2. All islets belong to Malaysia;
3. Pedra Branca to Singapore, Middle Rocks to Malaysia, South Ledge remains unknown;
4. Pedra Branca to Malaysia, Middle Rocks to Singapore, South Ledge remains unknown.

¹⁵ *Pedra Branca Judgement*, 99, para. 289.

¹⁶ The first piece of evidence is the 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty, which divided British and Dutch colonies in this region. The second piece of evidence is British reports on Johor's rule over the people of Orang Laut who mainly inhabited in the region of the east entrance of Singapore Strait (including the disputed islets in the *Pedra Branca* case). See *Memorial of Malaysia*, 68-70.

The fourth result should be impossible because Singapore only effectively controls Pedra Branca. According to all the evidence provided by both parties later in the proceeding of the dispute, the rank of probabilities from higher to lower should be Result 3 > Result 1 > Result 2 > Result 4 = 0. In other words, Singapore was more likely to win Pedra Branca at the beginning of this case.

| Results | Islets | Pedra Branca | Middle Rocks | South Ledge |
|--------------------|--------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| Singapore/Malaysia | | 1, -1 | 1, -1 | 1, -1 |
| Singapore/Malaysia | | -1, 1 | -1, 1 | -1, 1 |
| Singapore/Malaysia | | 1, -1 | -1, 1 | N/A |
| Singapore/Malaysia | | -1, 1 | 1, -1 | N/A |

For Singapore, Middle Rocks, as well as South Ledge, are not as important as Pedra Branca because the latter is more valuable, though it would be more favorable that Singapore acquires all these three islets. These maritime features are located at the center line of the north navigation channel of the Singapore Strait. It is because Pedra Branca is geographically larger and more exploitable than Middle Rocks that it was chosen as the ideal location for the Horsburgh Lighthouse. However, it is quite obvious that Singapore attempted to call for more interests by putting the dispute of Middle Rocks and South Ledge forward. If this proposal was accepted Malaysia, Singapore then would have the right to claim more disputed islets as well as the territorial waters around them, rather than just claim Pedra Branca while acquiescing to Malaysia's sovereignty over Middle Rocks. If the Court did not recognize Malaysia's indirect evidence regarding Johor's original title to the islets in this region, it would then be possible for Singapore to be awarded all the disputed islets after the evaluation of the vague evidence that it investigated and managed shipwrecks in the area of their territorial waters.¹⁷

On the other hand, the result of Middle Rocks being awarded to Malaysia might be more acceptable for it, compared to Singapore's winning all the islets. This result means minimizing loss of interests, from Malaysia's point of view. Singapore might have predicted this more probable result ahead of the arbitration, considering that it should have been well acquainted with the evidence relating to these islets. Therefore it is tactful that Singapore proactively put the dispute of Middle Rocks and South Ledge forward to expand the potential interests it could claim. If Singapore failed to win the sovereignty over these extra two islets, the result should be

¹⁷ About Singapore's records of investigation and management on shipwrecks, see Memorial of Singapore, 118-122.

acceptable because of its chance of acquiring sovereignty over Pedra Branca was comparatively certain.

Gradual resolution

The strategy of gradually resolving the dispute adopted by Singapore was *de facto* not clearly mentioned in either stage of the procedure of contacts and negotiations between the two claimants. However, as seen from the content of the 2003 special agreement, Singapore and Malaysia consented to submit the dispute regarding sovereignty over these three islets to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) while laying the dispute of territorial waters aside. Apparently, according to the practices of the parties, the resolution procedure of the Pedra Branca dispute was divided into two chronological parts: the islets and then the related territorial waters. Moreover, technically speaking, the first stage of this dispute has not concluded yet because the legal status of the South Ledge remains undecided. The joint technical committee, which was set up by Singapore and Malaysia according to the 2008 Judgement, has been operating the maritime delimitation of this region for about 10 years.

There was not enough reports or archives that helped explain the reason why they decided to gradually resolve the Pedra Branca dispute. It can only be inferred from the result of these two claimants' compromise after years of negotiations that no matter which party first mentioned the idea of gradual resolution, both of them seemed to agree on this approach without hesitation. For Singapore, the Pedra Branca dispute is so complicated that it could not be resolved completely, considering the evidence that each party could provide. Apparently, the advantage of a gradual resolution to the Pedra Branca dispute is that a preliminary outcome of the dispute could help prevent potential conflict generated after the probable consequence of both parties not being able to reach a final plan of integrated division regarding these territories, no matter what the final result would be. In this case, the preliminary outcome means the attribution of the two islands. A preliminary outcome of this dispute also limited further acts of either party because both Singapore and Malaysia could not bear the accusation of not complying with the international law if either of them adopted violent methods to deal with the remaining disputes, once they were bound by the 2003 special agreement and the 2008 judgment.

The second reason why the parties in this case, especially Singapore, adopted the plan of gradual resolution, is that they intended maintain favorable bilateral relations. Singapore is geographically the smallest country in this region. It has to rely on its neighbors such as Malaysia for cooperation on regional economics and security. This limited Singapore's choice of policy when facing the Pedra Branca dispute. Singapore was able to manifest its friendly posture to the most extent by revealing its will to

gradually and peacefully resolve the dispute. On the other hand, it was able to lead Malaysia to at least remain restrained at all stages of the resolution procedure, so that the dispute would be settled in a comparatively easier way.

The third reason for the adoption of gradual resolution in the Pedra Branca dispute was influenced by the geographical situation of these three islets. They are not only close to the mainland of each party, especially Malaysia, but also to their neighbor—Indonesia. There were no clear historical boundaries in this region. The negotiations held in 1969 between Indonesia and Malaysia on their maritime borders in the east Malacca Strait region had avoided the territorial waters around Pedra Branca.¹⁸ If Singapore and Malaysia intended to resolve the dispute regarding the islets together with the territorial waters, they would have been faced with the possibility that Indonesia might intervene, which would lead to a much more complicated tripartite dispute. In other words, no matter what the result of the attribution of these three islets would be, it is inevitable that Indonesia would be involved in the maritime demarcation of this region, considering these islets also lie no further than 8 nautical miles away from Indonesia's Bintan Island. The result of the 2008 Judgment then has *de facto* brought a new variable to the maritime demarcation of this region, which is Pedra Branca being awarded to Singapore. Therefore, considering the complicated geographical situation and the possible results, it is wise for these parties to divide the disputed islets apart from the demarcation of territorial waters and implement gradual resolution.

The Court had left a more complicated situation for the rest of the dispute by only providing an explanatory statement regarding the legal status of South Ledge. In fact, a low-tide elevation like South Ledge is valid to provide a base point for determining a baseline of territorial sea. However, the current situation has now been reversed, which means Singapore and Malaysia should delimit the territorial waters first, and then the dispute of South Ledge would be settled together with that. Hence it could be predicted that, in order to reach a final solution to the maritime demarcation as well as the legal status of South Ledge, both parties, especially Singapore would continue to seek gradual resolution to the rest of the dispute if it is necessary.

Skillful advocacy

There are two important principles of international law regarding the strategy of territorial acquisition adopted by Singapore during the proceedings of the Pedra Branca case. Singapore skillfully strengthened its claim and influenced the Court's judgment by taking advantage of them. The first principle is effectivités. Singapore *de facto* did not directly mention this

¹⁸ Pedra Branca Judgement, 90-91, paras. 257-258.

principle in its written or oral statements, instead, it just emphasized that it has implemented long-term peaceful control and administration over Horsburgh Lighthouse as well as Pedra Branca. During the stage when the Court was examining the legal status of Pedra Branca before the establishment of the lighthouse, Singapore attempted to claim that this island was *terra nullius*.¹⁹ However, it lacked strong evidence to support this claim. In fact, there was evidence from the former British Singaporean official records and reports indirectly showing that Johor ruled the region where these three disputed islets are located. Although this evidence had time discontinuity, the Court recognized their effects on proving Johor's original title to the islets in this region.²⁰ As can be seen from the Court's opinion, the result of Singapore's claim of *terra nullius* regarding these three islets was uncertain at the beginning of this stage. It can be further inferred that Singapore was actually aware of the uncertainty of this claim, according to the evidence regarding Pedra Branca known to it.

Singapore then began to emphasize its conduct in Pedra Branca as well as the surrounding waters after the Court confirmed Johor's original title to this island. There are four pieces of evidence regarding Singapore's effective control over Pedra Branca:

1. Singaporean authority's management of shipwrecks in this island's surrounding waters;
2. The Port Authority of Singapore approved foreign oceanic investigators' landing on Pedra Branca, including several Malaysian officials;
3. Singaporean navy installed military communication facilities on Pedra Branca, which manifested contents of its control and became diversified;
4. Singapore has disclosed its plan of land reclamation on Pedra Branca, though it was not implemented.²¹

On the contrary, Johor and Malaysia failed to protest any of Singapore's conduct for more than one hundred years, which implied Singapore's control was peaceful in this period.

The advocacy regarding effective control of Pedra Branca adopted by Singapore skillfully avoided a logical fallacy which might appear to be adverse to Singapore's claim, due to its failure of providing strong evidence to support its respective claims during the two stages. In fact, the content of this advocacy is similar to the characteristics of the principle of prescription. However, Singapore did not put forward its claim based on the principle of prescription, and it simply focused on emphasizing its long-term effective control.

¹⁹ Pedra Branca Judgment, 29-30, paras. 39-42.

²⁰ See Johor's ruling over the maritime nomad Orang Laut who mainly inhabited in the region where Pedra Branca lies, *Ibid.*, 37, 49, 99, paras. 68-69, 117, 288-290.

²¹ See Memorial of Singapore, 109-113, 116-118, 123-124, 107-109.

There are two advantages for Singapore not adopting the principle of prescription to support its claim. Firstly, during the beginning stage when the Court was deciding the original title to Pedra Branca, Singapore was able to claim it, or at least claim this island was *terra nullius*, rather than passively admitting that it originally belonged to Johor. As a matter of fact, the indirect evidence which benefits Malaysia's claim of Johor's original title to Pedra Branca was not strong enough. There would be a chance that the Court might consider this island *terra nullius* for both claimants and lacked sufficient evidence of sovereignty. If this result took place, it would contradict the situation that Singapore adopted the principle of prescription to support its claim at the beginning. This is because the claim in this way requires a precondition that the opponent claimant, in reality, initially owned the disputed territory. On the other hand, if the Court confirmed this island was *terra nullius*, it then might be easier for Singapore to win the title to Pedra Branca, because the amount of evidence that it acquired would help prove that it gained the title through its effective control. Meanwhile, since the Middle Rocks shared the same legal status as Pedra Branca, according to the Court, it should also be *terra nullius* in this case.

Secondly, Singapore's claim of effective control implied part of the features of the principle of prescription. If Johor had the original title to Pedra Branca, then Singapore's conducts accords to acts *à titre de souverain* and would shift this title to itself. On the contrary, it can be deduced that Singapore gained the original title to this island due to its conduct even though it did not claim this during the early stages of the arbitration. Some of the judges of this case have noticed Singapore's skillful claim. Two of them admitted that Singapore might fail by adopting the principle of prescription, according to the four preconditions of this principle.²² Therefore, Singapore had to reject the principle of prescription in its claim and keep emphasizing its long-term peaceful control over Pedra Branca.

The second principle Singapore used to support its claim is acquiescence. In written statements, Singapore cited several past cases of territorial disputes to explain that the concept of "tacit agreement" is equal to the principle of acquiescence in the Pedra Branca case. As can be seen from the evidence provided by both claimants, there were insufficient treaties that helped precisely define the legal status of these three disputed islets throughout their entire history, especially regarding the complicated title shift of Pedra Branca. The original legal status of these disputed islets is *de facto* assessed by two indirect pieces of evidence. As a consequence, the existing cases in international law are critical supplementary explanations to the conduct of the parties.

From Singapore's point of view, there are two factors that contributed to the shift of the title to Pedra Branca, one is Singapore's long-term

²² Judges Simma and Abraham, Joint dissenting opinion of Judges Simma and Abraham, International Court of Justice, 2008, 122.

effective control over this island, the other is Johor and Malaysia's long-term acquiescence to such acts. According to Singapore, this shift of title was guided by a so-called "tacit agreement". As it can be seen from Singapore's statement, there are several cases cited to support this claim, including the Island of Palmas case, the British—Norway Fishery Case, the Gulf of Maine case, the Temple of Preah Vihear case, etc.²³ Singapore argued that the sovereignty over a specific territory could be shifted by a formal written agreement, or by a "tacit agreement" generated by the conduct of the parties.

The Court accepted Singapore's explanation by directly citing the Temple of Preah Vihear case. According to the Court, one party should remain silent to the other party's conducts to generate the "tacit agreement". The court also emphasized this concept by citing the Island of Palmas case as well as the Gulf of Maine case. The concept of acquiescence is "equivalent to tacit recognition manifested by unilateral conduct which the other party may interpret as consent".²⁴ According to this explanation, Malaysia's acquiescence means abandoning its title to Pedra Branca and consenting to the result that this title was gradually shifted to Singapore over a period of time. Apparently, Singapore's adoption of the principle of acquiescence is affirmed by the Court in this way.

Conclusion

For any claimant who is involved in a territorial dispute, it should be a comparatively better solution that it strives to resolve the dispute by means of negotiations or international arbitration when a compromise cannot be reached, rather than violent actions. In order to maximize its own interests, every party should behave rationally, because the interests may not only include potential resources usable from the disputed territories, but also relations with the opponent, especially when both parties benefit from their interdependence. Fully taking advantages of customary international law and international treaties is an ideal choice, especially for a claimant whose power is comparatively weaker. If all parties fail to reach a final solution through negotiations, then resorting the dispute with international arbitration and complying with the result are also reasonable moves.

The Pedra Branca case has shown a comparatively new approach of territorial acquisition. As a new case, it fully manifested how a small country could peacefully and legally acquire disputed territories from a stronger neighbor without damaging their bilateral relations. The artful strategies adopted by Singapore has promoted its success in winning sovereignty of Pedra Branca from Malaysia in an amicable way. For claimants whose powers are comparatively weaker in any territorial dispute (for example, in the South China Sea disputes), it is possible that they might win sovereignty

²³ See Memorial of Singapore, 158-188.

²⁴ Pedra Branca Judgement, 50-51, paras. 120-122.

over disputed territories, as long as they devote all their efforts to persist in finding peaceful resolutions such as bilateral contacts and negotiations, and provide enough strong evidences to prove their sovereignty manifestations, including long-term effective control over the disputed territories. It can be further predicted that the remaining part of the Pedra Branca dispute could be resolved in the same peaceful and amicable way as before. No matter the final result, this case is significant for any other territorial dispute which remains to be settled.

TERRITORIAL AUTONOMY AND SECESSION AS STRATEGIES OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: CASE OF NAGORNO KARABAKH

Abstract: The article identifies and examines territorial autonomy and secession as conflict management strategies applied in Nagorno Karabakh. It demonstrates that neither of these strategies provided sustainable peace and indicates some of the underlying causes of this failure. Through the case of the NKAO, the article challenges the role of institutional autonomies as an encouraging factor of secession *per se*. In our case, the autonomous period indeed prepared the groundwork for mobilization, albeit for the opposite reason – it did not guarantee the ethno-territorial rights of the minority. In fact, it caused an increase in cultural, economic and political discrimination against the local Armenians. Secession put an end to intercommunal violence, but failed to establish peace. The secession of Karabakh and the factors leading up to it provide grounds for qualifying it as a resort to the remedial right, which has been instrumentalised by present and previous leaders of Armenia.

Keywords: *Nagorno Karabakh, peace and conflict, territorial autonomy, secession, conflict management*

Introduction

The region of South Caucasus has been a place of wars, confrontations and ethnic struggles for most of its known history. Even in modern history, the region did not manage to avoid armed conflicts, with every country in the region witnessing intra- or inter-state wars. The article sheds light on one of those conflicts, namely the war over Nagorno Karabakh, particularly examining the results of two conflict management strategies applied therein – territorial autonomy and secession. First, the article will briefly revisit those aspects of the conflict's historical origins that are immediately relevant to our objective. In the following sections, the article will discuss how territorial autonomy and secession have been applied to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and to what extent these applications were successful in terms of managing the political cleavages of the Azerbaijani and Armenian people residing in Karabakh.

Historical roots

The roots of the conflict can be traced to the beginning of the 19th century, when the Treaty of Gulistan between Imperial Russia and Persia brought most of the contemporary South Caucasus under Russian jurisdiction.¹ The significance of this event can be seen in the demographic shifts that came thereafter.² In the beginning of 20th century, West of the Caucasus, around a million and a half Armenians were killed in the Ottoman Empire and hundreds of thousands were displaced.³ The implications of the 1915 Armenian Genocide are of paramount importance not only for its political and humanitarian impact but also for their influence on the formation of Armenian identity, later nation and state building and demographic shifts in the region. These imprints were yet to surface in national struggles that broke out during the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which will be elaborated upon in detail in later sections.

In 1918, the Caucasus was politically consolidated around the short-lived Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic, which in the same year fell apart into the independent states of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. This period was marked with an armed revolt of the Armenians in Karabakh against the Turkish and British-backed Azeri authorities in 1918 and 1919.⁴ After the extension of Communist rule to the Caucasus, on July 3, 1921 the Soviet Azerbaijani government ceded the disputed Karabakh along with Nakhichevan and Zangezur (regions to the west of Karabakh) to the Soviet Republic of Armenia.⁵ Two days later, upon the decision of the Caucasian Bureau of Soviet Russia's Communist Party Central Committee, Karabakh was reattached to the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic⁶, received the status of autonomous region⁷, and became the Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO). The committee justified this self-contradicting move as a matter of the "necessity of national harmony between Muslims and Armenians, [considering] the economic linkage between upper and lower Karabakh, and its permanent ties to Azerbaijan".⁸

¹ Suzanne Goldenberg, *Pride of Small Nations: The Caucasus and Post-Soviet Disorder* (Chicago: Zed Books, 1994), 157.

² *Ibid.*, 157-58.

³ Christopher Walker ed., *Armenia and Karabakh: The Struggle for Unity* (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1991), 24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵ Gerard J. Libaridian ed., *The Karabakh File* (Cambridge: Zoryan Institute, 1988), 34.

⁶ Hrand Avetisyan, "The Communist Youth League of Transcaucasia under the Flag of Proletarian Internationalism" in *The Karabakh File* ed. (Cambridge: Zoryan Institute, 1988), 36.

⁷ Gerard J. Libaridian ed., "Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan finalizing the incorporation of Karabakh into Azerbaijan" in *The Karabakh File*, (Cambridge: Zoryan Institute, 1988), 37.

⁸ Avetisyan, "The Communist Youth League of Transcaucasia under the Flag of Proletarian Internationalism", 36.

In the next section, the article will examine the realisation of the institutional territorial autonomy of the NKAO and its role in the management of inter-ethnic relations and mobilization.

The Territorial Autonomy of the NKAO within the Azerbaijani SSR

The constitutional arrangement that set up the legal structures and functions in Nagorno Karabakh⁹ foresaw a range of ethnicity-specific configurations.¹⁰ The document mandated the use of a non-specified “native language” for procedural purposes, including the organization of education in schools. Moreover, it allowed the use of the national tongue or any other language of the USSR without any restrictions.¹¹ Nagorno Karabakh was to be represented in all republican organs, according to the principle of proportional representation. These arrangements were made as a follow up to the Azerbaijani Communist Party Committee’s request “to form, as part of the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic, an autonomous Armenian region in Karabakh with Khankend as its centre”¹²[emphasis added]. Additionally, Articles 7 and 8 of the law on NKAO guaranteed the economic, political, cultural and social equality of all citizens regardless of their background.

Scholarly work on institutional and territorial autonomy contends with the implications of such solutions as either secession inducing or secession preventing.¹³ Erk and Anderson bring up a vast amount of literature that argues for the efficiency of federalism in keeping states together, thanks to the democratic governance, “skilful division” and negotiated autonomy, notwithstanding the difficulties that come with it.¹⁴ On the other hand, there is a bulk of scholarly work criticizing federal solutions as exacerbating secessionism. In this line of thought, even though autonomy may decrease the chances of secessionism, in the long run, they create fertile ground for

⁹ Here, we refer to the “Project of Constitution of the Autonomous Oblast” discussed and adopted at the session of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijan Communist Party on 3 July 1924, as discussed in Volodya Hovsepyan ‘Навязанная “конституция,” [Imposed ‘Constitution’] Yerkramas, June 30, 2011, <http://www.yerkramas.org/article/?id=17420/>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Shahen Avagyan, Nagorno Karabagh: Legal Aspects, Second Edition, (Yerevan: Tigran Mets, 2010), 24.

¹² Libaridian ed., “Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan finalizing the incorporation of Karabakh into Azerbaijan”, 37.

¹³ Jan Erk and Lawrence Anderson, “The Paradox of Federalism: Does Self-Rule Accommodate or Exacerbate Ethnic Divisions?” *Regional & Federal Studies* 19: 2, (2009): 191 – 202.

¹⁴ See N. Bermeo, “The Import of Institutions”, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol.13, No.2, (2002): 96–110.; D. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); T.R. Gurr, *Peoples versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century*, (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2000).

mobilization along ethnic lines.¹⁵ Furthermore, “ethnofederal arrangements institutionalize competing national projects, increasing chances that secessionist conflict will develop”¹⁶, reducing the costs of secessionism and augmenting it.¹⁷ This school of thought also argues that institutions consolidate autonomy.¹⁸ Pessimistic views of institutional autonomous solutions are particularly shared among the case studies from the Eastern Bloc societies.¹⁹ A special issue of *Regional and Federal Studies* summarizes that federalism in itself is neither panacea, nor a path to conflict.²⁰

In our approach, we are inclined to a “third way”. We agree with Hechter’s approach of studying each case in its own right, since we believe that in federal institutional arrangements, context matters and they usually vary in form and essence and across determining factors. We believe that for proper evaluation of territorial autonomy as a strategy of managing multi-ethnic societies, considerations of institutional design only fall short of yielding substantial explanatory value. Those that argue for federal autonomy as an arrangement leading towards secession and violence, especially those who rely on big data, usually favour their design at the expense of the actual content of those arrangements. Considering the above, we will examine the on-the-ground manifestations of the autonomous design of the NKAO in order to evaluate its efficiency (or the lack of it) for the management of ethnic relations.

The early years of Soviet Karabakh were marked by corrupt management of the region accompanied by oppression and violence. In the 1920’s, these acts triggered the migration of some Armenians from Karabakh to Iran²¹. Many Armenian communists of Karabakh, who had been supporting the reattachment of Karabakh to Armenia, were imprisoned. The discontent of the Armenian population with the situation was expressed by “Karabakh to Armenia” movement, which included members from the entire spectrum of traditional Armenian parties, as well as Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. In 1927, the movement realised a campaign of

¹⁵ I. S. Lustick, D. Miodownik and R.J. Eidelson, “Secessionism in Multicultural States: Does Sharing Power Prevent or Encourage It?” *American Political Science Review*, Vol.98, No.2, (2004): 209–229.

¹⁶ Erk and Anderson, “The Paradox of Federalism”, 199.

¹⁷ Lawrence Anderson, “The Institutional Basis of Secessionist Politics: Federalism and Secession in the United States.” *Publius* 34, no. 2 (2004): 8, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3331204>.

¹⁸ Elena Pokalova, “Conflict Resolution in Frozen Conflicts: Timing in Nagorno-Karabakh”, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 17:1, (2015): 68-85, DOI:10.1080/19448953.2014.986378.

¹⁹ Erk and Anderson, “The Paradox of Federalism: Does Self-Rule Accommodate or Exacerbate Ethnic Divisions?”, 195.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 199.

²¹ Libaridian ed., “An eyewitness account of events in 1920’s by a refugee from Mountainous Karabakh to Iran”, 40.

distributing propaganda leaflets, promoting the idea of unification with the Armenian SSR. The authorities continued to threaten and silence the voices bringing up the issues of discrimination against Armenians or proposing de-annexation of Karabakh from Azerbaijani SSR. Many of these people were deported in the 1930's for allegations of "nationalism".²²

Aside from political oppression, Armenians were discriminated against in other spheres of public life. The economic and labour opportunities of Karabakh Armenians were reduced, due to administrative transformations.²³ Enterprises and industries were put under the jurisdiction of regions outside the NKAO, which resulted in a shortage of jobs and deindustrialization of the oblast. Industrial projects envisaged by five and seven-year economic plans in the sectors of energy resources, provision of electricity, and the food industry were not implemented. Some of the economic activity realised in Karabakh was put under the jurisdiction of bodies from Azerbaijan proper, in places like Aghdam, Barda, Kirovabad, etc., 40-60km from Karabakh.²⁴ The oblast was constantly deprived of its industrial infrastructure and was lacking in new projects. In agriculture, the main industry of the region, progress was hindered by the authorities. Water reservoirs were being designed to disproportionately benefit the Azerbaijani populated villages.²⁵ As a result of these policies, the letter demanding the reunification of Karabakh with the Armenian SSR or making it part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) concludes that "the managerial-administrative functions of the region have all but disintegrated" and resulted in the stagnation in the demographic growth of Karabakh Armenians.²⁶ In the 1950's, per capita capital investments in the NKAO scored around ten times less than the average of the rest of the republic. In the 1980's, this gap decreased to 2-2.7% thanks to an increase in Azerbaijani settlements.²⁷ However, there are also reports stating the opposite, i.e. that NKAO scored higher in almost all economic activities.²⁸ We believe that when it comes to the perceptions of local Armenians regarding their

²² Suren Zolyan, *Нагорный Карабах: проблема и конфликт* [Nagorno Karabagh: the Problem and the Conflict], (Yerevan: Lingva, 2001), chap. 3, <http://armenianhouse.org/zolyan/nf-ru/karabakh/3.html>.

²³ *Izvestia*, March 15, 1988, tr. in CDSP vol. 40, no 13 8.

²⁴ For example, the Sarsang reservoir was managed by Mirbashir. An experimental station in Martunashen was managed from Baku. An automobile repair plant planned to be built in Stepanakert was actually constructed in Kirovabad. The sojuzpetchat of Mars was moved to Aghdam. The management of Mars silk industry was transferred to a much smaller enterprise in Nuchi etc.

²⁵ Libaridian ed., *The Karabakh File*, 43-46.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 45.

²⁷ Zolyan, *Нагорный Карабах: проблема и конфликт* [Nagorno Karabagh: the Problem and the Conflict], chap. 3, <http://armenianhouse.org/zolyan/nf-ru/karabakh/3.html>.

²⁸ Anatoly N. Yamskov, "Ethnic Conflict in the Transcaucasus: The Case of Nagorno-Karabakh" *Theory and Society: Special Issue on Ethnic Conflict in the Soviet Union*, Vol. 20, No. 5, (1991): 658.

economic status²⁹, the difference in standards of living in Armenia and Azerbaijan matter more. In this regard, the living standards in Armenia were much more desirable than those of Azerbaijan.³⁰

In 1965, there were also calls by Karabakh Armenians warning about small scale violence that was perceived to bear ethnic motivations.³¹ The discontent regarding these incidents also contributed to the rise of ethnic tensions. Armenians did not feel appropriate measures had been taken by the authorities in order to address violence against Armenians.

The autonomous status of the region provided Karabakh Armenians the right to develop and use their own language and learn it in school. However, structural obstacles were created that impeded the exercising of this right. Teachers were not allowed to receive certification in Yerevan. Instead, they had to take courses in Baku, where interpretations of many events in history textbooks contradicted those of Armenian academia. “The History of the Armenian People” class was not permitted in Armenian schools in Azerbaijan.³² Moreover, the history books traced the settlement of local Armenians to 1828 and presented the Christian cultural heritage of the region as having a Caucasian Albanian-Azerbaijani origin.³³ Students from NKAO scored lower in admission tests in institutions of higher education in the Armenian SSR.

Aside from the decline in education, the Karabakh Armenians also felt cultural discrimination.³⁴ In the 1930’s, 118 Armenian churches were closed in the oblast. A local Azerbaijani author stated that Talaat Pasha, one of the main responsible figures of the Armenian Genocide, was just an “unpleasant personality”.³⁵ The cadre policy in NKAO was also perceived by the Armenians to be unfair, which pushed local elites to seek employment outside of the oblast. The lack of employment opportunities was also an issue for unskilled labourers, causing young people to enrol at technical colleges outside of the NKAO. Later finding work at industrial enterprises within Azerbaijan starting from the eighth grade.³⁶ Aside from rising ethnic tensions, the discriminatory policies also resulted in demographic stagnation and the decline of the Armenians in the NKAO. On the other hand, as we can see from Table 1.0, the percentage of the Azerbaijani population had

²⁹ Philip G. Roeder “Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization”, *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 2, (1991): 221

³⁰ Yamskov, “Ethnic Conflict in the Transcaucasus”, 640.

³¹ Libaridian ed., *The Karabakh File*, 47-48.

³² Yamskov, “Ethnic Conflict in the Transcaucasus”, 640.

³³ “Nagorno Karabakh: 1921-1988”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Artsakh, accessed February 01, 2019, <http://www.nkr.am/hy/karabakh-in-soviet-period>.

³⁴ Libaridian ed., *The Karabakh File*, 45.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

³⁶ Philip G. Roeder, “Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization”, *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 2, (1991): 199.; Zolyan, *Нагорный Карабах: проблема и конфликт* [Nagorno Karabagh: the Problem and the Conflict], chap. 3, <http://armenianhouse.org/zolyan/nf-ru/karabakh/3.html>.

been steadily growing since Karabakh's integration into the Azerbaijani SSR. This tendency may have led to the loss of demographic lead of the titular ethnicity within the institutional design established out of ethnic considerations. In the perceptions of the Karabakh Armenians, the fear of such a scenario was particularly sensitive due to the Nakhichevan experience, where in the 1980's Armenians had become almost extinct. The demographic change can be explained as a combination of several factors, including emigration of the Armenians due to discriminatory policies, the high birth rate of Azerbaijani population, and the replacement of those Armenians in rural areas with Azerbaijani newcomers.³⁷ This demographic threat contributed to the rise of tensions between the two polities and increased the demands of the Armenian elites to unite the region with the Armenian SSR. On the other hand, some analysts argue that the policies did not have discriminatory intentions.³⁸ Nevertheless, regardless of their real motives, the outcomes of the economic, political and cultural policies of the NKAO exacerbated the perceptions of discrimination among Karabakh Armenians.

Considering the above-mentioned conditions, we can deduce that the autonomous status of Nagorno Karabakh did not serve the objectives for which such autonomies are granted. Moreover, it is hard to see substantial advantages granted to the local ethnicity provided by the region's status. Instead, its people were subjected to discriminatory policies. Such federal institutions usually require special group-specific rights in order to accommodate the local population. In the NKAO, the institutionalization of the region to a large extent served the opposite goal. In this regard, the specific rights of NKAO Armenians can be termed as negative group rights – a condition provided by formal administrative separation based on arbitrary group criteria that creates ground for informally allocating those minorities a disadvantageous socio-political role than the notion of equal citizenship should guarantee. All in all, considering the institutional design of the NKAO as a self-ruling entity and tracing the roots of secessionism (see next section) to its formal setting would be misleading. While we agree that the structure and bodies of the USSR and Soviet Azerbaijan may have played out during mobilization, we argue that the content and the day-to-day realizations of negative group rights played a more important role in causing secessionism rather than the autonomous design of the entity per se. In sum, the application of half-hearted territorial autonomy as a strategy to resolve the inter-ethnic conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis of Nagorno Karabakh ultimately did not bring about sustained peace or provide the means of political, economic and cultural autonomy to the local Armenians. Even though the strategy as a whole failed, policies of this period intensified the inter-ethnic strife in the late 1980's, it is important to note that during the

³⁷ Yamskov, "Ethnic Conflict in the Transcaucasus", 646-647.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 641.

existence of the NKAO, major inter-ethnic clashes did not occur, arguably due to the authoritative character of Soviet rule. At least from the humanitarian point of view, this relative peace can be considered the biggest achievement in terms of relations between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, albeit not thanks to this strategy. Further attempts to address the conflict by granting the de facto independent Karabakh autonomous status within Azerbaijan have not been accepted.³⁹

Secession

Secession is the process where a part of a state pursues the establishment of its own sovereignty. It “severs and recasts the link between the seceding unit (the people and the territory) and the host state, and it reduces the population and territorial scope of the old state while establishing a new state”.⁴⁰ The goal of independent statehood can be reached either through peaceful agreement or by violent mobilization and even civil war. According to Gurr, the potential of collective violence correlates to a group’s relative deprivation, which is the gap between what a particular group perceives it is entitled to in welfare, power or other terms (value aspiration) and what it actually possesses (value position).⁴¹ In a discussion of secession as a right, Buchanan draws an analogy of secession and revolution – “[w]hen the people suffer prolonged and serious injustices, the people will rise”.⁴² Alternatively, to put it in Gurr’s terms, when relative deprivation increases, the people will rise. Wood suggests preconditions in five spheres of public life that engender secessionist struggle: a) geographical – a defined territory of the potential secessionists, b) social – group solidarity, c) economic – falling short of economic expectations, d) political – decline (or perception) of legitimacy, e) psychological – emotionally motivated struggle.⁴³ When the disagreement between the conflicting groups and elites grows and the stakeholders do not believe in the

³⁹ Pokalova, “Conflict Resolution in Frozen Conflicts”, 74.;

Ի՞նչ է նշանակում բարձր աստիճանի ինքնավարություն. ԼՂ ժողովուրդն իր դիրքը- րոշումը հստակ արտահայտել է. Փաշինյան [What does a high level of autonomy mean? The people of Nagorno Karabakh have expressed their position clearly: Pashinyan], Shantnews, March 06, 2019,

<https://www.shantnews.am/news/view/306668.html>; Vartan Oskanian, “Old states and new shifting paradigms and the complex road to peace in Nagorny Karabakh”, *The Limits of Leadership: Elites and Societies in the Nagorny Karabakh Peace Process*. Accord 17 ed. Laurence Broers (London: Conciliation Resources, 2005): 21.

⁴⁰ Anderson, “The Institutional Basis of Secessionist Politics”, 2.

⁴¹ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why men rebel*. (Princeton, N.J.: Published for the Center of International Studies, Princeton University Princeton University Press, 1970), 24-29.

⁴² Allen Buchanan, “Theories of Secession,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 26 (1) (1997): 31-61.

⁴³ John R. Wood, “Secession: A Comparative Analytical Framework,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 14 (1981): 112-120.

possibility of solving their problems, the conflict gains the potential to radicalize and turn into a secessionist war⁴⁴. In a similar vein, Gokcek argues that when the host state seeks to maintain its territorial integrity, it raises the stakes, resulting in hostility and, in case of irredentism, potentially an interstate war.⁴⁵ If such processes unfold along ethnic lines, then “the number of alternatives for conflict resolution becomes even more limited”.⁴⁶

John Coakley identifies four categories of progressively intensifying demands of ethnic minorities addressed to the host state – equality of citizenship, cultural rights, institutional political recognition and, ultimately, secession.⁴⁷ Formally, the NKAO has delivered on the first three demands, falling short of secession. However, as has been demonstrated in the previous section, the realization of the formally assumed obligations left much to be desired. In this regard, having artificial territorial autonomy, Armenians in the NKAO and in the Armenian SSR simultaneously had demanded genuine autonomy and recognition during the Soviet era, even though Karabakh formally had them.

Armenian-Azerbaijani relations regarding the NKAO, particularly the Armenian demands to Azerbaijani and Soviet central authorities, resemble Coakley’s pattern of escalation into secessionist demands⁴⁸ as an end goal based on the principle of self-determination that would have “allow[ed] the minority to be incorporated in a neighbouring state”.⁴⁹ This trend is demonstrated in the demands to the Armenian SSR leadership (1926-1927)⁵⁰, in the demands from Yerevan to unite the NKAO with the Armenian SSR (1945, 1949), several petitions for unification (mid-1960s) and other appeals (1967, 1977).⁵¹ The repeated failure of Soviet authorities to address these demands⁵² contributed to the toxification of the conflict, leading to the clashes in the late 1980s’. The appeals intensified with the introduction of Gorbachev’s glasnost and perestroika that gave the nationalities wider grounds to articulate their demands that had already started to surface in the Khrushchev era. Relative tolerance for exercising

⁴⁴ Anderson, “The Institutional Basis of Secessionist Politics”. 3.

⁴⁵ Gigi Gokcek, “Irredentism versus Secessionism: The Potential for International Conflict”, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 17:3, (2011): 280.

⁴⁶ Pokalova, “Conflict Resolution in Frozen Conflicts: Timing in Nagorno-Karabakh”.

⁴⁷ John Coakley, “The Territorial Management of Ethnic Conflict”, *Special Issue of Regional Politics and Policy* Vol. 3, No. 1, (1993): 4-7.

⁴⁸ Coakley assigns demands for irredentism to the spectrum of degrees of secessionism. Our preference for term “secession” instead of “irredentism” derives from this logic, and does not attempt to underestimate the role of Armenian SSR and its successor.

⁴⁹ Coakley, “The Territorial Management of Ethnic Conflict”, 7.

⁵⁰ Libaridian ed., “An eyewitness account of events in 1920’s by a refugee from Mountainous Karabakh to Iran” in *The Karabakh File*, 40.

⁵¹ Libaridian ed., *The Karabakh File*, 42-48.

⁵² Elizabeth Fuller, “Moscow Rejects Armenian Demands for Return of Nagorno Karabakh,” *Radio Liberty Research Bulletin*, 91/88 (February 29, 1988): 2. apud Stuart J. Kaufman, *Ethnic Fears and Ethnic War in Karabakh*, (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1998), 21.

free and democratic tools coupled with the unforeseen effects of korenizatsiia⁵³ provided fertile ground for ethnic mobilization.

On February 20, 1988, the Regional Soviet of Nagorno Karabakh adopted a resolution to transfer the Autonomous Region of Nagorno Karabakh from the Azerbaijan SSR to the Armenian SSR.⁵⁴ The first case of violence occurred in the village of Chardakhlu, as “a punitive raid” against Armenians by the local Azerbaijani party leader.⁵⁵ The events resonated in Armenia and led to the emigration of ethnic Azerbaijanis from Armenia, most of whom later ended up in Sumgait, Azerbaijan. Later, the chain of events led to small-scale outbreaks in Aghdam and Askeran, resembling hooligan clashes. Reports of deaths in Aghdam reached Azerbaijan and sparked the pogroms against Armenians in Sumgait. The death toll is estimated to be from 26 to the hundreds.⁵⁶ Brutal murders were committed starting from the evening of February 27, 1988.⁵⁷ It seems that the pogroms were in part organized and coordinated by the authorities and in part by local mobs and Azerbaijani refugees from Karabakh, who had been suffering social hardships after their displacement. The conflict escalated, intensifying the refugee flows from both sides⁵⁸, “cleaning” the sides from the opposite ethnic groups over the course of several months. Cases of virtual siege were reported in Nagorno Karabakh, with Azerbaijanis attacking convoys of supplies to Stepanakert, which later transformed into a practical blockade. There are reports of refugees brutally “escorted” from both sides.⁵⁹ On January 12, massive attacks on Armenians of Baku began with proof of government involvement.⁶⁰

As in other ethnic mobilization cases of this nature, as predicted by Horowitz, the conflict quickly escalated into a large-scale military

⁵³ These Soviet policies disproportionately favoured the rule of titular ethnic groups in order to attain and maintain control of the resources of mobilization. For more on the effects of Soviet ethno-federal policies on secessionist struggles, see Philip Roeder, “Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization.” in *World Politics* 43, no. 2 (1991): 196-232. doi:10.2307/2010471.

⁵⁴ Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 399.

⁵⁵ Claire Mouradian, “The Mountainous Karabakh Question: Inter-Ethnic Conflict or Decolonization Crisis?”, *Armenian Review*, vol. 43, no. 2-3/170–171 (Summer/Autumn 1990): 15.

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Fuller, “Nagorno-Karabakh: The Death and Casualty Toll to Date”, RL 531/88, (December 14, 1988): 1–2. apud Stuart J. Kaufman, *Ethnic Fears and Ethnic War in Karabakh*, (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1998), 23.

⁵⁷ Samvel Shahmuratian, “The Sumgait Tragedy: Pogroms against Armenians in Soviet Azerbaijan”, (New York, Zoryan Institute, 1990), 56-60.; Thomas De Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan Through Peace and War* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 34.

⁵⁸ Stuart J. Kaufman, *Ethnic Fears and Ethnic War in Karabakh*, (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1998), 26.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 28-30.; De Waal, *Black Garden. Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War.*

⁶⁰ Graham Smith, “Armenia and the Armenians” ed. in *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States* (London; New York: Longman, 1995), 281.

confrontation, “since the central government will not recognize the right to secede, those who wish to pursue such a course will need to resort to arms”.⁶¹ The stakes were raised to the point of a large-scale military confrontation and consolidated the diametrically opposed objectives, thus paving way for an enduring rivalry⁶² for decades to come. Thereafter, the sides have been contesting the rights of self-determination and territorial integrity, thus gradually transforming the initially intercommunal conflict to an intra-state and inter-state one.⁶³

We will now analyse these developments to evaluate their outcomes as solution-oriented strategies of conflict management. We treat solutions in terms of the right to secede and their outcome. Thereby, we seek to define whether negative or positive peace was reached, where negative peace is understood as the absence of violence and positive peace is the integration of human society.⁶⁴ By the right to secede we are interested in the institutional perspective on the matter, rather than legalistic. In this regard, Buchanan rightly asks, “Under what conditions should a group be recognized as having a right to secede as a matter of international institutional morality, including a morally defensible system of international law?”⁶⁵ Buchanan categorizes two approaches of this right: remedial right only theory and primary right theory.⁶⁶ Considering the former one superior, the author proposes two preconditions for a just cause of remedial secession: when the host state threatens the physical survival of the minority or violates its basic human rights, or when the minority was unjustly deprived of its sovereign territory.⁶⁷ Some oppose secession, arguing that it does not provide the newly established entity with a homogeneous population and does not reduce violence and minority oppression⁶⁸. This argument does not apply in our case, since (due to migration and displacement) Nagorno Karabakh became a highly homogeneous entity by the early 1990’s, with virtually no minorities. In this regard, positive peace has been achieved within the territory of Nagorno Karabakh. This homogeneity also excludes the criticism of Wilsonian self-determination, contending that because of ethnocentric secessionist claims, state boundaries will continuously subdivide. Nevertheless, the politicization of grievances and enduring inter-state rivalry

⁶¹ Donald L. Horowitz, “The Cracked Foundations of The Right to Secede”, *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 14, Issue 2, (April 2003), 11.

⁶² Zeev Maoz, and Ben D. Mor, *Bound by Struggle. The Strategic Evolution of Enduring International Rivalries*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 4.

⁶³ Laurence Broers, “From “frozen conflict” to enduring rivalry: reassessing the Nagorno Karabakh conflict”, *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 43:4, (2015): 559-560, DOI: 10.1080/00905992.2015.1042852.

⁶⁴ “An Editorial.” *Journal of Peace Research* 1, no. 1 (1964): 2.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/422802>.

⁶⁵ Allen Buchanan, *Theories of Secession. Philosophy and Public Affairs* 26 (1) (1997): 32.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁸ Horowitz, “The Cracked Foundations of The Right to Secede”, 6.

hamper the possibility of achieving positive peace between Armenians and Azerbaijanis “changing the minds of men”. Since 1988, around 25,000 casualties have been reported⁶⁹, even though the number varies in various sources. In May 1994, a ceasefire was established between Armenia, Nagorno Karabakh and Azerbaijan⁷⁰ through Russian mediation. Nevertheless, the conflict remains unsettled. To the present day, Nagorno Karabakh is a de facto state with functioning institutions, lacking any international recognition (even from Armenia). This leads us to conclude that the strategy did not succeed in bringing about peace between the societies. In fact, it was “the beginning of new bitterness”⁷¹ that has become “an incentive to ethnic polarization”.⁷² Next, when it comes to the institutional morality of the right to secede as a mode of settling interethnic conflict, the Karabakh case seems to fit the remedial right category. Armenians of Karabakh (and beyond) consider the territory’s incorporation into the Azerbaijani SSR as an historic injustice. The accumulated perceptions of further injustices within the NKAO culminated when acts threatening their physical survival were committed. The peculiarities of Armenian historical interpretations and narratives played a key role in this regard⁷³. Particularly,

“The terms “massacre,” “pogrom,” and even “genocide” became current, and immediate, spontaneous associations with 1915 were made everywhere. The Azerbaijanis, related by race, language, and culture to the Turks, became in Armenian minds the same heartless people who had participated in the genocide of 1915”.⁷⁴

Even though Horowitz is highly critical of secession as a strategy for conflict management or resolution, he agrees that, ‘remedial right’ to secede is a more cautious case, as a “last-ditch response to discrimination or oppression by a central government”⁷⁵ – which seems to be the case in Nagorno Karabakh. The pogroms of Sumgait and Baku, the reported attempts of siege against the NKAO and the numerous occurrences of violence against civilians mentioned above may serve as justification for Armenians to claim the right for remedial secession.

The first president of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, explains that “Under that [remedial secession] doctrine, if a state systematically violates

⁶⁹ В Азербайджане подсчитали погибших в Карабахской войне [The number of deaths in the Karabagh war was counted in Azerbaijan], Lenta.ru, January 13, 2014, <https://lenta.ru/news/2014/01/13/list/>.

⁷⁰ The Bishkek Protocol, Bishkek, 5 May 1994.

⁷¹ Horowitz, “The Cracked Foundations of The Right to Secede”, 9.

⁷² Ibid, 12.

⁷³ Kaufman, *Ethnic Fears and Ethnic War in Karabakh*, 32.

⁷⁴ Richard G. Hovannisian, “Historical Memory and Foreign Relations: The Armenian Perspective” in *The Legacy of History in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Frederick Starr (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1994): 241.

⁷⁵ Horowitz, “The Cracked Foundations of The Right to Secede”, 18.

the civil rights of its ethno-territorial minority citizens on the governmental level and on racial, national, religious and xenophobia grounds, committing violence and threatening to eliminate them or deport, the international community is obliged to secede the territory occupied by that minority from the state, for the sake of the minority's survival".⁷⁶ In this vein, PM Nikol Pashinyan, addressing the UN General Assembly in 2018, made explicit references to the probabilities of physical extinction, by arguing that "[...] to be a part of Azerbaijan for Karabakh means to be totally exterminated. Hence Karabakh must not be a part of Azerbaijan, unless one wants to trigger a new genocide of Armenian people".⁷⁷ In the same year, he also referred to the nature of the conflict as a breach of human rights at the Paris Peace Conference.

Thus, at least from the Armenian perspective, leaving Karabakh under Azerbaijani jurisdiction would have led to the extinction of Armenians there as well, especially when such claims have been voiced by high Azerbaijani authorities.⁷⁸ Due to these contradictions in perceptions and mutual fears, the application of secession as a strategy of managing the conflict has led to shaky or even explosive management of the conflict rather than providing a long-term sustainable solution. To summarise, secession as a strategy of conflict management in Nagorno Karabakh managed to end the intercommunal and intra-state conflict solely by virtue of physically separating the two sides (negative peace). However, the cleavage evolved into an inter-state one, failing to deliver sustainable and peaceful management of the conflict. Coupled with inherent mutual perceptions, mistrust, and a sense of incompatibility of political objectives, the conflict remains a security dilemma up to this day with implications for inter-state and regional stability.

Conclusion

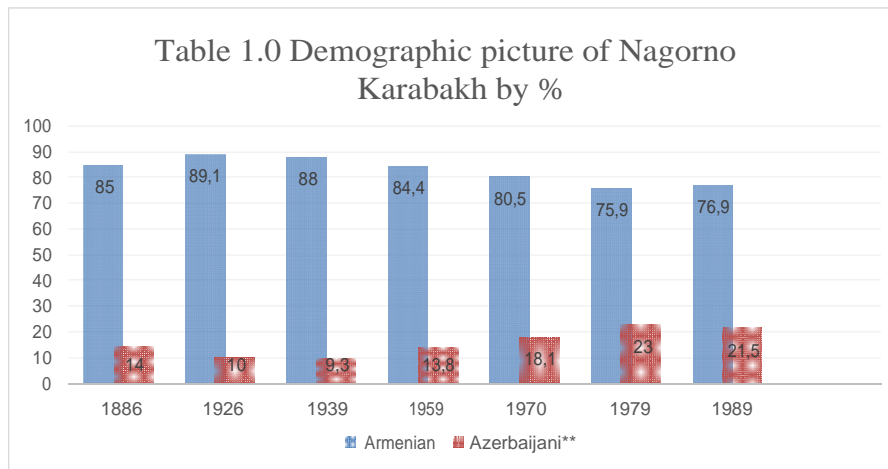
During the course of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict's history, a set of tactics and strategies have been pursued to manage the societal divide. None of them have yielded propitious results. This article has identified and examined two of them – territorial integrity and secession. The territorial autonomy of Nagorno Karabakh within the Azerbaijani SSR as an institutional design to address group specific peculiarities was (to a large extent) executed artificially. Instead of enjoying group-specific ethno-territorial rights, the Armenians of Karabakh were discriminated against

⁷⁶ "Armenia ex-president: We should make use of remedial secession doctrine in Karabakh issue", News.am, May, 6, 2016, <https://news.am/eng/news/326010.html>.

⁷⁷ "Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan delivers speech at UN General Assembly", The Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, September 26, 2018, <http://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2018/09/26/Nikol-Pashinyan-speech/>.

⁷⁸ Walker ed., *Armenia and Karabakh: The Struggle for Unity*, 130.

socially, economically and politically (negative group rights). Moreover, these practices helped fuel division throughout the NKAO era and escalated into a large-scale conflict in the turmoil of the Soviet collapse. Secession also did not achieve sustainable peace in Nagorno Karabakh. Even though it was successful in fulfilling one of the sides' demands, this by no means ended the territorial strife nor neutralized the mutually hostile perceptions leading to the binary polarization of the societies (negative peace). From the perspective of the institutional morality of the right to secede, some events from the NKAO period, as well as incidents immediately preceding the large-scale violence also during the war provide the Armenians with grounds to push for the remedial right to secede. Some elite discourse indicates the presence of this vision among Armenian political leadership. For further research on the efficiency or success of conflict management strategies, the framework proposed by Goertz and Regan that examines the average rate of rivalry, the frequency of severe militarized conflicts and the variation of conflict levels can be applied. This framework can be revealing not only for its methodological usefulness but also for the prominence that the framework of Enduring Rivalries has gained as an appropriate lens to study the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.⁷⁹



⁷⁹ Gary Goertz and Patrick M. Regan, "Conflict management in enduring rivalries", *International Interactions*, 22:4, (1997): 321-340, DOI: 0.1080/03050629708434896. For the study of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict from Enduring Rivalry perspective, see Laurence Broers "From "frozen conflict" to enduring rivalry: reassessing the Nagorny Karabakh conflict" *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 43:4, (2015): 559-560, DOI: 10.1080/00905992.2015.1042852.

FIELD PROJECT RESULTS

BEATA BOEHM

THE UN “SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME” IN UNPA SECTOR WEST, CROATIA

*An experiment in Conflict Transformation between Serbs and Croats
to rebuild and stabilize economic structures at the ceasefire line in an
economically and legally unstable environment 1992 – 1996*

Abstract: This article examines the “Social Reconstruction Programme” of the UN in post-conflict Western Slavonia, Croatia, its historical background, failures and success in UNPA Sector West, from 1992 and the following years.

Under the framework of the UN “Agenda for Peace” and UNPROFOR’s peace-building initiatives the following central points were the goal of peace consolidation between two conflicting parties, Serbs and Croats: Disarming and demobilizing the Serbian and Croatian armies in the UN protected area, the transformation of local police into multi-ethnic security forces, the protection of all inhabitants, the return of displaced persons, humanitarian support as well as social reconstruction and the economic development in the region.

Summing up, the “Agenda for Peace” and the “Social Reconstruction Programme” did not achieve their goals. The goals had been unrealistically high with respect to the timeframe of the UN mandate, the potential of projects to transform conflicts, procuring and providing experts, funding and know-how. It underestimated warmongering of the Croatian government, which led to termination before the mandate ended and “exported” problems to other regions.

To look at the positive achievements, one may summarize that the Social Reconstruction Programme had a therapeutic effect on war-traumatized people’s lives, helped to normalize everyday life in a war-devastated region, initiated socio-economical development in a politically instable environment, and created lasting international contacts and friendships especially for the youth.

Keywords: Social Reconstruction, Conflict Transformation, Pakrac Project, Western Slavonia, UNPA Sector West

Introduction

The Programme was implemented under the framework of Secretary

General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's "Agenda for Peace" and the Initiative of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the United Nations Protected Area (UNPA), Sector West. The project became known well beyond the borders of Western Slavonia as "The Pakrac Project".

Under the Cyrus Vance Plan, the mandate's central points were as follows:

- Disarming and demobilizing the Serbian and Croatian armies in the protected area
- Transforming the local police into multi-ethnic security forces
- Protecting all UNPA inhabitants, and protecting minorities in particular
- Returning all displaced persons
- Humanitarian support and economic development in the region

The use of the word "experiment" underlines the fact that in 1992 almost no experience with peace-building projects in conflict zones existed. Neither the UN nor the implementing organizations had undertaken such a project in a crisis area. The acting project participants, including local negotiation partners and workers, proceeded on the basis of "learning by doing". No official final report of the entire project was ever issued.

During the period following the conflict in the former Yugoslav region, the goal of peace consolidation efforts and peace-building measures was to normalize inter-ethnic relationships between the conflicting parties as quickly as possible and to contribute to the region's economic development through specific cooperative projects. Such projects aimed at helping to rebuild and stabilize economic structures. Refugees and displaced persons of both Serb and Croat origin were to be quickly repatriated in order to support their peaceful coexistence.

United Nations Office Vienna (UNOV) was tasked with coordinating the implementation of the "UN Social Reconstruction Programme" as Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General.

History of the Pakrac Conflict Region

Located about 120 km southeast of Zagreb, 280 km from Knin and 300 km from Belgrade, until 1991 Pakrac was an administrative, economic and political centre for health, education, culture and social issues. It had its own district court, police station, banking institutions, a large modern regional hospital and a local newspaper. There were Roman Catholic, Serb Orthodox and Baptist religious communities and churches.

According to the 1991 census [Census of the State Statistical Institute of the Republic of Croatia, April 1992], the political district Pakrac comprised 68 villages and the two cities - Pakrac and Lipik. Prior to the onset of the armed conflict in 1991, the district had a total of 27,589 inhabitants. Of these, 8,197 lived in the city of Pakrac, divided between

3,033 Croats, 3,514 Serbs and 1,650 individuals of other ethnicities, mainly Hungarians and Italians. Before the outbreak of the war, a total of 17 different ethnicities lived in the city of Pakrac. About 40 % of them were joined in mixed marriages.

This ethnic composition was the result of 450 years of turbulent migration history in the region. Serbs were initially settled here during the Turkish sieges in the interest of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy as a bulwark against the Turks. Another major migration wave occurred at the end of the 19th century due to the region's industrialization, with its economic development attracting many other nationalities from the former monarchy to settle here permanently.

The Republic of Croatia declared its independence from the Republic of Yugoslavia in June 1991, thereby rendering the Serb population living in Croatia an ethnic minority. In return, the Krajina Serbs, supported by the political authorities in Belgrade, declared their autonomy, as did subsequently the so-called independent "Republica Srpska Krajina" (RSK), which was not internationally recognized. On Croatian territory, the RSK with its declared capital Knin comprised Krajina, Eastern Slavonia and parts of Western Slavonia.

Already in the summer of 1991, armed conflict broke out between the RSK's paramilitary forces, supported by the Yugoslav People's Army and the Croatian armed forces. As a result of this confrontation (1991/92) Serbian forces gained control over about one third of Croatian territory including the southern part of Western Slavonia, bordering on Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The armed conflict between the two armies resulted in horrendous destruction and human suffering in the embattled areas. Many towns and villages on both sides of the later ceasefire line were destroyed completely and their inhabitants forced to flee, creating scores of displaced persons and refugees.

Following international peace negotiations, the embattled areas were declared a "United Nations Protected Area" (UNPA) in the spring of 1992. Administratively, the area was subdivided into the sectors "UNPA Sector West" (Western Slavonia), "UNPA Sector North and South" (Krajina) and "UNPA Sector East" (Eastern Slavonia). UNPA Sector West was the only sector not fully under the control of the RSK, remaining under Croatian control up to the ceasefire line.

Since the southern part of Western Slavonia under RSK control directly abutted the part of Bosnia-Herzegovina under Serbian control, after the establishment of UNPA West Serb refugees moved into the abandoned houses of Croats who had fled to the Croatian part of Western Slavonia. Displaced persons and refugees who were not the rightful owners moved into such houses in both parts of the Sector, either under Croatian or Serbian control. For example, on the Croat side, 6,000 Croatian refugees from

Kosovo were settled by local community authorities in the villages Vocin and Dulovac in abandoned homes of Serbs who had fled to the Serbian area. In 1993, the community authorities vowed that the aforementioned refugees would vacate the homes if and when the original Serbian owners were to return.

Although 300 Croatian policemen were allocated to the UNPA Sector West in order to maintain law and order, in February 1995, 5,000 armed Croatian militias infiltrated the Sector and were observed in 40 different positions by UNPROFOR. Croatian military units were gathered in the demilitarized zone 30 km outside of the UNPA. Serbian militias were smuggled in from Bosnia in the south. RSK armed forces shelled Zagreb. Croatian armed forces attacked the Krajina Serbs in two of the four UN Sectors. On 1st May 1995, the Croatian forces overran the UN checkpoints and conquered the Sector West in a “Blitz attack”. As a consequence, about 5,000 Serbs left the Sector. Of the remaining approximately 6,000 persons, six months later only about 1,500 Serbs had stayed in the region.

Participating players in the “Social Reconstruction Programme”

- The “United Nations Peace Keeping Military Force” consisted of 12 infantry regiments with 10,400 UN soldiers and 2,850 additional logistics personnel, including headquarters in Zagreb as well as 100 military observers. Four regiments with 3,500 men were tasked with the implementation of the UNPROFOR mandate in the UNPA Sector West.
- The “United Nations Civil Affairs” unit contained ca. 100 UN experts who were stationed in all four UNPAs and headquartered in Zagreb. They were responsible for civilian affairs and the implementation of political and economic reconstruction.
- The “United Nations Police Force (UNCIVPOL) was responsible for monitoring the work of local police and supporting the local population in cases of complaints regarding discrimination or human rights violations.
- The United Nations Office Vienna coordinated the following organisations:
 - CARE Austria, member of CARE International (CARE – Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere) is a politically, ideologically and religiously independent organization giving support regardless of nationality, ethnic origin, language, culture, religion or gender
 - Help Age International
 - The Human Rights organisation Croatia Anti-War Campaign
 - Volunteer Project Pakrac
 - Austrian Peace Servants

Problems in establishing the UNPA Sector West

Although a peace-treaty had been signed by the Croatian authorities, the representatives of the local Croat administrative units (Pakrac, Grubisno, Polje, Daruvar, Novska, and Nova Gradiska) were either not informed or incorrectly informed by the Croatian government units in Zagreb regarding the mandate of UNPROFOR and the contents of the Cyrus Vance Plan. The local Croat authorities therefore viewed the deployment of UNPROFOR as an occupational rather than a peace-securing effort, serving the purpose of securing the Serbs and returning the "Serb aggressors" to their villages in Croatia. Local media, radio stations and newspapers contributed continuously to spread such disinformation among the Croat population.

Insufficient financial means and administrative support from the UN centre in Zagreb and the late arrival of qualified personnel delayed the implementation of the UN mandate. The lack of qualified interpreters was a particularly thorny problem.

Interpreters were recruited through a private language firm in Zagreb whose owner had contacts to members of the government. She later became a governmental minister herself. Through this contact, it is suspected that the Croat government was extremely well informed about everything happening in the UN Sector, including negotiations.

At the end of March 1992, the first approximately 40 UNCIVPOL observers arrived in the Sector West without any instructions regarding their tasks or functions. The lack of experienced UNCIVPOL leaders during the first six weeks contributed to the overall confusion.

Precious time was lost in negotiating the exact borders of the UNPA Sector West. The Croat negotiators believed that Croat laws and institutions would be replaced by corresponding UN laws and institutions within the UN Sector, therefore they tried to keep the Sector's size at a minimum.

UNCIVPOL assumed the responsibility for monitoring the local police, which as a rule consisted of former soldiers without any civilian police training. However, about one third of the UNCIVPOL observers were also unprepared for their tasks, manifested by insufficient English and/or the inability to drive motor vehicles. Additionally, most of the observers did not have any prior UN experience.

UNPROFOR finally took control of the Sector in July 1992.

The UN Civil Affairs UNPA Sector West opened sub-bureaus within the Sector, frequently together with UNCIVPOL, in order to enable the population to contact UNPROFOR. Periodic meetings with the respective local authorities with the purpose of explaining UNPROFOR's mandate were held on both sides.

Initially, representatives of the Croat administration as well as the local police in Pakrac showed clear signs of disapproving of UNPROFOR

and largely avoided any formal contacts. It was thus also impossible to organize official contacts between Croat and Serb local politicians at the community level. The UN Civil Affairs unit, however, found that the degree of rejection between the opposing sides subsided relative to the distance from the ceasefire line.

The RSK's central government in Knin appointed the mayor of Okucani as the President of Western Slavonia. Thus, it became necessary in the Serbian part of the Sector to negotiate with two politicians, one from Pakrac and one from Okucani. They had different viewpoints on matters regarding Pakrac. The inexperience of the local politician in Okucani regarding civilian matters and his fear of committing administrative errors with potentially negative consequences from Knin thwarted any activities being undertaken for a protracted period of time.

In the Serb-controlled part of Pakrac, the local authority consisted of a team of experienced Serbian experts who had been dealing with civilian issues already before the outbreak of the conflict. These local Serbian community representatives showed a clear interest in the social and economic improvement of the region. They had many constructive ideas and prepared professional preliminary studies on the destruction that had occurred in their respective communities and its possible remedy. Their willingness to collaborate with UN Civil Affairs and various parts of UNPROFOR to improve the population's social and economic situation led to numerous death threats and two arrests by the authorities from Knin. After the "Blitz attack" of the Croat army in May of 1995, Croatian authorities arrested them, too.

Local police were often the ones to bring activities to a standstill. There were reports that Serbian police forces set fire to Croat houses or blew them up, in addition to confiscating Croat properties.

It took major efforts by UNCIVPOL to lower the rate of destruction through arson and detonation of empty houses on both sides. Especially youth gangs from both sides were involved in these activities. Frequent night-time patrols carried out by both sides together with police gradually improved the situation. During the course of the mandate, however, it was not possible to realize the multi-ethnic police force envisaged by the Vance Plan.

The aforementioned UN concept intended to involve the entire UNPA West Sector in the "Social Reconstruction Programme". Over time, however, activities increasingly concentrated on Pakrac as a result of negotiations within the Sector.

UNPROFOR's peace-building activities built upon capacities in the population, linking both sides across the border. The following cross-border activities for purposes of peace consolidation and social reconstruction included the following topics:

Check Point Meetings

In July of 1992, the affected population was given the opportunity to meet family members and other relatives from whom they had been separated since the outbreak of the armed conflict in 1991 at the checkpoints that had been established along the ceasefire line. These meetings, protected by UNPROFOR, were of particular significance for the local population, especially for ethnically mixed families. On average, about 350 persons participated each week in the Check Point Meetings.

Extremist members of the local authorities on both sides tried to prevent the meetings, since they viewed them as acts of unwanted forgiveness. On several occasions, UNPROFOR was told that the meetings could not take place for security reasons. When UN Civil Affairs pointed out that security was within the purview of UNPROFOR, the local authorities generally cooperated and the Check Point Meetings continued.

Local police on both sides attempted in various ways to keep participants from joining the Check Point Meetings. For example, police harassed and provoked participants through surveillance measures. However, the will of the population to participate in the meetings ultimately prevailed, and the police finally refrained from interfering.

UN Parcel Delivery Programme

In connection with the Check Point Meetings, a Parcel Delivery Programme was organized that made it possible to send food, clothing and other personal items across the ceasefire line. Also in this case, there was significant resistance by the authorities, especially on the Croat side, since the programme was interpreted as aiding and abetting the enemy.

UN Village Visitation Programme

As a next step, a Village Visitation Programme was organized. The goal of this initiative was to enable the displaced population to visit their original villages. These had often been completely destroyed. Many people had not seen their villages since fleeing upon the outbreak of the armed conflict, although in some cases they were as close as 10 or 20 km away. Both sides viewed the introduction of this programme as particularly important. Many displaced persons told UN Civil Affairs that they wanted to return as soon as possible, regardless of the unresolved political situation, and that it was less important under which political system they would live, as long as UNPROFOR could guarantee their safety upon return.

The Village Visitation Programme also encountered many forms of resistance at the community level on both sides. One of the most frequently advanced arguments against the programme was the contention that it would support the return of war criminals.

In spring of 1993, local authorities on both sides allowed displaced inhabitants of the Sector to cultivate their fields on the respective opposite sides of the ceasefire line. Subsequently, the Serbian side presented UN Civil Affairs with the wish of 1,100 individuals to work their fields on the Croatian side. At the same time, 75 Croats wanted to cultivate their vineyards located on the Serbian side. All such agreements and/or decisions having to do with direct contacts with the other side required the additional approval of the respective central authorities in Zagreb and Knin.

Social projects for the elderly

From the middle through the end of 1992, UNDP in coordination with UNOV funded an international social worker whose task it was to organize multi-ethnic teams of social workers. Since the communities did not agree to joint seminars with Serb and Croat participants, the international social worker, in collaboration with communities on both sides of the Sector, organized separate seminars with local social workers with the purpose of providing training for old-age care programmes.

Help Age International funded a visitation program providing at least weekly visits to old people on both sides, assisting them with needed care and humanitarian support. Although the teams of social workers acted separately on their respective sides of the Sector, the visitation programme worked very well, and there was an expectation that it would be continued after the cessation of the international support as part of community activities.

The "Volunteer Project Pakrac"

Based on initiatives from CARE Austria and the Croatian Human Rights Organization "Anti-War Campaign Croatia" in cooperation with UNOV, international volunteers became involved in "Social Reconstruction" in summer 1993. Under the protection of UNPROFOR and the aegis of the "Anti-War Campaign", they were registered in Croatia as the "Volunteer Project Pakrac". Throughout the project's duration, both the goals and organizational form of this flexible "grass roots" organization were adjusted on several occasions in order to respond to evolving events and new insights. For this reason, the "Centre for Peace Studies" outlived the "Social Reconstruction Programme".

- 1993 "Volunteer Project Pakrac": "... to re-establish links between the divided Croatian and Serb communities which will allow for the eventual re-settlement of displaced persons into their original homes". These goals were formulated on the basis of the Vance Plan. The above quotation stems from the magazine of the "Volunteer Project Pakrac" (no number or year, probably 1994).
- 1995 "Info Centre Pakrac": "The project's aim is to help re-establish hope in the future and slowly begin to re-open communication between the conflicting parties." Such was the formulation of goals after the re-capture of Western Slavonia in 1995, as a reaction to the necessity to primarily make available legal information to the slowly returning population and members of minorities, but also to the NGOs present.
- 1997 "Centre for Peace Studies" (CMS): "To encourage a creative exchange between theoretical and practical perspectives in peace education, conflict transformation and social justice, through nurturing a fruitful relationship between knowledge and action. To extend self-education through providing opportunities for dialogue and provocative questioning, to raise awareness of non-violence within the wider public sphere and to empower new people to develop this awareness and embody it in diverse forms in their life and work. To consolidate the experience of peace-building work in Croatia and other post-Yugoslav countries since 1991, through allowing those involved to deepen their understanding of such work and continue research and networking in an international context. To act as resource centre for existing and future local initiatives in the broad field of peace-building through partnership, support and information sharing." (CMS 1997: p. 2; this was the formulation of goals after the organization was re-named and specializing in new tasks, on the basis of the charter of the Anti-War Campaign Croatia 1991).

The volunteers were recruited from about 20 different countries all over the world, primarily by the "Service Civil International" organization, whose task it has been since World War I to mediate the recruitment of volunteers for work camps. The first group of International Volunteers arrived in Pakrac in the summer of 1993 in order to participate in the work on the "UN Social Reconstruction Programme". The volunteers funded their own stays, most often of a three-week duration. Many of them, however, stayed longer or returned several times. Some of them continued their involvement upon returning to their respective home countries, for example by engaging in fundraising activities.

In cooperation with work brigades, organized and administered by the communities on the Croatian side, members of the "Volunteer Project

Pakrac” spent six hours daily on clean-up activities in the destroyed city. By virtue of these regular daily contacts, many friendships sprang up between them and the local population.

In afternoons the volunteers worked to establish a “Youth Programme”. The goal of this project was to discourage local youth from engaging in ethnically hostile acts by involving them in inter-active learning and to motivate them to gain a better understanding of the “other” side and to reconcile with it by having them participate in constructive after-school activities. A youth club was opened, offering a broad variety of activities that also took into account the psychological and social needs of young people affected by the war. The Youth Programme was implemented in collaboration with the local secondary school.

The project had been planned for both sides of the ceasefire-line. Due to supposed safety concerns for the volunteers, while the city was divided into two parts, it could only be implemented with a great degree of difficulty and only after initial obstruction from the local authorities. This led to a high degree of frustration among the eager, largely very young and inexperienced international volunteers. Some of them even received death threats from their newly won Croatian friends when returning from deployments on the Serb side. In some cases, they were met with open hatred, something they had not been prepared for.

By 1995 more than 250 volunteers from 19 different countries had come and worked with the population in Pakrac. By 1997 their number had grown to 500. They spent a total of 15,000 hours cleaning and repairing houses, thereby supporting the CARE “Reconstruction Fund” with US\$ 22,000. The Funds Committee credited this amount to socially disadvantaged families, selected by the community’s social services, in order to help them re-pay their loans. The connection to the CARE project provided an important synergetic effect for the reconstruction programme.

The most important contribution of the young and untrained volunteers, who were extremely helpful, trusting and untouched by nationalist sentiments, was their ability, through their idealism, enthusiasm and commitment during joint activities with the population of Pakrac, to awaken and strengthen interest in intercultural and participatory learning, tolerance as well as to diminish prejudices and strengthen “Social Reconstruction”. Their presence had a therapeutic effect on a population that had been traumatized by war. Their programmes appealed foremost to the young people of Pakrac.

By 1995 they had spent approximately 10,000 hours of their “leisure time” on social activities, such as language instruction, sports activities and children’s events, the programming of a weekly local radio programme, in addition to building a computer network at the school with the aim of providing students with international contacts. During the pilot phase of this

project 400 individuals from the United States responded by email to the students' expressed desire for contact with U.S. print media.

The volunteers produced a tri-weekly VIP email newsletter and a bi-weekly journal to address innovative approaches to the "Social Reconstruction" project and distribute feedback from readers, donors and former volunteers, as well as other projects.

In April of 1995, with the invasion by the Croat army impending, volunteers went as living human shields to the houses of Serbs who were particularly imperilled politically because of having cooperated with UNPROFOR.

After the re-capture of Western Slavonia by the Croat army in May 1995, the "Anti-War Campaign Croatia" together with local and international NGOs and UN Civil Affairs, established the "Info Centre Pakrac". Primarily to provide the local population, in particular the Serb minority but also people working at the numerous NGOs in the city, with legal information.

Over time, there was an increasingly pressing need for longer-term peace-building training for the project participants, which led to the formation of the so-called "MIRamiDA Basic Workshop" and other courses. The goal of these courses was to communicate the theory and practice of peace building and conflict transformation to activists, local teachers and other interested parties. Therefore the "Info Centre Pakrac" was changed into "Centre for Peace Studies" in the summer of 1996.

Although it was not possible to achieve the original goals as defined by the Vance Plan, according to later analyses, the project, under the auspices of a "grass roots" human rights organization, turned out to be the most sustainable project in the conflict region. It responded with adequate projects, goals and organizational restructuring to local needs and evolving changes. Moreover, countless international contacts and networks were created and continue to exert structural influence on the region even 25 years later.

CARE Home Repair Programme

As a follow-up project to the Village Visitation Programme, a pilot project for rebuilding destroyed homes was planned. Based on Article 20 of the Vance plan, the goal of the project was to enable the return of displaced persons to their homes. It sought to demonstrate that it was possible for both ethnic groups to return to a relatively normal pre-conflict status and to coexist.

According to official information, in Pakrac 1,101 houses (about 70% of all homes) had been affected by different degrees of destruction through the war in 1991. Less damaged homes urgently needed repairs to be winterized to make them habitable before the onset of the next winter.

With UN Civil Affairs leading the negotiations, community representatives from both sides agreed on a street that had been inhabited by a multi-ethnic population before the armed conflict, now located on the Croatian side. The street “Ulica Malesevic” directly abutted the ceasefire line somewhat outside the city. It consisted of several family homes and was located between the destroyed hospital on the Croatian side and the Canadian UNPROFOR position on the Serbian side. Croats called the street “Ulica Vukovarska”, while UN personnel called it “Street of Hope”. Both names had major but controversial symbolic significance.

Local authorities on both sides of the ceasefire line assured their full support for the project. Owners of the destroyed houses willing to participate in the Reconstruction Programme were subjected by the “other side’s” police to stringent security checks, regarding their possible participation in the former armed conflict.

It was planned to lend the equipment to the families and subsequently make it available to other parties interested in reconstruction of their houses, together with the residential containers provided by CARE.

Before the families could begin their work, however, the clearing of mines from the street and its surroundings turned out to be an intractable problem. This made it impossible to implement the pilot project according to plan. Therefore, the reconstruction project design had to be planned anew and CARE Austria had to re-negotiate its donor agreements.

Meanwhile, on the Croat-controlled side, the tools that had been made available for the pilot project in agreement with the Croatian community administration were commandeered, without CARE’s prior agreement, for general clean-up operations and the renovation of communal facilities, such as schools, kindergartens, the youth club, the culture hall, the community centre, the club house, the former boarding school, the soccer club, the health centre, the Red Cross building Pakrac, the old-peoples’ home, the park, as well as private homes chosen by the local social services. The equipment was also made available to repair war-damaged homes of the so-called “labour brigades”. These homes had been chosen by the community’s social services in accordance with certain social criteria, such as socially disadvantaged families with many children, single old people or the families of war-wounded individuals. The labour brigades consisted of local men who had not been drafted in the war and who were deployed against little pay by the Croat central government for clean-up work on facilities chosen by the community. They worked alongside international volunteers.

During the second phase of the reconstruction project in the summer of 1993, an agreement between CARE Austria, UNOV and the community administration of the Serb-controlled part of Pakrac was signed. The agreement allowed debtors to obtain building materials for the repair of their homes according to a so-called “Bricks for Work” scheme. Bricks and other building materials were “sold” in return for project-related community

services or neighbourly assistance. The communal administration documented such input and offset it based at a fixed hourly rate. The necessary building materials and tools were purchased on the Serbian side. During this project phase, a total of 33 houses in the Serb-controlled side of Pakrac could be winterized in time. The Croatian side thought that the legal framework conditions only entitled aid organizations to "give away". Since the concept of "give-away" did not conform to the guiding principle of CARE – "Help in order to enable self-help" – the project had to be planned anew, in addition to conducting new negotiations with the financial donors.

During the reconstruction project's third phase, CARE negotiated the creation of a revolving fund with the respective communal administrations in order to finance the repair of 100 houses on each of the two sides in the fixed destruction categories I through IV. Giving special consideration to the economic situation in both the Croat and Serb areas, the negotiations led to the establishment of a credit fund with social aspects, granting interest-free loans. This, however, meant that the fund would shrink due to its revolving nature and thus would have to be continuously replenished.

Meanwhile, building materials were again freely available in the marketplace on the Croatian side. Therefore, the establishment of a store for additional building materials was no longer necessary and the absence of a legal framework for aid organizations was no longer an issue.

The process for granting loans from the credit fund worked as follows: On the Croatian side, the population was informed about the lending guidelines for the reconstruction loans through posters, newspaper ads, radio announcements, etc. Credit applicants submitted their requests to the international project manager in the joint UNOV/CARE office that was made available by the community in its administrative building.

Since on the Serb-controlled side electricity had been shut off, applications were announced on posters or through word of mouth and submitted to the manager of the local building materials store.

Funds committees with community representatives were established on both sides by the respective communal administrations. The international CARE coordinator had observer status in the committees. The committees were responsible for determining lending criteria and deciding on loans and repayment specifics. Both sides reviewed, among other things, the applicants' ownership documentation, the requested loan amount and the needed work input and building materials.

Applicants had the option of repaying the credit either in cash or in kind – as for example through building materials that had been donated by other organizations, or in the form of communal work or neighbourly assistance. The hourly repayment rate was set by the funds committee at DM 2,10 - a median rate between the local minimum wage and a teacher's hourly wage.

In cases in which persons were unable to repay the loans through their

labour on account of their age, weak physical condition or other handicaps, neighbours and international volunteers offered help. The labour input provided by such neighbours or volunteers was also valued at DM 2.10 per hour.

Applications were submitted to the fund's committees, which decided on loan distributions. Credits were granted to applicants who met the lending criteria. Repayment terms varied between three and fifteen years, depending on credit contract's terms and affected home's degree of destruction.

Upon being granted a loan, credit recipients were issued vouchers that entitled them to acquire building materials and/or labour inputs on the free market at competitive prices negotiated by the international CARE coordinator.

The goal of the revolving fund could not be achieved. According to the repayment plan, the repayment of the loans that had disbursed did not start before the premature end of the project. Effective 25 Oct. 1995, the credit repayment collection became the responsibility of the Pakrac community. At the project's handover the community assumed the contractual obligation to finance social projects from the fund.

In accordance with the plan, 100 houses were renovated on the Croatian side. While 160 credit applications were positively reviewed on the Serbian side, the goal of "100 houses" was not met due to procurement problems. On account of the international embargo against Serbia, building materials and tools were in scant supply. When taking into account all project phases of the reconstruction programme, a total of about 500 individuals in 150 households benefitted from the CARE reconstruction project.

Most community representatives and private persons welcomed the presence of CARE. Some individuals indicated that they wanted CARE to continue its work after the completion of the UN mandate. Considering that the populations on both sides were informed that CARE was implementing the same project on both sides, people's trust and positive view of CARE should be seen as a positive achievement in conflict transformation.

Due to the Croat military intervention and occupation of UNPROFOR positions in May 1995, about 15,000 Serbs left Western Slavonia, most of them for Eastern Slavonia, and some for Bosnia. The technical director of the Serbian CARE Building-Market was shot dead. Confirmed by the Helsinki Federation for Human Rights in Zagreb, about 1,100 persons were killed while fleeing during the "Blitz operation". According to the Croatian government's statement of 22 May 1995, 188 Serbs were killed during the "Blitz operation", among them 54 civilians. In the middle of May, international human rights observers discovered large areas of recently moved earth in a cemetery south of Okucani. The Croatian government did not comment on these findings and no further investigations took place.

Of the about 2,000 remaining Serbs, a significant majority were beneficiaries of the "Social Reconstruction Programme". Following the "Blitz operation" the Croat authorities arrested 300 Serbs and accused them of war crimes. Among those arrested were UNPROFOR's most important negotiators, the signers of the "Daruvar Agreement" for the Infrastructure Projects and the Serbian manager of the CARE Building Materials Market. Of the Serbs remaining in the Sector, 1,070 applied for Croatian citizenship. Six months later, only about 1,500 Serbs remained in the Sector.

The following aspects of the Croat military intervention that impacted the project, merit special mention:

- Changes to legal framework conditions
- The loss of the majority of the Serb population
- The loss of co-workers on the Serb side, one of whom was killed, and the other one arrested
- The dissolution of the funds structure on the Serbian side
- The partial destruction of the infrastructure on the former Serbian side
- The loss of project documents
- The premature termination of the project and its hand-over to the Croatian community administration

The CARE Small Business Programme

After the end of the Cold War, the society of former Yugoslavia underwent a significant structural change, transforming from a centrally planned economy to a free market economy in the context of a competitive European market.

Authorities and population recognized that developing a small business sector and the accompanying privatization would contribute to normalizing life. However, politicians in Knin and Zagreb supported policies that were unfriendly to the economy, which stalled the successful implementation of certain projects.

As a consequence of the war, economy on the Serb-controlled side of the Sector had ground to a complete halt by 1992. The Croat side, too, was plagued by high unemployment and the lack of productivity. Most males on both sides were part of the local "Milicija". It was thus of paramount importance to initiate activities that would divert these men from their paramilitary activities and involve them in a working process.

In March 1993 CARE Austria conducted a study in the Pakrac region to identify possible projects for supporting small business development on both sides of the ceasefire line. Due to the post-conflict situation, however, here were major challenges for founding private enterprises, including a centrally controlled legislature, the absence of a functioning banking sector,

confusing new tax and legal regulations, as well as the embargo on the Serbian side.

Financed by UNHCR, despite a rather difficult start and a few setbacks, including three different CARE project managers within a short period, 60 small business enterprises made satisfactory progress and achieved important direct and indirect successes for the community:

Austrian professional specialists from the Austrian Working Society for Regional Development trained a group of promising young entrepreneurs and provided basic knowledge about private economic concepts. The young entrepreneurs were expected to pass on this knowledge to others in the region. Joint seminars were planned in Austria for members of both ethnic groups, but since the Serbian side refused to issue passports, finally separate local seminars had to be held.

An “information library” was opened, offering information on Croatian tax and commercial law, banking system, privatization of nationalized property and issues pertaining to the embargo. The library was connected to a network of specialists in both Pakrac and Zagreb.

Seed capital was made available for founding private enterprises.

Synergies were created with the CARE “Reconstruction Project”, especially in the Serb-controlled part of Pakrac, where the embargo made it difficult to procure basic goods.

In light of the extremely difficult economic environment and absence of a normal market, in the Serb-controlled part of UNPA West, CARE decided only to carry out projects, that could be implemented immediately and that could be organized in a production cycle; in order to guarantee a sales market for the products, thereby procuring income for the entrepreneurs so they could re-pay their loans.

On the Croatian side, a “fowl production ring” was created. It consisted of ten chicken farms, a feed company and a slaughterhouse, a transport company with a mini bus and another transport firm with vans, and an agricultural marketing enterprise.

CARE provided the feed company with grain and paid for the processing. The farmers were given a first delivery of chickens and feed. The chickens were plucked at the local slaughterhouse in accordance with Croatian veterinary guidelines. On the basis of commission agreements with the farmers, the marketing company identified buyers for the chickens in the Pakrac area. Both transport companies supplied the market. All of these enterprises were able to offer their products and services to the community. Thus, the production cycle guaranteed at least one market.

A building production ring was also established, consisting of a scaffolding firm, a company for construction tools and equipment, a carpentry shop, and a welding and sheet metal shops. For these enterprises, the CARE Reconstruction Project and other building activities in the region represented the market.

A "hospitality ring" was established consisting of a four-room bed-and-breakfast, a small restaurant, a real estate agency and six private landlords who rented out rooms. The market for the enterprises was created by NGO employee's visits and an increasing number of training seminars being held in Pakrac.

A "fowl production ring" including a mill and a veterinary station was established on the Serbian side. Due to the absence of any kind of public transportation, the two private transport companies were of particular importance.

A "building production ring" was established including a sawmill that processed wood delivered by local lumberjacks, a glazier plant, another carpentry shop and a cement delivery plant. This created jobs and enabled displaced persons and refugees, who were generally well educated but lacked tools and opportunities to find work. All equipment was transportable. It was planned for refugees and displaced persons to take it with them, if and when they could return home.

UNHCR funds were used to help small businesses gain momentum within the aforementioned production cycles. One example was the production of windows used by the Reconstruction Project: wood was purchased for the sawmill, the processed wood was made into window frames by the carpenters, and then into finished windows by the glaziers. These windows were subsequently delivered by the transport company and purchased for the reconstruction of houses. This way the Reconstruction Project created a market for young entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs supported the general population with important goods and services, including highly needed means of transportation. Such interdependencies created synergies between the projects and supported the region's economic development.

This pilot project was probably the first small business assistance programme in Croatia building up small businesses and providing basic knowledge of entrepreneurial concepts, taxes and banking systems. The project's impact as a tool of conflict transformation remains elusive, but it enabled the population to believe in reconstruction and return to "normal" life.

Women's Self-Help Projects

In the Serb-controlled part of the Sector a self-help project was organized by women in the Rahic community. A sew-cooperative was established. It was intended to employ local women as well as displaced women from a former sewing factory. CARE funded the renovation work of the community building of the Serb-Orthodox church and provided the sewing machines. However, the lack of electricity supply could not be resolved during the project period. Therefore the sewing machines had to be

stored in the church until power was restored (see below Infrastructure Projects).

On the Croat-controlled side of Pakrac, a group of women, supported by the Austrian Peace Service, opened a laundry using natural spring water. This was an extremely urgent initiative due to water pipelines having been destroyed in the conflict.

Infrastructure Projects

The ceasefire, which divided the city into separate Serb and Croat areas, also separated the existing infrastructure. The Croat area housed most of earlier infrastructures, including electricity, gas and telephone. The much smaller Serb side contained only minor industrial plants and communal facilities, but it did control the regional water supply system. During the fighting of 1991/92 all infrastructure systems were damaged. Supply facilities that were still functioning were turned off for the “other side”. That meant that the Sector’s inhabitants on the Croat side did not have water and those on the Serb side lacked electricity, gas and telephone services.

In order to find acceptable solutions regarding energy and water supplies for the population on both sides of the ceasefire line, negotiations with local technicians were assumed already in the fall of 1992 under the leadership of UNPROFOR. Proposals were discussed with local politicians on both sides. This led to the so-called “Daruvar Agreement” in 1993. The Agreement envisaged trading water from the Serb side for energy from the Croat side in order to benefit the entire population. Moderate local politicians signed the “Daruvar Agreement”. However, the Serb signers were subsequently arrested, accused of treason by Serb “hardliners” in Knin and the Agreement was frozen.

In December 1994, UNPROFOR succeeded in signing an “Economic Agreement” with politicians in both Zagreb and Knin. It involved the opening of the highway, repairs to oil pipelines, the railway system and the water supply system. The operation of the oil pipelines was resumed in less than two weeks. The highway opened within two and a half weeks from the signing of the agreement and was used by more than 25,000 vehicles already in the first month. UNCIVPOL and UNPROFOR’s Jordanian Peace Keeping Force monitored the highway within the Sector. Outside the Sector EU observers monitored the highway.

The rail-lines for cargo-traffic were cleared of mines by Serbs and Croats and rail transport operations resumed.

The proposed exchange of “water against electricity” remained frozen. Serb local politicians had made the opening of the water pipeline conditional

on UNPROFOR's remaining in the Sector, while the Croatian government rejected the UN mandate being extended.

The water supply system, which had not been functioning in the region for more than three and a half years, was only restored in the summer of 1995 through the efforts of CARE, financed by the "Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance" after the Croats re-captured Western Slavonia in the "Blitz attack".

A partial restoration of the destroyed district hospital on the Croat side was a current topic of negotiation of UNPROFOR. UNOV offered to renovate the general medicine department and the maternity ward, provided that Serb citizens would also have access to the hospital, but no agreement was reached.

Observations regarding the methodology of project planning and project management

The method initially applied was "Participatory observation". Various needs and problems were identified through informal and formal conversations and discussed within the available social and administrative structures.

The first planning phase of the "Social Reconstruction Programme", which international players approached with great idealism, was paired with little experience in conflict transformation.

It soon became clear that no standardized pre-programmed approach on how to deal with the conflict would apply. But it was generally assumed that peace-building measures would only be successful through the gradual and continual establishment of confidence-building measures.

In 1992, during the planning and implementation phase of most projects, it was foreseen that assistance measures in conflict areas would impact the conflict situation and dynamics. It was thought that negative effects could be mitigated through so-called "Local Capacities for Peace" or "Connectors".

Individual projects were developed by sub-contracted NGOs together with local and international experts. Local policy was driven by supra-national interests. The legal framework was constantly changing. Therefore it was vital for responses to be flexible. The entire structures of complex projects had constantly to be adjusted, redesigned and newly planned. Continual redesigning occurred throughout all phases of all projects, with the result that the planning and timing of processes and contractual situations often overlapped or did not converge. For the involved NGOs this caused severe existential difficulties.

A fundamental problem became obvious already during one of the first negotiation sessions, organized by UN Civil Affairs in 1992 on the Croat side of Pakrac. UN Civil Affairs invited representatives of local

institutions, engineering bureaus, physicians, community representatives, international NGOs and local social workers. Prior to the meeting, all participants had received the contents of the agenda, but had not been informed that the UN expected a multi-ethnic and cooperative effort. This resulted in a situation that the Croatian leader of the Red Cross in Pakrac refused to take a seat at a negotiating table where Serbian planning engineers were seated.

As a consequence, future attention had to be given to select suitable partners for project development and to identify persons within existing local networks who met the following criteria:

- the person had not personally experienced traumatic events in the earlier fighting, since otherwise project discussions would be encumbered by the mourning of persons reliving traumatic experiences
- the person was prepared to respect other ethnic groups
- the person showed personal interest in social responsibility

Only after all these criteria had been met, the person's professional competence had been assessed.

In the course of the project's implementation, particular emphasis was placed on informing local decision makers and project participants (for example, people receiving loans) that the project in question assists Serbs and Croats equally on both sides of the ceasefire line. Since direct cooperation, communication and joint actions were impossible due to the physical and political separation within the Sector, special importance was given to positively motivating people with regards to conflict transformation.

The necessity for redesign efforts throughout the entire project period led to significant delays. This resulted in unfunded cost increases due to higher staff expenses and to the loss of project resources. For example, due to the strictly regulated financial guidelines of UNHCR, only a fraction of the resources that had been allocated to the small business project could be deployed at the end of 1993 because of year-end and budgetary restrictions.

Concluding remarks

In summary, the project did not achieve its goal of normalizing inter-ethnic relationships between the conflict parties according to the Vance Plan. The Plan's goals had been unrealistically high, especially with respect to the:

- timeframe of the UN mandate
- potential of projects to transform conflict situations
- providing resources such as experts, funding and know-how

The project's transformative impact on the conflict at hand was limited. Nevertheless, it helped counteract a process of isolation on both sides, something difficult to measure in quantitative terms, as well as to normalize the lives of war-traumatized people in the region.

The project's impact at the local level

The confidence-building measures of UNPROFOR helped normalize the lives of individuals who participated in projects. Some of the projects also strengthened people's positive attitude toward conflict transformation.

The fact that many Serbs who participated in the "Social Reconstruction Project" chose to remain in their homes, where they would face the challenge of living as an ethnic minority, indicates the significant influence the conflict-transformative activities held.

With respect to the region's socio-economic development, the reconstruction and economic projects on both sides contributed to normalizing the conflict situation and set new impulses.

The national level's impact on the project

Due to counter-productive efforts by the conflicting parties' centres in Zagreb and Knin, which were undertaken for nationalistic and tactical reasons, but also due to UNPROFOR's misjudgement of the conflict parties, the most important economic cooperation projects, affecting both sides of the ceasefire line – the "Daruvar Agreement" and the "Economic Agreement" – could only be implemented five months before the violent recapture of Western Slavonia. In retrospect, they thus mainly served the interests of only the Croatian side to the conflict.

It is astonishing how quickly the "Economic Agreement" was implemented at the end of 1994, especially when compared to the otherwise long drawn out negotiations that had been going on for several years and were often futile, the roadblocks that had been set up for its implementation, and the time and effort that had been expended by the players involved. In retrospect, one might gain the impression that the Croat government viewed the implementation of the "Economic Agreement" as a precursor to the impending invasion, especially when considering the fact that by that time, the Krajina Serbs had already been dropped politically by the Serb government in Belgrade. If the Krajina Serbs would have been aware of this, they might not have agreed to sign the "Economic Agreement".

The violent end to the conflict created a new situation, whereby the problem of Serb refugees and displaced persons was "exported" to other crisis regions: After the "Blitz attack" many Krajina Serbs fled to Belgrade, the capitol of Serbia, but they were there unwanted displaced persons and colonized by the Serbian government to Kosovo to strengthen Serbian presence in the Kosovo conflict.

The project's impact on international players

The “Social Reconstruction Program” overstrained the administrative capacities of all involved international organizations, both within the framework of their structures and also their employees’ qualifications.

The administrative intractability created significant problems for donors as well as for international organizations. It is noteworthy that most of the international staff members involved in the “Social Reconstruction Project” in UNPA Sector West were transferred out of decision-making positions and replaced by their respective organizations, despite the fact that *continuity* is an essential factor in confidence-building measures, not least because of the importance of reliable positive interpersonal relationships.

To streamline planning, implementation and reporting efforts, standard project management requires a stable environment. In an unstable environment when incalculable factors become dominant, it is impossible to proceed on the basis of a “three-year framework”. Centralized organizational structures are too clumsy to react adequately to project requirements in unstable conditions. Only one small grassroots organisation, the Anti-War-Campaign Croatia, was able to react adequately with flexible institutional reorganisation according to changing needs and possibilities.

Project workers in crisis regions must have special communication skills, creativity and also additional qualifications. Peace education was offered by the European Peace University in Stadtschlaining, Austria until 2013.

European Peace University was awarded the UNESCO prize for peace education in 1995.

In addition to factors that can change in a project in a stable environment, in an unstable environment both implementing and donor organisations must take increased risks into account:

- security risks
- changes in timeframes
- changes in framework conditions
- changes in project goals
- changes in contracts and contractual partners
- loss of deployed means and resources
- the loss of project partners under contract
- increased costs

A standardized pre-programmed approach in a divided society does not work. The central decision-making structures of international organizations must delegate greater decision-making powers to local peace building actors. The actors need additional training to be able to respond appropriately to the challenges in a crisis region. Administrative efforts accompanying such projects must be extremely flexible.

BOOK REVIEW

Մեր Տաակյան, Инициатива Китая «Один пояс, один путь» и Армения, Ереван, Фонд “Совет политических и стратегических исследований “Китай-Евразия””, 2019,¹(Mher Sahakyan, *China's One Belt, One Road Initiative and Armenia*, “China-Eurasia, Council for Political and Strategic Research” Foundation, Yerevan, 2019).

Prof. Matthew Crosston, PhD

Senior Doctoral Faculty, American Military University, School of Security and Global Studies

Doctoral Studies in Strategic Intelligence / Global Security

Co-Editor, International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence

The book by Mher Sahakyan, *China's One Belt, One Road Initiative and Armenia*, is not just a needed and most welcome addition to this body of literature: it brings valuable new insights into the study of Global Affairs in general. Exhaustively researched and meticulously detailed, this work shows how the reality is that China is pinning a large portion of its subtle global hegemonic hopes on the OBOR initiative (even if it is not formally declaring this to be so). Any attempts, therefore, to better understand all of the massive nuances and subtleties that are undoubtedly going to emerge as a consequence of its development are sorely needed.

Even more so when you consider that to date most of the analyses of the OBOR deal only from the perspective of either Chinese global power or how the United States intends to counter it. A small portion of the literature is beginning to look at the Indian perspective of China's rising influence through the OBOR, but aside from this there is a dangerous and disturbing lack of true expertise and analytical insight on how the initiative might impact the countries that are purposely designed and structured to actually be on China's 'belt' and/or 'road.'

Armenia is one of those destinations and as such this book becomes a model for all future case studies, a platform and rigorous foundation upon which other scholars can add their own unique geographical/foreign policy expertise. Taken in concert will be the only way to truly judge and ascertain the full scope and reach of the OBOR initiative. So kudos to Sahakyan for

¹Միեր Սահակյան, Չինաստանի «Մեկ գոտի, մեկ ճանապարհ» նախաձեռնությունը և Հայաստանը, Երևան, Լորավանք ԳԿՀ, 2018

having the vision and ambition to be one of the first to attempt the building of this all-important global affairs platform and in so doing makes Armenia one of the leading producers of rigorous data on the OBOR initiative and its global impact. This book therefore can stand proudly as a strategic, political, and diplomatic pathway directly to the OBOR initiatives while still taking into consideration the obligatory challenges, opportunities, risks, and possibilities.

AUTORS LIST

Lilit Harutyunyan

PhD, Associate Prof., Head of the Department of Arab countries, Institute of Oriental studies NAS RA. Main fields of her research are: Modernization and transformation processes in the MENA region, Modern history of Lebanon and Syria, Non Muslim (Christian & Jewish) communities of the Arab countries.

Levon Hovsepyan

PhD, Senior Research Fellow of the Department of Turkey at the Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS RA. He is a lecturer at the Chair of political institutions and processes of the Yerevan State University. Main fields of his research include the problems of defense and security sector, foreign policy and socio-political processes of Turkey.

Araks Pashayan

Leading research fellow PhD, Department of the Arab Countries IOS, NAS RA. Main field of her scientific interests are Saudi Arabia, political Islam, Islamic factor in regional and international affairs, Armenian communities of Arab countries.

Maximilian Ohle

Master's Student of International Affairs and Public Policy at the Zhou Enlai School of Government, Nankai University. His research interests include China-Russia Relations, Hierarchy in International Relations and International Security in East Asia.

Richard J. Cook

Ph.D. Candidate of International Relations at the Zhou Enlai School of Government, Nankai University. His research interests include China-U.S. Relations, Hierarchy in International Relations and International Security.

Zhaoying Han

Professor of International Relations at the Zhou Enlai School of Government, Nankai University. His research interests include China-U.S. Relations, Chinese Foreign Policy and International Relations Theory.

Rysbek Mamazhanov

Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of International Relations, Renmin University of China. His research interests include Sino-Russian Relations, Contemporary Relations of China with the Post-Soviet States, the Eurasian Economic Union, International Security and Sino-U.S. Relations.

Beniamin Mailyan

Associate professor, Senior Research Fellow of the Department of Christian East at the Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS RA. His main fields of research are the problems of the modern history of Georgia/Abkhazia/South Ossetia.

Yulong Dai

Doctoral Candidate, School of International Relations and School of History Nanjing University, China. Main fields of his research are territorial disputes, Southeast Asian studies.

Narek Sukiasyan

MA in Regional Politics, Yerevan State University. Research interests: Security studies, Peace and Conflict Studies, Securitization, Copenhagen School, Foreign Policy.

Beata Boehm

Former Deputy Director and Head of Humanitarian and Structural Assistance of CARE Austria was responsible for negotiations, development and implementation of the CARE related projects within the Social Reconstruction Programme in UNPA Sector West Affiliation: Senior Consultant ACUNS, Academic Council on the United Nations System, HOPE '87, Vienna. Research interests include civil conflict transformation, social inclusion of Roma.

Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon: Governance and Violence - Article submitted April 16, 2019, sent for review April 25, 2019, accepted for publication June 4, 2019

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**Editorial Office: Marshal Baghramyan Ave. 24/4,
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Tel. (+374 10) 58 33 82, (+374 10) 56 52 11
E-mail: cejournal@orient.sci.am**

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