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CONTENTS

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SUNNI AND SHIA COMMUNITIES' TRANSFORMATIONS IN LEBANON: CHANGES IN THE BALANCE OF POWER[∗]

Abstract: The paper focuses on the transformations going on in Sunni and Shia communities in Lebanon within the framework of the current changes in the regional balance of power. The analysis of the transformations of the mentioned communities in Lebanon and of their impact on the internal and external levels provides one of the most relevant examples of the "sectarianization" of the Middle East, especially after 2011, which was also characterized by the struggle between Sunnis and Shiites. The confessional contradictions are deeply rooted in Lebanon, based on its confessional political system, but, despite the public rhetoric, both communities tend to have more pragmatic and accommodating attitudes instead of deepening confessional confrontations. While it is true that each community has witnessed the radicalization of certain positions and that, especially after 2011, major changes are taking place, which have been fuelled by the narrative that is mostly emerging at the regional level. Have regional developments influenced the national Lebanese ones? Has confessionalism been used as a tool of realpolitik in Lebanon? These are the main questions that are going to be examined.

Keywords: Lebanon, Sunni, Shia, Confessional system, Balance of Power, Transformations, Arab uprisings ("Arab spring").

Introduction

The wave of Arab uprisings (known also as the "Arab Spring") that shook the region and led to the 'collapse' of some longtime authoritarian leaders has provided

new stimulus to the interpretation of developments in the Middle Eastern region, until now viewed through the paradigm of authoritarianism resilience (Heydemann and Leenders, 2011; Harutyunyan, 2022; Volpi, 2012). The "Arab Spring" paved the way for a series of new interpretations and transformations of the regional balance of power.

Before 2011, one of the best-known theories emphasized the existence of an internal split in the Middle East following the division between Sunnis and Shiites, with a focus on the identity element (Cole, 2006; Helfont, 2009). Several scholars have advanced the hypothesis of a "post-Arab" Middle East (Phillips, 2014), with most relations among Middle Eastern States, instead of inter-Arab relations, increasingly dependent on those of non-Arab States (Iran, Turkey, Israel) (Susser, 2007; Noble, 2008). Another field of analysis had underlined the reconstitution of renewed pan-Arabism based on new transnational consciousness fuelled by new Arab media (El-Nawawy and Iskander, 2002; Lamloum, 2009). Another group of scholars, such as Valbjørn and Bank (2012), used patterns of analysis borrowed from the past, such as that of the "Arab Cold War", amending them to reflect the region's new situation following the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. Their argument, using Malcolm Kerr's 1965 book The Arab Cold War, 1958–1964 as a starting point, would seek to employ the prism of the realist interpretation proposed by Kerr, rearranging it for the current situation. Valbjørn and Bank argue that dynamics among the Arab states would be characterized by a new dimension of Arab unity not at the state level but at the society level (Valbjørn and Bank, 2007). They argue that, despite appearances, Middle Eastern policy today would not be confessional or ethnic divisions that would prevail, such as the supposed growing rivalry between Sunnis and Shiites, but dynamics more closely related to the classical raison d'état that would fit into a "Westphalian narrative", whereby the particular interests of the states would win out. In Valbjørn and Bank's point of view, an interesting example of such dynamics could be seen in the behavior of certain Arab countries during the war between Hizballah and Israel in 2006. According to the researchers mentioned above, the deployment of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt against Hizballah's actions would not be dictated, as

many analysts argue, by a Sunni-Shia divide but by the start of what Valbjørn and Bank define as a "new Arab cold war", that is, a realignment of Middle Eastern states on the basis of a renewed struggle for leadership in the region. According to this view, in reconfiguring the regional order in the wake of the "Arab Spring,", the relations that are being formed among the various Middle Eastern countries appear to be characterized by a form of competition in which each nation vies for their accreditation as a hegemonic power at the regional level (Salloukh, 2013). If the narrative of identity is heavily used to represent the Middle Eastern region as characterized by a redefinition of alliances that would see a Sunni bloc (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Qatar) lined up against the so-called "axis of resistance", in part coinciding with a Shia bloc (Iran, Syria, Hizballah and Hamas) (Abdo, 2013, Heydemann, 2013, Malmvig, 2013), the so-called "confessionalisation" of the Middle East should be considered the new all-encompassing narrative that is replacing transnational unifying themes (such as the Palestinian cause and the fight against Israel or pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism) by proposing a sort of new pan-Islamism based on confessional basis. In the following paper, we would like to show that national politics still play an important role in redefining the geopolitical balance of power in the region.

In the context of Arab uprisings and regional transformations, we can find that the political strategies of the regional states have acquired international recognition, which has also been accompanied by the decline of the interests of the Western countries in the Middle East, as the American withdrawal from Iraq (and recently from Afghanistan) has demonstrated, and also by the marginalization of those transnational issues (such as the Arab-Israeli conflict), which have contributed towards fueling the transnational pan-Arabist ideology (Norton, 2013). This element also appears to have been strengthened, despite appearances, by the insignificant and weak role played by the Arab League and other organizations (also the GCC) in regional politics (Dakhlallah, 2012).

The paper aims to focus on the transformation of the communitarian arrangements in Lebanon, one of the countries that has not been directly affected by

the "Arab Spring". The focus will be on the Lebanese Sunni and Shia communities, as the split between Sunnis and Shiites has become one of the most complicated narratives used to describe the current situation at the regional level. Consequently, the article will explore how this narrative is fuelled in Lebanon and how important this is in understanding the regional dynamic. The Sunni community, represented by the coalition government of March 14[2], is suffering a process of marginalization that has led, on the one hand, to the marginalization of its leader Saad Hariri and, on the other hand, to the strengthening of some Salafist movements, which put forward a binary vision interpreting Lebanese politics as a struggle between Sunnis and Shiites. The Shia community, whose role (with the rise of Hizballah) has become increasingly strategic, is suffering legitimacy turmoil after the escalation of the crisis in Syria and the support provided by the General Secretary of the Party, Hasan Nasrallah, to the president of Syria, Bashar Asad. This threatened to undermine the party's claim to trans-confessionalism, which it has aspired to since its creation.

However, it should be remembered that in different periods, this 'confessional tension' partly aimed to preserve the consociational (confessional) system. The system foresees proportional repartition of power among the different communities (Hiro, 2003; Lijparth, 1969). In Lebanon, the president of the Republic has to be a Maronite, the prime minister a Sunni, and the president of the Parliament a Shiite. The Sunni anti-Shia rhetoric (spread also within the Maronite community) is likely to move the plane of comparison among the different communities, thereby giving credit to the narrative of sectarianism that has been amplified by the media[3]. The following

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[2] The anti-Syrian opposition formed the 14 March coalition, named after the rally staged on that day in 2005, gathered around the al-Mustaqbal (the Future) party, which included the Sunni forces but also those of the Christian Lebanese Forces of Samir Geagea and the Druze Progressive Socialist Party of Walid Jumblaṭ, who left the coalition in 2011 (Harutyunyan, 2020).

[3] The Rise of the Salafis in Lebanon: A New Sunni-Shiite Battlefield, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Vol. 12, No. 28, 4 December 2012, http://goo.gl/FKqxSm. (Accessed May 1, 2023); Alexander Corbeil, Lebanon's Salafists Challenge Hezbollah Dominance, November 11th, 2012, Foreign Policy Association, http://goo.gl/vchM3z/ (Accessed May 1, 2023); Lebanese Salafists call for jihad in Syria, April 22, 2013, The Middle East Time http://goo.gl/DqNlM3. (Accessed May 1, 2023); Hezbollah entry in Syrian conflict fans

reading of Lebanese politics seems to create new and less manageable confessional tensions, and it is clear that these adverse changes are a clear legacy of the "sectarian pan-Islamist" narrative (Di Peri, 2014a) that is emerging at the regional level. It should be mentioned that "sectarian tension" could be also considered the reason why Lebanon seems to be immune to the wave of uprisings.

Lebanese confessionalism and the Arab uprisings

Lebanon is one of the most interesting countries to observe as regards the narrative of the interactions between Sunnis and Shiites. This small country is a "mirror" of the confessional diversity that characterizes the region. In Lebanon, however, the division of political power along sectarian lines has granted certain stability to the system due to the power-sharing formula (Fakhoury, 2009; Di Peri, 2010). If Lebanon's economic system espoused a neoliberal vision, also as a result of a laissez-faire policy developed post-independence (Gates, 1998), in Syria as well as in Iraq, economic power has long since been established by a centralized economic policy (Aita, 2007; al-Ahsan, 1984); only in recent times has centralization been leading the way to the privatization of certain sectors. Finally, while Lebanon has played a key yet indirect role in Middle Eastern and international relations, at different stages, Syria and Iraq have sought to gain a hegemonic role as regional powers, contending with Egypt (or Saudi Arabia) while also playing the pan-Arabism card (Gause, 2007).

The different trajectory that Lebanon has experienced over the years compared to other countries in the region characterized by confessionalism led to the fact that communities played an important role in the building of the nation-state in Lebanon, becoming the mainstay of the country's political and administrative management (Rondot, 1947). However, since the end of the second civil war (1975–1990) and more distinctly after the war with Israel in 2006, a series of important changes within each community began to emerge, showing at least two elements: 1. Now as in the

Shiite-Sunni fires, The Times of Israel, June 8, 2013, http://goo.gl/CxzoeR (Accessed May 1, 2023), etc.

past, the Lebanese communities are not immune to external influences and actors, yet they operate in a regional context strongly permeated by instability, and in this context, there is a mutual exchange between internal and external in terms of alliances and patronage links. 2. Despite the obvious confessional splits, the Lebanese communities demonstrate a certain pragmatism that affects both the alliances within the country and those that each community develops externally. In the paper, these two points will be examined through an analysis of the Shiite and Sunni communities. These aspects are going to be observed in relation to the national Lebanese context and their transnational dimension.

The Rise of Hizballah and the Lebanese Shia community transition

The rise and consolidation of the Shia community and the arrival on the Lebanese political scene of Hizballah in 1982 have greatly contributed to changing the confessional balance, having a major impact both internally and externally. Since the 1970s, the Lebanese Shia community has undoubtedly received more attention from scholars and the media. In the 1970s, the Shia community became the most populous Muslim community in Lebanon. Internally, this clearly contributes to a more demanding role for the Shiites in the confessional political system, whereas externally, it contributes to redefining strategic alliances. If the Shia community in Lebanon was the "great" excluded from the National Pact of 1943—and especially from the new configuration of institutional arrangements provided for by the al-Taif agreement of 1989—the end of the civil war certainly marked an important step forward for the internal accreditation of this community. In the 1970s and then the 1980s, the main actor for the Shia community was the Amal movement. The official creation of Hizballah (1982) contributed greatly to the resizing of Amal, paving the way for its rapid affirmation as one of the most important political actors in the Lebanese political arena (Abukhalil, 1990).

More than the other parties in Lebanon, the "Party of God" (Hizballah) was more able to adapt to the profound changes in Lebanese society after the second civil war (Alagha, 2006; Hamzeh, 1993). On the one hand, Hizballah provided a voice for the

dispossessed, carrying on the legacy of Musa al-Sadr and building a welfare network for the poor (as well as for martyrs' families) that will endow it with legitimacy nationwide (Flanigan, 2009). On the other hand, over the years and especially in the 2000s, Hizballah was able to attract, centered around a pan-Arab project, namely the common struggle of the Arabs against the State of Israel, a number of countries and movements in the region (for example, Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood) (Schenker, 2013). The flexibility of Hizballah has been particularly evident since 1992, when, after some hesitation and strong internal discussions, it finally accepted the al-Ṭaif agreement and made the decision to run in the political elections, winning an increasing number of parliamentary seats. The gradual modification of the strategy of the party at the domestic level and its unerring commitment to building the "society of resistance" did not prevent Hizballah from maintaining a strongly militant external stance, establishing the party's inclusion on terrorist organization lists as well as international stigmatization, both in the U.S. in 2013 and in Europe, as well as in Israel (Azani, 2006; Birnbaum and Eglash, 2013). This position, marked by the struggle against the West and Israel, was clearly apparent from the beginning, as evidenced by the party's program document, the Open Letter of 1985[4].

It is obvious that this basis has also been seen by the two countries that have contributed the most to the emergence and development of Hizballah - Iran and Syria. It should be noted, however, that, in spite of the rhetoric, Syrian support for the Lebanese Shiites groups did not fit within a regional policy characterized by the Sunni-Shia divide but rather by a more pragmatic attitude, that is, the identification of the most promising community in Lebanon for its accreditation as one of the main actors at the regional level (Di Peri, 2014b).

From the point of view of Hizballah, if, over the years, pragmatism has prevailed at the domestic level, a more militant attitude has emerged at the regional level, which, until the outbreak of the Arab revolts, relied on two important elements: the claim to credit itself as a pan-Arab organization open to all communities and representative of the 'ummah' and the ability to leverage this militant position to

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[4] The text of the Open Letter see Norton (1987), pp. 167-87.

justify the party's domestic policy choices as well as seeking to placate the Shiite hard core and the transconfessional alliances, such as the alliance with Maronite leader General Michel Aoun. This double track and the ability of Hizballah to introduce and establish itself as a new force on the Lebanese political scene (Lamloum, 2009; Koch, 2008) have in some way contributed towards dampening the critical elements from within, from the Sunni community (in particular Saad Harir, son of ex-prime minister Rafik Hariri, especially after the assassination of Rafik Hariri and the creation of the International Commission of Inquiry) (Khashan, 2011), and from the Maronite community (especially beginning with the 33-day war of 2006). Despite the so-called "divine victory" against the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Hizballah began to be criticized domestically for being responsible for the war and the consequent destruction of the country, as well as internationally, for its dependence on Syria and Iran, which would have used Lebanon as a proxy to conduct their struggles against Israel (Gambill and Abdelnour, 2002). The accreditation as a leader of the fight against Zionism, neo-liberalism, and capitalist exploitation, as well as participation in anti-globalization conferences (Karagiannis, 2009), and the good management skills acquired at the administrative level (Harb, 2009), enabled the party to accumulate political capital that could be exploited within Lebanon. However, after the war of 2006 and the events of the spring of 2008, a new perception of Hizballah was established, which had, as a common matrix, growing hostility towards it by a large part of the population as well as polarization of the confessional positions. In May 2008, the decision taken by the Fouad Siniora government to authorize an investigation into Hizballah's phone network, resulting in the removal of the head of security at Beirut International Airport (a man close to Hizballah), led to a violent reaction by Hizballah. For the first time since the end of the civil war, the country was shaken by two weeks of armed clashes between Hizballah and the Lebanese army, which only came to an end through foreign diplomatic efforts.

Even the long-standing alliance with Maronite leader Michel Aoun couldn't help Hizballah regain credibility at a national level. It can therefore be affirmed that Hizballah's adaptability and its ability to use the international and regional context for

its domestic accreditation have been questioned to such an extent that, in 2009, Hizballah published its new manifesto, a document explaining its new stance at the domestic, regional, and international levels (Di Peri, 2014b). It can be maintained that this new document is also an attempt to show the party's moderate politics and to regain credibility at the domestic level. Actually, in the manifesto, some harsh stances contained in the Open Letter disappear and a more pragmatic attitude prevails (Alagha, 2011).

The crisis in Syria and its consequences for Lebanon are reinforcing Hizballah's inability to continue to juggle the two positions (moderation domestically and militarization externally) for two main reasons: firstly, because the older external supporters of Hizballah – Iran and Syria, are strongly challenged by the international community.

Syria does not seem credible given the annihilation policy of a large part of its population. Iran, which had hailed and supported the Arab uprisings as a continuation of the 1979 Islamic Revolution to promote itself as a regional superpower, has objective difficulties in sustaining its position considering the current situation marked by increasing tension between Sunnis and Shiites. Secondly, given Hizballah's unconditional support of Asad, the "Party of God's" strategy of acting as a representative for all Lebanese is gradually crumbling, consequently increasing the anti-Shiite rhetoric in Lebanon within the Sunni and Christian communities and causing further confessional splits with tangible consequences on the ground (clashes in Tripoli and Saida).

It should be argued, however, that the official declarations by Hizballah on these issues continue to focus on the moderation of positions at the domestic level (Lakkis, 2013).

The Evolution of the Lebanese Sunni Community in the context of regional transformations

The Sunni community has played an important role in the country since the creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920 (Di Peri, 2009). The political and demographic

weight of the Sunni community began to grow along with the leverage of the Christian Maronite community. Each community had its own vision of Lebanon. The Maronites would have frowned upon the creation of a Maronite state in Lebanon; in the 1926 Constitution, this prerogative was omitted, promoting instead the narrative of a future state for all Lebanese regardless of confessional affiliation (Zamir, 1985). While the Sunnis would have preferred Lebanon to have been part of a wider pan-Arab project, perhaps assuming its union with Syria (at the end of the 1950s also with Egypt and Syria). At the forefront of such thinking were the Sunni elite in Beirut, represented by the emblematic figure of Riyad al-Solh[5]. Gradual accommodation and, above all, the prospect of political and economic benefits for both sides led to the creation, in 1943, of the National Pact, an unwritten accord that guaranteed a power-sharing agreement between the two major communities, Maronite and Sunni, on the basis of their confessional weight. The Sunni community had great significance not only in the institutional arrangements that led to the creation of the Lebanese consociational system but also in the political life of the country, as evidenced by the considerable power of certain Sunni prime ministers during the period of 1943–1975.

After the end of the civil war in 1990, a new founding pact, the al-Ṭaif agreement, further legitimized the importance of the Sunni community through its equivalence to the Maronite community at the expense of the Shiites. The preeminence of the Sunni community, even after political marginalization, over the Maronite one in the aftermath of the civil war had as a witness in the re-foundation of its own narrative a controversial and charismatic figure who had played a key role in the reconstruction of the country, ex-prime minister Rafik Hariri. A native of Saida (Sidon) city in southern Lebanon, historically a Sunni stronghold, Hariri was a leading actor in Lebanese politics of the nineties and helped to strengthen the idea of

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[5] Riyad al-Solh was one of the most prominent Sunni Lebanese political men and a promoter of Lebanese independence and the National Pact.

a "lay" Sunnism with a strong entrepreneurial mindset[6]. Hariri's idea of Sunnism, linked with modernity and progress, used the same buzzwords that Hariri had used to present his pharaonic projects for the reconstruction of the country through his company, SOLIDERE (Makarem, 2014). The presentation of himself as the new man of Lebanon gave new visibility to the Sunni community, which found in Hariri a powerful, unifying leader. The Lebanese system, which is based on the consociational model whereby the balance of all the components of society is fundamental, has been shaken since the Nineties by two important trends: the increasingly open clash among the three powers of the state, which, post-al-Taif, had been treated de facto as the same (the president of the Republic, the prime minister, and the speaker of the parliament). This clash led to paralysis in decision-making. The other aspect was the increasingly evident conflict between Hariri and Hizballah, which had become the country's leading political force. Furthermore, these fractures must be contextualized in the light of the so-called "pax Syriana" in Lebanon (Kassir, 2000). From the end of the civil war until the withdrawal of its troops from Lebanese territory in 2005, Syria played a leading role in driving Lebanese politics. The institutional clash between Hariri and President Lahud, avowedly pro-Syrian, and between Hariri and Hizballah, openly supported by Syria, was consumed in the shadow of the Syrian aegis over Lebanon. While taking into account these dynamics, attention must also be paid to the events following the assassination of Rafik Hariri in February 2005. A wave of outrage at the murder of the former Prime Minister, for which Syria and its ally Hizballah were accused, led to a polarization of the political positions within the confessional system, which resulted in a radicalization of the conflict between the Sunni political parties aggregated around the March 14 coalition and Hizballah with its March 8 coalition, in particular on two controversial issues: the disarmament of Hizballah (as required by the al-Taif agreement and never accomplished) and the initial investigation into the assassination of Rafik Hariri. Two political coalitions came to light in the aftermath

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[6] Hariri was prime minister from 1992 to 1998 and from 2000 to 2004. His politics have been defined as authoritarian modernization. Hariri had strong ties with Saudi Arabia; a country where he lived for many years before coming back to Lebanon (Harutyunyan, 2020).

of Hariri's assassination. The March 8 coalition brought together the Shia movements Hizballah and Amal and the predominantly Christian supporters of Michel Aoun (who had opposed Syrian influence in Lebanon during the 1990s). For the first time in its history, the Sunni community felt orphaned, abandoned, and marginalized by its politicians, who were murdered[7] and their political weight gradually decreased. This perception is an important factor to take into account.

This is also the reason why the Sunni community has strengthened itself around the Sunni al-Mustaqbal party, led after the death of Rafiq Hariri by his son and successor Saad (Vloeberghs, 2012).

The polarization of the positions of the political forces regarding Hariri's murder investigation saw the option put forward by the March 14 coalition, which called for an international resolution, opposed to Hizballah's alternative, which called for the settlement of the dispute "within" the country. The Security Council Resolution 1595 of 2005 had resulted in the creation of an International Commission of Inquiry (Cataleta, 2012; Schimmelpfennig, Gardner, 2008), whose work (which led to the arrest of some members of the Syrian intelligence) was interrupted by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006. It was within this context that, on May 30, 2007, with Resolution 1757 of the Security Council, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) was set up, becoming operational in 2009. The beginning of the STL's work was preceded by the "2008 events," which were caused by several factors: the clash between the two coalitions around the STL as well as their different stances regarding the Israeli invasion, which led, in November 2006, to the resignation of the Shiite ministers from the Fouad Siniora government; the end of the term of President Emile Lahud, already renewed by special law in 2004, which led to an eighteen-month power vacuum; and the clashes in the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr al-Bared[8].

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[7] In 2005, besides Hariri, there were a series of assassinations of anti-Syrian politicians and journalists.

[8] The Fatah al-Islam movement, led by Shaker al-Abssi, with its basis in the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr al-Bared on the outskirts of Tripoli, was severely attacked by the Lebanese army under the pretext of pursuing an officer responsible for a bank robbery in

After exhausting mediation, promoted from the outside, the parties were able to find a semblance of unity on a new confessional compromise, the Doha Agreement (May 21, 2008). The compromise unlocked the impasse that had lasted for months, leading to the election of Michel Suleiman as President of Lebanon on May 23, a revision of the electoral law (passed in September), and the launch of a new political economy[9].

However, following allegations by the STL leveled at Hizballah, considered one of the masterminds of the assassination of Hariri, at the beginning of 2011, the political tension that had been kept painstakingly under control in previous years became evident once more, and Hizballah withdrew eleven of its ministers from Saad Hariri's government, causing it to fall. The appointment of Najib Mikati, a Sunni businessman originally from Tripoli, as Prime Minister did not appease the controversy since his candidacy was put forward by Hizballah and its allies, Michel Aoun and Walid Jumblaṭ. Protests erupted across the country on the "day of rage" (January 25, 2011)[10]. After five months of negotiations, on 13 June 2011, Mikati became the Prime Minister of Lebanon. These events reinforced a sense of alienation and powerlessness within the Sunni community, which played an important role in allowing the growth of radical Sunni movements with a strong anti-Hizballah stance and, in general, an anti- Shiite rhetoric.

The political difficulties of the March 14 coalition led by Saad Hariri, in particular due to the lack of a clear political strategy, encouraged the party to seek the support of Sunni conservative groups with varying degrees of radicalism, which might prove a useful tool to revive the coalition's basis (Fielder, 2007). In this

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Tripoli. After months of siege, affiliates of the group were dispersed, and al-Abssi disappeared. Later, he was killed by Syrian security forces.

[9] It is also important to see the memorandum of understanding signed the same year between Hizballah and the Lebanese Salafi movement led by Sheikh Dr. Hassan al-Shahhal to promote a renewed agreement between the Lebanese Islamist forces to guarantee national unity. This memorandum, however, was suspended indefinitely from al-Shahhal, the day after his signature. The Hezbollah-Salafist memorandum of understanding 19 August 2008, https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/2432 (accessed 1 May, 2023).

[10] Lebanon protests turn violent, Al Jazeera, January 25, 2011, http://goo.gl/60h5Jy. (Accessed May 1, 2023).

context, one of the elements that necessitates emphasis is the high fragmentation that the Sunni community was forced to face in the last decade: while many Sunnis support the March 14 coalition, others have "migrated" to Hizballah (the "leader" of resistance against Israel), and others have joined radical Islamic groups with a clear anti-system, and often anti-Shiite, attitude.

The problems within the Lebanese Sunni community were amplified at the regional level. Since Rafik Hariri's commitment to Lebanese politics, ties between the Sunni community and Saudi Arabia have become very close. In general, Lebanese Sunnis have espoused a neoliberal economic policy that has brought them closer to the West[11]. The political and economic woes of the Hariri family after Rafik Hariri's assassination irritated Riyadh, however, and the turbulent regional context that emerged from the Arab uprisings of 2011 merely distorted the attention of the Saudi monarchy from the Hariri family.

However, it should be mentioned that during his mandate, Saad Hariri tried to maintain a pragmatic approach with his regional neighbors, for example, with a visit to Damascus in late December 2009 and through his marriage to a woman from a prestigious Syrian family[12]. Saad Hariri's visit to Damascus was after the Saudi ambassador's visit, who affirmed that "the steady communication and special relationship between the custodian of the holy shrines and President Assad are exemplary for other Arab leaders to emulate" (Khashan, 2011).

It seems apparent that the changed internal circumstances, with the massive influx of Syrian refugees, especially Sunnis, the manifest support of the Sunni community to the forces of opposition to Syrian president Asad and to some radical Salafi groups in Lebanon, and the lack of political figures gathering the lost legacy of the Hariri clan, are exacerbating the problems within the Sunni community and fragmenting them further (Di Peri, 2014b).

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[11] Given the economic and political problems of the Hariri family, Saudi Arabia has become increasingly crucial over the years despite the good relations of Saad Hariri with the French president Sarkozy.

[12] "Hariri ends trip calling for better relations with Syria", France 24, 20 December 2009, https://www.france24.com/en/20091220-hariri-ends-trip-calling-better-relations-with-syria (accessed 1 May, 2023).

Conclusion

It is evident that in Lebanon, the Sunni and Shia communities are playing a key role in the evolution of national policy, transformations, and changes in the balance of power among Lebanese communities. Given the marginalization of the Christian communities and especially of the Maronites in the aftermath of the al-Taif agreement, Muslim communities have acquired a central role in conducting the political game in the country: the Shiites, mainly through Hizballah, which has been able to gain accreditation at a national and regional level; the Sunnis, because of their historical role in the confessional system of Lebanon; and, more recently, due to the success of the Hariri family. It is also evident that the two communities are strongly projecting outward in defining their own political strategies. On the one hand, by strengthening old alliances, like the involvement of Hizballah in Syria alongside the Asad regime (Devore, 2012). On the other hand, the new connections established with Sunni movements and parties in the Middle East, which called for a revival of the most radical Sunni groups in Lebanon, helped to strengthen a Sunni axis that is spreading increasingly to a regional level (Omayma, 2008). The Salafist groups that have strengthened their positions in Tripoli, as well as those that have developed around Ahmad al-Assir in Saida, are examples of a shift in this direction.

These changes within the communities aren't new in Lebanon. Although the confessional clashes have been historically represented as a fight between Christians and Muslims, and the civil war has helped fuel this narrative, it should not be forgotten that, towards the final stages of the civil war, bloody clashes exploded between Sunnis and Shiites, inside the Shia community, in the "war of the camps" (Picard, 1993; Harutyunyan, 2007), which led to Iran's intervention with sanctions against their co-religionists. It should also be pointed out that the presence of Salafist groups in Lebanon cannot be linked solely to the Syrian crisis (Hamzeh, 1997).

However, it is obvious that the intervention of regional actors with renewed political weight, such as Saudi Arabia, Qaṭar, and the Muslim Brotherhood, has led to the radicalization of certain positions, pushing the narrative of sectarianism and its diffusion at a Lebanese level (Norton, 2012). Saudi Arabia and Iran seem to be

framed within the precise dynamics of realpolitik for the control of the region, in which confessional issues are used as the main tool of this realpolitik (Gause, 2011; Rivetti, 2014).

Analysis of the main transformations that have occurred within the Shia and Sunni communities in Lebanon has demonstrated that the country has been strongly affected by the evolution of regional relations. It cannot be denied that certain polarizations of confessional positions on a sectarian basis are a reflection of the larger polarization of these positions on a regional level. Lebanese politics is still alive, and, until now, as part of the Baabda Declaration of 2012 (which stressed the need for the neutralization of Lebanon regarding the Syrian war and regional events[13]), the Lebanese political forces have tried to preserve Lebanon from the regional turmoil. However, until now, the policy of non-confrontation, based upon confessionalism, has prevailed, not without difficulties, over the narrative of "confessional pan-Islamism" that is increasingly circulating nowadays in the Middle East, including Lebanon.

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CHINA-PAKISTAN SPACE COOPERATION: PATH, MOTIVATION AND THE FUTURE*

Abstract: *After the founding of the People's Republic of China, friendly bilateral relations between China and Pakistan have become increasingly close in various fields following China's peaceful rise. The space cooperation that started after the end of the Cold War is a sign of the gradual progress of the relationship between the two countries to the current all-weather strategic cooperative partnership. With China's assistance, Pakistan has achieved significant milestones in the space field. Pakistan is also a key node in China's strategy to expand international space cooperation. After the 2010s, China-Pakistan space cooperation was integrated with the construction of the Space Silk Road and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, becoming a model for space cooperation specifically promoting the social and economic development of developing countries. This paper outlines the complete picture of China-Pakistan space cooperation under the evolutionary logic and chronological context of "ideological-materialization" two-way mutual construction, so as to reasonably predict the prospects of China-Pakistan space cooperation.*

Keywords: *China-Pakistan Space Cooperation, Space Diplomacy, Space Silk Road, Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization.*

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Introduction

This article analyzes the space cooperation between China and Pakistan and aims to answer the following research questions: First, what are the background and framework of China-Pakistan space cooperation? Second, what are the motivations and benefits for each country behind the cooperation? Third, what are the negative issues and positive opportunities that will be faced in the cooperation, and how will the two countries respond and continue to move forward? Current Chinese academic research on China-Pakistan relations focuses on geopolitical competition, regional cooperation, trade, and international aid, with less attention given to cooperation in space, while some Western studies have an ideological bias that makes the perspective and evaluation unobjective. In view of the above, the following will expound the background and implementation of China-Pakistan space cooperation systematically from the empirical evidence and analyze it in depth from the theoretical perspective to explore the internal driving forces and external standpoints followed in the cooperation process, as China and Pakistan have disparate levels of space development. Finally, reviewing the challenges and opportunities associated with China-Pakistan space cooperation.

Overview of the process and achievements of Pakistan's space history

Pakistan's space development can be divided into the embryonic period from 1961 to 1970, the stagnant period from 1971 to 1990, the revival period from 1991 to 2010, and the stable period from 2011 to date (Mehdi and Su 2019, 175-180; Atif 2020, 48-59).

The embryonic period (1961~1970):

The Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), established in 1961, made Pakistan the first South Asian country to launch the space program. Initially focused on the peaceful applications of space technology for national advancement (SUPARCO, 2022), SUPARCO collaborated with NASA to launch the Rehbar-1 in 1962, making Pakistan the third Asian country to launch rockets after Israel and Japan (Lele 2013, 43-58). During the same period, the US

started the Apollo program and required atmospheric data on the Arabian Sea. Pakistan, being located in the Indian Ocean region, provided NASA with meteorological information collected by the Rehbar rockets, which aided the first manned lunar mission of Apollo 11 in 1969 (Mehdi and Su 2019, 176-177).

The stagnant period (1971-1990):

In the 1970s, Pakistan shifted its focus to developing nuclear weapons due to geopolitical hostility with India. The space program was disrupted because of domestic economic difficulties and political instability. The authorities transferred the rocket experience to missile development, triggering sanctions from the US in the 1980s. By the 1990s, lack of financial resources caused SUPARCO's space program to be ineffective (Awan et al. 2018, 132-133), resulting in a development hiatus over two decades between the first rocket launch in the 1960s and the launch of the first satellite in the 1990s.

The revival period (1991~2010):

US sanctions in the 1980s created an opportunity for space cooperation between Pakistan and China. China provided technological assistance, enabling SUPARCO to resume operations in the 1990s. Notable Projects included the BADR and PakSat satellite series. BADR-1, an experimental observation satellite, was launched on the Shenzhou-2 rocket and completed a one-month mission cycle. In 2001, BADR-2, equipped with Earth photography instruments, was launched by the Russian Zenith-2 rocket (Ahsan ed. 2019, 41-43), and PakSat-1 entered the frequency orbit to provide domestic communication services. Pakistan became one of the few countries with communications satellites in orbit at the time (Atif 2020, 51). Ten years later, PakSat-1R was launched, replacing PakSat-1 and optimizing and expanding the service scope.

The stable period (2011-):

"Pakistan Space Vision 2040" document is the first mid- and long-term space development plan issued in 2011 that covers military and civil aspects. The Vision aims to make Pakistan a recognized "space-faring nation" by focusing on space application technologies based on military strategic purposes and establishing a

command and control system through the deployment of military satellite systems for intelligence and early warning functions to consolidate existing defense architecture (Awan ed. 2018, 133). In the civil domain, the Vision works on improving the quality of life of Pakistanis through space activities and satellite development of the "full spectrum of space technology". The core action of the Vision is to launch six LEO satellites of the PRSS series and five Geostationary Orbit (GEO) satellites of the new-generation PakSat series between 2011 and 2040 (Ahsan ed. 2019, 41-42). In 2018, SUPARCO launched remote sensing satellites PRSS-1 and PakTES-1A, the latter of which was designed and developed by SUPARCO, symbolizing Pakistan's capability to develop indigenous satellites. In 2014, Pakistan became the first country to switch its domestic satellite navigation system from the US Global Positioning System (GPS) to the Chinese Beidou System (BDS) (Mehdi and Su 2019, 178). The BDS provides Pakistan with a cross-domain geographic information network for transportation management, urban planning, environmental monitoring, and disaster monitoring, highlighting the deepening of China-Pakistan space cooperation.

Concept, positions and consensus of China-Pakistan space cooperation

"Global Commons" refers to the territory and resources that are not subject to national sovereignty but belong to the common heritage of mankind, including the high seas and international seabed, international airspace, the polar, cyberspace, and space (Ren 2014, 120-126). The spatial domain of space refers to the moon and Earth orbits where satellites operate, and space resources are the materials available for human use, such as solar energy and planetary minerals. The Global Commons has attributes of "non-excludability" and "competitiveness" (Han 2018, 2). The former means Global Commons is open to all actors. The exploitation and utilization conducted by any individual, organization, or country shall not impede the equal behavior of others. However, the resource distributions of Global Commons are uneven, resulting in a competitive orientation. Specific actors seize the tools, and accessibility often owns the advantage. The contradiction between non-exclusivity and competitiveness is the logic of cooperation. In space, the Outer Space Treaty,

known as "the Space Constitution", stipulates free access for all countries. However, the high cost of satellite launches and operations limits space activities to a few states with technical and economic strength, forming a hierarchy on a material basis (Way 2018, 7-9). Therefore, international cooperation becomes a strategic choice for all countries, whether they are traditional or emerging space powers.

Launching space cooperation—China's motivations and positions

Brain Harvey categorized space powers based on human spaceflight technology thresholds, with the United States, Russia, and China as space superpowers (Harvey ed. 2010, 543-545). The classification shows the technical characteristics of different periods and the dynamic identity changes of state actors. China began its space program in the 1950s. Rapid economic growth since the 1980s has been reflected in high-speed space development in rockets, satellites, manned spaceflight, deep space exploration, missile defense, and manufacturing. In 2003, the Shenzhou V completed the first manned space mission, making China the world's third space superpower.

The motivations behind the transnational cooperation of space powers can be explained by the economic statecraft theory of political economy. David A. Baldwin defines "economic statecraft" as the use of various economic tools by state actors to promote political, diplomatic, or security goals (Aggarwal and Reddie 2020, 4). There are three elements: The policy tools that generate influence, such as investment, foreign aid, and financial control; the field of exerting influence, which is international society; and the mode of influence, by changing cognitions of the target object, such as attitudes and expected behaviors (Baldwin 2020, 31). Michael Mastanduno introduced "structural linkage"—the use of economic incentive to seek desired configurations of interests with the target countries—to define the interaction between "actors" and "recipients" of economic statecraft. For the actor country, the structural linkage is unconditional and will not change because of the sudden behavior of the recipient country. The deepening of economic interdependence leads to the increasing influence of the actor country and consolidates the bilateral relationship (Mastanduno 1999, 304-309). Foreign aid is the most common policy choice among economic statecrafts, as seen in the Marshall Plan and the Point Four Program after

World War II, which strengthened the US hegemony by earning the confidence of global countries through modernization (Roberts 2021, 269-271). The economic statecraft of China to pursue diplomatic goals has occurred in the context of South-South cooperation by providing foreign aid to developing countries. Paul Papayoanou points out that, in addition to building increasingly solid networks with target countries, economic statecraft has invisibly reduced the perception of Western countries hyping up China as a rising hegemonic threat (Papayoanou 2019, 119).

Stephen Whiting introduced Baldwin's theory into the theoretical analysis of the space domain and proposed the "Space Diplomacy Model" from the perspective of national interests, where space powers use advantages to pursue political and diplomatic goals (Whiting 2002, 54-57). Space assets and capabilities are similar to economic statecraft in traditional diplomacy. Whiting listed seven paths to build the model, with increasing operational influence: prestige, technology partnerships, access to space services, legal precedent, objective information, subject presence, and threat of punishment (Whiting 2003, 60-74). This article focuses on the integrated dimensions of "prestige and presence", "technological partnerships and access to space services", and "objective information", as the compositions of the Chinese Space Diplomacy Model, to analyze the motivation and positions of space cooperation.

1. Prestige and presence

Prestige is rooted in the innovative nature of space technology. He Qisong pointed out that space exploration capability is a public display of strength, wealth, and vitality and is also a source of national pride and confidence (He 2008, 9). Steven Lamakis believes that space programs are a measurement of national prestige and a key weight in the comprehensive power scale among world countries (Lambakis 2002, 55). Presence and prestige are two sides of the same coin in the image of a space power. Presence refers to the material properties of space assets and their proximity to specific space targets. The sense of presence from external space assets creates space awareness and influences the behaviors of space actors. The Space Diplomacy Model suggests actor countries demonstrate their commitment to space

development through the sustained accumulation of prestige and presence, strengthening the credibility of space cooperation.

2. Technology partnerships and access to space services

Technology partnership refers to the actor country establishing a cooperation relationship by granting key space technologies to the recipient country and guiding the country to adopt consensual behaviors. It also means that, despite the premise of unequal space capabilities, cooperating countries can contribute to common goals. Space superpowers challenge cutting-edge space missions, disseminate the industrial chain, and assist partner countries in cultivating space talents. An example of this is the International Space Station (ISS), the US-funded remote manipulator systems developed by Canada, and the Spacelab operated by the European Space Agency, which not only shared the costs but also strengthened the interdependence (Whiting 2002, 63). The most direct impact of the proliferation of space technology is that space superpowers provide cheap or free space services similar to foreign aid, as most of the recipients are developing countries. Space superpowers do not expect relative compensation but rather improve the people's quality of life in developing countries, thereby shaping a positive image (Whiting 2002, 64). Cheng Qun argues that as the leader of developing countries in the space field, China leads other developing countries towards space through space diplomacy, sharing the economic and social benefits brought by space services, which has become the best example of South-South cooperation (Cheng and Fu 2013, 77-79).

3. Objective information

Space vehicles can operate in space over any country according to international space jurisprudence, allowing satellites to gather high-precision information on Earth through photography and radar echoes (Whiting 2003, 67-68). Obtaining information can help countries learn about their own and other countries' situations and predict scenarios. The GPS, once a US military strategic resource, has become an international public good for accurate positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT) services (Johnson ed. 1998, 14-15).

Enhancing international prestige is regarded as the main driving force for

China's space development (Cunningham 2009, 73-74). Since the 2010s, China has made significant breakthroughs and established a renowned objective presence, including the Chang'e-4 probe, which landed on the back side of the moon in 2019, and the Tianwen-1 lander, which made China the second country to arrive on Mars in 2020. These achievements reveal that China's space program has surpassed traditional ideology and looks to explore sustainable resources across planets and contribute to the global community. In 2022, the Tiangong space station completed the connection with the Shenzhou 14 spacecraft and the Wentian experiment module, becoming the second long-term resident base in space. The technology partnership is indispensable behind this milestone, with collaborations from agencies such as the European Space Agency and Roscosmos. In 2019, nine research projects from 17 countries on the Tiangong station were released. The Chinese space station has become the core platform for frontier research and technology exchange (Lu 2021). Besides the pioneer-oriented Tiangong plan, China has engaged in diverse cooperation in satellite launches and infrastructure with developing countries. The Beidou system, China's independently developed and operated global satellite navigation system, has launched a wide range of information services in over 120 countries and has created a new model of foreign aid—the "high-tech foreign aid", which has significant implications for enhancing China's international influence (Hu 2015, 7-13).

Seeking space cooperation—Pakistan's motivations and positions

Pakistan's space development is characterized by close ties with space superpowers. James Oberg proposed two constraints that most countries face in their space development processes (Oberg 1999, 136). The economic constraint means that high sunk costs are required for space programs, which creates a crowding-out effect of fiscal resources with immediate livelihood projects. The technical constraint includes access to technology—space exploration involves cutting-edge technologies and high-end human resources, which the domestic side is difficult to feed. Understanding of technology—it is a common fact that education and civil society awareness are relatively low in developing countries. Space programs are difficult to

achieve in a short period of time, leading to a lack of support from a large number of disadvantaged groups. Obsolescence of technology—space development belongs to a technology-intensive growth model; early-stage research may be replaced by other countries' innovations, making it challenging to stabilize space projects and exposing them to huge financial risk. Oberg's argument described the multiple bottlenecks in Pakistan. Conversely, these challenges become the roots of seeking international space cooperation. Agnieszka Lukaszczyk argues that developing countries invest limited resources in space programs, focusing on the well-being of their people and gaining space power recognition (Lukaszczyk 2011). The foundation of Pakistan's space program was laid with initial US assistance and comprehensive cooperation with China. Pakistan also became a member of the "Five Conventions" of the international space cooperation and normative system. The dynamic mechanism and path consist of three domains: technology, economy, and diplomacy.

1. Technology domain

For developing countries, technology transfer is the most important feature of international space cooperation, which can be divided into hardware and software. The hardware includes the transnational transfer of satellites and space infrastructure (Ansdell ed. 2011). For example, the Chinese CGWIC has become the major source of satellites for Asian and African countries in recent years. The software focuses on professional training. The space field brings together interdisciplinary knowledge, and international cooperation helps to cultivate research talents and labor quality (Azriel 2017, 5). The United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Space Science and Technology Education Center, composed of 10 developing countries, including China and Pakistan, provides professionals and students from member states with workshops, short courses, and formal degree education (UNOOSA 2014).

2. Economic domain

Developing countries enhance comprehensive space capabilities through transnational commercial activities. Market competition and innovation trends stimulate local technology, and the spillover effect drives advancement in upstream and downstream industries. Countries with economic strength exercise their "buying

power"—purchase basic space services directly from advanced countries or even intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance services by military satellites of space superpowers (Klein 2012, 115-116). For countries with a lagging economy, buying power is converted into direct technical assistance from international organizations and other space powers (Iyengar 2021, 24-34). The UNOOSA "Space for Sustainable Development Goals" (Space4SDGs) initiative focuses on popularized space application projects contributing to the UN 2030 global sustainable development agenda (Baumgart 2021, 2-4).

3. Diplomatic domain

Developing countries use diplomatic means such as proposing initiatives and participating in the negotiation of international space norms or agglomerating influence through collective cooperation mechanisms to ensure access to space (Dennerley 2016, 30). Under the impetus of developing countries, the UNOOSA launched the Human Space Technology Initiative (HSTI) in 2010, aiming to establish an international exchange platform for space technology and information, promote cooperation among space and non-space countries, and enable more countries to participate in space exploration and manned space activities (Ochiai ed. 2014, 584-587). The accumulation of national prestige and presence in space is the deeper appeal behind the diplomatic activities, providing developing countries with higher mobility and more choices in dealing with space activities. For example, the number of communication satellites in Earth's orbit increases the discourse power of state actors striving for radio frequency or orbital positions within the authority of the International Telecommunication Union (Klien 2012, 114-115).

For Pakistan, China-Pakistan space cooperation is vital for space development by balancing technology, economy, and diplomacy. For China, there is an actual need with the in-depth advancement of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and the construction of the "Space Silk Road" has become the consensus of countries in the region to fulfill the demand for interconnection. It is also a key factor for both countries to accelerate the expansion of space cooperation.

Content and characteristics of China-Pakistan space cooperation

The historical background and implementation phases

China-Pakistan space cooperation began in the 1990s and has continuously progressed in breadth and depth over time, divided into four stages. During the initial stage (1991-2006), the Ministry of Aerospace Industry and SUPARCO signed the "Cooperation Agreement on the Peaceful Utilization of Aerospace Science and Technology" in 1991, positioning future cooperation with the goal of promoting peaceful use of space under the principle of equality and mutual benefit. The most representative progress in this period was the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO). In 1992, China, Thailand, and Pakistan initiated the Multilateral Cooperation on Space Technology Applications Initiative in the Asia Pacific Region (AP-MCSTA), the precursor of APSCO. APSCO was officially founded in 2005, becoming the first international space organization led by China. As a founding member, Pakistan participated in the Small Multi-Mission Satellite (SMMS) program of the organization (Siddiqi 2010, 132-133). The second stage (2007-2011) was a phase of substantial software and hardware input from China. The two countries signed the "Framework Agreement on Deepening Cooperation in Space Science and Technology" in 2007 to carry out cooperation in communication satellites. The PakSat-1R communication satellite project started with China responsible for the design, manufacture, and launch tasks, which was also the first satellite in orbit delivery in Asia. In 2011, PakSat-1R was transferred to SUPARCO in geostationary orbit by the Long March 3B rocket, with an expected lifespan of 15 years. Its primary mission was to provide basic communication services for Pakistan, South Asia, Central Asia, and East Africa. During the development of PakSat-1R, China provided Pakistan with loans totaling over 300 million RMB (Ali 2011).

The third stage (2012-2021) of space cooperation was an all-round technology promotion period. The "2012-2020 Space Cooperation Outline" was signed in 2012 to focus on civil space projects. China developed the PRSS-1 remote sensing satellite for Pakistan. In 2019, the two countries signed the "Cooperation Agreement on Manned Space Flight Activities". A Joint Committee on Manned Space Cooperation was set

up to conduct the subsequent technology testing and astronaut training (SpaceWatch, 2019). The ultimate goal is to send Pakistani astronauts into space in 2022. The fourth stage (2021–present) aims to deepen the cooperation, with the "China's Space Program: A 2021 Perspective" white paper proposing to jointly carry out lunar and deep space exploration as well as the development of a new generation of communication satellites. Pakistan has also been allowed to enter the Tiangong space station, symbolizing that China-Pakistan space cooperation has moved from single-way technology transfer to cooperative exploration of cutting-edge research.

The strategic foundation and innovative path

Space technology is one of the frontier fields that China has rapidly developed in the past few decades. The underlying motivation for China's space development is to combine various space projects from a micro perspective with the national diplomatic strategy at the macro level. This has created a multidimensional space cooperation paradigm integrating international space cooperation and traditional regional governance. Through the projection of space assets and the deployment of corresponding space capabilities, via the functional connection with the expansion of livelihood infrastructure projects on Earth, establishing an integrated development framework for benefit transfer and mutual construction in a "trans-earth" scope.

The innovative paradigm is practiced in the three-dimensional engineering of the BRI—the Space Silk Road Initiative originated in 2014 (SpaceChina, 2014). The Space Silk Road aims to enhance comprehensive space capabilities in the BRI region, support the space industries of countries along the route, and coordinate multilateral space cooperation strategies. Ajey Lele pointed out that "connectivity" is the core element of the BRI and is reflected in China's strategic actions in becoming the provider of space services. Any construction plan along the route needs to rely on satellite systems, creating demand for the Space Silk Road (Lele and Roy 2019, 26-28). He Qisong argues that the Space Silk Road has built a multi-dimensional cooperation system of "sea, land, air, cyber, and space", promoting the interconnectivity of the BRI route, facilitating resource exploration, the exchange of cargo and personnel, and strengthening the monitoring and protection of the

ecological environment, achieving mutual trust between China and countries along the route (He 2016, 76). Ahmad Khan views the Space Silk Road as a way for the Chinese space industry to break the embargo imposed through the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR). China projects its space power externally to carry out bilateral and multilateral cooperation through the Space Silk Road. Space competition between superpowers under the ITAR mechanism has shaped their respective technology applications and standardizations. At the global level, two major space partner groups, the BRI countries and the Western countries, have been formed (Khan 2021, 3).

The Space Silk Road entered the official discourse in the "China's Space Program: A 2016 Perspective" white paper. The white paper proposed specific development plans, including the construction of the "Space Information Corridor, using satellite systems to build a space service supply-demand ecosystem covering the BRI route and assisting countries to develop their own technology to provide necessary support for economic activities. The evolving Beidou system constitutes the core component of the Space Silk Road. The system completed regional coverage of China and the Asia-Pacific in 2014. In 2020, after the satellite group finished the constellations deployment, it realized the global PNT service. The current third-generation system consists of three geostationary orbit satellites (covering China), three inclined geosynchronous orbit satellites (covering most of Asia), and 24 medium-Earth orbit satellites (covering the world), with total coverage of more than 50 countries and 3 billion audiences (Mujtaba and Chohan 2021, 17-18).

Pakistan has received space technology from China since the 1990s. As an important participant in the BRI and the first international user of the Beidou system, Pakistan has experienced different socio-economic benefits from both China's general foreign aid and space diplomacy. The synergistic effect is reflected in the flagship project in the BRI—the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), of which Pakistan is a development axis and a geographical hub. CPEC was officially launched in 2015 after leaders of the two countries signed memoranda of understanding (MoU) totaling US$46 billion. China plans to invest in the construction of the Gwadar Port

and the four key areas of energy, transportation, infrastructure, and industrial cooperation as a "1+4" cooperation layout. In the space field, the Space Silk Road and Pakistan's space programs are complemented and converged into the overall plan of the CPEC, such as the PRSS-1 and PakTES-1A satellites, which are part of the CPEC construction plan and aim to provide remote sensing information to a series of CPEC infrastructure projects and monitor the environmental impacts (Khan 2021, 5). A national space center capable of manufacturing, testing, and operating various types of satellites is also included in the CPEC projects (Space Watch Asia Pacific 2018).

The direct impact of the Space Silk Road on the internal side of Pakistan is the improvement of technological level and industrial productivity in the space sector, nurturing an indigenous R&D environment while lowering investment costs and risks. Usman W. Chohan argues that the impact of the Space Silk Road is significantly reflected in the third sector of the economy. Agriculture is Pakistan's economic pillar. Through the satellite data brought by the Space Silk Road, live scenes of crop growth, groundwater levels, and climate changes can be precisely monitored, helping predict crop yields and preventing natural disasters. The Space Silk Road has also boosted the development of Pakistan's information and communication technology (ICT). The popularization of the internet and mobile phones has created new market opportunities. More importantly, ICT plays a key role in connecting information between vast, remote areas and mainstream urban society. Furthermore, the Space Silk Road has promoted the upgrading of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education, leading to scientific research output (Mujtaba and Chohan 2021, 19-20).

Issues and challenges faced by China-Pakistan space cooperation

Issues on military and security

The friendship between China and Pakistan has led to mutually beneficial achievements and reflected their commitment to maintain the stability of the South Asian geopolitical landscape based on their strategic response to the common national security threat of India. India has always considered China its main strategic

competitor due to long-standing border disputes. In the space field, India has regarded China as its target to surpass. Both countries have positioned their space programs as important manifestations of national soft and hard power and have continued to compete at the frontier of technology. However, China is far ahead of India in the development of core technologies (Rajagopalan 2020). Although India's growing space capabilities make it difficult to surpass China in a short period of time, they have greatly widened the development gap between itself and Pakistan, especially in the military and security fields directly affected by space technology. As the two countries became nuclear states successively, India further implemented the space militarization that is complementary to nuclear weapon development. The Command, Control, Communication, Computers, Information, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) capabilities established through satellite systems pose a serious security threat to Pakistan. The C4ISR system enables India to grasp real-time information on the location of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, missile bases, and the deployment of conventional forces. With India's continuous launch of military satellites and expansion of monitoring coverage and accuracy, Pakistan's political bottom line of maintaining "credible minimum nuclear deterrence" capabilities has been weakened (Hussain and Ahmed 2019, 69-73). Thus, besides accelerating more satellite launch plans under China-Pakistan space cooperation, Pakistan is forced to invest more resources in space-related military capabilities such as ballistic missile defense systems and military satellite communication systems, directly increasing its path-dependency on China.

Pakistan and China began cooperation in the missile field in the 1990s. China has continuously exported multiple ballistic missiles and related technologies to Pakistan. Remote sensing satellites such as the PRSS developed under the Space Silk Road have military and civilian dual uses. Pakistan uses these satellites to monitor border movements, prevent the infiltration of domestic rebels and foreign agents, and provide further feedback on the function of its domestic missile system. The Beidou system projects a key force in Pakistan's defense, guiding its own missiles, assisting the air defense system to detect incoming missile trajectories and intercept those in

time, and transmitting battlefield information to catch the movements of the Indian army in possible war scenarios, thereby reducing the military threat to some extent (Goel 2009). Samran Ali argues that the most effective tactical approach for India to completely suppress Pakistan's defense capabilities would be to use anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons to attack the Beidou satellite constellation, but rashly provoking a military conflict with China is definitely not a rational choice for India (Ali 2022). Khan believes that the development of space technology and the geopolitical games among China, India, and Pakistan have formed a "space security trilemma" beyond the Earth's surface (Khan 2019, 17-18), which is a long-term risk challenge but also a major demand driver for China-Pakistan space cooperation.

Challenges on international politics

The steady development of China-Pakistan space cooperation has aroused covetousness from countries outside the region. As a traditional space power, Japan has used the Asia Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF) as a space diplomacy tool and formed a regional space competitive pattern with the APSCO led by China (Suzuki 2007, 73-80). Pakistan, as a founding member of APSCO, also participated in the APRSAF through different government entities (APRSAF 2022). Pakistan and the US resumed contact in space at the beginning of this century. In 2004, NASA and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) jointly established the transgovernmental agency SERVIR to carry out cross-border environmental management globally. NASA uses its advanced satellite technology to help countries improve decision-making for the environment and natural resource utilization. In 2010, SUPARCO represented Pakistan to join the SERVIR Hindu Kush Himalaya Regional Branch Center (SERVIR-HKH) regional hub in South Asia (SERVIR Global 2019). The above-mentioned cooperation between Pakistan and foreign countries illustrates Pakistan's space for diplomatic thought, which prioritizes immediate national interests. The negative discourses like the "China Threat Theory" and "BRI Debt Trap" that continue to spread in Western countries' interactions with Pakistan, along with frequent abnormal regime changes within Pakistan, highlight the potential risks in China-Pakistan space cooperation.

Some Western scholars have accused China of practicing "neo-colonialism" by monopolizing the space service market within the BRI and exporting soft power such as political values and ideology to the space commons (Davis 2018, 29-30). The CPEC has been strictly scrutinized, while some Western media continue to spread the idea that China is driving Pakistan into a debt trap, exacerbating Pakistan's sluggish economy and forming a vicious spiral of more reliance on Chinese capital injection (Hurley ed. 2018, 19-21). In fact, research has shown that such an accusation lacks clear evidence of China using funds to operate political and economic leverage between recipient countries (Ferchen 2018). It is an unfounded fallacy to equate the debt distress of recipient countries with China's national interests. Cai Jianhui pointed out through the analysis of the Pakistani government's long-term financial statistics that bilateral debt is not the main component of the country's foreign debt. The debt pressures of most BRI countries are fundamentally rooted in the global impact of the US Fed's cyclical interest rate hikes (Cai ed. 2019). Although there are lots of prejudices in international public opinion, it also exposes the objective fact of Pakistan's long-term economic weakness. Political corruption and internal ethnic conflicts have hindered foreign investment for decades. Many past space projects could not be realized due to funding issues. Since 2020, the macroeconomy has fallen into a severe recession affected by the pandemic, which has further intensified into a political crisis. Due to the sharp deterioration of the domestic fiscal deficit, in March 2022, Pakistani Minister of Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry confirmed that SUPARCO had decided to postpone its original plan with China to send astronauts into space (Pons 2022).

As the all-weather strategic cooperative partner, China continues to support Pakistan in this difficult time by providing a loan of 15 billion RMB to the new Pakistani government to alleviate the economic crisis in 2022. The loan plays a supportive role in stabilizing various construction projects, including the space projects under the CPEC (Sputnik News 2022). Despite many obstacles, positive factors indicate that China-Pakistan space cooperation still has a broad prospect, given the common interests, strategic objectives, and solid friendship between the two countries.

Opportunities and prospects for China-Pakistan space cooperation

The scope of space development effects spans from the low-political field of economics and society to the high-political arena of military and diplomacy. Political friendships between state actors are crucial for space cooperation. Objective data shows the "political dividend" spilled out from the solid foundation of China and Pakistan and that China has maintained Pakistan's largest trading partner since 2015 (The Belt and Road Database 2022). China's consistent support for software and hardware has strengthened trust between the two countries. The space program is a critical component of China's overall aid to Pakistan. After the BRI and the Space Silk Road Initiative were proposed, the two countries made the statement at the establishment of an all-weather strategic cooperative partnership in 2015 to promote cooperation comprehensively in space technology applications. Pakistan is the first Asian country to carry out satellite cooperation with China under the BRI framework. Long-term political mutual trust has played an important role. For China, Pakistan provides an output path and optimizes the learning curve for its advanced space technology and manufacturing capabilities. For example, PRSS-1 and PakTES 1A satellites were launched into orbit by the Long March 2C carrier rocket, applying the world-leading "one rocket, multiple satellites" technology (Xinhuanet 2018). The diffusion of technology and the actual needs presented by the two countries in the space field are further projected into a series of satellite plans in Pakistan's Space Vision 2040, with the collaboration of medium- and long-term infrastructure constructions under the CPEC. Thus, a higher-level complementarity is fully reflected—China is Pakistan's core strategic partner to realize the future space vision, while Pakistan is China's indispensable member in the promotion of great power diplomacy.

The nature of space as a global commons makes it an extension of global governance (He and Huang 2022, 61). China's increasing influence in global governance has led to the rise of the South-South cooperation model in space. The China-Pakistan space cooperation model could serve as a reference for China in its cooperation with other Asian, African, and Latin American countries. The future

prospects of China-Pakistan space cooperation can be implemented in the following aspects: First, cooperation in the space environment's governance. The widespread use of space technology, with numerous spacecraft launched into space, results in a growing number of space debris. Due to the high-speed environment in Earth orbits, space debris affects the normal operation of space assets and poses risks and hazards to space activities. There are a total of 21,901 man-made objects in Earth's orbit, except for the 4,450 operational satellites (NASA 2019, 10). Space debris is caused by the activities of a few space powers, and the safety issues and damages are shared by all countries on Earth, creating unfair external risks for developing countries, including Pakistan. At the COPUOS committee meeting in 2022, Pakistani representatives expressed serious concerns about space debris on behalf of developing countries, emphasizing that space debris mitigation is a "common but differentiated" mission and that space superpowers should bear the main responsibility (UNOOSA 2022). With the dual identities of a space superpower and a developing country, China began its debris control plan in 2000. In 2010, the "Interim Measures for the Management of Space Debris Mitigation and Protection" were issued as the beginning of the official initiative on space debris (Mu and Fan 2015, 425-426). In 2021, the "Shijian 21" satellite was launched to verify current debris resolution (The Hindu, 2021). China and Pakistan share common interests in space and environmental governance. In the future, the two countries could promote engineering progress on debris mitigation technology and governance norms and strengthen the discourse power of the vast developing countries on the issue of a sustainable space environment.

The second is to strengthen the construction of multi-layer cooperation mechanisms from transnational, regional, to global levels. Since the 2010s, China and Pakistan have carried out a unique paradigm of integrating outer space development and surface regional cooperation, creating a foundation for China to promote space cooperation with other BRI countries and ultimately achieve the full-regional cooperation of the Space Silk Road Initiative. On the other hand, as a global intergovernmental organization, APSCO's core momentum is the professional

working networks among various levels of member states' official space departments. Talent training has become the most important link to assist developing countries, including Pakistan, in building space capacity, as China is the only space superpower in the organization. Julie Michelle Klinger pointed out that APSCO's policy practice aligns with the implementation of the BRI and the Space Silk Road. The Space Silk Road is consistent with the strategic cooperation of APSCO member countries. The goal of building a community with common interests, responsibilities, and destiny proposed by the BRI is in line with APSCO's vision (Klinger 2018, 62-64). In the future, the prospect of an all-round space cooperative network could be seen as follows: The bilateral level of cooperation modeled on China-Pakistan space cooperation is set as the base. The small multilateral cooperation under the BRI and the Space Silk Road will be an extension. Multilateral cooperation will be generated by the expanding membership of APSCO at the international level. Therefore, tackling issues like space demilitarization, space environment governance, and fair allocation of orbital spectrum, which are concerns as the Long-Term Sustainability of Space Activities (LTSOSA) to global developing countries (Yan 2019, 51-58), will become the synergy display of China-Pakistan space cooperation as the starting point of a grand blueprint.

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ARAM GASPARYAN ⃰

SOME ASPECTS OF THE ALGERIAN-RUSSIAN MILITARY COOPERATION: THE FEATURES AND PROSPECTS ⃰

Abstract: *The article examines the military cooperation between Algeria and Russia, which is of key importance for bilateral relations. The cooperation between the two countries intensified and received a new impetus during the presidency of Abd al-Aziz Bouteflika and Vladimir Putin. In a short time, Algeria became the largest buyer of Russian weapons in the Middle East and North Africa, which, together with the revenues from the sale of oil, strengthened Algeria's position and increased its influence in the region. At the same time, military cooperation with Russia had a significant impact on the development of political relations between the two countries. Algeria gradually became an important strategic partner for Russia in North Africa.*

In presenting the Russian-Algerian military cooperation, it is important to highlight certain aspects that have had both positive and negative effects on this partnership during different periods. These aspects include a shared desire for strengthening positions, as Russia and Algeria have shown a mutual interest in bolstering their positions and influence in the Middle East and African region; political cooperation and similarity of positions on a number of international issues; and the Russian-Ukrainian war, which had and has some impact on military cooperation.

The current trajectory suggests that there are no apparent factors that could impede the deepening of the existing relationship, but taking into consideration the new geopolitical developments in 2022 related to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and anti-Russian sanctions, Russian-Algerian relations will undergo a qualitative transformation. The article presents a novel approach to examining the potential for military cooperation between Russia and Algeria, taking into account the above-mentioned circumstances.

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Introduction

Algeria's relationship with Russia and the Soviet Union dates back to before Algeria's independence and continues today, particularly through the military, despite the fact that the collapse of the USSR and the Algerian civil war froze Russian-Algerian relations for almost a decade. After Abd al-Aziz Bouteflika came to power in 1999, the two countries became closer, and during the presidency of Vladimir Putin, relations were further strengthened.

The revival of relations allowed Moscow to regain its position in the Maghreb, expand its presence in the Mediterranean region, and become more actively involved in the economic and political life of Africa. The rapprochement with Moscow contributed to the strengthening of Algeria's position in the region and in the international arena. The two countries generally held similar viewpoints on many international political issues. However, these relations are based mainly on military cooperation, despite the fact that both Algeria and Russia have opportunities for cooperation in multiple economic fields, such as the energy sector and trade.

The economies of both countries are highly dependent on hydrocarbon sales and revenues. In the 2000s, along with the increase in oil prices, the financial capabilities of Algeria increased too, thanks to which it was possible to invest billions of dollars in the military sector. Algeria became the leading country in Africa with its military expenditures during 2008-2012, and took the 6th place in the world among arms importers (Shay 11), the majority of which are purchased from Russia.

Algeria has an essential role for Russia's policy not only in the Middle East but also in Africa. Bilateral ties have deep historical roots. The Soviet Union supported and provided military aid[1] to the National Liberation Front (NLF)[1] during the war

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[1] The National Liberation Front was created on November 1, 1954 as a result of the merger of several small political groups into a nationwide organization that led the armed struggle for Algerian independence from France. (Ruedy, 160-161).

of independence (1954-1962). In 1962, the USSR established diplomatic relations with the Republic of Algeria, laying the foundation for many years of fruitful cooperation in the fields of trade, energy, and defense. In addition, dozens of Russian military advisers, engineers, and specialists in various fields have a long history of work in Algeria, particularly in the health sector, while thousands of Algerian students, some of whom have been elevated to the post of minister, have attended former Soviet universities and institutes.

It should be noted that Algeria also sought to cooperate with the Soviet Union in various fields. Algeria's relations with the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), the most important direction of which was military cooperation, resulted from Western countries' restrictions on arms sales to Algeria. During the period of 1962-1989 Algeria acquired about 11 billion dollars' worth of modern weapons from the USSR, including airplanes, tanks, weapons, ammunition, etc. (Mokhefi 57, Barth 2), which were purchased for the credits provided by the USSR. The USSR also provided loans for the construction and development of heavy industry in Algeria, as well as for the production of equipment (Ghanem 111).

Russian-Algerian relations. Putin's era

Algeria's relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated in the 1990s as both countries faced internal challenges. In 1991, a civil war began in Algeria, which continued until 1999. Russia also had to deal with the complex reality created as a result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which required the need to reconstruct the economic and political system. The global system transformation caused by the dissolution of the Soviet Union also had a crucial impact on the reformulation of the foreign policies of Algeria and Russia, and the new geopolitical shifts could not bypass bilateral relations.

The revitalization of relations between the two countries was re-established in 1999 after Abd al-Aziz Bouteflika was elected president of Algeria and Vladimir

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[1] The National Liberation Front was created on November 1, 1954 as a result of the merger of several small political groups into a nationwide organization that led the armed struggle for Algerian independence from France. (Ruedy, 160-161).

Putin was elected president of Russia. The latter took steps to restore bilateral relations, and as a result, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov visited Algeria in 2000; already in 2001, Algerian President Bouteflika visited Russia.

Putin and Bouteflika signed a memorandum of strategic cooperation[1] in Moscow. In addition, the two sides negotiated the resumption of Russian arms sales and the modernization of Algeria's industrial sectors, including the fuel and power sectors (Katz, 152-153). The visit of the Algerian president to Russia gave new momentum to relations between the two countries.

President Vladimir Putin made an official visit to Algeria on March 10, 2006. It was the first visit of a high-ranking Russian official to this African country since Nikolai Podgorny's[2] visit in 1969 (Hamchi, Rebiai, 259). As a result of the two-day visit, Russia and Algeria signed four cooperation agreements, including an intergovernmental agreement on trade, economic, and financial relations and a document on Algeria's debt settlement. According to the latter, Moscow wrote off Algeria's debt worth 4.7 billion dollars in exchange for a promise to buy 7.5 billion dollars of new Russian weapons in the future (Shay 7), Algerian leadership delivered on the promise.

It should be noted that Algeria was forced to establish military cooperation with the Russian Federation because the country faced difficulties acquiring arms from Western countries due to the Algerian civil war and its aftermath. At the same time, Morocco, which also sought to strengthen its position in the region, relied on deepening relations with Western countries. This created an opportunity for Russia to establish military cooperation with Algeria and expand its influence in the region.

As for Russia, the latter activated its Middle Eastern and African policy in the 2000s and tried to strengthen its influence and assume a more active role in this region through Algeria. Moscow also hopes that arms sales and military cooperation

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[1] See the full text of the agreement: Консорциум Кодекс, Электронный фонд правовых и нормативно-технических документов. (Consortium Code, Electronic fund of legal and normative-technical documents.). [Konsortsium Kodeks, Elektronnyy fond pravovykh i normativno-tekhnicheskikh dokumentov.]   https://docs.cntd.ru/document/901794649

[2] Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet in 1965-1977.

agreements will bolster Russia's position in Algeria, but its goal of establishing a naval base at the port of Mers al-Kabir still appears distant.

As a result, Russia accounted for 80% of Algeria's arms imports from 2006 to 2013, according to SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) (Congressional Research Service, 14.10.2021).

In 2007–2012, Algeria received 44 Su-30MKI (A) twinjet multirole air superiority fighters at a total cost of $2.4 billion. In recent years, Russia has also supplied Buk-M2E (SA-17) and Pantsir-S1 anti-aircraft missile systems, attack helicopters, and heavy military cargo helicopters. In addition, Algeria has received more than five hundred T-90SA tanks since 2006. The best indicator of the importance of the Algerian arms market for Russia is the fact that it acquired the Iskander-E (SS-26) short-range ballistic missile system (Borisov, 47), which was also of strategic importance to Algeria, taking into account the regional rivalry with Morocco and the need for power balance. Besides, from the point of view of Russia, it would be some kind of leverage in future military-political cooperation.

It should be emphasized that the characteristic feature of Russia-Algeria relations in the 21st century is the intensification of cooperation in the energy and military spheres. Russia and Algeria have long had close relations in the energy sector, with energy trade being the mainstay of their bilateral economic cooperation. Both countries are major energy producers and exporters, and they have established a strong partnership in the oil and gas industry. Russia and Algeria have continued to deepen their cooperation in the energy sector through joint ventures and investments. For example, Russian energy companies such as Gazprom and Lukoil have been involved in exploration and production activities in Algeria, while the Algerian state-owned company "Sonatrach" has invested in Russian energy projects. The first fact is due to both the strong position of the two countries in the global energy markets as well as the increasing competition in the global energy market.

The activation of cooperation in the military sphere is due to multiple factors. One of the main factors is Algeria's need to modernize and strengthen its military capabilities, particularly in the face of regional security threats, instability, and a

strained (sometimes even hostile) relationship with Morocco. Algeria has faced significant security challenges in recent years, including terrorism, cross-border smuggling, and regional conflicts, which have prompted it to enhance its defense capabilities. Thus, Russian-Algerian relations are focused on two main areas: arms and energy cooperation, which also had an impact on the identification of political positions.

There are two significant facets of the political cooperation between Russia and Algeria in which their approaches are akin: their stance towards the "Arab Spring" and their joint efforts in combating global terrorism. The events of the "Arab Spring" led to the deepening of differences between Russia and Western countries.

Russia strongly opposed the interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries, which was in line with Algeria's position. As is well known, Algeria criticized the invasion of NATO forces in Libya, which they believed would contribute to regional instability. The Libyan crisis and its aftermath had an impact on Algeria's approach to the Syrian crisis, which aligned with Russia's position (Hammich, Rebiai, 268). The Libyan crisis had a notable impact on Algeria's stance towards the Syrian crisis. Algeria, which had advocated for a political solution to the Libyan conflict, adopted a similar approach to the Syrian crisis. As a result, Algeria has supported a political solution to the Syrian crisis, rejecting any military intervention or external interference in the conflict. Additionally, Algeria has sought to promote dialogue and reconciliation among the various Syrian parties to resolve the crisis peacefully. Based on the current analysis, there appear to be no identifiable factors that would impede the continued intensification of the existing relations.

Military cooperation in a new reality

The Ukrainian crisis has cast a shadow over Algeria and thrust the North African country into unprecedented polarization between Russia on the one hand and NATO and European Union member countries on the other, especially over energy and military cooperation.

The Russian-Ukrainian war has had a complex impact on Russia's relations

with Algeria. Algeria has traditionally been a key customer of Russian military equipment, and the conflict has had significant implications for this relationship.

On the other hand, the conflict has also highlighted the risks of relying too heavily on Russian military equipment. The conflict has raised concerns about the reliability of Russian military technology as well as the political risks associated with relying on a single supplier. This has led Algeria to diversify its sources of military equipment, with the country increasingly looking to countries such as China as alternative suppliers. China is gradually becoming an important military partner, thus reducing Algeria's dependence on Russia, which remains Algeria's main arms supplier. In 2012–2016, Russia's arms sales to Algeria increased by 4.7% compared to 2007–2011 (Zoubir, Hamitouche, 215). Algeria's arms imports were 64 percent higher in 2016–20 than in 2011–15, making it the sixth largest arms importer in the world. Russia remained the largest arms supplier to Algeria in 2016–20. Russian arms deliveries included 16 combat aircraft, 42 combat helicopters, and two submarines. Other notable deliveries to Algeria included two frigates from Germany and two frigates from China. (SIPRI, 2021.) At the same time, military cooperation with China includes the training of Algerian officers in Chinese military academies. The two countries also cooperate in the field of security and in combating international terrorism (Zoubir, Hamitouche, 215).

In addition to its impact on the military equipment trade, the conflict has also had broader implications for Russia's relationship with Algeria. Algeria has traditionally been a supporter of Russia on the international stage, with the two countries sharing a common interest in preserving sovereignty and opposing intervention in internal affairs. However, the conflict has led to tensions between Russia and some members of the international community, including the United States and the European Union. This has created a difficult balancing act for Algeria, which is seeking to maintain good relations with both Russia and the West.

The Russian-Ukrainian war has had a significant impact on Russia's military industry, both in terms of its economic and technological development.

The war had negative economic consequences, particularly in terms of

sanctions imposed by the international community. The United States and European Union have imposed a range of economic sanctions on Russia, including restrictions on exports of military equipment, which have limited Russia's ability to trade with foreign countries and negatively impacted its military-industrial complex. Additionally, the war has led to increased military spending, which has placed a strain on Russia's overall economic resources.

At the same time, the sanctions imposed on Russia as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war and the withdrawal of Russian gas and oil from Europe significantly increased the role of Algeria as an alternative gas supplier. In 2022, according to the data of the first five months, revenues from gas sales amounted to 21.5 billion dollars, while in 2021, in the same period, they were $12.6 billion (Al-Monitor, 15.11.2022). This fact prompted the USA and EU countries to intensify their diplomatic efforts, the main goal of which was to ensure the volume of gas supply.

In October 2022, the lawmakers, under a bipartisan group of Congress members, urged Secretary of State Antony Blinken to punish Algeria in accordance with the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act[1] for trading arms with Russia (Asharq al-Awsat 31.10. 2022). It should also be noted that several US security delegations visited Algeria during 2022, including one led by Brett McGurk, the US National Security Council coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa, and one led by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs Chidi Blyden to co-chair the US-Algeria Joint Military Dialogue. Particularly noteworthy was the visit of US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken to Algeria (Arabic Center Washington DC, 01.25.2023), the main purpose of which was to reduce the level of cooperation with the Russians, reduce tension in the Maghreb region, and ensure gas supply to Europe. Visits by high-ranking US officials to Algeria and possible sanctions will have some negative impact on Russian-Algerian relations in one way or another.

In 2022, France made efforts to improve and strengthen its bilateral relationship

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[1] The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) is a United States federal law that imposes sanctions on Iran, North Korea, and Russia.

with Algeria. In August, French President Emmanuel Macron visited Algeria with a large delegation, which was aimed at restoring ties that had deteriorated in the previous year after a series of announcements by Macron (Le Mond, 25.08.2022)[1]. The director of the Geneva-based Research Center for the Arab World, Hasni Abidi, referring to the visit of French President Emmanuel Macron to Algeria, said "Algeria has excellent historical relations with Russia. But after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Algeria does not want to be seen as an agent of Moscow or part of some Russian axis of evil." Reestablishing ties with France could serve as a means for Algeria to demonstrate its status as a respected member of the international community. (BBC News, 10.12.2022).

As part of ongoing efforts to address regional security issues, a meeting was held between the leaders of the French and Algerian intelligence services. According to sources, one of the main topics discussed during the meeting was the situation in Mali (Al-Monitor, 15.11.2022) where a military coup took place in 2020. The Algerian authorities expressed concern over the volatile situation in their neighboring country, particularly following the withdrawal of French troops and the reported activities of the Russian private military company, the "Wagner Group". In this context, it is noteworthy Abdelmadjid Tebboune's recent criticism of the Russian presence in Mali given the current security situation in the region. The Algerian President expressed concern over reports of the Wagner Group's activities in Mali, which have raised concerns among neighboring countries, including Algeria. In an interview with the French newspaper Le Figaro, the Algerian president said. "The money that this presence costs would be better placed and more useful if it were allocated to the development of the Sahel, if it were invested in economic projects" (Le Figaro, 29.12.2022), he said, referring to the presence in the

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[1] In 2021, French President Emmanuel Macron made several controversial statements regarding Algeria, which led to a deterioration of the bilateral relationship between the two countries. In a speech commemorating the 60th anniversary of Algeria's independence, Mr. Macron accused Algeria's "political-military system" of rewriting history and fomenting "hatred towards France"

country of mercenaries from the Wagner Group[1], whose landing in Bamako, in collusion with the Malian military authorities, has further destabilised Algeria's "backyard'.

President Tebboune''s unexpected statements show that the relations between Russia and Algeria are not as fluid as expected. The question arises as to whether the historical and strategic relations between the two sides have entered a phase of apathy, which is substantiated by the fact that the scheduled visit of President Theboun to Moscow did not take place in 2022. The reasons for the cancellation of the visit are currently unknown, despite the fact that it was actively being prepared for. In this regard, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Algeria Ramtan Lamamra said, "We have a large-scale cooperation program. Algeria and Russia are long-standing and important partners for each other. We are conducting a high-level political dialogue, and we hope that the visit of President Abd al-Majid Theboun to Russia will be the beginning of a new phase in our relations" (Ria Novosti, 11.11.2022).

The decreasing indicators of trade can also be considered a setback in Russian-Algerian relations. Although Algeria is presented as one of Moscow's main trade and economic partners in Africa, trade relations between the two countries are insignificant. Despite the fact that bilateral trade has steadily increased over the years, it is nevertheless worth noting that in 2013 it amounted to only 1.318 billion dollars, while the trade turnover with the USA was 4.947 billion dollars and with European countries was 49.281 billion dollars (Mokhefi, 57). In 2016 and 2017, bilateral trade between Russia and Algeria amounted to 3.97 and 4.63 billion dollars, respectively, and already in 2020 and 2021, it decreased to 2.91 and 3 billion dollars (Al-Monitor, 15.11.2022).

Conclusion

Therefore, despite the fact that Russia and Algeria are strategic partners, military cooperation remains the key direction of their relations. However, the

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[1] The Wagner Group is a Russian private military organization accused of mass killing civilians in Mali. Mali: Independent rights experts call for probe into Wagner Group's alleged crimes. https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/01/1133007

Russia-Ukrainian war and the crisis in relations between the West and Russia undoubtedly cast a shadow on relations between Russia and Algeria.

The Russian Federation has come under unprecedented political pressure and economic sanctions since the beginning of the war in Ukraine. The prolongation of hostilities in Ukraine and the lack of significant success on the frontline not only raised questions about the effectiveness of Russian weapons but also caused significant problems in the military industry, with a negative impact on Russian arms supplies. In addition to supplying and logistical difficulties, the Russian defense industry, as a result of the sanctions, is facing problems in acquiring components, which can also be an obstacle to ensuring the volume and quality of arms production, affecting export opportunities as well. Recently, the active political engagement of Western countries in Algeria, particularly the USA and France, has also had a serious impact on Russian-Algerian relations. Algeria has historically maintained strong relations with Russia; however, in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Algeria is keen to distance itself from being perceived as aligned with Moscow or part of any negative association with a Russian alliance. In order to showcase its standing as a respected member of the international community, Algeria considers the reestablishment of ties with France as a potential avenue.

Algeria, being one of the largest buyers of Russian weapons, will undoubtedly face certain problems. Taking into consideration the amount of Russian-made military equipment in Algeria and the long-term experience of using it, Algeria will likely continue to buy Russian weapons, despite the fact that their types and quantities may be less available due to production difficulties and the war in Ukraine. In this case, Algeria may look for new arms suppliers to meet its defense needs.

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WU YEYAN[*]

A STUDY ON JAPANESE MINGEI'S BIRTH IN TAISHO ERA AND ALIENATION IN SHOWA ERA[*]

Abstract: *Yanagi Sōetsu put forward the word "Mingei (Folk Craft)" in 1925 and jointly published the "Purport Book on the Establishment of Japan Mingei Museum" with Tomimoto Kenkichi, Kawai Kanjiro, and Hamada Shoji the following year, so as to launch Japan's "Mingei movement". Some scholars have noticed that during World War II, Mingei was related to "life culture" with fascist ideology, and there was a historical phenomenon that Mingei served politics. This paper attempts to interpret the first-hand texts of Yanagi Sōetsu, Kunio Kishida, and Kiyoshi Miki, discuss how Mingei with a "healthy" original intention came into being, and how it gradually became a tool for Japanese fascist aggression and expansion. Mingei originated in the period of "Taisho Democracy," with a strong left-wing flavor in Japanese history. It contains a beautiful vision of making society "healthy". It has gained influence with the support of elites, and the Mingei movement has progressed well in rural and urban society. Later, Mingei gradually attracted the attention of the Showa fascist government and was absorbed by the concept of "life culture" advocated by the new system in 1940, which was alienated and became a tool for the mobilization of the Japanese fascist war.*

Keywords: *Yanagi Sōetsu, Mingei, Japanese folk craft, colonialism, imperialism, fascism.*

Introduction

Mingei was born in the Taisho Era; it originally conceived the idea of guiding the country to develop in a healthy direction, but this idea became a tool of the Japanese fascist empire in the Showa era and also became a dissident force opposed

to the people's natural, simple, and peaceful aspirations. At last, it failed the country. This deviation from the original intention of Mingei is worthy of research and discussion in academic circles. There are many achievements in Yanagi Sōetsu's research on Mingei, but there are few studies on the deviation from the original intention of Mingei. The "Complete Works of Yanagi Sōetsu" compiled and published by Chikuma Shobo, is an important document for the study of Mingei. The collected documents are comprehensive and detailed, which has laid a good research foundation for scholars in this field. Some scholars have noticed this "Deviation", such as Kim Brandt, who published the book "Kingdom of Beauty: Mingei and the Politics of Mingei in Imperial Japan" by Duke University Press. From the broad perspective of culture and society, this book deeply analyzes the Mingei through the interaction among intellectuals, collectors, local craftsmen, government officials, businessmen, magazine editors, and middle-class consumers and has an insight into the relationship between "life culture" with fascist ideology and the Mingei. As the pioneer of Japanese Mingei research in China, Xu Yiyi was assigned to the folk craft research center in 1975 to engage in the design of paper-cut. He gradually got to know Mizuo Hiroshi, learned Yanagi Sōetsu's Mingei theory and thought, and then began to translate and publish Yanagi Sōetsu's works. His related work has greatly promoted the development of Mingei research in China. Jiang Junjun noted the cooperative relationship between the Mingei movement and the "snow investigation" and "life culture" movements during World War II in her article "Opinion on the Mingei Movement During the 1937-1945 War". It also analyzes the Mingei movement from the two dimensions of "Japanism" and "serving politics". On the one hand, it assists the government in increasing local and national fiscal revenue from the material level; on the other hand, it attempts to unite all the nations from the spiritual level.

This paper discusses how the Mingei with "healthy" initial intentions came into being and gradually alienated and integrated with the Japanese fascist regime.

The birth of Japanese Mingei

The word "Mingei" originated from the Korean Yi Dynasty ceramic. In September 1914 (Taisho 3), a young man named Asakawa Noritaka hoped to enjoy the three works given to "White Birch" magazine by François Auguste René Rodin. He also brought Yanagi Sōetsu a faceted jar with an autumn flower design from the Korean Li Dynasty (染付秋草文面取壺 そめつけあきくさもんめんとりつぼ) as a gift. Yanagi Sōetsu was deeply moved by the beauty of this work. From his landing in Pusan in 1916 (Taisho 5) to 1940 (Showa 15), he visited Korea 21 times. This work opens the door to the "Mingei movement" in the future. Therefore, in a sense, Japanese "Mingei" originated in Korea.

Yanagi Sōetsu has long been interested in folk art. The old objects he collected in Kyoto had an important impact on the birth of Mingei. According to Yanagi Sori's memory, their home in Lake Teganuma was filled with all kinds of pottery and other folk crafts. Because of the Kanto earthquake in 1923 (Taisho 12), the Yanagi Sōetsu family moved to Kyoto the following year. At that time, Kawai Kanjiro also lived in Kyoto, but Yanagi Sōetsu strongly criticized that Kawai's works were only an imitation of oriental ancient ceramics, so he was estranged from Kawai and they didn't have much contact. This year, Hamada Shoji just returned from Leach Pottery in St. Ives, England. With Hamada's efforts, they bury their hatchet. Yanagi Sōetsu heard about the morning market in Kyoto from Kawai; since then, he and Kawai Kanjiro frequently went to the market to collect the "coarse objects" (下手物 げてもの). Almost all the important collections of the Japanese folk crafts museum were collected by them in Kyoto at that time.

The investigation of the Yi Dynasty's artifacts then aroused Yanagi Sōetsu's interest in the study of Mokujiki Budda statues. In 1924 (Taisho 13), when he was admiring the collection of Yi Dynasty ceramics in the house of Komiyama Seizo, the mayor of Ikeda Village, Kofu, Yamanashi Prefecture, he was suddenly attracted by the Buddha statue of "Mokujiki Shonin" that he saw by accident. Yanagi Sōetsu recalled: "It was the first time I met Komiyama. On that day, the two works of Shonin accidentally came into my sight, which may have been fate. According to my request,

the host showed me ceramics, not those sculptures. Two Buddha statues (Ksitigarbha and Amitayusa Tathāgata) are placed in front of the dark warehouse. When I passed them, I inadvertently touched them for my own sight (if the Buddha statues were covered with a piece of cloth, I might never meet the shonin in my life). I was immediately enchanted, and the smile on their lips attracted me at once. This is unusual. If there is no special religious experience, such things cannot be carved." Since then, Yanagi Sōetsu has devoted three years to the study of the Mokujiki Budda and wrote the article "The Origin of the Discovery of Mokujiki Shonin".

Yanagi Sōetsu's investigation of Mokujiki Budda eventually led to the birth of Mingei. In 1925 (Taisho 14), during his journey with his friends Kawai Kanjiro and Hamada Shoji to inspect the Mokujiki Buddha statue in Takano Mountain, which is the holy land of Buddhism, the word "Mingei" was born in the hotel discussion, which means folk craft. On April 1, 1926 (Taisho 15), Yanagi Sōetsu jointly published the "Purport Book on the Establishment of the Japan Mingei Museum" with Tomimoto Kenkichi, Kawai Kanjiro, and Hamada Shoji, which is the symbol of the official launch of the Mingei movement and contains the original idea of Mingei. To study the original intention of Mingei, it is necessary to analyze this article. The second sentence in the article is "自然から産みなされた健康な素朴な活々した美を求めるなら、民藝Folk Art の世界に来ねばならぬ", The word "民藝" (Mingei) in this sentence uses "Folk Art" as its English counterpart. The Chinese character "People" (民 みん) in this text not only forms the word "Mingei" (民藝), but also forms two times "Ordinary people" (民衆 みんしゅう), one time "Nation" (民族 みんぞく), and one time "National people" (国民 こくみん). In the text, "people" means ordinary and common, and "nation" and "national people" mean the ability of Mingei to represent the uniqueness of the Japanese nation. For example, you can see a pure Japanese world (純日本の世界がある) in the clumsy artifacts made by nameless craftsmen (名無き工人). The Chinese character "Art" (藝 げい) appears in the sentence of "必然蒐集せられる作は、主として工藝Craftの領域に属する". In this sentence, it clearly defines the scope it represents, mainly in the field of "Craft" (

工藝). Mingei aims to pursue a new kind of beauty. The characteristics of this kind of beauty are: health (健康 けんこう), soundness (健全 けんぜん), simplicity (素朴 そぼく), nature (自然 しぜん), freedom (自由 じゆう), clumsy (下手 へた), casualness (無心 むしん), moisture (潤い うるおい), and full of life (生命に充ち). This characteristic is also the essence of beauty (美の本質), recognized by Yanagi Sōetsu, Tomimoto Kenkichi, Kawai Kanjiro, and Hamada Shoji.

The word "Mingei" is very practical and contains a beautiful vision of seeking a "healthy" society. When describing the process of his father Yanagi Sōetsu's Mingei theory, Yanagi Sori wrote: "John Ruskin and William Morris believe that the people who make goods and the people who use them should belong to the same close social community. They also advocate that only a sound society can make sound goods." However, with the expansion of influence, the Mingei theory of pursuing the essence of "health" and constructing a "healthy" society, and the subsequent Mingei movement, make this theory closer to the Japanese fascist government and go farther and farther on the road of "unhealthy".

Alienation of Japanese Mingei

Due to the strong elite attribute contained in Mingei activities, it has been supported by social elites, who are keen on eye-catching social activities such as publishing books, holding exhibitions, establishing Mingei associations, and establishing Mingei museums. Personal taste and aesthetic cultivation are very important to status and social prestige, so Mingei also gathers many elites. For example, the people who initially supported Mingei are often older cultural elites, and their social power comes from the monopoly of educational and aesthetic capital. Those who catch up from behind are some emerging industrial capitalists and intellectuals with higher education.

Mingei began to gain followers and greater influence from its social activities. Since 1931, Yanagi Sōetsu and other Mingei activists have shifted their focus to new Mingei and rural areas. The difference between new Mingei and old Mingei is that it

reduces its attention to old things and changes direction to more active social activities. Their efforts to reform the rural handicraft industry by respecting local traditions and characteristics have quickly attracted people's attention and support. Local craftsmen and elites in San'in and its adjacent areas took the lead in joining this cause. Activities to find a way out and market folk crafts in San'in and other areas have expanded the relationship between Mingei and key institutions of urban consumerism. Such as building distribution channels for retail stores and department stores that establish relationships between mass consumption media. Soon after, the new Mingei and its main promoters gained followers in metropolitan centers in Kyoto, Osaka, Tokyo, and other regions of Japan. In 1934, the Mingei Association was established, which enabled more and more individuals and groups to participate in the production, promotion, and distribution of new Mingei. In addition, the Mingei Association took over the publication of "Kogei" magazine and coordinated other Mingei organizations, such as the newly established Japan Folk Crafts Museum in Tokyo. These activities helped Mingei expand to all regions of Japan.

With the development of Rural Revitalization in Northeast Japan, the social reputation of the Mingei movement went up. In 1930, a serious agricultural crisis called the "Showa agricultural panic" occurred in Japan. By 1931, the northeastern region and Hokkaido had suffered serious crop failure due to severe cold weather. Due to the economic downturn and the influx of urban unemployed into rural areas, many areas of northeast Japan have fallen into poverty. Yanagi Sōetsu believes that encouraging the development of handicraft sidelines in northeast rural areas can improve the poverty status of villages because rural products have local characteristics and can become real local products. It is meaningless to imitate urban style; rural areas should use local materials and traditional methods to produce goods that match modern life. In 1933, in order to reduce the loss from the snow disaster and restore the rural economy in northeast Japan, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry established the Snowfall Institute. Since 1937, the Snowfall Institute and Mingei Association have made joint efforts to promote Mingei production in northeast Japan. By expanding and rationalizing low-cost cottage industries to

improve the productivity of rural communities and by making full use of the off-season labor force, reformers hope to provide additional sources of income for cash-deficit farmers. At the same time, the efforts to promote Mingei production in northeast rural areas also contribute to boosting the morale of the local people.

The increasingly influential Mingei movement began to attract the interest and attention of the Japanese fascist regime. As early as 1932, the comments made by Kunii Kitaro, director of the Craft Guidance Center of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (商工省工芸指導所), published in the government publication "Craft News" (工芸ニュース) were representative. He said that people have developed the bad habit of overestimating imported products, having an insufficient understanding of technology, and paying too much attention to science. The Mingei and peasant art movements are commendable, and their efforts have attracted attention to the local manufacturing industry. The main goal of the Japanese fascist government is to create a "beautiful new society" with a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere". This "beautiful" vision is regarded as a source of aesthetic satisfaction and a source of virtue and strength. As the European academic circles of fascism studies have long emphasized, the consideration of aesthetics is at the core of the fascist plan. Fascist politics is not only characterized by the deliberate manipulation of spectacular new situations and symbols, such as architecture, films, mass programs, gatherings, posters, and uniforms, but also by the transformation of society and country by fascism, which is framed in clear aesthetic terms. Japan is in a peripheral position among the big powers, and national aesthetic uncertainty is the source of its sense of inferiority. The Japanese fascist government realized that having a unique national aesthetic was very important politically and economically.

As a local aesthetic resource for folk art, Mingei can undoubtedly be used by the Japanese fascist government. Regarding the reasons, first of all, at the beginning of the 20th century, the production cost of luxury handicrafts was high, the efficiency was low, and sales were difficult. Japan's famous, exquisite, and luxurious handicrafts gradually declined in the west. In the period between the two world wars, Japan was in a period of style uncertainty. It was unclear whether the country should continue to

promote national goods with local traditional aesthetics. Therefore, the government hopes that the aesthetic resources of Mingei will help manufacturers achieve good performance overseas and establish the international reputation of Japanese art. Secondly, the importance of rural culture represented by Mingei has been recognized. The rural culture of spending less and producing more embodies the local values of production and thrift, emphasizing that such a culture has the ability to reform families and eliminate class and regional differences. If it is accepted by all Japanese, it is conducive to national unity.

With the use of Mingei by the Japanese fascist government, Mingei gradually coincided with the concept of "life culture" advocated by Japanese fascists. "Life culture" was gradually formed when Miki Kiyoshi was in charge of the Showa Research Association, a think tank of Konoe Fumimaro, after 1937, when he formulated a cultural policy outline for the new order (新体制) and formulated cases for the Ministry of Culture. However, due to the hostility of the military authorities and conservative forces, the Showa Research Society had to be disbanded, and its ideological trend was soon absorbed by the Imperial Rule Assistance Association. The Imperial Rule Assistance Association was established in October 1940. Prime Minister Konoe served as the first president. The goal is to promote the new order movement, which is essentially the centralized reorganization of the fascist regime. Kunio Kishida served as the first culture minister of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association. He incorporated Mingei into the concept of "life culture," strongly advocated by the new order. The positive, popular, daily, internal, unified, healthy, and productive culture of "life culture" has similarities with Mingei. In the 3rd point of Article 5 "maintaining and carrying forward local cultural traditions" in "New Construction of Local Culture", he clearly wrote "guiding the preservation and healthy development of Mingei". In 1942, the life culture class was listed as the No. 1 Department in the class system, indicating that "life culture" is the leading concept of the cultural movement of the IRAA. The "report on wartime life culture" published in 1943 reveals that "life culture" is a means of mass mobilization; that is, life should serve war; culture is life, so culture should serve war.

Strangely, Mingei activists led by Yanagi Sōetsu actively embraced the new order movement. He showed his initiative at the beginning of "the problem of new systems and craft beauty: the Mingei movement has been going on for more than ten years. Now the new order has been implemented everywhere. We have long put forward the idea that we need to establish a national formal social organization to implement the concept of Mingei. Fortunately, in extraordinary times, this reform was achieved rapidly. For this reason, the new order required by this country is an excellent opportunity for the realization of the concept of Mingei" Yanagi Sōetsu recognized Kishida's local cultural construction policy and believed that through the cooperation of Mingei, the society can recover to a healthy and beautiful state and use local Mingei to construct the whole country of Japan: "The way of handcraft relies mostly on the traditions and materials of the earth, which will inevitably reflect the distinctive national characteristics. It can be said that such folk crafts are more prosperous locally than in cities. Recently, the value of local culture has been reassessed in order to rebuild a country with characteristics, so this is the basic work that must be carried out. The unique performance of the country now depends on local Mingei, which is not exaggerated. It is the only way to use Mingei as a straightforward and concrete expression of national character. Only when Mingei is healthy and developed can it be displayed in the world with a unique national image." However, Yanagi Sōetsu only saw trees but not forests, ignoring the evil attribute of "unhealthy" fascist Japan as a whole. The Mingei movement's embrace of the new order will not bring health to Japanese society but help its tyranny. So far, Yanagi Sōetsu's Mingei and Miki Kiyoshi's life culture were initially alienated into a simple fascist war tool in order to realize a certain social transformation desire of "healthy development".

In fact, the alienation of Mingei can be seen as early as its scope of activities. Mingei activities were not limited to Japan but rapidly expanded to various colonies and semi-colonies of the Japanese empire with Japan's aggression. Mingei is not only Japanese Mingei; it also merged Korea, Okinawa, North and Northeast China, Taiwan Province of China, and other places' folk crafts into Mingei. In the 1920s, Korea

strongly resisted Japanese rule. Yanagi Sōetsu's efforts to solve the "Japan-Korea" problem through cultural activities in the 1920s have been accepted, which is beneficial to the establishment of a regime with a relatively reconciliatory culture in Korea. Therefore, Yanagi Sōetsu's projects and visits in Korea have received direct or indirect support from the Japanese government. By the 1930s, Korea had been assimilated into a relatively stable colony of the Japanese fascist empire. Yanagi Sōetsu was already interested in Okinawa culture during his studenthood. He began to investigate Okinawa in 1938 in an attempt to infer Ryukyu culture into pure Japanese culture in order to seek the legitimacy of rule in Japan. In 1938, Yoshida Shoya joined the Japanese army in North China and gradually promoted the practice of Mingei there. With the support of the military, he tried to establish a colonial handicraft economy; the Manchuria Mingei activities presided over by Shikiba Ryusaburo from about 1942 were also controlled by the military, advocating the hypocritical ideas of "harmony of five nations" and "king's promised land" of "Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Manchurian and Mongolian"; in 1943, Yanagi Sōetsu visited Taiwan for Mingei research entrusted by the Oriental Art International Research Association and the Japanese folk crafts museum, soon after the investigation, the "Taiwan governor's office" established an organization called "Life Culture Revitalization Association" on this basis to promote the craft revitalization activity called "Taiwan Modeling Culture Movement" and strengthen colonial rule.

Conclusion

Mingei originated in 1914 (Taisho 3), when the Yi Dynasty pottery "faceted jar with autumn flower design" was given to Yanagi Sōetsu, and it was only 4 years after Korea completely became a Japanese colony. It can be said that the birth of Mingei was accompanied by the oppression of the Japanese Empire and the humiliation of the Korean people. Yanagi Sōetsu's work in Korea and the Mingei that came into being were used by the Japanese government to serve colonial rule. Although the birth of Mingei is full of Yanagi Sōetsu and others' beautiful vision of "healthy" social reform, even in the period of "Taisho Democracy," when

Mingei was born, the booming democratic movements have not been able to change the immorality and illegality of the Japanese government. Because it is still the continuation of the Japanese empire that pursued social Darwinism, foreign aggression, and expansion policies after the Meiji Restoration in 1868. It still carried out cruel colonial or semicolonial rule in Korea, Ryukyu, the Taiwan province of China, and North and Northeast China. The birth of Japanese Mingei was influenced and shaped by imperialism, colonialism, nationalism, industrialism, and capitalism. Such Mingei did not have the ability to let the government return to good, nor the courage to break with the government and fight to the end. Therefore, the local reforms brought about by the Mingei of "health", "soundness", "simplicity", "nature", "freedom", "clumsy", "casualness", moisture," and "full of life" can only become the ruling tool of the "unhealthy" government. Eventually, it was inevitable to be alienated into the means of integrating the "Asian Empire" of the Showa fascist regime.

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Report

Current trends in terrorism: Program on Terrorism and Security Studies held at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Germany

On June 6-30, 2023, the four-week "Program on Terrorism and Security Studies (PTSS)" was held at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Germany, with lectures and seminar discussions in separate syndicate groups. The program was attended by 94 participants from 59 countries, which truly testified to the large-scale and global nature of the PTSS program, as almost a third of the world's countries were represented.

Although the global security environment has changed significantly in recent years, terrorism remains a primary security threat for many countries around the world. Here, I would like to briefly outline the current general trends, which are as follows:

1. Africanization of Jihad: Global jihadist terrorist organizations, mainly Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, are moving their infrastructure and, accordingly, their targets from the Middle East to the African continent, the Sahel, and a number of East African states. This trend, named as Africanization of Jihad, was explained by the fact that Middle Eastern countries using the latest technologies have developed their intelligence and counter-intelligence capabilities to such an extent that terrorist organizations are no longer capable of acting with high performance.

2. Transfers and payments with cryptocurrencies: Counter-terrorist agencies and services currently face multifaceted threats and challenges. One of the modern features of international terrorism is the use of new forms and ways of financing terrorist organizations: transfers and payments with cryptocurrencies, which are considered a new challenge for the counter-terrorist services of different states. Application of crypto currency financing by terrorist organizations has become more frequent, and it has become much more complicated for the respective authorities to

identify the sources of funding for terrorist organizations, track the course of financial flows, and make accurate observations.

3. Manipulation of the perception of time in Islam: Another trend worth mentioning is how jihadi terrorist organizations, while recruiting, manipulate the perception of time in Islam. The precise and authentic interpretation of time in Islam in the fight against the radicalization of individuals who are included in jihadist terrorist structures is of paramount importance. In Islam, time is considered a precious gift from God to be utilised wisely for fulfilling religious duties, gaining knowledge, and promoting justice. There are two perceptions of time.

• Al-Dahr – The Islamic concept of infinite time that connects individuals to the universe's expanse, the time spent on earth and the actual life of a person are not important.

• Al-Waqt – This way of perceiving time focuses on the present moment, emphasizing the importance of efficient use of time to create personal and societal common good and betterment.

Jihadi terrorist organizations target representatives of different social strata during recruitment and radicalization, and by manipulating these two perceptions of time, they focus on explaining the first way of perceiving time and cause urgent, often violent actions and a disregard for worldly life. Then they try to prove that true Muslims must abandon earthly life and must reach celestial life through jihad, which is more suitable for them[1].

4. Leaderless Jihad: One of the challenges we face now is the new phenomenon of leaderless jihad, which first and foremost stems from the leadership deficit within terrorist organizations. The deaths of the most compelling leaders led to fierce competition among peers for the leadership of the movements. Most of the time, this competition lasts long enough that movements are managed and organised without any leader, thus changing the traditional structure of the movement. The strangest thing is that while interacting with terrorist movements, states and their

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[1] Mohammed Omar, Mosul Eye Blog, Presentation: The Influence of Time in Islam and De-radicalization Methods, 28.06.2023, George Marshall European Center for Security Studies.

respective counter-terrorist authorities will grapple with the problem of identifying the leadership archetypes of the new leaders of the terrorist organizations if there is one, and if there is no leader within the organization, they don't know who to negotiate with or how to communicate with them.

In 2007, during the international conference "Ensuring preparedness in the fight against terrorism" held in Yerevan, the Armenian side announced that, as a result of systematic measures implemented in the Republic of Armenia, no case of terrorist activity or its financing was registered, and from the point of view of terrorist threats, the territory of the republic can be assessed as relatively safe. In the territory of the Republic of Armenia, there are high-risk facilities for life support, transport, and telecommunications; storage sites for radioactive, toxic, and explosive materials; and diplomatic and various international missions that can be targets for both terrorist organizations and sabotage and reconnaissance formations of a possible enemy. In addition, the Armenian nuclear power plant, natural and artificial reservoirs, and hazardous and explosive objects of the chemical industry in the Republic of Armenia can themselves act as a means of mass destruction if global terrorist actions are carried out against them.

During the seminar-discussions, the legal basis of the fight against terrorism by RA, the National Strategy for the Fight against Terrorism in the Republic of Armenia, was presented, as was the fact that Armenia has joined the UN Convention against Terrorist Financing and the Council of Europe Convention against Terrorism. The Republic of Armenia also faced the challenge of terrorists and mercenary groups in 2020 when Azerbaijan started an all-out war against Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh). In the course of one specific seminar-discussion devoted to assessing the terrorist threat to our nations, we emphasised that during the 44-day Artsakh war in 2020, the Azerbaijani side unleashed the potential of terrorists and mercenaries recruited in Syria and thus conducted the process of encouraging the infiltration of proxy forces and jihadist militants from the Middle East's various battlegrounds into the South Caucasus. It was highlighted that Turkey, having accumulated the best experience in recruiting and using terrorist and mercenary potential in Libya, Iraq, and Syria,

provided full support to Azerbaijan in this matter, organised the recruitment of mercenary terrorists from different battlegrounds in Syria, and solved the problems of their transfer to Azerbaijan[1]. Turkish involvement in this process was addressed by international media, such as the Voice of America[2], the BBC[3], The Guardian[4], and confirmed by some states, such as Russia and France. Therefore, we emphasized that after the second 44-day Artsakh war provoked by Azerbaijan in 2020, the Republic of Armenia needs to design and develop a new national security strategy and counter-terrorism strategy that will assess and provide acute ways and means to respond to the threat of Azerbaijan using terrorist resources against the Armenian armed forces in the future.

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[1] Hovsepyan, Levon. "The Influence of Domestic Factors on Military-Political Behavior of Turkey in the First and 44-Day Artsakh Wars: Comparative Analysis". *Scientific Artsakh*, 3 (10) 2021.

[2] "Monitor: Turkey Sending Syrian Fighters to Azerbaijan". *Voice of America.* https://www.voanews.com/a/extremism-watch_monitor-turkey-sending-syrian-fighters-azerbaijan/6196538.html. (Accessed 01.06.2023).

[3] "The Syrian mercenaries used as 'cannon fodder' in Nagorno-Karabakh". *BBC.* https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-55238803. (Accessed 01.06.2023).

[4] "Syrian recruit describes role of foreign fighters in Nagorno-Karabakh". *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/oct/02/syrian-recruit-describes-role-of-foreign-fighters-in-nagorno-karabakh. (Accessed 01.06.2023).

Workshop

The parliamentary and presidential elections in Turkey of 2023

The workshop, held on May 8, 2023, at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the NAS RA, was devoted to the parliamentary and presidential elections in Turkey. The purpose of the workshop was to comprehensively discuss the current situation in Turkey and outline possible scenarios after the elections. The main theses of the speeches of the speakers who participated in the round-table discussion were:

1. Before the earthquake, it was more or less clear how events would turn out in terms of Erdogan winning the second round of the presidential election and the opposition holding a majority in the parliament. However, the devastating earthquake significantly changed the general environment of the election campaign. The looting that occurred in the days after the earthquake, whose culprits have not yet been found, also contributed to the development of this situation. The aid provided by the authorities to those in the disaster area was provided selectively, which caused the justifiable dissatisfaction of the population. Initially, it appeared that the opposition would heavily rely on the numerous issues brought on by the earthquake, the level of corruption, and looting in the pre-election campaign, but over the past month, Erdogan has successfully pushed these issues to the side and deprived the opposition the chance to use them to his advantage. Erdogan succeeded in directing, shaping, and seizing control of the dominant informational and propaganda narrative. With various propaganda techniques, Erdogan also managed to weaken and discredit the rival opposition. Only on the third day did the Turkish army begin to participate in the relief operations in the disaster area, which may have been a result of Erdogan's worries and fears that the army might take some action.

2. Erdogan defined the pre-election campaign's core themes, which include constant displays of Turkey's achievements, from the country's initial nuclear

power plant to the development of its defense industry. While attempting to concentrate on economic issues, presidential candidate Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu has problems adequately responding to those agendas of the government, trying to focus on economic issues. The Erdogan circle manipulatively keeps anti-American rhetoric, which is widespread in Turkish society, on the foreign policy agenda. The government wants to weaken the opposition by doing this since it is linked to and identified with the West.

On March 27, the High Electoral Commission of Turkey approved the main four candidates for the position of the country's president, two of whom are particularly interesting: Muharrem Ince and Sinan Oğan. The first joined the campaign as an independent candidate quite late. In the 2018 presidential elections, he was Erdogan's opponent; he received almost 30% of the vote and stood for the opposition "Republican People's" party. In order not to harm the united opposition, it was suggested that he remove his candidacy; nevertheless, he refused. There is an approach to his candidacy that is aimed at getting votes from the main opposition bloc. The other candidate, Sinan Oğan, is of Azerbaijani origin and has lived and taught in Azerbaijan for many years. Turkish far-right nationalist groups support his candidacy. There is an opinion that Aliyev, the president of Azerbaijan, financially supports this candidate. The diversity of political forces supporting opposition candidate, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, shows that there is no ideological or moral consensus among them; the only thing that unites them is the desire to see Erdogan removed from power, and it is still unclear how this multifaceted coalition will function once in power. How will they get past the barriers?

3. Erdogan's election campaign was formally launched this year, although it actually began in October of last year with his key speech, "The Century of Türkiye." Erdogan is using the military and military-industrial achievements, as well as the potential of extreme nationalist and Islamic parties, including the "Nationalist Movement," "Great Union," "Hüda-Par," and the religious tariqats and brotherhoods operating in the country, their waqfs, and networks,

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like the "Menzil" tariqat, in this pre-election campaign. The networking prospects and income potential in those tariqats are fairly good. The most talked-about option is the potential for a second round of presidential elections, while it is probable that Erdogan will do everything in his power to prevent one and find a solution in the first round. Additionally, a scenario like this could occur in which the winning candidate for president does not gain a majority in the legislature, causing a political crisis on the domestic policy.

4. The pre-election manifesto of the opposition "Nation" alliance is mostly focused on internal political and state issues, while the foreign policy is presented quite modestly and generally. Instead, it is a general program that was accepted as a compromise to first appease the bloc's members with various ideologies, values, and foreign policy objectives. The opposition alliance's foreign policy vision is to make "Peace in the country, peace in the world," the guiding principle of the Kemalist foreign policy, a reality. Respecting the principles of independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of regional countries, not interfering in internal affairs, and acting from an impartial position in regional conflicts are emphasized. Another important emphasis is on ending foreign policy based on internal political calculations and ideological deviations. These stand in stark contrast to Erdogan's extremely individualized, prejudicial, and ideological foreign policy. The opposition's program calls for reforming the current methods for ensuring the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' staff, as well as restoring the function and significance of the Foreign Ministry in formulating and carrying out decisions and redefining foreign policy. These clauses and the strategies put out by advisers working for the opposition indicate institutionalization of foreign policy, depersonalization, the avoidance of manipulative behavior brought on by domestic political objectives, rationalization of the implementation of foreign policy, etc. The opposition appears to be trying to reassert Turkey's standing in the West based on some of the declaration's emphasis points. For Kılıçdaroğlu, foreign policy is a

relatively unfamiliar field, and advisors will play a major role. As a rule, advisors in such cases are more inclined to a cautious and predictable foreign policy so as not to create additional risks in their area of responsibility. Additionally, over-concentration of resources will be necessary for the declared priorities of economic stabilization, systemic change in the state administration, and the rule of law. In such circumstances, foreign policy might be formed through the lens of promoting these internal agendas. The degree of ties with the EU may be the biggest issue, even though there haven't been any choices made on a lot of matters yet, which is also objectively understandable. If the opposition wins the election, its foreign policy will be quite tough to implement because it will depend on how united their pre-election alliance or coalition is, which will be challenging to ensure.

5. The "People's" alliance's foreign policy program is already well-known among specialists. The pre-election manifesto gave a key place to foreign policy, and it is more of a vision, which is the ambitious continuation of Erdogan's foreign policy. The main goal is the formation of the "axis of Turkey," with the aim of achieving strategic autonomy. There is constant emphasis on the great and powerful Turkey, being a global player in the international system, and increasing the influence of foreign policy. The program is distinguished by the components of the ideological and cultural mission characteristic of the AKP. The construction of "a fully independent Turkey" in the chaotic international system, in which a key place is given to the power component, is declared a key goal.

6. The Kurdish forces have a sizable electorate in Turkey since the late 2000s. It was determined that the pro-Kurdish "People's Democracy" party received roughly 60 mandates in the 2018 elections, or 11% of the vote. In pre-election proceedings, Erdogan has always been able to leverage the Kurdish element. Thanks to Erdogan's approach, the Kurds' influence in Turkey's pre-election processes increased after 2002. This is particularly evident

when examining the outcomes of the elections that were held after 2002, where the AKP and Erdogan have a notable edge in the areas where the populace appears to support the government the least. This is related to the effective way Erdogan leverages Kurdish votes to his advantage by separating them from the "Kurdistan Workers' Party" (PKK). This is related to the effective way Erdogan leverages Kurdish votes to his advantage by separating them from the "Kurdistan Workers' Party" (PKK). The notion that Erdogan will bring Kurds and Turks together has recently come up for discussion in Kurdish circles. This makes it evident that the Kurds support Erdogan, and it leads us to believe that he will be able to maintain and even grow his support among them during the upcoming elections. There is a deep conviction among Kurdish people that by avoiding the PKK, they may live more prosperously in Turkey. The Kurdish community, especially in the areas of the Kurds living in the southeast of the country, is strongly supportive of the idea of coexisting in a strong Turkey with the Turks. The Kurdish issue in Turkey remains within the logic of the country's pure citizenship.

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