Global Power Shift

Aharon Klieman *Editor*

Great Powers and Geopolitics

International Affairs in a Rebalancing World

Springer

Global Power Shift

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Preface

The malcontents of this world—the militants, the jihadists, the marginalized, and the anti-*status quo* revisionists—are once again on the march. From the Crimea across the Middle East's Arab heartland, and from Libya to Nigeria and Somalia through the interior and Horn of Africa all the way eastward to the South China Seas, global power is shifting in ways that are at once dramatic and disquieting, made the more so for having been largely unanticipated.

Thrust back on the defensive is an entire post-Cold War international order, including the very foundational principles upon which it rests. Only yesterday, in entering this second decade of the twenty-first century, two alternative futures vied for acceptance. The first predicted a "Great Convergence" of mankind, generated by unprecedented economic and technological globalization, whereas the second foresaw an emerging "G-Zero" leaderless yet admirably egalitarian planet Earth made possible by the incremental and essentially nonviolent reshuffling of geopolitical power, prestige, and influence.

Political realities now suggest an altogether different paradigm. A fundamental reordering, to be sure, but more revolutionary than evolutionary; more savage than civil; and spearheaded not so much by the acknowledged great powers as by leaders of defiant weaker states, pivotal regional countries, and aggressive non-state actors; and, most disconcerting, by fanatical religious movements unbound by any accepted international rules, Western norms, legal standards, or social conventions.

How far and how fast have we retreated from those earlier confident reassurances of a "democratic peace", or of a "long peace" under the aegis of a benevolent "*Pax Americana*." When a civilian Malaysian airliner can be shot down with impunity, and when peacekeepers functioning in southern Syria under a United Nations flag and mandate are fired upon and detained by al-Qaida affiliates, the evidence is all too patently and painfully clear that international society is under siege. Just as the international system itself and its stability and credibility are sorely tested should Russia's creeping armed invasion of the Ukraine proceed unchecked.

Unless these destabilizing assaults on the global order are promptly and effectively repulsed, then "Cry 'Havoc!', and let slip the dogs of war." Hence, even in the

midst of rapidly unfolding events worldwide, students of international affairs must accept the twofold imperative of grappling with the more serious and most immediate threats, while recommending serviceable tools of the statesman's trade for guaranteeing if not the ideal of a Kantian perpetual peace then at least a tolerable, functioning world order.

Responding to the challenge, the scholars and specialists contributing to this collection of timely essays address head-on the current transformational moment in world history and politics. In doing so, they tackle their respective assignments guided by the following questions:

- What constitute today the real sinews of national power? And what is the best mix of hard, soft, and smart power needed to cope with current as well as unanticipated future challenges?
- Who are the resurgent and rising great powers? The prospective leading state and non-state actors?
- Even in the throes of its own multiple crises at home, does the United States continue to be indispensable overseas? Can it be counted upon to lead from the front?
- Are we able to identify both mechanisms and coalitions for constructing a new, more stable equilibrium, preferably short of all-out war? An equilibrium accurately reflecting the real distribution of power and influence worldwide, by first recognizing and then accommodating the ascendancy of pivotal leaders and countries in each of their respective regional subsystems.

Using the notion of a dynamic, ongoing balancing of power process as a unifying theme, these essays serve to highlight those regional rivals and rivalries most critical for international stability.

Surveying the scene in mid-summer 2014, one astute observer was led to conclude, "It is all gray and it is all grim.[1]" All gray, yes! All grim, definitely not! *Great Powers and Geopolitics* represents a serious attempt at providing a durable compass—the concept and the process of rebalancing power—for weathering the current storm and in offering authoritative guidance through the perplexities of a world in flux.

Through their individual case studies and collective effort, the editor and authors hope to satisfy the increasingly urgent need for understanding shared by policymakers and academics alike. As well as by students and citizens around the globe who share with us both a fascination with foreign affairs and a deepening concern at the state of the world.

Ramat-Aviv, Israel Aharon Klieman

[1] Leon Wieseltier, "Obama was wrong: The era of humanitarian intervention is not over," *New republic*, 27 August 2014.

Acknowledgments

The origins of this book trace back to a 3-day academic workshop convened in Jerusalem in November 2013, which brought together 17 scholars from 9 countries representing a range of cultures, disciplines, and perspectives. Although neither the organizers nor the participants could possibly have anticipated what course world politics were about to take—where better than Jerusalem for cautioning against practicing the prophetic profession?—the single consideration bringing us together surely had to have been a shared sense that, quoting Bob Dylan, "the times they are a-changin'."

Already a year earlier the Conference Announcement and Initial Call for Papers invited would-be participants to consider as their working premise that international affairs were poised on the threshold of a new era—a new era marked by a major realignment in the hierarchy and distribution of both political power and global influence.

Nor were indicators lacking of deep systemic change about to take place well before Malaysian Airlines flight MH17, before the Crimean and Ukrainian crises, before the Gaza Strip, and before the meteoric rise of the *ad-Dawla Islamiyya* (Islamic State) movement in a disorderly and possibly disintegrating Middle East. Even then, our sensors were picking up strong signals of a world-weary and wary America, increasingly exasperated by unappreciative friends and undisciplined foes, while from the other direction former supporting actors waited impatiently in the wings for an opportunity to gain center stage.

Both the preliminary Jerusalem Workshop and now this book represent an attempt at getting in front of events. Not in the sense of predicting their exact course but, rather, in framing on a larger canvas the dynamics of how and why power is in fact shifting on a global scale, as well as who are the prime movers behind this realignment.

Publication of these selected Workshop papers—revised and updated for this volume—offers a perfect opportunity to express thanks to the several individuals and agencies without whose encouragement and material assistance this project could not and would not have progressed from start to finish. First and foremost, the

International Political Science Association (IPSA), for sponsoring the Jerusalem Workshop and for enabling several young scholars to participate through IPSA travel grants. One of the privileges in chairing IPSA's Research Committee on Geopolitics is the opportunity to concert efforts with close colleagues Sharyl Cross in the United States, Igor Okunev in Russia, Ziv Rubinovitz in Israel, and Pere Vilanova in Spain.

That the Workshop sessions proved singularly successful—in the sense of serious questioning and earnest debate that led to a unique intellectual bonding—owes in no small measure to the spectacular setting offered on The Hebrew University's Mount Scopus campus overlooking the Old City and Holy Basin, whose ancient ruins and sacred sites bear strong witness to the ebb and flow of history, to the wages of religious zealotry, and to the rise and fall of great and would-be great powers.

Equally conducive were the physical facilities provided by the management of The Beit Maiersdorf complex where our guests were graciously and amply hosted by The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations. A special debt of thanks is expressed, therefore, to Professor Piki Ish-Shalom, head of the Institute, for endorsing the Workshop idea and for his personal participation in one panel and to Chanoch Wolpe for converting that idea into a memorable reality by micro-managing the three-day event with aplomb and good humor.

As *Great Powers and Geopolitics* enters into print, making it accessible to a wider audience, sincere thanks are readily offered, last but certainly not least, to the team of professionals at Springer, headed by Barbara Fess and Johannes Glaeser, and to Enrico Fels, who served in the indispensable role of "honest broker."

Contents

Introduction

Aharon Klieman

You can tell an international system is out of touch with reality when it risks repeating the grave mistake of previous international orders determined to uphold the status quo even in the face of inescapable change. History offers abundant proof that the folly of refusing to recognize or to incorporate rising powers in the constant redistribution and rebalancing of power becomes the prologue to first regional and then global disorder.

Such is again the case today. One institutional manifestation of this resistance to change, or slowness in adapting to it: the five original veto-empowered members of the United Nations Security Council remain immovably secure in their seats more than 70 years later. Neither replaced nor reinforced by new peer powers, this institutional rigidity denies—indeed, defies—more recent shifts in the real foci of global influence and responsibility. Today our shared future is in the hands of not one, nor two nor even five "Great Powers" but perhaps a dozen or more key regional actors who will doubtless answer the salient concerns of international politics: Amity, or enmity? Peace, or war? Order, or disorder? Stability, or instability? Cooperation, or conflict? Integration, or separatism? Growth, or stagnation?

The late IR theorist Kenneth Waltz may have built a strong argument for why a bipolar world is more stable than a world of many powers.[1] Nevertheless, the current trend is decidedly toward the diffusion of political capital and economic clout as well as conventional and unconventional military capabilities. Indicative of this pronounced global power shift, the swelling ranks of acknowledged or threshold "Great Powers" now include, besides China, France, Great Britain, Russia and the United States, such additions as Brazil, Germany, India and Pakistan, Indonesia

[1] See, for example, his spirited defense of bipolarity in his extended essay, "The emerging structure of international politics", *International Security*, 18, 2 (Autumn, 1993), 44–79.

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and Vietnam, Japan and the two Koreas, South Africa, plus the three non-Arab Middle Eastern countries of Iran, Israel and Turkey. Even this list is arbitrary, incomplete and subject to revision. To be sure, ignoring this heightened polycentrism and denying these ascendant states their rightful place at the table cannot prevent the rebalance of power but only guarantee that it will be accomplished through recourse to violence.

The theoretical and practical implications of this system-shaping new hierarchy or architecture of power are both numerous and critical to our understanding of international affairs. First, the large-scale redistribution of power and influence provides the supreme test of the present international system's adaptability to change by enlisting the aspirants in assuming their positive role as defenders of the international order, whereas, conversely, disallowing them the recognition and upgraded status they seek will only convert them into spoilers. Second, because these additional influential states are themselves caught up in local contests and regional conflict situations, the overall balancing of power, as Waltz and the neorealists caution, is made that much more precarious. It will require all the talents of prudent statesmanship to prevent any one threat agent or localized competition from getting out of control and menacing the larger global order. Third, and related, the scholar's task of identifying the likely shapers of the system becomes that much more challenging with the entry of each new rising power, just as does tracking the simultaneous balancing acts of power in one region after another.

1 "Great Powers", "Geopolitics", the "Balance" and "Balancing" of Power

Recalibrating the power transitions taking place within and across the global system—keeping our eye on the ball—is the most pressing task before all of us, practitioners, researchers and concerned citizens alike. In an attempt at sharpening our eyesight and insights, the following collection of essays promotes three indispensable yet often misunderstood or even discarded central organizing concepts of world politics: "great powers", "geopolitics", "balance of power".

"Great Powers" Whether set off in capital letters or not, the term originates in attempts at ranking states according to either one or both scales: (a) the capabilities they possess (often referred to as "the sinews of power") and (b) the degree of influence they can and actually do bring to bear in any given situation. Implicit in any such effort is acknowledgement of the inequality of nations. International law and General Assembly voting procedures aside, not all nations are comparable. Some are more privileged, more powerful, more influential, and therefore either to be respected or feared more than others.

Despite its commonplace usage, the term itself remains unscientific, its application to states altogether arbitrary. Thus, for example, is Iran a "great power"? And Great Britain no longer the "great power" that it once was?

At a higher level of abstraction, any number of other questions and problems arise? What is it exactly that makes a Great Power great? Tangibles or intangibles? National resources or national will? What distinguishes them as a group from lesser "small powers" and still greater "superpowers"? Moreover, how do they choose to employ this power? Toward what specific ends? Do they function as stabilizers or destabilizers in relations with neighboring countries, or towards fellow great powers? Once having achieved the coveted preferential status, what determines whether they (a) continue to rise, (b) conserve their power and thus manage to preserve their position, or (c) begin a reverse trajectory of yielding ground? Finally, from the standpoint of the international system, are there an optimal or desirable number of great powers?

Unfortunately, there are no definitive or authoritative answers to these great powers-related questions. In the final analysis, greatness in world politics is largely left to the claimant to determine: in maximizing available resources, human and otherwise; in its national cohesiveness and *esprit*; in its self-confidence, self-conviction and resolve in pursuing its declared greatness; and in its assertiveness. These imponderables are what become determinant and what make this intermediate cluster of so-called "middle-range", "middle-tier", regional and/or rising wannabe great powers singularly fascinating. But what at the same time makes them singularly problematic for global governance, and in both phases—waxing and waning—as they energetically ascend the ladder of greatness no less than when inevitably obliged to yield pride of position and to descend that same ladder, not without resistance.

"Geopolitics" The second of the key organizing concepts underpinning these essays, serves to reopen the debate over the twenty-first-century relevance or irrelevance of what Harold and Margaret Sprout a half-century earlier termed "man-milieu" relationships.[2] By which they were referring to the impact on human and international affairs of such basic geographic and environmental factors as location, territory, borders, contiguity, *etc*. There were few enthusiasts for political geography at the time, however, since most analysts of world affairs were not only disgusted, in the first instance, by the association of geopolitics with Nazi Germany's rationale for pursuing *Lebensraum*, *machtpolitik* and *Aryan* racism while practicing genocide; but, in the second instance, firmly convinced that geography retained little if any meaning in a post-modern world progressing from jet age to space age to computerization and globalization. Thus were geographical variables and their study, Geopolitics, virtually eliminated from core curricula on international relations.

Whether owing to a cyclical pattern of disciplines falling in and out of vogue or, more plausibly, under the influence of recent and current events, one detects of late

[2] Harold and Margaret Sprout, "Man-milieu relationship hypotheses in the context of international politics, Princeton: Princeton University Center of International Studies, 1956, Pp. 101, subsequently revised and published as *The Ecological Perspective on Human Affairs with Special Reference to International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965.

a marked surge of renewed interest in the nexus between geography and politics. A trend which Robert Kaplan exultantly trumpets as "The Revenge of Geography".[3] The supportive evidence is quite convincing. Merely suggestive of how geopolitical considerations factor into the relations of the great and not-so-great: The strategic impulse behind Russian President Vladimir Putin's determined annexation of the Crimea. The opening afforded the Kurds by Iraq's political disarray to give effect to their long-thwarted aspirations for full autonomy on the very edge of independent statehood. The ease by which in 2014 the Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL) was able to erase the imposed and artificial borders drawn at the end of the First World War between "Syria" and "Iraq". A precarious situation in the Pacific prompted by an escalating controversy involving China, Japan and a half-dozen other regional actors fighting over a seemingly insignificant chain of islands. In a global economy hungry for energy sources, the emergence of Israel (natural gas), Turkey (water) and the United States (oil) as prospective strategic suppliers, with added emphasis upon the strategic importance as well of the sea and overland routes for safely, efficiently and cheaply piping these liquid assets to waiting outlets and markets. For added measure, one duly notes the physical separation between the besieged Gaza Strip and the contested "West Bank", and its significance for Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, but even more so for Palestinian reconciliation and unity between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority.

In short, geopolitics may be defined as what Great Powers engage in, what they practice and what they are best at. Variables originating in physical geography, including topography, climate and demography, still translate either into assets or liabilities, openings or constraints, for rising, resident or receding great powers just as they did in the Age of Empire. Lastly, geopolitics provides the context—the landscape, the backdrop, the arena—in which great power contests take place at any given moment.

"Balance" and "Balancing" of Power Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said it best: "Great nations need organizing principles, and 'Don't do stupid stuff' is not an organizing principle."[4] She then went on, whether intentionally or not, to provide a clue to at least one prospective guide to international political behavior by noting: "It's a very key question. How do you calibrate, that's the key issue. …. How to apply it going forward will still take a lot of calibration and balancing".

Both terms, "calibration and balancing", are closely associated with the general theory of the balance of power. Like geopolitics, the balance of power has suffered a checkered past and cheerless present. It, too, had been largely disqualified by late-twentieth-century commentators on world affairs for the double sin of being not

[3] See Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography* (New York: Random House, 2012. The same argument is made, albeit less confrontationally, by Walter Russell Mead in his essay in *Foreign Affairs*, "The return of geopolitics", 93, 3 (2014), 69–79.

[4] Interview with Jeffrey Goldberg, "Hillary Clinton: 'Failure' to help Syrian rebels led to the rise of ISIS", *The Atlantic*, 10 August 2014.

only morally anathema but outmoded diplomatically, only to be thrust back into IR discourse under the force of recent events and the attendant need for conceptual and analytical tools by which to understand these events. This book is part of the effort at reassessing and reintegrating the balance of power paradigm, with particular emphasis on the politics and the process of *balancing*.

The "balance of power" is used in evaluating the division and distribution of power among two or more independent local or global actors. "Balancing", by contrast, looks at the expenditure of energies and resources, the exertions of those several competitive actors or coalitions directed towards gaining comparative advantage over each other or, alternatively, offsetting and counterbalancing an unfavorable balance. It follows from this logic that the net outcome of these interactions might just as plausibly result in imbalance as in symmetrical balance.

Seen in this light, balancing is ubiquitous. Balancing is inherent in any situation where independent states now augmented by non-state actors are found pursuing rival interests. By definition, balancing is applicable to any number of different Great Power configurations—bilateral, trilateral or multilateral—with the single exception of a hegemonic international system characterized by unipolarity.

In retrospect, it is somewhat ironic and certainly worthy of note that in the race now underway to find a useful reference point for surveying the transformed international landscape of greater and lesser powers, among the most relevant and most promising are the two wrongly-slighted fields of study: geopolitics and the balance or balancing of power.

2 Studies in Great Power Balancing Politics

A world in which the United States is less prominent and less assertive, choosing not to lead from the front, is, by definition, a rebalancing world. The exact nature and contours of this reconfigured international system will work themselves out by the beginning of the next decade if not sooner. In broad general terms two alternative models already present themselves: a descent into world disorder, or a substitute world order qualitatively different from the existing one. A world order marked by a new and as yet uncharted map of power, and by a correspondingly revised hierarchy of powers: great, intermediate and small; global, regional and local.

In Chapter 2, "Pushing back. The balance and balancing of power", Aharon Klieman argues that the balance of power continues to offer theorists and statesmen alike a serviceable mechanism for maintaining tolerable levels of global order and stability even in the midst of accelerated change. Summarily rejected in the second half of the twentieth century by scholars and analysts of world affairs as no longer relevant politically and incurably flawed conceptually, the balance-of-power paradigm nevertheless retains its impressive and robust explanatory power for today's transformative international relations.

After successive eras of Soviet-American Cold War bipolarity and post-Cold War American hegemony, we are "back to balancing". Acknowledging the re-emergence of multipolarity, with the participation of an unprecedented number of competitive state and non-state actors, Klieman offers six refinements of the classic Balance of Power in adjusting theory to reality. He then proceeds to address the current geopolitics and geometrics of recalibrating power.

Can and will the United States still remain the leading power? Or are the rising competitive powers in fact taking the lead in reshaping the international system? And if the latter, how might the United States behave under bi- or multi-polarity? By posing these questions so directly at the start of his essay, Ziv Rubinovitz joins the great debate raging in recent years over the trajectory of American prestige, power and leverage. Primacy or decline?

Scholars generally agree that American dominance is no longer what it was a decade or two ago and is likely to recede even further. In Chapter 3, "The rise of the others: can the U.S. stay on top?", Rubinovitz takes objection to such gross generalizations and insists a key distinction be made between economic and military capabilities. He cites evidence of a loss of economic predominance by the U.S. even as it maintains its overall lead in the military field thanks to the twofold advantage of geography and naval superiority. Cautioning, however, against complacency, Rubinovitz advocates a revised American strategy based on selective engagement and offshore balancing. Under a defensive realist approach the United States stands a far better chance of retaining significant margins of power compared to its nearest challengers: by narrowing the geographical scope of its vital interests; by backing local powers who command their respective regions, thus leaving it free to concentrate energies on regions where dependable partners are lacking; and by projecting power from the sea in order to protect its vital interests and to defend those regional allies.

Chapter 4, "Interdependence, balancing and conflict in Russian–Turkish relations", shifts attention from the United States and its global reach to the direct participatory role of post-Soviet Russia in the multiple rebalancing acts now underway in other strategic arenas. In his contribution to this volume Tolga Demiryol provides a realist account of the puzzling trajectory of Russian–Turkish bilateral relations since the early 2000s. Between 2003 and 2011 these two major Eurasian powers engaged in an unprecedented level of political cooperation under the framework of a "strategic partnership", only to see bilateral relations return to the more familiar historical pattern of competitive equilibrium after 2011.

In his analysis Demiryol attributes this predominant Moscow–Ankara mixed relationship of cooperation and conflict to two factors: economic interdependence based on a strong energy partnership, and convergent regional security interests in Eurasia. Using quantitative data, he argues the latter convergence to have been the real driver behind the *rapprochement*, with Russia and Turkey in effect balancing perceived U.S. encroachment in their sphere of influence. It is the same security factor which also explains why ties between them frayed after 2011—even though their economic interdependence remained constant and brisk. External changes like conflicts in the Caucasus and Black Sea region and the Arab Spring in 2011 worked

to drive a wedge between Russia and Turkey. Demiryol's last point is worth keeping in mind. Longer-term incongruities in the respective energy strategies of Russia and Turkey presently function as yet a second source of discord in bilateral relations.

This theme of geopolitical relationships oscillating between the poles of amity and enmity carries over into the following chapter 5, moving from the Caucasus to the Balkans. In questioning whether great power configurations in that arena are compatible or conflicting Marinko Bobić reminds us that rarely has any great power in the past truly mastered the Balkans or done so exclusively. But neither has the Balkan Peninsula managed to avoid great power competition.

Today, while the European Union (EU) has made significant inroads toward overseeing this volatile region, a resurgent Russia, an increasingly influential Turkey and the financial crisis that has spread across Europe are serving to rekindle the political contest over the Balkans and its future. Which makes the Balkans and the configurations of great power interaction taking shape there highly instructive as part of the global power shift. Is the region fated to be mired in a zero-sum struggle, as John Mearsheimer already predicted in 1990? Or do existing and prospective configurations create an incentive for the three contending parties to cooperate? What emerges from this analysis is fading confidence that the members of the European Union can work in concert to maintain peace and stability in the Balkans without antagonizing Russia and Turkey. In such a triangular contest of interests and will, even as secondary actors Russia and Turkey have powerful cards to play should they determine individually—or even conspire together—to offset or undermine European policies.

Using geopolitical strategies as its theoretical framework and the dyadic model of balancing, Chapter 6, "Competing Hegemons: EU and Russian power projection in the South Caucasus", focuses on power projection in the south Caucasus by the European Union (EU) and Russia. Scott Nicholas Romaniuk underlines the motives behind Armenia's policy of pursuing closer ties with the EU, countered in turn by Moscow's efforts at discouraging this tilt toward the West. Of particular relevance for how balancing politics are conducted, the author traces for the reader how "carrots" and "sticks"—the stock-in-trade of statesmen—are being employed by both the EU and Russia in gaining traction in this shared space or "Common Neighbourhood". Romaniuk argues that despite protracted attempts by the EU to establish its influence over the South Caucasus, Moscow's geostrategic posture is probably better suited to secure the region as a Russian zone of influence.

Chapter 7, "Russian perspectives on U.S.-China relations and the twenty-first-century global system", while devoted to Russian perspectives on U.S.-China relations, goes considerably further and deeper by serving to underscore just how pivotal post-Soviet Russia has become for the new—better still: renewed—balance of power. This traces, in effect, to two salient features about Russia: one constant and immutable, its physical location and territorial expansiveness; the other, transitory or circumstantial, in the sense of its present regime and the Russian surge under President Vladimir Putin. Regarding the former, concern with political developments on multiple fronts is a Russian territorial imperative. Previous

Chapters on "Interdependence, balancing and conflict in Russian–Turkish relations", "Congruous or conflicting? Great power configurations in the Balkans", and "Competing Hegemons: EU and Russian power projection in the South Caucasus" may have concentrated, regionally, on balancing in the Balkans and in the Caucasus, with direct Russian participation, whereas Igor Zevelev reorients the reader eastward, to bounded case studies in Chapters 8 through 11—"Is Russia a great power in Asia?", "The Eurasian great power triangle", "Pulling their punches: BRIC foreign policies in the Middle East" and "Strategic hedging by non-great powers in the Persian Gulf"—of balancing politics in central Asia, the Far East and the Middle East, again involving Russia. Finding the right balance between the Euro-Atlantic and Asia-Pacific vectors will remain a major challenge for Russian foreign policy for years to come.

With a bow to this critical worldwide role of Russia no less than the U.S. in shaping the current and future course of international affairs, Igor Zevelev offers an insider's interpretation of how modern Russia sees itself *vis-à-vis* the twenty-first-century global system. For Zevelev, Russian foreign policy is characterized by a combination of several conflicting narratives which coexist in a general space of rhetoric on identity, security, and civilizational divisions. Accordingly, perceptions of the United States and China provide a powerful lens for framing not only how Russia conceives its foreign policy, but also for understanding its national identity transformations.

Both culturally and historically, most Russians deem themselves part of Western civilization. In the eyes of the Russian political elite, however, America's image is essentially blurred and marked by ambivalence, whereas China, by contrast, is regarded as alien and has little intellectual or emotional appeal. And yet, China as opposed to the United States is basically described as a reliable partner. Within this triangular construct, not losing sight of Russia will be a priority for both the U.S. and China, thereby creating openings and opportunities for Russia as balancer, but only if its leaders act prudently and are adept at playing their cards right.

Our next contributor, Stephen Blank, reinforces this deeper look at the Russian psyche in Chapter 8, "Is Russia a Great Power in Asia?", yet assigns greater weight—with specific reference to the Asian arena—to the pivotal country's quest for international status and recognition. For Blank Moscow's professed interest in regional security is first and foremost an effort to leverage its geographical position and power attributes. These he specifies as: Russia's membership and veto in the Security Council, its vast energy reserves, arsenal of nuclear weapons, geographical expanse—all with the purpose of improving its global standing. Nevertheless, the crucial argument presented in this chapter is that despite Russia's obsession with and craving for recognition as a great power in Asia, it still falls short. It is Blank's opinion and documented that Western policy tends to dismiss Russia as a factor in Asian security. Washington, in particular, steadily refuses to acknowledge what Russia desires most: acceptance as an Asian great power.

Chapter 9, "The Eurasian Great Power Triangle", continues this concentration on the Asian triangle, with Artyom Lukin asking: Can America afford in the years ahead to compete against two Eurasian great powers simultaneously? Something

which it was able to do in the 1990s, when Washington dared to encroach upon Moscow's traditional sphere of influence in continental Eurasia, and asserted its own hegemony in the Asia-Pacific. When neither Russia nor China were strong enough, or positioned as yet seriously to challenge U.S. hegemony. And when Washington had little fear of angering *both* Russia and China.

From this larger geopolitical and longer historical dual perspective the Ukraine crisis of 2013–2015 only serves to underscore the underlying, unresolved antagonism between Russia and the U.S.-led West. Artyom Lukin hazards the opinion that whatever its final outcome the battle over Ukraine inevitably makes Russia less "European" and more "Asian", thereby pushing it closer to China. To avoid a new edition of confrontational balance politics, Washington, Moscow and Beijing must strive to reach at least some modicum of accommodation.

Guy Burton in Chapter 10, "Pulling Their Punches: BRIC Foreign Policies in the Middle East", moves our analysis from the widely accepted leading Great Power contenders to the second-tier of emerging middle-range actors, with Russia in the unique position of straddling both categories. Looking at the Middle East, this chapter compares and contrasts the foreign policies of the four aspiring global powers commonly lumped together as the BRICs: Brazil, Russia, India and China. Although their supposed cohesion as a solidified group with shared interests and objectives remains subject to question, for Burton and in terms of the global power shift they do constitute an identifiable as well as significant economic and demographic cluster.

Differentiated by their status as (1) either energy producers (Brazil and Russia) or consumers (China and India) and (2) either democracies (Brazil and India) or authoritarian regimes (China and Russia), BRIC policies towards the Middle East are discussed with respect to four specific issues where the U.S. has opted to be intimately involved. These are: containment, invasion and occupation of Iraq; the Israel-Palestinian conflict; Iran's nuclear program; and the 2011 Arab uprising.

Although variations exist in the four BRIC members' individual national policies, Guy Burton's working hypothesis is that they share a common commitment: in favor of promoting state sovereignty and against outside Great Power intervention of any kind, leading to a relatively critical attitude toward American assertiveness. At the same time, however, with the possible exception of Putin's Russia the BRICs have not pursued policies directly challenging or undermining U.S. interests. This circumspection Burton attributes to any of several motivations: common regional objectives between the U.S. and the BRICs (especially stable energy markets and prices); their individual limitations and collective incoherence; and their willingness to free ride on American-provided regional security. Middle East regional security and that of the BRICs will not persist for long, however, without these emerging powers volunteering to shoulder and share the burden of responsibility in the future. The multinational coalition now engaged in a long struggle against the Islamic State movement affords these four claimants to heightened international status an exquisite moment to stand up and indeed be counted.

The last of our case studies is by Yoel Guzansky and looks at the resourcefulness of small states in the face of geopolitical instability, including their ability to

prevent total subordination to the will of larger, more powerful actors, whether global or regional. In the specific instance of the Persian Gulf emirates faced with an ascendant Iran one course of action lies in the delicate balancing act of "hedging"—a form of non-commitment that avoids the two dangers of either alienating or submitting to any of the competitive players in an increasingly perilous Middle East arena.

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Pushing Back: The Balance and Balancing of Power

Aharon Klieman

Abstract Summarily dismissed in the second half of the twentieth century by scholars and analysts of world affairs as deeply flawed conceptually and no longer relevant politically, it must now be acknowledged that the balance-of-power paradigm retains its robust explanatory power in today's transformative international relations.

"Back to balancing" is a twenty-first-century expression of the unbroken historical process of offsetting power, prestige, influence and leverage among an indeterminate number of competitive actors. Thus understood, balance-of-power theory continues to offer theorists and statesmen alike a serviceable—not foolproof—mechanism for maintaining tolerable levels of global order and stability in the very midst of accelerated change.

A world in which the United States is less prominent is a rebalancing world. Acknowledging the re-emergence of multipolarity, this essay offers six refinements of the classic Balance of Power concept. It then proceeds to address the current geopolitics and geometrics of recalibrating power as the contemporary international system "pushes back" after successive eras of Soviet-American Cold War bipolarity and post-Cold War American hegemony.

Thinking in terms of the balance and the balancing of power urgently needs to be restored to the center of discourse on world affairs. Absent such an awareness, and even otherwise close observers of world affairs as International New York Times globalist Roger Cohen are easily misled into pronouncing "It's the post-American world—and that means chaos".[1]

Statements summarily dismissing the United States as a pivotal actor and balancer are—like those famous newspaper obituaries prematurely announcing American humorist Mark Twain's death—in equal measure both untimely and exaggerated. Moreover, the sole alternative to American preeminence is not a

[1] Roger Cohen, "An anchorless world", *International Herald Tribune*, 13 September 2013.

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chaotic, anchorless world—a "zero-polar" world—but one which continues to maintain an uneasy and admittedly precarious equilibrium.

For this restoration of the Balance of Power to happen, the first order of business requires that the theory itself be revised and updated in order: (a) to correct shortcomings in standard formulations; (b) to reflect progress in IR research; and (c) to correspond to the particular features and changing contours of contemporary world politics.

Six refinements in the traditional, timeless Balance of Power construct are called for.

We should be redirecting our attention:

- to *balancing* rather than *balances*
- to *mechanisms* for balancing rather than for *measuring* balances
- to any number of *regional* and *local* balances—not only to the systemic or global balance
- to *smaller* second- and third-tier balancers instead of the so-called "great" powers
- to *decentralized* bottom-up balancing rather than top-down balancing directives imposed from above
- to balancing *within* nations and interrelated domestic-external linkages which means abandoning the notion of balancing as exclusively a function of "politics *among* nations" (to borrow from Hans Morgenthau's famous textbook title) or, if you prefer, politics *between* nations.

Because of their direct importance for the reopened debate over the Balance of Power and its application to the present, each of these six shifts of emphasis merits a closer look.

1 Balance of Power Revisited

- **From Balance to Balancing**. As captured by the metaphor of the *libra* or scales,[2]

[2] The late medieval origins and development of balance as an image, phrase and concept are ably traced by Alfred Vagts in his essay "The Balance of Power: Growth of an Idea", *World Politics*, 1, 1 (October, 1948), 82–101.

the "*balance* of power" is commonly assigned either of two principal meanings: an observable *situation* or a measurable *distribution* of power[3]—what John Mearsheimer refers to as "the geometry of power".[4]

We should really be concentrating instead on the *balancing* of power. Balancing as dynamic and action-oriented. Balancing as a *process*: fluid, ongoing and unending. Balanc*ing* as recalibration.

That the end result of all the interactions by an *n* number of actors does or does not approximate an equal balance of power is less important than the interactions themselves. Harold Lasswell was one of the first social scientists to observe, already in 1965: "it is more accurate in analyses of world politics to speak of the *balancing* than the *balance* of power".[5] It is not true that Nature only recognizes balance and imbalance. Statecraft, like Nature, recognizes and indeed encourages the *quest* for balance. What matters is the constant striving; the competitiveness; the instinctive or felt need to offset. Not so much the *end*game as skill at *playing* the game.

- **From Measuring Balance to Balancing Mechanics**. Given that there is as yet no full-proof formula for accurately quantifying power equations, scientific enquiry might better be redirected away from questions concerning the *what* (balance or imbalance? automatic or manually regulated? exact or inexact? favorable or unfavorable?). Instead, we should be asking ourselves, more

[3] On the usage and different meanings assigned the term, see: Ernst B. Haas, "The balance of power: prescription, concept, or propaganda", *World Politics*, 5, 4, (1953), 442–477; and Michael Sheehan. *The Balance of Power. History and Theory* (London: Routledge, 1996). Chapter 1. "The Meaning of the Balance of Power", pp. 1–23.

[4] John J. Mearsheimer, "Why we will soon miss the Cold War," in *The Atlantic Monthly*, 266, 2 (August, 1990), 35–50.

[5] Harold D. Lasswell. World Politics and Personal Insecurity (New York: The Free Press, 1965), especially Chapter III. "The Balancing of Power; The Expectation of Violence". The quote is found on page 42, with emphasis added in the original.

profitably: *How*? How do ongoing balancing *processes* actually function? And how might they be regulated more effectively?

Rephrasing the core question shifts the primary thrust of research, in turn, towards the choice of *means* by which international actors maneuver for competitive position; the specific *ways* they opt for in checking and countering others even as they seek to add to their own power and influence. The *mechanics* and *mechanisms* for balancing open before us the breathtakingly rich diversity of policy instruments in the diplomat's proverbial "toolbox", today incorporating the entire range of offensive, defensive, soft, hard, sticky and staying power.

- **From Systemic to Regional Balances**. Conventional perspectives on the balance of power concentrate almost exclusively on the international system writ large, *e.g.*, *global*, *systemic* or *world* balances. Yet with the end of the Cold War and the *devolution* of power from a single central and dominant balance to *multiple* centers of power, balancing is more readily evident at the *sub-system* level—in regional, sub-continental and local contests that are taking place throughout the system.

It is this *decentralized* balancing of power and the resultant "sub-balances" which presently reconfirm the theory. Through their shifting allegiances and tacit understandings, Middle East state actors Egypt, Iran, Israel, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey—joined by the religious non-state Sunni and Shi'ite movements—have now come to dominate regional affairs, with the United States either helpless or settling for an auxiliary role. Another timely case in point is the reorientation of American foreign policy to Asia and the Pacific basin, focusing attention at one level on the U.S.-China relationship, and at another level on the maneuverings of a number of local actors, among them Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam. Students of balance should therefore be closely researching and tracking these related phenomena.

- **From Global Powers to Regional Balancers**. Fourth, and related, is the necessity for dispensing with what has long been an unduly narrow preoccupation by the Balance of Power realist school with rivalries involving only Great Powers and superpowers.

As though balancing is the privilege of a select few. The monopoly of the high and the mighty; the prerogative of not more than a handful of leading actors who dominate the system and dictate to it from above. This tapered field of vision prompted Lieber and Alexander, for example, to insist "*great power* balancing against the United States has yet to occur" (*Italics mine*), leading them to argue—in the face of evidence to the contrary—"why the world is not pushing back".[6] Whereas in reality balancing behavior is unrestricted, and egalitarian; meaning that it takes place at *all* levels and *throughout* the system.

[6] Keir A. Lieber and Gerard Alexander, "Waiting for balancing", *International Security*, 30, 1 (Summer 2005), 109–139.

Cold War preoccupation with competition at the superpower level has deflected us from the fascinating range of offsetting bilateral and trilateral competitive relationships existing away from the Washington-Moscow central axis. Large or small, all states and international actors are in effect "aspiring powers". And none more aspiring of late than a growing number of ambitious regional, middle-tier and rising powers.

- **From Top-Down to Bottom-Up Balancing**. Prospects for international peace and stability thus become two-directional. Which is to say that world order is not exclusively a function of successful balancing at the top of the pyramid.

This customary and accepted "trickle-down" view of balances of power imposed (or bestowed) *from above* by dominant Great Powers is supplemented here by one indicating that approximate balances or, to borrow a term from physics and economics, "countervalence" may just as well come about—or not come about, as the case may be—through persistent multiple checking-and-balancing efforts originating at lower levels of the international system. Regional power standoffs (India and Pakistan, North and South Korea) can also *percolate upward*, impacting on the overall balance; by contributing, in the aggregate, to a greater or lesser degree of global stability (or instability), security (or insecurity).

- **From Interstate to Domestic-External Balancing**. Sixth, and last: global realists must widen their monitoring of what is in truth a vastly more inclusive and complex balancing process. This begins by acknowledging domestic-external linkages.

Classical balance of power theory has long clung to a narrow conception of the balance as solely a function of interactions *between* states. Hence, the longstanding preoccupation with competitive arms races; shifting alliances; buffers, partition and other forms of territorial dispensation; the entire gamut of diplomatic activity from normalization to estrangement, enmity and back to *rapprochement*; imperial rivalries and spheres of influence; and more. Presently, we have a far greater appreciation for the impact of politics *within* states on politics *among* nations, and to what extent internal developments such as social cohesion, economic market forces, political institutions, regime change, and caliber of leadership not only weigh heavily on the international scales of power but may actually be a determining factor in balancing outcomes.

Thus China's ethnic unrest and urban air pollution are as relevant for the swing of the pendulum as the budget deficit and breakdown of bipartisanship in the United States. Indeed, the latter's constitutional "checks & balances" formula for executive-congressional relations feeds directly into the larger balance of power. In sum: a country's global standing—a Great Power or not-so great power—as well as prospects for a stabilizing equilibrium worldwide are going to be determined by what transpires *within* individual countries no less than by the conduct of relations *between* countries.

2 Balancing of Power Theory

By incorporating these six adjustments into our conventional view of how the balance of power functions—or ought to function—we are better equipped to follow the alternative paths international systems historically have taken in restructuring themselves, even as this incremental process of rebalancing continues to unfold before us in real time.

Renewed respect for equilibrium and for the balancing of multifaceted power also marks the return of geography to the center of global affairs. This draws our attention, rightly so, to the geographic, spatial and territorial elements of national power; to the direct, intimate interplay between the political and the geographic; to the impact of geographic considerations upon policymaking and strategic decisions—what Harold and Margaret Sprout in their 1956 work referred to as the "man-milieu relationship".

Consolidation and collective action *versus* self-determination, self-help and fragmentation—these, I submit, are the two most immediate as well as deeper, longer-term paradoxical geopolitical challenges confronting responsible statesmen and enthusiasts for global governance alike. The UN dream, the EU model and coercive ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria) nightmare, on the one hand; the Crimea, Iraqi Kurdistan and South Sudan, on the other. How to reconcile these competing forces: one unifying, the other divisive? And how to avoid, in political terms, the equally uninspiring poles of hegemony and anarchy—centralized power and authority as opposed to the diffusion of power and authority across the globe and throughout the system.

This essay speaks to the Balance of Power approach toward global governance. Its main thesis is that decentralized, regionalized post-Cold War balances of power such as those surfacing in Central Asia, the Middle and Far East and elsewhere are the product of these two conflicting macro-trends. In which case, the general theory of the Balance of Power offers realistic prospects for a stable, workable although not necessarily serene multipolar political and economic international system. In defending this position, however, the key emphasis is on balanc*ing*: the verb rather than the noun; the *act* of balancing rather than the actual *condition* of balance.

This distinction between the balance and the balancing of power is critical. We must move away from attempts—exercises in futility really—at proving (or disproving) at any given moment in time the existence (or nonexistence) of static, measurable, absolute *equilibria*. These imagined balances (or imbalances) are, in any case, imperfect, necessarily subjective and ultimately unverifiable, as well as susceptible to constant change. Instead of a misplaced preoccupation with mathematical equations, data sets and numbers-crunching, the real key lies in the practical *mechanics* of checking and balancing power.

The power balancing principle maintains that either extreme—an unbalanced, lopsided world of nations subordinate to a single dominant power or, alternatively, fully empowered state actors unaccountable to any higher authority—has more negative consequences than positive ones: too little or too much autonomy; too

little or too much freedom to act on behalf of one's own parochial self-interest. It also posits that over time power will tend to check, counter and offset power. These two cardinal tenets of political realism are important in light of a great many interpretations of modern diplomatic history aimed at discrediting the practice of balancing politics, and the innumerable scholarly essays which question its theoretical foundations.

The argument presented here is that the notion of redressing perceived imbalances of influence and power has not lost any of its theoretical, descriptive, analytical or explanatory power. Quite the opposite: the Balance of Power is a doctrine for a changing world. Indeed, to make the argument even more forcefully: it remains the central organizing concept of politics among nations no less today than at any time in the past. Besides which, wherever one turns today, balancing politics are in evidence throughout the international system: whether the focus is on the ambivalent relationship between Germany and its European Union partners; the adjacent Turkey-Russia-Iran and Iran-Saudi Arabia-Pakistan triangles; the long standoff between North and South Korea; Sino-American rivalry; the Sunni-Shi'a divide within the "*dar al-Islam*" or Islamic world; or the competition for position, prestige and possession in maritime East Asia. Moreover, we can rest assured that balancing politics and the balancing dynamic are guaranteed to be with us well into the foreseeable future.

The time has come to restore balance-of-power thinking to the center of international relations (IR) discussion. This is best achieved, in the first instance, by refining the theory consistent with modern-day global political realities; and with the evolution toward multipolarity in particular.

The contrast between standard interpretations of the Balance of Power as *situation* and the Balancing of power as *process* outlined here can be likened to the difference between the popular metaphor of the simple scales once used by merchants, perfectly balanced between two counterweights, with equipoise and *stasis* the ideal, as opposed to an Alexander Calder sculpture highlighting (a) complexity and (b) continuous movement.

Scales

Mobile

The implications for understanding contemporary IR are significant, with the latter representation demonstrating the workings of a *Perpetuum mobile*. Its basic features consist of: *multiple* units—state and non-state actors—of *disparate* size, weight and position constituting parts of a larger *system*. A system whose connectivity allows it to be sufficiently flexible and adaptable as to tolerate *pushing* and *pulling* by these units even as it imposes minimal *constraints* upon their freedom of movement. If you will, a system of "global governance" designed to function even in alternating periods of *stability* and *instability*.

Absent total system breakdown and these unit-actors can be counted upon to generate any number of shifting *configurations*, the net effect of which is a basic *equilibrium*. Albeit *equilibria* of a temporary nature. Imperceptibly slow to emerge and limited in duration—until once again thrust into *disequilibrium* by proverbial "winds of change", whether environmental or from within itself. Such as when one or more "revisionist" actors undertake independent initiatives in seeking release from a prevailing *status quo* perceived of as disadvantageous or, alternatively, too constraining.

Reaffirming how a single picture might be more effective than a thousand words, the traditional balance-of-power scales and the less conventional but more representative "mobile" represent competing normative values: stalemate *versus* change; steady-state *versus* movement; a division of power between two unit-actors *versus* the diffusion of power among many unit-actors.

One model—the scales—insists upon strict *parity*, while the other—the mobile—makes the most of *disparities*. One's premise assumes *independent* actors; the other's, their *inter*dependence. One fears and therefore resists change as inherently *destabilizing*; the other respects change as *unavoidable*, indeed welcome—provided it is incremental, evolutionary and peaceful, not sudden, revolutionary or violent in nature. One advocates the preservation of an existing order—in effect, by encouraging immobility and *deadlock*; the other, suppleness and *movement* in fashioning new worlds and new orders. One is anchored in conservatism, the other, in activism. One prizes skillfulness in *computing* power equations, the other, a talent for *engineering* counterbalancing mechanisms.

To be sure, of the two constructs the free-wheeling mobile offers a more accurate—a more *realistic*—representation of the actual workings of the Game of Nations. It is worth remarking that the anti-balance bias enjoys wide acceptance in intellectual circles; much less so among worldly statesmen, practitioners and diplomats. Indeed, the shift away from "counting poles" and from *outcome*-oriented to *action*-oriented is where the study of international relations is presently at. Evidence of this increased respect for *balancing* over *balance* is evident in each of the respective two spheres which together shape the agenda of world affairs: within the community of IR scholars, and in the parallel world of IR practitioners.

The terminology of recent IR discourse is one of the best indicators. Consider for a moment how much of our thinking is framed by the twin notions of balance and balancing, both in the popular media and in the professional literature. Consider, too, such leading foreign policy terms as: pivot and re-pivot; bandwagoning,

freeloading, buck-passing, chain-ganging and hedging; offshore *balancing*, asymmetric *balancing* and under-*balancing*. Never mind that some of the distinctions—between "hard balancing" and "soft balancing", for example—may strike us as rather forced. The point is that, whether effective or not in actually producing a balance of power, all of these gerunds or verbal nouns are expressions for and variants of power calibration.

3 A Multipolar Moment

Cataloging methods for administering the balancing process through a system of weights and *counter*weights constitutes a research field unto itself. The options presently available for balancing continue to feature a veritable toolbox of time-honored measures—and *counter* measures. Alliances and *counter*-alliances; arms-racing and arms limitation agreements; projecting sea power; the threatened use and actual resort to military force; negotiation, *rapprochement,* appeasement; territorial compensation ("swaps" in today's diplomatic parlance) and other related adjustments like territorial compromise, partition, buffer zones or spheres of influence; as well as efforts at destabilization of one's opponent from within through support for opposition groups, "fifth columns" and insurgents, otherwise known as "*divide et impera*".

These staples of classic balancing are supplemented—and actually enhanced—by more modern, more sophisticated techniques, like networking and media diplomacy, nuclear deterrence, terrorism and counterterrorism, cyber warfare, wars of attrition and proxy wars, trade pacts, commercial ties and various other forms of economic statecraft, and seeking influence through membership in any number of regional frameworks, IGO's and NGO's. Helping to lubricate the balancing process, these and still other stratagems testify to the surprisingly diverse inventory of "power equalizers" which exist in today's world for attempting to contain and to counterbalance power with power.

Power balancing, to be sure, can be precarious: both for the individual state and for global order, defined minimally as dispute management and system maintenance. Diplomatic history hardly lacks for illustrations of how policymakers can and often do err in selecting between alternative policy instruments. In the final analysis, though, it is by their choice of policy instruments—domestic or diplomatic, constructive or destabilizing, offensive or defensive, prudent or imprudent, proportionate or disproportionate, successful or ineffective—that statesmen are ultimately held accountable.

Confining ourselves to the interplay of such a select group—for example, the "Big 5 + 1" leading actors (China, Britain, France, Russia and the United States, joined by Germany)—ignores the smaller players; particularly the emergent, middle-tier and rising powers. Let it be said they are no less zealous of their power status; no less pledged to defending national interests and promoting national agendas; no less motivated and active in improving their positions in relation to

immediate neighbors, proximate regional competitors and, in some cases, even *vis-à-vis* the dominant major powers. Two fascinating arenas to watch are the Middle East and the expansive region west and east of the Caspian Sea (Central Asia and the Caucasus). Here, in a major reversal of positions, local independent actors played off against each other in the past by imperial Great Powers now come to regard themselves as the primary shapers of regional economics and politics, playing off greater external powers against each other.[7]

Modern diplomatic history attests to the proven ability of small and even weak states to affect systemic balances. Serbia did so in 1914. Italy, by joining the Pact of Steel in 1939 and Tripartite Pact in 1940 to form the militaristic Rome-Berlin-Tokyo axis, helped to seal the fate of Europe in the lead-on to the Second World War. At various points in the Cold War era Afghanistan, Communist China, Cuba, Nasser's Egypt, Israel, Hungary, North and South Vietnam, and Yugoslavia in one way or another directly and meaningfully affected the U.S.-U.S.S.R. superpower equation. In the Middle East, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has long occupied the protected "catbird seat" in the regional Israeli-Arab military balance, and in this pivotal role has—with the exception of the 1967 crisis—had a moderating (*i.e.*, balancing) effect on the central war/peace equation.

[7] For insight into the regional dynamic unfolding in the Caspian Sea region, see: Werner Hermann and Johannes F. Linn (editors). *Central Asia and the Caucasus*. At the Crossroads of Eurasia in the 21st Century (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2011), especially Martha Brill Olcott. Chapter 2. "Rivalry and Competition in Central Asia", 17–35.

So, too, does contemporary history corroborate our hypothesis about the balancing effect exercised by otherwise seemingly marginal actors. This often discounted grouping includes small, weak, rogue and failed states, extending far down the chain to so-called micro-states as well as non-states and global terrorist networks. Qatar (population: 1.85 million; size: 4,467 square miles), with the second-highest GDP per capita in the world and financial surpluses in the range of $30 billion to $40 billion a year,[8] carries an inordinately big stick in Arab and Islamic affairs, and not always in compliance with America's wishes. Among other noncompliant countries engaged in 'pushing back" in recent years and months, suffice to mention Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq (even when still under direct U.S. occupation), Israel, Libya, North Korea, Pakistan, the Palestinian Authority, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sudan, and Venezuela. One of the surprises on this growing list is Norway, which turned down the Obama Administration's request to help expedite disassembling Syria's chemical weapons arsenal.[9]

Each of these recalcitrants in one way or another has stood in open defiance of the international community, but most notably of Washington's expressed preferences. And, with few exceptions, have gotten away with impunity. Individually, but particularly in the aggregate, these actors—"the rest"—are today serving as highly effective counterweights to rule by any single Power, or even any concert of Powers.

To believe otherwise, and to dismiss or downplay small-scale oscillations on this one side of the fulcrum of the balance-of-power scales, results in a fundamental misrepresentation of contemporary world politics. Thus, for example, Robert Singh reports "the disappearance of balancing acts" and "the absence of counterbalancing activities" to the U.S., citing by way of evidence that "Neither a single state nor a formal (or informal) association of such states has emerged as a plausible counterpart or peer competitor" of the United States.[10]

Surely any evaluation of challenges to America's privileged position, real or potential, must factor in the effect of balancing politics by medium and lesser powers. In the same way, prospects for local and regional balancing feeding into larger systemic stability and equilibrium in coming years will depend increasingly on how wisely the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and other "swing states" like Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Turkey and Vietnam—each in their respective geopolitical arenas—play their potentially meaningful balancing role.

This insight has direct theoretical and political implications, one of them being that the dynamic of perpetual balancing and realignment is more overpowering than the willpower or staying power of would-be hegemons. And that not even the United States, with its advantageous mix of hard and soft power capabilities, is

[8] "Qatar spends to propel its global agenda", *International Herald Tribune*, 7 January 2013.

[9] "Norway says it won't help destroy Syria toxic arsenal", *International New York Times*, 26–27 October 2013.

[10] Robert Singh. "The United States: the eagle untamed", in Donette Murray and David Brown (editors). *Multipolarity in the 21st Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 30.

immune to the immutable law of geopolitics. As the U.S. National Intelligence Council felt compelled to concede in its December 2012 Global Trends 2030 report: "the 'unipolar moment' is over and Pax Americana—the era of American ascendancy in international politics that began in 1945—is fast winding down".[11]

From this standpoint the preoccupation with Hegemonic Theory for the past two decades and more has been a colossal misreading of world politics. At no time has the international system been subordinate to the wishes of the United States, or unipolar in any real sense. Unfortunately, not only did this fundamental misperception contribute to a false sense of hubris in Washington, especially among neoconservatives, but by cultivating such a U.S.-centric perspective on global governance we are less prepared at present for coping with the major realignment of power and the formation of new centers and hierarchies of power, prestige and influence that is transforming the contours of the global economy and of world politics.

World politics abhors a vacuum. There is no such thing as "zero-polarity" So, too, is it in the very essence of world politics to fight back against asymmetrical imbalances; against a monopoly or preponderance of power. For realists and statesmen alike, aware of "the terrible temptations and dangers of unbalanced power", and with apologies to the U.S. and to American supremacists, there can be no such thing as "liberal hegemony" or a "benevolent hegemon". Here the metaphor of the scales has a certain instructive value, if one of the scales stands for the United States and the second represents the other actors. Looking to the latter first, most states are not anti-American as such. But with instances of American activism, unilateral interventionism and other excesses still vividly in mind they do share in common an innate preference for holding the U.S. in check.

From France to Russia, and from Turkey to Brazil, the other players in the "game of nations"—all of them stakeholders in a stable, workable international system; all of them competitive but not necessarily enemies of the U.S.—do not wish to see the world governed from Washington: not economically, not militarily, not politically. Thus, while a hasty, spiteful American retreat from its foreign commitments would hardly be in their best interest, on the other hand, keeping America honest and having American power safely contained is.

Similarly at the local level, balancing politics posit that local competitors, emulating their Great Power role models, will act as a counterpoise to one another. If non-Great Power regional contestants such as India and Pakistan in the Indian subcontinent, or Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam in the South China Sea, act as responsible, successful stabilizers or balancers in their respective sub-systemic arenas of competition then the net result overall should favor systemic stability. This they can engender simply by playing out their rivalries, by countering and neutralizing each

[11] U.S. National Intelligence Council, *Alternative Worlds*: Global Trends 2030 (Washington, D.C.) NIC 2012-001, December 2012, p. x, p. 98. http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/GlobalTrends_2030.pdf

other, by banding together when appropriate through "creative coalitions" and shifting alignments.

Thus, by the rules of balancing, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan and the Sunni-dominated Persian Gulf countries, discreetly joined by Israel, have a shared interest in containing Iran, even at the sub-nuclear level. By these same rules, Turkey, in pursuing its "zero problems" Middle East policy, might actually have contributed to longer-term regional disequilibrium, with Ankara one-sidedly "tilting" against Israel and thereby abnegating its otherwise pivotal balancing role against Iran, an ascendant regional claimant and prospective rival. In any event the healthy balancing of global power is very much evident in what Gregory Gause in a December 2012 essay in Foreign Policy, calls "the playing fields of regional rivalry".[12]

As a lifetime student of Middle East affairs, I cannot resist the temptation to note a recurring pattern of modern diplomatic history. As Britain, France, the former Soviet Union and now the United States can attest, no "playing field" stands out more than the greater Near & Middle East, stretching from Cyprus to Afghanistan, in testing the use and abuse of power by a long succession of Great Powers, in exposing their vulnerabilities and in hastening their recessional from power. Its lethal mix of religion and politics; its regional rivals and local rivalries; its deep social and cultural contradictions; and, not least, its enduring geostrategic centrality continues to confound "the best and the brightest" of world statesmen. The classic nineteenth-century "Eastern Question" that so disconcerted (literally and figuratively) a succession of Powers reappears today in all its gravity and complexity as the multifaceted "Middle Eastern Question".

4 The U.S.: Yielding Pride of Position

As noted earlier, the rebalancing process is correcting itself from two different directions. Not only are other countries and non-state actors slowly *gaining* ground and pushing back relative to the United States, but the U.S., for its part, is *yielding* ground and scaling back.

Acknowledging that *both* trajectories must be monitored *simultaneously,* we can safely assume other actors, small and large, weak and powerful, will aspire, within the limits of their individual capabilities, to reach ever higher rungs on the ladder of power, prestige and influence. But what is reinforcing this leveling process from the opposite direction are transformations on the American side of the equation, some more readily perceptible than others. Thus developments taking place in and to American society, and not only outside of the continental United States, are a second driver behind global multipolarity.

[12] F. Gregory Gause, III, "The year the Arab spring went bad", *Foreign Policy*, 31 December 2012.

Quantitative political science is known for assigning disproportionate weight to the tangible, muscular "sinews of power"[13] over and above other variables so subtle and hard to get at as "*esprit*" or "national will" or "resolve" or the "caliber" of national leadership. Yet, in the running debate in Washington and on American campuses between "declinists" and "exceptionalists", as well as in terms of the all-important chessboard of world politics, it is precisely these qualitative attributes which, with reference to the United States and multiple balancing, weigh heaviest on the scales.

American capabilities and global reach remain unsurpassed, leaving whatever doubts there are about the U.S. to revolve around its willingness to actually accept the burdens of global leadership and its determination to lead. This entails, *inter alia*, accepting the mantle of indispensability, asserting authority and commanding respect. In other words: to suffer the costs and the risks of leading from the front rather than "leading from behind". Instead, America gives the impression of having entered into a risk-averse mode in its foreign policy and, as a result, has been struggling to assert its leadership in one region after another and across the globe, prompting the New Republic's Leon Wieseltier to label the U.S. "the world's superpower bystander".[14]

Conspicuously absent in domestic debate over the United States and the world are such once-accepted expressions of hegemonic hubris as "the American Century", "the new world order", "*Pax Americana*", the U.S. as "world policeman", "lone ranger" and "indispensable nation", the "preemptive war" doctrine or the twenty-first century democratization equivalent of "making the world safe for democracy". This somber, more realistic tone in itself serves as important confirmation that international balancing politics are a matter of balances within balances.

For the U.S. as for all societies, whether open or closed, external balancing is very much a function of internal balancing: among rival parties and factions; between conflicting interests and priorities; and also pitting advocates for different foreign policy orientations—engagement *versus* retrenchment and disengagement—against each other. Sensing this change in the American national mood and mounting caution on the part of the U.S., other more determined foreign actors have been seizing the opportunity to assert themselves whenever and wherever possible in pushing back against the U.S. and the imbalance that for several decades has worked in its favor.

[13] The argument for America continuing to maintain its commanding lead against all prospective rivals in the major tangible elements of national power is pressed forward by many students of U.S. foreign policy, none more forcefully than Professor Robert J. Lieber. See his: *Power and Willpower in the American Future*: Why the United States Is Not Destined to Decline (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); "Can the U.S. retain primacy?", *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* (V, 3 (2011), 23–36; "Staying power and the American future: problems of primacy, policy, and grand strategy." *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 34, 4 (2011), 509–530.

[14] Leon Wieseltier, "Unbelievably small", *The New Republic*, 7 October 2013.

Even as the learned debate airs over what Professor Stanley Hoffmann once referred to as "Gulliver's Troubles", U.S. credibility is low, and waning. There is a shared sense abroad that the American people as well as the American policy establishment no longer possess the same degree of self-assurance as in those first heady days of the post-Cold War era, when Washington signaled ownership over foreign affairs and the talk was of a U.S.-inspired "New World Order".[15] That for whatever reason or combination of factors the United States has become a "frugal superpower". That, by opting for a "light footprint" strategy, the U.S. is no longer perceived—nor perceives of itself—as fully engaged, and can therefore be defied with relative impunity; worse still, ignored. Leading Aaron David Miller to observe: "these days, most everyone says 'no' to the United States without much cost or consequence".[16] Commenting at the end of the 16-day federal government shutdown in October, 2013, so close an observer as President Barack Obama himself noted how the domestic partisan strife "has encouraged our enemies, emboldened our competitors, depressed our friends who look to us for steady leadership".[17]

5 A Doctrine for a Changing World

The purpose of this essay has not been to reinvent the balance of power but to refine the concept, making it possible to reach several main conclusions.

First and foremost, we are nowhere near the "one world" Kishori Mahbubani[18] and others profess to see as the "new global civilization". Yet, by the same token, the global order is not breaking down or coming apart; nor is the cause of global governance orphaned. Even were the so-called "disengagers" in the United States policy establishment to carry through on their pledge—or threat—to pull back and to pursue a less activist strategy in foreign affairs while putting America's own

[15] As George Packer characterizes the change in U.S. foreign policy, "In the bipolar habit of America's attitude toward the rest of the world, we've flipped from grandiose missionary zeal to sullen disengagement". "Islamist Violence and a War of Ideas", *The New Yorker*, 8 October 2013. See also: Bill Keller, "America's new isolationism", *International Herald Tribune*, 10 September 2013.

[16] Aaron David Miller, "Can America afford not to bomb Syria?", *Foreign Policy*, 9 September 2013.

[17] "Obama issues call to avoid a replay", *International New York Times*, 18 October 2013.

[18] The case for such a convergence of worldwide values, perceptions and standards of living is argued by Kishore Mahbubani in his recently published book, *The Great Convergence* (Public Affairs, 2013) , subtitled "Asia, The West, and the Logic of One World".

house in order. Rather, the 2015 global order—pronounced "'good enough' global governance" by one blogist[19]—is correcting itself by redressing the bipolar and unipolar imbalances of power lasting nearly seven decades.

Ours is indeed a *multipolar* moment. Geopolitically, the playing field of balancing politics is becoming increasingly less exclusive and far more crowded, made so by additional stakeholders vying among themselves for higher status and greater leverage. Consequently, the balance of power, and with it the chances for a more stable world, are no longer simply a question of the presence of a solitary "peer competitor" but of comparatively smaller yet determined nations nipping and sniping at the greater powers. A large-scale realignment being shaped, if you will, by America and Europe scaling back and all the others pushing back.

This insight is corroborated by the significant restructuring of the global order now underway. The trend is decidedly from a strictly hierarchical system, ending in a single apex at the top of the pyramid, to a flatter, more decentralized and egalitarian one, broadened in the middle by a growing number of middle-tier powers.

Multiple balancing can have a healthy leveling effect when stirred by self-interest and permitted to function freely, unfettered save for the commonality of shared insecurity and the imperative of survival. Framed in these terms, the great global project now at hand is how to prevent exchanging one extreme for another: distancing ourselves from the pole of over-concentration only to swing too far in the opposite direction of international lawlessness.

During this latest, current transformative phase in world history, the leveling and diffusion of power will continue. It will be marked, *inter alia*,

- by the salience of trade blocs and regional security regimes such as ASEAN;
- by the impressive rise of developing nations with growing importance for the global economy, like China, India, Indonesia, and South Africa; and
- by the assertiveness of confident regional actors like Brazil, Qatar and Turkey, benefiting geopolitically from location, size or resources.

Based on this assumption, the scientific monitoring of international affairs must learn to adjust to a world of shared power; of proliferating power centers and regional "sub-balances". Acknowledging that balancing tactics and processes are open to all unit-actors—regardless of their ranking—facilitates this learning process. As should a better feel for how the mechanics of balancing, responses to environmental and political trends, and the recalibration of power are carried out not only in theory but in actual practice.

In place of a general, systemic balance of power imposed from above by one, two or at most a select few privileged global powers, the relative stability of international society and the future of the international order are likely to be influenced and possibly determined from below. By those states previously

[19] Daniel W. Drezner, "The rise of 'good enough' global governance?", *Foreign Policy* (8 January 2013). http://drezner.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/01/08/the_rise_of_good_enough_global_governance

dismissed as secondary and third-level countries of peripheral importance, and best treated, if at all, as subordinate to the central Great Power balance of power. Here the Islamic Republic of Iran most readily comes to mind.

In light of this power redistribution the United Nations Security Council's abject failure to recompose itself speaks poorly of the present international order's ability to adapt. Conversely, positive confirmation of adaptability to the new reality lies in the progression, both numerically and politically, from a by-gone era of "Big Two" and "Big Four" domination to the present one, which underscores more inclusive groupings—"G-7" and "G-8" to "G-14" and "G-20"—and testifies to the important contribution to global economic development by the growing number of supporting, and supportive, actors.

Lastly, balancing and recalibration call for sensitivity and patience. For all their grace and subtlety, like most processes, they are gradual and slow-paced; oftentimes, maddeningly so. Too many analysts and commentators are uninformed about the nature of the balancing dynamic; unappreciative of it; or else terribly frustrated and impatient with how it tends to work itself out through small increments. Unable or unwilling to break with convention, we still cling to the habit of expecting to control for situations of fractionated power long enough to measure them, with the goal in mind of answering the unanswerable: at this precise moment, and at this stage of international political development, is there or is there not an exact balance of power?

Unsatisfying though it must sound as a method for governance—in global systems as in democracies—balancing does take time. But as Edmund Burke, the great nineteenth-century statesman and political theorist observed: "It is one of the excellences of a method in which time is amongst the assistants, that its operation is slow, and in some cases almost imperceptible".[20] Nevertheless, power does eventually counter power, albeit even then not for very long, as Change (with a capital C) continues to restructure the world, keeping the mobile that captures the very essence of modern world politics constantly and forever in motion.

Power balancing is no one's fool-proof prescription for global peace, for global prosperity or for global governance. Yet in an imperfect world still suspended between the vision of world government and the spectre of total disorder, international system-maintenance and basic world order policed through the conscious, unstructured checking of power and balancing of threats nonetheless offers, at a minimum, the boon of relative stability.

Stability during this latest transformative phase in world history might then make it possible to concert efforts in going forward to the more advanced stage of an international society-in-the-making. It was the same Edmund Burke who also insisted, "We compensate, we reconcile, we balance". I therefore conclude where I began. The future of world politics hangs in the balance. More precisely; it hangs *on* the balance . . . on the skillful *balancing* of power.

[20] Edmund Burke. *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Part X.I.

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The Rise of the Others: Can the U.S. Stay on Top?

Ziv Rubinovitz

Abstract Can the United States still remain the leading power? Or are the rising powers in fact reshaping the international system? And if the latter, how might the United States behave under bi-/multi-polarity? While most scholars now agree that American primacy is declining, clearly, a distinction needs to be made: in the economic field this does appear to be the case, far less so in the military realm. The loss of economic predominance and, gradually, the ability to maintain a robust global deployment make it not only reasonable but imperative to rethink American grand strategy. The United States stands a better chance of remaining the leader with significant margins of power compared to its challengers if it adopts a defensive realist approach, embracing strategies like selective engagement or offshore balancing. The United States enjoys a twofold advantage compared to the rising powers: a favorable geographical setting and naval primacy. This implies it can project power from the sea to protect its vital interests and to defend regional allies. The United States should therefore: (1) narrow the geographical scope of its vital interests; (2) concentrate only on regions in which it has no one to trust; (3) while backing regional allies in command of their respective regions.

1 Introduction

"Simply put, the United States is now a declining power. This new reality has tremendous implications for the future of American grand strategy."[1] More than 20 years after the Cold War ended and the United States became a sole superpower, it seems increasingly unequivocal to more and more scholars, pundits and practitioners that American unipolarity is over. This is especially evident when analyzing economic data that show constant erosion in American dominance and an unquestionable rise of East Asian economies, especially China's. However, other scholars

[1] Pape (2009).

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argue that these signs are inconclusive or misread, and some argue that in fact there are signs of a continuous American lead, perhaps less impressive than in the 1990s but still significant enough to refute arguments of unipolarity's gradual demise or of America's decline.

This is the foremost topic in the literature on international security, with dramatic implications for the American domestic arena as well as for regional and global systems. Based on geopolitical theories and consistent with the realist paradigm this study reviews the principal arguments and asks what the United States might still do to preserve its superior position vis-à-vis the rising powers.

Our starting point is that at the end of the Cold War the United States held power that not only gave it unprecedented advantage over the rest of the great powers but earned it a position of primacy (a necessary but insufficient condition for unipolarity), although not necessarily hegemony.[2] Assuming that the United States possesses the material power to maintain its primacy, even if at a considerably lower level than at the initial stages of the post-Cold War era, and given that China is steadily rising (as number two in the system and in some aspects, number one), what is the best strategy for the United States to implement? This study contends that a mild version of offshore balancing vis-à-vis the Euro-Asian landmass would be most appropriate. Offshore balancing lowers the potential for greater and quicker erosion of American power by local or regional rivals, arguably less tempted to challenge the United States when its forces are almost exclusively at sea. And in addition, this strategy underscores America's most prominent advantage—its superior naval power.

A major theoretical question in international security is whether primacy is really over (and with it the unipolar order)? And if so, what will be the substitute order in the international system? Would it be wise for the United States to struggle to preserve its primacy?[3] Or should the United States change its grand strategy to fit into its new, more modest status as a superpower in bi-/multi-polarity and perhaps adopt a policy of retrenchment?[4] These questions are not easy to answer, especially when there is profound disagreement on the current balance in the international

[2] Primacy and hegemony are not synonymous, although many tend to see them as such. The term primacy means being first, while hegemony means leading. Primacy is a measurable material situation, in comparison of hard power among states, whereas hegemony is a political situation, which is related to the balance of power, but is not necessarily its direct outcome. Primacy is for a state to take, while hegemony is for a state to receive (from other states that would be willing to follow). In other words, hegemony is a question of consent, while primacy is a question of competition for power. See Clark (2009a), pp. 23–36; (2009b)$, 464–480. In other words, primacy is a realist term based on measuring material assets, while hegemony is a non-measurable constructivist term that reflects the willingness of countries to allow another country to lead them. This paper will stick to the material-realist term of primacy, which can be measured.

[3] On American potential benefit from losing its unipolar status see Maher (2011), pp. 53–68.

[4] MacDonald and Parent define it as "a policy of retracting grand strategic commitments in response to a decline in relative power". MacDonald and Parent (2011), p. 11. This definition resembles Christopher Layne's definition of offshore balancing. Layne (1997), pp. 86–124. Further in this paper I will offer how to distinguish them from one another.

system. While there is agreement that the margin in America's favor has narrowed, there is no agreement on whether this implies that American primacy is at risk in the most substantial aspects of hard power, or to what extent.[5]

The literature on the rise of China and other ascendant countries is vast, spanning the last two decades. For some time Japan was considered a rising force; at times it was the European Union; and in recent years Russia, Brazil, India and South Africa have been addressed as new rising powers alongside China and known collectively as the BRICS. Seemingly, there is scarcely a component of national power that has not been closely considered. The two traditional facets of power—military and economic—are most obviously discussed; and during the first decade-and-a-half of the twentyfirst century there have been quite a few studies dealing with soft power facets (namely, soft balancing[6]) and which argue these facets signal the relative decline of American primacy, and altogether transform the unipolar system.

Our purpose here is to turn the spotlight to another aspect insufficiently considered: the geography and geopolitics of the international system, and its influence on the future course of global affairs. While this aspect is not completely ignored, it is not at the center of current analyses. The main argument for using geopolitical theory is that the theory and the issues it raises are not obsolete, as has been widely assumed. Competition for world dominance will in many respects return to sea-power/land-power struggles reminiscent of the past. In essence, unlike many commentators, I argue that geography matters and continues to exercise a significant influence on policy.[7]

For instance, the voluminous literature on the specific rise of China poses two fundamental questions for review: "What does China want?" and "Is China a status-quo power?"[8] If China is rising economically merely to fill its pockets while it can and before its population gets old (hence, China just wants to prepare for years of financing its aging elders, "getting rich before getting old"[9]) then its investment in the military seems puzzling.[10] The answers to these questions will have the greatest impact on the structure of the international system and, consequently, on future American strategy. For if China is not a revisionist power but is prepared to remain

[5] The vast majority of scholars argue that the United States is in decline. Several "dissident" arguments were published in recent years: Joffe (2014) and Lieber (2012). Another argument that is related and calls for the United States not to retrench was presented in Brooks et al. (2012/13), pp. 7–51.

[6] Pros and cons on soft balancing include: Kroenig et al. (2010), pp. 412–431; Pape (2005), pp. 7–45; Paul (2005), pp. 46–71; Datta (2009), pp. 265–284; Brooks and Wohlforth (2005), pp. 72–108; Howorth and Menon (2009), pp. 727–744; Lieber and Alexander (2005), pp. 109–139.

[7] Perhaps the most prominent recent study that places geography at the core of foreign policy analysis is Kaplan (2012).

[8] Heath (2012), pp. 54–72; Johnston (2003), pp. 5–56. For analyses of China's view see Nathan and Scobell (2012a), pp. 32–47 and their book (2012b); Ong (2007). For a wider historical analysis of China's relations with the world see Westad (2012).

[9] See data on China's aging population in: Xiaoli (2011), pp. 2–3.

[10] Chen and Feffer (2009), pp. 47–67.

in the shadow of the United States (specifically in the military arena, which means that China will not develop military power directly challenging American military primacy), then the system will not change much compared with its current structure. But should China reveal revisionist orientations this will compel the United States, in turn, to change its own attitude, orientation and military posture.

The following section presents the theoretical argument in favor of continuing American primacy, followed by a review of the major arguments in the professional literature concerning the current international system. Is it changing? If so, what is the alternative structure? Competing strategies that appear in the literature will then be discussed, differentiating between them in order to identify the wisest one under prevailing circumstances. Next, I will present the paper's major argument concerning the centrality of geography and geopolitics, and what this implies for prospects of the United States remaining on top of the system. Analyzing the geographical positions of the United States and China, I will then suggest an accommodation of vital interests to the new realities which might actually improve America's ability to maximize its superior capabilities and maintain its primacy. The preferred strategy is one of offshore balancing, that would have the United States rely heavily on select regional allies with the ability to dominate their regions under an American umbrella of military, political and economic support.

2 The Argument

Founded on geopolitical factors, this study asserts that the United States can remain on top. That the United States is still positioned to maintain its superpower status even though the gap has narrowed between it and the rising powers who are America's potential competitors but whose respective geopolitical positions preoccupy them with local rivalries rather than ascending to regional and later global hegemony.

Furthermore, reinforcing this central thesis and argument, it is misleading to compare the rise of the 'others' only to the United States. The competition is not only versus the United States. Since most of the rising powers are neighbors or have adjacent, tangent or sometimes congruent spheres of influence, their rise should also (and maybe mostly) be compared within that group. In some respects the rising powers, through their own inter-rivalries and aspirations cancel each other out vis-à-vis the United States.

The physical location and geopolitical position of the United States are the cornerstones of its foreign policy. However imperfect, as became painfully evident on September 11, 2001, this position provides it with 'safe haven' from foreign powers' assaults. Unlike any other great or super power—now or anytime—the United States retains the prerogative to **decide** whether or not and to what extent it will be involved in international affairs. Isolationism was a practical policy for approximately 20 years: from the end of World War I until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. Even though the United States since the end of World War II

has adhered to the opposite strategy of global engagement, theoretically and hypothetically isolationism can be resumed. Perhaps not to the same extent as in the 1920s–1930s, but a form of selective disengagement is certainly possible. This is a possibility and a policy no other country can afford to entertain simply because all other major powers are too proximate to each other; meaning they cannot disregard one another in quite the same way as the United States can.

Moreover, the United States is—and will remain in the foreseeable future—the world's dominant naval power, with unrivaled power-projection capabilities. Consequently, it can afford to partially distance itself from the European and Asian continents and become, instead, an offshore balancer. True, it stands to lose some of its direct influence, but it can preserve its power on the sea for a long time and project it whenever and wherever needed. But redeploying to the sea and safeguarding its core vital interests from there necessitates a number of select and trustworthy regional powers the United States can support as they, the local actors, seek to dominate their respective regions. Neither full retrenchment or offshore balancing, nor "deep engagement"[11] this course of action lies somewhere intermediate.

The United States retains much wider room for maneuver than is often presumed. And with the most powerful military without parallel in the foreseeable future it still has a broad spectrum of policies, thus positioning it for any anticipated hegemonic competition. How should the United States therefore act? Shrinking budgets and increasing expenses for maintaining the current force deployment will probably lead the United States, except for vital interests to be defended unilaterally, to rely more heavily on floating bases while leaving regional allies to protect American interests on land. Not to adopt this regional alliance strategy might only accelerate the erosion of American dominance, with serious consequences down the road.

3 Literature Review

The question is whether or not American hegemony is over? Or when will it happen? Ian Clark suggests that the term hegemony is misused, and prefers questioning the future of American primacy.[12] This paper follows Clark in terminology and substance.

Most of the literature is American-generated and therefore includes several biases. The most significant is a near-obsession with China that is not new or unique to the current discussion in American political science and policymaking circles, and which could just as well turn out to be more frightening on paper than in reality. While hardly a paper-tiger, China and the preoccupation with it tends to

[11] Brooks et al. (2012/13).

[12] Clark (2009a).

discourage analyses of the rise of other great powers, and to deflect serious discussion in the literature of multipolarity as a serious alternative to unipolarity or to Sino-American bipolarity. Studies that focus on China seem to imply that the next system will be bipolar. To the scholars' credit, it seems that there is no power that is emerging like China; hence it is correct to focus on it. But then, will other powers be entitled to status of additional poles?

The literature on global order can be divided into two major types:

A. Sources of threat to United States primacy and the resultant future structure of the international system

   1. The China alarmists > bipolarity.
   2. The BRICS > multipolarity.
   3. America's advantage is too large to be matched anytime soon ("Keep calm and carry on") > unipolarity.

B. The attendant effect on U.S. behavior:

   1. Fighting to preserve primacy = preemption or prevention.
   2. Getting used to it = retaining the current strategy, which implies accepting gradual erosion.
   3. Get used to it = offshore balancing.

3.1 The Current Polarity and Its Future

The Soviet Union disintegrated at the end of 1991, leaving the United States as the sole superpower. The most striking evidence of this new reality was the Gulf War in early 1991, less than a year before the Soviet dissolution, in which the United States managed to assemble an international coalition with the Soviet Union among its members. This was the auspicious start of a new period in international affairs,[13] although it was not clear to scholars even then whether this represented a "moment" or an "era".[14]

From today's perspective, even now the contours remain unclear. Is structural change around the corner? And what comes next—bipolarity or multipolarity? Or perhaps unstable unipolarity? If bipolarity with China, will it be stable as Waltz argued concerning bipolar systems?[15] How long should a system hold steady in order to be considered stable? Christopher Layne's argument is very problematic in this sense since he and Charles Krauthammer contend that unipolarity will be

[13] On the strategic planning in the unipolar era see Homolar (2011), pp. 189–217.

[14] Unipolar momentalists include Krauthammer (1990/91), pp. 23–33; Layne (1993), pp. 5–51; (2006a), pp. 7–41; Waltz (1993), pp. 44–79. Unipolar era advocates include Wohlforth (1999), pp. 5–41; Posen (2003), pp. 5–46. On the debate see Sheetz and Mastanduno (1997/98), pp. 168–174.

[15] Waltz (1964), pp. 881–909.

undermined within several decades. Yet even that, in comparative long-cycle historical terms, is a very long time. The bipolar system terminated after 45 years, and no one called it in retrospect a "bipolar moment".

Focusing specifically, and narrowly, on the Chinese threat to American unipolarity leaves little space to assessing other emerging great powers any one or more of which might readily turn into major poles or actors within a multipolar system. India, Brazil, Russia and the EU, for example, are rarely considered as potential rivals. However, higher-level theoretical analyses do more often suggest multipolarity. All of which leaves open the critical question: So what type of system does the United States need to prepare for? Will the system resemble the heyday of bipolarity in the early years of the Cold War? Or will it resemble the semi-multipolar days of the 1970s–1980s, during which the United States and the Soviet Union may have been the undisputed leading powers and yet did not strictly control their camps as they had in the early days of rigid bipolarity?

It is probably sound to predict that the new system will come to resemble the latter model. Nonetheless, in the case of China, it still has a long way to go before being considered a military match for the United States even though it does already appear to be an economic challenger.

3.1.1 Economics

There is little disagreement among scholars that the United States is declining economically,[16] if "decline" means that its comparative share in the global economy is dropping. Daniel Drezner presents the economic aspect of China's rise, and focuses on its new status as the United States greatest debt holder.[17] This issue is political no less and probably more than economic. But in the age of globalization to which the United States has contributed so much, does the fact that it is losing economic primacy truly make such a difference?

The overall *balance* in *hard* power—which really matters—is quite clear: China may possess the major part of American dollars in the world and may be America's largest creditor and debt holder, but the United States had not lost any of its military power. It is still superior to any other power, especially China.

There are scholars who contend that China is now playing the American game,[18] which is not bad for the United States, even if it appears on the surface to weaken it. In truth, the United States and the European Union to some extent are the real engines of the global market; while China has become increasingly dependent on the global system, and therefore more vulnerable.[19] Other countries are also rising in economic growth that competes with the Chinese. Even though China is ahead by

[16] Beckley (2011/12), p. 57.

[17] Drezner (2009), pp. 7–45. See also Friedberg (2010), pp. 31–54.

[18] Steinfeld (2010).

[19] Fingar (2012), p. 195.

a decade, India, Indonesia, Brazil and others are on the stage now.[20] The economic crisis of 2008 lowered consumption in the west, and people are saving more than spending. For China this means less exports of products, and this, too, will slow it down. Fingar's conclusion:

> Do these patterns mean that China will abandon its quest for greater security and international influence? Not at all. But it does mean that Chinese leaders will find it increasingly difficult, costly and perhaps unnecessary to disrupt the US-led system from which it benefits. This is as true of economic and political benefits as it is of regional and global security. China will become increasingly able to challenge US pre-eminence, but may well find it increasingly unnecessary to do so. In fact, it may be able to live with US pre-eminence for a long time. That would be a good thing, because the United States is almost certain to remain pre-eminent for the foreseeable future. The Chinese may not like that, but they know it is true.[21]

Hart and Jones assert that the U.S. economy is still three times larger than the Chinese one.[22] But still, the degree of influence each power has in the system had changed. "China, for instance, has long been a 'sovereignty hawk', generally opposing the notion that interventions for humanitarian purposes are legitimate. Its model of authoritarian capitalism has also increasingly become an ideological export, challenging the United States' liberal model."[23] For that matter Russia, too, is perhaps misplaced in the list of emerging powers. Its economic data are not really improving and its population is declining annually by 4 %, and with this rate it might drop to less than 120 million by 2050 compared to 140 million today.[24]

Dobbins et al. state that China's "GDP and defense budget could grow to exceed those of the U.S., allowing it to become a true peer competitor." However, they argue that at the same time China's security interests and military capabilities are concentrated on its immediate periphery. Consequently, they believe that China might face crises with its neighbors in the coming decades; therefore its focus will remain regional.[25]

Economic data clearly show a transition in China's favor in GDP, but the GDP per-capita is in American favor, as China's population is more than four times larger. If China decides to ignore its bourgeoning population's rising social demands and favor the national cause, it might succeed but it may also face civil strife which the leadership may not be able to restrain.

[20] Fingar (2012), p. 198.

[21] Fingar (2012), pp. 203–204.

[22] Hart and Jones (2010), p. 63. See also Joffe (2014), Chap. 3.

[23] Hart and Jones (2010), p. 66.

[24] Hart and Jones (2010), p. 67.

[25] Dobbins et al (2011).

3.1.2 Military/Security

Robert Art argued in 2010 that the United States is the most powerful state in the world in economic *and* military assets; and, secondly, that the U.S. would remain the most powerful military power "for some time to come," despite inevitably seeing its edge relative to other great powers diminish. In this 2010 scenario China becomes the greatest potential rival, provided that its economy continues to grow in the coming two decades as it did in the last two decades so that it might then surpass the United States in GDP, but not in GDP per-capita.

As of now, China has succeeded in changing the balance of power in East Asia. It is already the region's dominant military land power. Art also assessed that should China invest in military modernization for several decades and be determined to project naval and air power, it would be able to deploy a naval force that "could contest the American supremacy at sea in East Asia."[26]

Art correctly argues further that as long as China's emerging hegemony in East Asia does not include Japan, and as long as the United States maintains strongholds in the region (Singapore, the Philippines and Indonesia), the geopolitical threat from China will not be comparable to that of the former Soviet Union. The reason is that China cannot jeopardize the overall *global* balance of power so long as Europe, the Persian Gulf, India, Japan and Russia remain independent or under U.S. influence.[27] Art then concludes that the United States should let China grow but should also draw a proverbial line in the sand; that is, accept that China is growing but make sure it knows the United States is stronger.

Reviewing China's increasing defense budget is sufficient to understand why following Art's suggestion is not quite so simple. China actually increased the defense budget by 11.2 % in 2012, following two decades of annual two-figure percents increases (since 1989, except for 2009—only 7.5 %).[28] Plus there are always uncertainties concerning the purpose of this steady militarization. Is it in preparation for a global conflict with the United States over resources and political interests (i.e., preparing China to become a rival pole)? A regional contest of wills with any of its neighbors—and China indeed has issues with all of them, be it territorial, historical, economic, etc.? Or prompted by domestic concerns, such as preparing to crush separatists or rebels or dissident elements?

In 2001, Mearsheimer contended that "American policy [on China] has sought to integrate China into the world economy and facilitate its rapid economic development, so that it becomes wealthy and, one would hope, content with its present position in the international system. This U.S. policy is misguided. A wealthy China would not be a status quo power but an aggressive state determined to achieve

[26] Art (2010), pp. 359–360.

[27] Art (2010), p. 371. On Japan's strategy towards the rise of China see Mochizuki (2007), pp. 739–776.

[28] http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-03-04/china-says-defense-spending-will-increase-11-2-to-106-4-billion-in-2012.html. Accessed 17 March 2012.

regional hegemony. . .. Although it is certainly in China's interest to be the hegemon in Northeast Asia, it is clearly not in America's interest to have that happen. . .. It is not too late for the United States to reverse course and do what it can to slow the rise of China."[29]

Thirteen years later, it seems that Mearsheimer was partly correct and partly wrong. A steadily increasing share of China's wealth is directed toward enhancing military capabilities beyond defensive needs; and recent reports indicate Chinese strategists have apparently begun calling for their government to adjust China's foreign policy to match its growing capabilities. For many outsiders this suggests pressure in Beijing to replace the "peaceful rise" and the "low profile policy" with a more ambitious external policy.[30] On the other hand, China's economic rise will first need to finance its aging population. Nevertheless, at the moment, China's goals and true intentions remain unclear to American and western analysts and to Washington policymakers.

It makes for compelling interest to follow the reactions of China's neighbors to its rise to regional hegemony in East Asia. Theoretically, they might be expected to consciously balance China, but at least one major study by Steve Chan finds that they are not hurrying to do so. The defense burden of China's neighbors is not rising so quickly, while their bilateral trade with China is in fact increasing—contrary to the theoretical expectations.[31] This can be interpreted as signaling either that China is succeeding in dividing and playing off its regional rivals; or that the United States, despite its declared pivot to Asia, is not fulfilling its role as regional hegemon, leaving the neighboring countries without anyone to turn to in offsetting against China. Not to be overlooked, China in recent years has focused on developing "anti-access" capabilities,[32] further raising concerns in the United States.[33] Add to this that China is also investing in its navy, and has already showcased an upgraded aircraft carrier purchased from Russia, so that it is not surprising that the United States has decided to move 60 % of its Navy to the Asia-Pacific theater.

For now the American edge in military power vis-à-vis China's seems safe. But there is one obvious consequence of the "pivot" policy, which is the reduction of military presence in other regions. This, to be sure, has significant implications for America's standing in the international system, especially with its allies.

[29] Mearsheimer (2001), p. 402. Quoted by Art (2010), p. 362.

[30] Branigan (2012). In a more general view on Chinese views of American hegemony, see Blum (2003), pp. 239–264.

[31] Chan (2010), pp. 387–412.

[32] "Anti-Access" capabilities are systems that ought to prevent American forces from intervening in possible hostilities between China and its regional rivals, including improved airplanes and submarines, anti-ship ballistic missiles, as well as control systems with improved range. See Hoyler (2010), p. 84.

[33] Hoyler (2010), pp. 84–105; Mahnken (2011), pp. 299–323; and also Christensen (2001), pp. 5–40; Fravel and Medeiros (2010), pp. 48–87; Holmes (2009), pp. 217–243; Pradun (2011), pp. 7–38; Ross (2009), pp. 46–81; (2012), pp. 70–82.

3.1.3 American Decline and a New Structure

Robert Jervis raises an important question: "Change *in* or *of* the system?"[34] In other words, is the change in power relations so dramatic that it alters the structure of the system, or is it only a different balance of power that is forming?

Scholars who study the United States' position in the current international system are divided between those who believe it is a sole superpower that will maintain its preponderant position for a long time (believing that unipolarity is stable and peaceful[35]) and those who insist that the United States was a sole superpower for a short time after the Soviet Union collapsed, or that it is still a hegemon, but not for long (unstable unipolarity or renewed multipolarity). Kenneth Waltz, Christopher Layne and others argue that unipolarity is temporary. They predict the emergence of competitors to the United States—and in the near future; given this inevitability, they volunteer strategies for moderating the speed and extent of the decline of American hegemony, or which might increase cooperation with potential competitors in order to preserve America's privileged status within the international system.[36] In contrast, William Wohlforth, Stephen Brooks, Barry Posen and others argue that the unipolar system is and will remain stable because the power margin the United States enjoys is too large to change the system in the foreseeable future. Thus they confidently suggest strategies for preserving America's hegemonic status.[37] The issue, of course, is yet to be resolved, as is evident from recent symposiums and ongoing debate.[38]

Schweller and Pu argue that "If a great transformation is coming, it is not one that heralds a radically altered world politics based on legalism, constitutionalism, or global civic activism. Rather, it is a structural transformation from unipolarity to multipolarity that most realists believe promises a return to the familiar history of great powers struggling for power and prestige."[39] It is uncertain if the apparent transition is leading to multipolarity or to bipolarity, or whether it will come to resemble past models and historical experience. Whatever else, the power that the United States had obtained in the last several decades places it in a quantitatively and qualitatively different category than any other great power in the foreseeable future, Therefore, even if the United States is less dominant compared to other great powers, it is altogether far-fetching to argue for similar status as in any previous

[34] Jervis (2009), p. 210.

[35] The assumption of peacefulness of the unipolar system is challenged in Monteiro (2011/12), pp. 9–40.

[36] Waltz (1993); Layne (1997).

[37] Wohlforth (1999); Brooks and Wohlforth (2005); Posen (2003); Lieber (2012); Kagan (2008), p. 86. See also Lieber and Alexander (2005); Larson and Shevchenko (2010), pp. 63–95; Wohlforth (2009), pp. 28–57; Levy and Thompson (2010), pp. 7–43.

[38] Layne (2012); Nye (2012); Wohlforth (2012), pp. 203–222; Itzkowitz Shifrinson and Beckley (2012/13), pp. 172–181; Haynes et al (2012), pp. 189–203.

[39] Schweller and Pu (2011), p. 42.

system. Which is not to say definitively that in the future such a system might not emerge; only that it is unlikely to come about in the near future.[40]

According to Michael Beckley, most declinists consider the United States to be in economic and not military decline.[41] The United States remains the sole superpower, and it is hard to imagine extreme circumstances under which it stands to lose this preeminent status. Even if U.S. expenditure on defense decreases it does not affect American military primacy, at least in the short run.[42] American spending on defense remains consistently higher than that of all its potential rivals combined. Moreover, even if the tipping point is moving closer and China should come to surpass the United States in defense expenditure, it will take many years for Beijing to close the gap—qualitative as well as quantitative. Nevertheless, the bond between economy and military affairs is very strong. For instance, in April 2012 senior Obama Administration officials admitted there was no budget to strike Syria, necessitating that the solution of the turmoil could only be diplomatic.[43] Naturally, such statements ought to be taken very cautiously and one can assume that if the situation in question would have involved vital interests of the United States, budgetary shortage would not have prevented a military operation. But still, this statement exemplifies financial effects on the use of force.

Mario Carranza mentions that those who argue that American hegemony is not in decline claim that neither China nor Europe can shape events on the basis of their material power, but he also argues that they underestimate China's (and to lesser extent, Europe's) ability to take control over markets in the Global South (South America and South Asia), and mentions that China increased dramatically its economic relations with key South American countries such as Venezuela, Argentina and Brazil.[44] In this context it is worth mentioning James Kurth's argument that China will rise to be more Chinese in its traditional sense but with western characters: becoming, first, a naval power—and no longer strictly a land power; second, a financial power—and not just a trading one.[45]

Fettweis argued that "At the end of 2003, the unipolar moment (Krauthammer 1990) is demonstrating a staying power that few neo-realists would have

[40] For supporting data see Wohlforth (1999); Lieber (2012); Kagan (2008). For a critical review of Kagan and Lieber see Keohane (2012), pp. 114–118.

[41] Beckley (2011/12), p. 57.

[42] See further details also in Joffe (2014), Chap. 3.

[43] "The Republican chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Howard "Buck" McKeon, and the committee's ranking Democratic member, Adam Smith, said they are opposed to U.S. military intervention in Syria at this time. 'On the other hand, there is much we do not know about the opposition. Syria also maintains robust air defenses that limit military options. Therefore, I am not recommending U.S. military intervention, particularly in light of our grave budget situation, unless the national security threat was clear and present,' McKeon said." Saine (2012).

[44] Carranza (2010), p. 441. See also Carmody and Owusu (2007), pp. 504–524; De Santibanes (2009), pp. 17–36; Li (2007), pp. 833–862; Pollock (2007), pp. 55–79; Power and Mohan (2010), pp. 462–495.

[45] Kurth (2012), pp. 39–59.

anticipated. To this point, the world is still in most measurable and unmeasurable senses unipolar. The United States towers over the rest of the world militarily, economically, politically, technologically, and even culturally; its influence is without peer in any of these spheres. The declinists that began to predict the demise of the United States in the late 1980s have been proven very wrong, for today unipolarity is stronger than ever."[46] He continues: "[The U.S.] is the only participant in the ongoing and controversial 'revolution in military affairs'. The United States maintains the only military whose reach is truly global and has clear advantages over the combined armed forces of the rest of the world."[47] Since the publication of Fettwies's article in 2004, China has indeed made strides in the technological arena, which should provide still another cause for concern in Washington.

The scholarly literature of the last decade demonstrates the perplexities of the current situation. What does seem clear is the decline in American economic primacy even while the United States retains military primacy that does not appear to be in jeopardy for years to come.

Given the altered balance of power that continues to evolve there is logic in assuming that whatever system does emerge in replacing unipolarity it will not be identical to previous system models. Thus, American-Chinese bipolarity will not correspond with the earlier American-Soviet pattern of relationships, neither in the balance of capabilities nor in the balance of influence. Moreover, there is no ideological dimension or rivalry similar to the Soviet-American one.

The same is true should a multipolar system take shape. In the twentieth century interwar experience with multipolarity prior to 1939 the great powers were of comparable ranking. At present, it seems highly unlikely that all claimants to great power status will be treated equally. Unlike the pre-World War II within the emerging hierarchy of super-, great- and middle-range- powers the United States has a huge advantage over all the others except perhaps for China, in technology, in military power, in economic depth and so on. It is safer to assume as a working premise that the United States and China will be the unequivocal leaders of the system, followed by a number of second-tier countries—the "great powers" and several regional powers having regional and even extra-regional or international influence and responsibilities. Nor is it reasonable to assume the new system presently taking shape will divide into anything like the inflexible alliances on the eve of World War I.

Will there be a new Concert, or rival spheres of influence? And will such a multipolar system be spread globally or be limited to the geographic region surrounding each great power? Will such a system provoke a renewed competition for under-developed countries? These questions and others of the kind are yet to be answered, but the replies one might offer suggest how the United States and China

[46] Fettweis (2004), p. 90.

[47] Fettweis (2004). References to Arquilla and Ronfeldt (1997); Sandars (2000).

would prefer the system to operate. In this sense, "we miss the Cold War"[48] might be answered with a return to the "clear order" of those days.

3.2 *Winds of Change in the Diplomatic Arena?*

Diplomacy is perhaps the most visible arena signaling significant change in the international system. Ironically, in historical terms, China and Russia become co-leaders of a conservative Westphalian State "camp", in the sense of sanctifying non-intervention in domestic affairs. A recent example is China's and Russia's veto on punishing Syria's regime in the UN Security Council. Their veto probably reflects the shared fear that permitting intervention (according to the logic of the R2P concept[49]) might then be used against them in the future. This is not a trivial matter; it would make both China and Russia attractive for non-liberal and non-democratic states seeking external support while busy abusing their populations.

Democracy may have flourished in the last 20 years; nevertheless, there are enough countries willing to consider exchanging American patronage for Chinese protection, thereby only further positioning Beijing as a credible counter to Washington, and a rival pole. Defection from the pro-American camp and favoring China in hopes of pledges of financial aid and diplomatic backing could have the attendant effect of polarizing local and regional politics across the globe, and serve as the starting point for a new Cold War.[50]

UN Security Council votes are a reasonably simple and powerful indicator of incremental changes in the overall balance of political power in the international system. We recall how China—as Taiwan until 1971 and as the PRC—vetoed three draft resolutions during the Cold War. Similarly, during the Cold War the USSR voted dozens of times against western draft resolutions. During the 1990s Russia and China tended to cooperate with the United States, but then began systematically defying American will. Security Council Resolutions show that during the Cold War the USSR vetoed 114 draft resolutions, many during the formative first decade of the UN (1946–1955). Then, in the 1990s, Russia vetoed two draft resolutions (regarding Cyprus and Bosnia), whereas in the 2000s and until August 2012 it vetoed a total of seven draft resolutions, most of them together with China. Once the PRC replaced Taiwan it vetoed two draft resolutions during the Cold War (in 1972), and abstained or absented itself in several other instances. In the 1990s, China cast a veto twice, but in the 2000s and until August 2012 has vetoed five draft resolutions,

[48] Paraphrase of the title of Mearsheimer (1990).

[49] http://responsibilitytoprotect.org/ICISS%20Report.pdf; Evans (2009).

[50] Meanwhile, media reports indicate that Russia might be planning to resume its alliance with Egypt: http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/514/994.html?hp=1&cat=666 (Hebrew) Accessed 19 October 2013.

all with Russia. This voting pattern indicates that the Russians and the Chinese feel self-confident enough to openly defy America's will.[51]

3.3 The Competing Strategies

In the face of such challenges, how should the United States respond? Again, turning to the scholarly literature, it volunteers many designs and outlines for a grand strategy for the United States, each premised of course on a different reading of the direction the United States and the world system are heading, whether in the direction of stable primacy or declining unipolarity. Culled from the literature, the most relevant heuristic grand strategies on the table are: (1) primacy, (2) selective engagement, (3) offshore balancing, (4) and retrenchment.[52]

Several of these alternative strategies are not differentiated clearly enough. Thus, with reference to "offshore balancing" Layne defines it as "defending the United States' territorial integrity and preventing the rise of a Eurasian hegemon. As an offshore balancer, the United States would disengage from its military commitments in Europe, Japan, and South Korea."[53] Stephen Walt, for his part, explains offshore balancing as follows: "Offshore balancing assumes that only a few areas of the globe are of strategic importance to the United States (i.e., worth fighting and dying for). Specifically, the vital areas are the regions where there are substantial concentrations of power and wealth or critical natural resources: Europe, industrialized Asia, and the Persian Gulf. Offshore balancing further recognizes that the United States does not need to control these areas directly; it merely needs to ensure that they do not fall under the control of a so-called peer competitor. To prevent rival Great Powers from doing this, offshore balancing prefers to rely primarily on local actors to uphold the regional balance of power. Under this strategy, the United States would intervene with its own forces only when regional powers were unable to uphold the balance of power on their own."[54] In fact, this strategy would limit the use of force only to the most vital regions for the United States, and would view intervention elsewhere as damaging and wasteful of resources.

Paul MacDonald and Joseph Parent neither challenge Layne's definition nor confront the offshore balancing concept directly. Rather, they highlight "retrenchment" and define it as "a policy of retracting grand strategic commitments in

[51] Multilateral Research Group, Research Analysts (2012). For a thorough analysis of China's Security Council behavior see Wuthnow (2011).

[52] Art (2003); Barnett (2004) and (2005); Gholz et al. (1997), pp. 5–48; Joffe (1995), pp. 94–117; Layne (2006b); Nye (1991); Posen (2003); Ross (2007); Ruggie (1996); Steinberg (2005–06), pp. 55–72; Walt (2002), pp. 121–154, (2005); MacDonald and Parent (2011); Brooks et al. (2012/13); Haynes et al. (2012).

[53] Layne (1997), p. 112.

[54] Walt (2005), p. 222. See also Layne (1997).

response to a decline in relative power. Abstractly, this means decreasing the overall costs of foreign policy by redistributing resources away from peripheral commitments and toward core commitments."[55] Retrenchment, in effect, has a broader purview than offshore balancing. It applies to a broader range of great powers, whereas offshore balancing is a strategy for insular powers, especially the United States. Thus, in a sense, offshore balancing can be seen as a variant of retrenchment. On the other hand, offshore balancing seems more practical; it not only steps back from commitments on the mainland but plays a more active part in the balancing process—left somewhat vague in definitions of retrenchment.

Also worth considering are the risks in each of the four abovementioned strategies. In "deep engagement" the risks are quite obvious, especially after the recent decade; i.e., involvement in unnecessary conflicts that do not affect vital American interests—and, more often than the United States would like to admit, imperils those interests. In retrenchment as in offshore balancing the risks are less overt. Discussing possible critiques of retrenchment, MacDonald and Parent maintain the largest risk in both retrenchment and offshore balancing is the loss of control and influence over events in such a way that the great power (in this case the United States) expends more of its power than expected, and which it cannot reverse once having forfeited its strongholds.[56] In other words, the U.S. could be left with nowhere to return. This runs entirely counter to the argument being made here that the United States is best advised in the coming decade to entrust much of the management of regional affairs to its allies.

In suggesting those conditions under which U.S. policymakers might determine national grand strategy, Kai He identifies three possibilities. If the United States sees itself as a *rising* hegemon, selective engagement should be its preference. If it is a *stable* hegemon, then hegemonic dominion is the appropriate strategy. And if a *declining* hegemon, it should prefer either offshore balancing or multilateralism.[57]

Hence, any strategy the United States might opt for that accepts the rise of others as a fact represents a status quo behavior. Offshore balancing—the result of reducing commitments around the world because of combined pressure from the rising powers and America's own inability to maintain its global-wide commitments in the long run—is status quo-oriented. The alternative is for the United States to become revisionist in the sense that it might actually use its power to change the rules of the game in its favor.[58] In this context the announced Obama pivot strategy toward the Asia-Pacific arena appears to be a conscious attempt to maximize the best asset in America's possession—its naval primacy.[59] To be sure, a critical concern is the distinct possibility of a dangerous mismatch between the

[55] MacDonald and Parent (2011), p. 11.

[56] MacDonald and Parent (2011), pp. 13–18.

[57] He (2010), pp. 1121–1143.

[58] Gilpin (1988), pp. 591–613; (1981); Brooks and Wohlforth (2011), pp. 201–219; Wohlforth (2009), pp. 28–57.

[59] See a major counter analysis in Ross (2012).

adopted American policy and its perception abroad, once the Chinese see the United States as revisionist by calling upon China to reform its political system.[60]

Kai He and Huiyun Feng offer a valuable insight: one power's rise does not necessarily imply another power's decline. More specifically, they contend that American decline is not necessarily a direct result of China's rise.[61] In other words, it is not a zero-sum game between the United States and China. If understood, this assumes great importance by giving Washington breathing space to operate without sensing that its primacy is in immediate peril. Nevertheless, they say that if the United States eventually does decline while China rises, the power gap could narrow to a dangerous point where additional powers might try balancing or pushing back against the U.S. by employing hard power. Thus far any such attempts—scarcely successful—have employed soft power only.

Kai He and Feng's point is relevant not only for the U.S.-China dyad but has broader implications. Rising powers do not view the United States as their sole point of reference; they also relate to each other, especially since many of them are located on the same Asian continent, and either have shared borders or overlapping spheres of influence or interest. The game, therefore, is not zero-sum for the United States vis-à-vis China, but includes additional players, even if their share in the global economy is significantly lower than that of the United States and or China.

Brzezinski suggests enlarging the notion of "the West" by extending it beyond North America and Europe into "Russia and Turkey, all the way to Japan and South Korea". This will make it the world's most stable and democratic zone, which then could "enhance the appeal of the West's core principles for other cultures. . ." At the same time, he continues, the United States should engage the East. "If the United States and China can accommodate each other on a broad range of issues, the prospects for stability in Asia will be greatly increased."[62] Brzezinski calls for a dual role for the United States: as promoter for enlarging the West, and as a balancer between the Eastern powers. But can China feel secure and practice its regional hegemony while the United States is closely involved as "balancer"? Does Russia fit into the West, and how democratic is it considered? Such an extension of the West—if at all possible—would resemble the American Cold War alliances that included non-democratic regimes just because they were anti-Communist. Added to which Brzezinski's suggestion represents a new Cold War model by attempting to encircle China in a Kennan-style containment strategy.[63]

Within the Realist paradigm there are two competing theories which prescribe conflicting advice and which are based on contradictory readings of reality.[64] Whereas *offensive* realism emphasizes securing material power that will guarantee

[60] Nathan and Scobell (2012a), p. 33.

[61] He and Feng (2008), p. 384.

[62] Brzezinski (2012), p. 97.

[63] See Garver and Wang (2010), pp. 238–261.

[64] Many have discussed the differences between the two major realist paradigms. For instance see Taliaferro (2000/01), pp. 128–161. Also see the following studies, some of which suggest different

a given country's security, and securing regional and global primacy even by force,[65] *defensive* realism advocates possessing sufficient material power but prefers some sort of power sharing to enhance mutual trust among the great powers, which actually enhances the security of each participating power.[66] In the American case, defensive realism takes the form of offshore balancing or selective engagement, while offensive realism goes further in aiming for domination and engagement with potential rivals. This does not mean that there cannot be agreement among realists concerning specific American actions, such as the consensus that the war against Iraq in 2003 was unnecessary and counterproductive.[67] Disagreement arises and become much sharper regarding other great powers. How should the United States treat China and other emerging or reemerging powers? Should they be engaged? Should the United States prevent the foreseen competition by striking first, or should it allow them to emerge as regional hegemons and then divide the world into spheres of influence with them?

Advocates of defensive and offensive realism agree that states seek security to guarantee their survival, but disagree on the means for achieving this survival goal. *Defensive* realism argues that a state seeks *relative* security; hence it wishes to maintain its position in the global balance of power without aspiring to primacy vis-à-vis other states. Accordingly, states would not intentionally strive to possess too much power, so as not to threaten other states in a manner that might inadvertently lead to a security dilemma actually and tragically ending in war. In principle, defensive realism therefore recommends using force only as a last resort. In contrast, *offensive* realism argues that a state is compelled by circumstances to seek absolute security; consequently, it will perceive of threats easily and will also be more willing to use force against such threats just as it can be expected to do when seizing opportunities to increase its territorial possessions at the expense of others.

Because we are dealing here with American responses to the changing structure of the global system, the above analysis and distinction means that should the United States act in conformity with the offensive realist approach, it would have to be much more willing to resort to force in the face of constant perceived threats. Whereas, if the United States chooses to act according to the defensive realist approach, it will be less willing to use force. Again, in terms of the U.S.-China dyadic relationship, many scholars identify America's strategic goal regarding China as an attempt to change it (i.e., democratize it) and not stop its inevitable rise.[68] At times it seems as though the United States is less concerned that China might surpass it, as long as China is a liberal democracy. Other scholars focus

variations in realist thinking: Brooks (1997), pp. 445–477; Schmidt (2005), pp. 523–549; Legro and Moravcsik (1999), pp. 5–55; Feaver et al. (2000), pp. 165–193.

[65] Mearsheimer (2001).

[66] Waltz (1979); Jervis (1978), pp. 167–214; Glaser (1994/95), pp. 50–90.

[67] See Mearsheimer's and Walt's series of publications against going to war with Iraq: Mearsheimer and Walt (2003a), pp. 50–59; (2003b), pp. 4–10; (2002); 2003c.

[68] See Friedberg (2011), pp. 42–45, 49–52, 183 [inter alia]; Gilley (2004).

instead on strategies for balancing China's rise, such as through engaging China's neighbors in security alliances or enhancing American deployment in East Asia to deter China.[69] This latter concentration is in fact geopolitical by definition.

4 A Geopolitical View: America's Entrenched Advantage

4.1 The Sea-Power/Land-Power Struggle

In this section, I offer a geopolitical explanation for the international system and its future on the working premise that geography is important for any political entity.[70] From an historical perspective the heyday of the geopolitical approach to world affairs was during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the most important theories in this paper's context were those of Alfred Thayer Mahan,[71] Halford Mackinder,[72] and Nicholas Spykman.[73] Although apparently obsolete, they do serve today to conceptualize the unchanging geographical setting in a strategic language of conventional military affairs. Geopolitics is of enduring value under these circumstances, because it has been at the core of assumptions in designing military power of all countries. Besides which the core logic of these theories has basically survived the introduction of airpower into the military arena. Mahan in particular studied the importance of sea-power, which currently suits the American geopolitical position as an offshore naval power in relation to the Euro-Asian continent. Mackinder, for his part, focused on continental land powers and their emerging influence that could threaten the sea-powers' leadership. Accordingly, the sea-powers' concern, he argued, was to prevent the land-powers from taking control over the Heartland, fearing that from that region the great land-power could project power all across the "world island" that would eventually allow it to dominate the world. He called for an Atlantic (British-American) alliance to stop the then-dominant European continental powers. In a further refinement, Spykman concentrated on the Rimland, on the margins of the Heartland, arguing that here was the region without which it would be impossible to take over the Heartland and where the clash between the respective sea and land powers would have to take place.

Owing to the enduring salience of physical and political geography, in American foreign policy thinking some theoretical concerns have never changed, especially the fear of domination of the Euro-Asian continent by a rival power.[74] This has led

[69] Garver and Wang (2010).

[70] McDougall (2003), pp. 217–233; Blij (2005).

[71] Mahan (1965[1890]). .

[72] Mackinder (1904), pp. 421–444; (1919); (1943), 595–605.

[73] Spykman (1969[1944]).

[74] Stephen Van Evera suggested that between 1917 and 1991 American national security policy was aimed at one goal: keeping industrial Eurasia divided, i.e., preventing any of the land-powers

the United States to contain the Soviet Union once it emerged as the land superpower by forming alliances across Euro-Asia which in effect encircled the Soviet Union and its East-European satellites. In the current situation, it is hard to see a single great power taking over the industrial and military centers of Euro-Asia, but the United States would probably do well if it separates these centers from one another and by keeping as many of them as possible under its influence.

Aaron Friedberg notes that

> Realist optimists such as Robert Ross and Michael McDevitt believe that geography will greatly enhance the stability of the emerging U.S.-China relationship. The United States, in this view, is a maritime power. Its interests and sphere of influence are, and likely will remain, centered offshore in Northeast and maritime Southeast Asia. China, by contrast, is and has historically been primarily a land power. Its "natural" sphere of influence will include Central Asia and continental Southeast Asia. Ross maintains that these spheres of influence do not overlap, with the possible exceptions of the Korean Peninsula, Taiwan, and the Spratly Islands. Provided that the issues relating to these three areas can be properly managed, there should be little reason or occasion for the United States and China to come into direct conflict. These circumstances stand in marked contrast to those that prevailed during the Cold War, when the United States and the Soviet Union had overlapping, physically contiguous spheres of influence in Central Europe, a situation that produced much tension and considerable danger, especially during the initial stages of the superpower competition.[75]

Robert Ross writes, "The East Asian experience also supports the traditional understanding of the role of geography in threat perception and secondary state behavior. Geographic proximity contributes to threat perception and alignment decisions. The result of great-power proximity and heightened threat perception is not secondary-state balancing, however, but rather accommodation of great power capabilities. Indeed, throughout history great powers have been most successful in establishing spheres of influence over their immediate neighbors."[76]

4.2 The Geographical Setting

4.2.1 The United States

American foreign policy is founded on one compelling geographical fact: the United States is relatively far removed, separated as it is from the "Old World"—the "World Island" in Mackinder's language—by two large bodies of water. It is also bordered by two countries, Canada and Mexico, not considered to be serious threats. Over time it came to establish a powerful navy, and later an air force in

from gaining control over the entire continent. Evera (2008), pp. 12–14. See also Friedberg (2011), pp. 6–7.

[75] On the impact of geography, Ross (1999), pp. 81–118 and McDevitt (2001), pp. 101–105. Quoted in Friedberg (2005), pp. 28–29.

[76] Ross (2006), p. 392.

order to defend its commercial fleet and still later to project its power around the globe.

This geographical distance from the world's other power-centers was the basis of America's relations with the international system, making geography a central dimension in its leaders' perspective.[77] Its basic geographical setting has not only protected the U.S. on a day-to-day basis from the moment it could rid itself of the British military presence, but more importantly for our purposes here, it has allowed the United States the luxury of deciding whether or not and how to get involved in global affairs.

The only time the United States was invaded was in 1812–1814, when the British invaded in retaliation for the United States' invasion into Canada. The current and foreseeable state of affairs is entirely different, however. In an era of airpower and intercontinental missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads, many scholars argue that geography and distances matter very little; hence, that oceans no longer serve to protect the United States. As though to confirm the profound change and "Fortress America's" vulnerability, the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 dramatically illustrated, what extensive damage might be inflicted from afar.

This much is incontrovertible, as the United States suffered the worst attack on its soil since the War of 1812. However, this said, even with the 9/11 attacks there was no direct threat to American territorial integrity or question of invading and occupying American soil. Few if any other countries in the world are in such a position. For one thing, all of the potential competitors for primacy border on other regional powers that are sure to resist any attempt to force them into becoming subordinates of the emerging powers.[78] Incursions, invasions and wars remain the shared historical and geopolitical frame of reference for all of these powers.

Not only does the United States have the most powerful military in the world; it also has the greatest power advantage compared with its immediate neighbors. Similarly, given the physical distance from its potential rivals and the nature of the physical separation—ocean on the east, ocean on the west—it is hard to see any great power threatening the United States comparable to the proximate threats any of them face on *their* own immediate borders. The U.S. built and still retains a huge sophisticated military capable of reaching any of the potential rivals.

The argument might be summarized as follows: It doesn't matter—at the end of the day—how powerful the United States is compared to its potential or real adversary (or adversaries) because its first line of defense is not so much the elements of power it possesses (economic, military) as it is America's geopolitical setting, i.e. its geographic location. If utilized effectively it represents a natural asset of enduring and incomparable advantage. John Mearsheimer's "stopping power of water" argument works nicely in America's defense, and in two ways.

[77] Henrikson (1991), pp. 182–184.

[78] This is a theoretical prediction or expectation. However, Chan (in his An Odd Thing Happened on the Way to Balancing) examined the situation in East Asia and found that there was no real attempt to balance China; moreover, the economic ties with it are only strengthening.

On the one hand, the United States is protected from any other foreign power's direct physical invasion by the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.[79] On the other hand, these same bodies of water do not prevent the United States itself from projecting power anywhere around the world.

Protection of American soil is only part of the story, although obviously the most vital one from the perspective of minimal state survival. The other part of the story is America's primacy or hegemony on the Euro-Asian continent. Based on the same geographic factor, the United States has a huge advantage over China and other Euro-Asian great powers. First and foremost, all of these great powers are neighbors of one another; hence any great power that rises and threatens to become a regional hegemon risks the enmity of its regional rivals. This can evolve into restraining regional arms races or into alliances and counter-alliances among the regional powers reinforced by other outside powers; in this case, the United States. Put differently: even though the U.S. may have lost some power relative to its potential rivals, each and every one of them faces imminent problems on its borders. This means they will have to confront their continental problems before dealing with offshore problems or overseas expansion. This affords any U.S. administration invaluable time to assess each unfolding situation and changing balances of power. However, this dare not be misinterpreted as a permanent guarantee, and a future American president will be called upon to do two things. First, to make sure the larger geopolitical setting works to America's advantage by not allowing any rival to peril its homeland. Second, the president will need to decide how best to preserve its comparative geopolitical advantage in the Euro-Asia land mass. This can be best achieved by concentrating sufficient forces to protect American interests on the Euro-Asian continent; but also by deftly deploying these forces in a sensitive manner that will not escalate tensions unnecessarily.

All of which considerations argue compellingly for the United States to act as an offshore balancer, securing its vital interests by preventing a hostile takeover of the continent by a single power. Ross concludes that "If the United States remains committed to maintaining its forward presence in East Asia, it can be assured of maritime supremacy, the ability to handle the rise of China at manageable costs, and a stable East Asian balance-of-power."[80]

Toward this end the United States maintains those regional command centers established during the Cold War, extending from NATO through the eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf to the Far East. Barry Posen argues that it reflects a consensus that the system of commands is still necessary.[81] It is. No other great power has any comparable global force deployment, thus any great power that might peril vital American interests would of necessity face American forces immediately and directly. Maintaining this system of regional commands therefore seems beneficial and cost-effective even if expensive. Redeployment of the forces

[79] Mearsheimer (2001), pp. 114–128.

[80] Ross (2006), p. 395.

[81] Posen (2003), p. 19; Cole et al. (1995).

in keeping with altered circumstances at home and abroad could ease the financial burden without necessarily hampering the benefits of the defense system as a whole.

4.2.2 China

China neighbors 21 countries, including seven of the 15 largest in the world: India, Pakistan, Russia, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam. It has gone to war with five in the past 70 years; and since 1949 has had border disputes with all of them, although most were resolved in one way or another.[82] Moreover, China's borders are mostly vulnerable to invasion by sea or land. So, too, can its powerful, more distant potential rivals—the United States, Russia, India and Japan—encroach upon China rather easily, as has happened in the course of the last two centuries.[83] "China's potential battlegrounds are not overseas, but on its own administered or claimed territory."[84] China will have "to invest in domestic security and territorial defense, which will make it hard to project force on a large scale far from its borders."[85] All of which points to a single overriding fact of geopolitics: China's first concern is with its immediate periphery.

"[I]f China fails to replace the U.S. as a global policeman, it is hard to see another candidate who can do so. Along with the rest of the world, China might have to suffer the consequences of a general decline in global security. . . . China therefore has no interest in an American decline."[86] Nathan and Scobell argue that resisting China's rise is erroneous as China is already far too strong to be denied its place, and such attempt risks breaking mutually beneficial relations. They argue that many Chinese policymakers are convinced, in error, that the United States is actually and purposefully pursuing precisely such a denial strategy. They assert that "China is not going to 'rule the world' unless the U.S. withdraws from it,"[87] which suggests the key to the future structure is in Washington. This perception, in turn, gives the United States a wider space for maneuver.

Robert Kaplan, in *The Revenge of Geography*, analyzes China's challenge to the United States as follows:

> China does not pose an existential threat. The possibility of a war between the United States and China is extremely remote. There is a military threat from China, but . . . it is indirect. The challenge China poses at its most elemental level is geographic – notwithstanding critical issues such as debt, trade, and climate change. China's emerging area of influence in Eurasia and Africa – in Mackinder's 'World-Island' – is growing, not in a nineteenth-century imperialistic sense, but in a more subtle manner better suited to the era of globalization. Simply by securing its economic needs, China is shifting the balance of

[82] Data from Nathan and Scobell (2012b), pp. 4–5.

[83] Nathan and Scobell (2012b), pp. 15–18.

[84] Nathan and Scobell (2012b), p. 17.

[85] Nathan and Scobell (2012b), p. 356.

[86] Nathan and Scobell (2012b), p. 356.

[87] Nathan and Scobell (2012b), pp. 358–359.

> power in the Eastern Hemisphere, and that will substantially concern the United States. On land and at sea, abetted by China's favorable location on the map, Beijing's influence is emanating from Central Asia to the Russian Far East, and from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean. China is a rising continental power, and as Napoleon famously said, the policies of such states are inherent in their geography.[88]

Kaplan argues that militarily Taiwan is the single most important barrier for Chinese power projection. It is an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" as described by General Douglas MacArthur. The United States dominates China's seaboard through Taiwan and forces Beijing to hold back on wider force projection. Should China consolidate with Taiwan, however, its navy would then have a strategic advantage in relation to the First Island Chain in the South China Sea. In addition to which, China would be able to shift its military energies to more distant power projection than ever before.[89] With these geopolitical considerations in mind, Kaplan calls on the United States to be a more assertive balancing power in Eurasia.[90]

4.2.3 Accommodating Vital Interests to the New Reality

The vital interests of the United States consist of: defense of the homeland, access to energy resources, securing free navigation, and prevention of a hostile takeover of the world-island heartland. Defense of the homeland was given as justification for the war in Afghanistan. Access to oil was one of the major reasons (perhaps not spelled out explicitly) of the war in Iraq.

The third core goal of safeguarding free navigation is the self-defined U.S. role since replacing the United Kingdom as naval superpower during and especially after World War II. By securing free navigation the United States ensures its global reach through sea lanes and enables free commerce which the United States favors as part of the free market system. Here, the United States is far superior to any other power at sea; hence by protecting sea lanes it also has a huge advantage vis-à-vis any potential rival. Preventing a hostile takeover of the heartland, the fourth and last vital U.S. national interest, sounds out of date, but it is in fact making a comeback. Russia, for instance, lost part of the heartland when the Soviet Union disintegrated but which Vladimir Putin seems determined to retrieve. Therefore the competition has reopened. True, airpower can be cited as diminishing the importance of seizing land in that strategic region, but not to the degree of making controlling territory obsolete. Clearly, many countries remain undeterred or intimidated by the argument of territory losing its geopolitical value or importance.

Even if in the past 20 years deploying forces around the world to maintain and protect these interests made strategic sense, it is now open to question whether such

[88] Kaplan (2012), p. 200.
[89] Kaplan (2012), pp. 217–218.
[90] Kaplan (2012), p 346.

a deployment is wise. One reason being that such a broad spread of forces increases the likelihood of confronting rivals previously fearful of the United States but now grown confident in their strength.

Viewed slightly differently, vital interests have not changed. With the one very important exception of strategic energy resources, in which the United States is expected to achieve independence in several years. Strategies for protecting these core interests, however, can and do change. It is altogether reasonable, and advisable, therefore, to adopt revised means for decreasing the likelihood of direct friction with potential competitors. Supporting regional allies while deploying at sea appears, on balance, to be the most appropriate strategic option for the United States. While appearing to be an act of withdrawal, such a sophisticated course of action can actually work in interesting and advantageous ways against prospective rivals, as they either lose their mutual adversary (the United States) or attempt to fill the vacuum created by America's offshore redeployment, thereby diverting their attention to local, regional rivalries.

Enforcing regional allies that are trustworthy and share American vital concerns at least enough to be willing to defend them for themselves and for the United States could be quite rewarding. If these regional powers sympathetic to and working with the U.S. can effectively dominate their respective regions, the United States would only need to back them from the sea, provide a diplomatic/political umbrella and guarantee American support in their hour of need. Listed among these candidates are India, Japan and South Korea vis-à-vis China—with Taiwan and perhaps even Russia in the background.); and Turkey as well as Israel in the Middle East. Most of these countries are traditional U.S. allies, having played this reinforcing role for many years and have come to rely on the United States. So that there is no compelling need to forge new relationships; merely to reinvigorate them, and which function can be formalized as needed. It then becomes America's compelling interest to consolidate its strategic partnerships in order to secure its vital interests at a lower cost rather than keeping the current deployment with its attendant hazards and financial burden. If properly addressed, this will leave the United States in its more natural role of protecting sea lanes and providing security for international commerce.

5 Conclusions: Is the "Unipolar Moment" Over?

John Mearsheimer is probably correct in assessing that while the United States stands to lose its preponderant status in the Asia-Pacific region owing to China's climb. Nevertheless, the U.S. might actually increase its physical presence in the region in response to this ascendancy by China.[91] According to this scenario he

[91] Mearsheimer (2010), p. 381. In June 2012 the Secretary of Defense announced a major concentration of the American fleet in the Asia-Pacific region. Jim Garamone. "Panetta Says Strategy Puts Dream of 21st Century in Reach". http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=116647 Accessed 7 June 2012.

argues that China's rise will create an arms race with the United States not without potential for conflict, but that would see China's neighbors joining forces with the United States in order collectively to contain the Chinese power.[92]

The new rule of rising powers is summarized nicely by Richard Rosecrance: "Under these likely-to-be-continuing circumstances, intensive development through economic growth is generally preferable to military and extensive expansion. With new investments, a country can transform its position through industrial expansion at home and sustain it through international trade. Access to the economies of other nations is sufficient; a rising nation does not need territorial control of them. Peaceful development can thus take the place of aggressive expansion. Since World War II, a number of economies have adopted this principle, including Germany, Japan, China, and other East Asian nations. They have prospered as a result."[93]

Can one draw lessons from the American-Soviet bipolar system applicable to the emerging American-China bipolar configuration that is arguably the most likely development for the near future? Henry Kissinger, for one, warns against employing the Cold War analogy, especially because of the very different role the Soviets then and China now have in terms of the global economy. China has the potential for bringing the international economic system to the edge of collapse in ways the Soviets could never imagine.[94] Kissinger further insists: "Americans would do well to remember that even when China's GDP is equal to that of the United States, it will need to be distributed over a population that is four times as large, aging, and engaged in complex domestic transformations occasioned by China's growth and urbanization. The practical consequence is that a great deal of China's energy will still be devoted to domestic needs." In other words, there is room for guarded optimism on the part of the United States.

The Cold War may have ended decisively in America's favor more than 20 years ago, yet there are contradictory signs regarding the duration of the unipolar era. On the one hand, there is no question that the United States maintains its status as leading military power, but on the other hand, the economic basis of its hegemony eroded while the economies of China, India, other South-East Asian countries ("Tigers"), Russia (thanks to the prices of oil) and the European Union have grown.[95] It is hard to predict when, if at all, the international system might turn

[92] Mearsheimer (2010), p. 382.

[93] Rosecrance (2006), p. 33.

[94] Kissinger (2012).

[95] Many of the prospering countries in recent years have devoted resources to rearming. This can signal that in the near future the United States will be challenged, although it is obvious that it will be very hard to catch up with the United States. The 2008 crisis harmed all the powers (China and India apparently only slowed down rather than went into recession as most great powers), and it had probably weakened them to a degree that would make it hard for them to recover on American expense sometime soon. The crisis might even strengthen the dependence on the United States since everyone depends on the American recovery. In other words, even if the American economic hegemony weakened (the dollar's weakening vis-à-vis the Euro and other currencies is only one

against the United States, even though this issue has very practical meaning for American strategy. Left open for the moment is the fateful question: Should the U.S. attempt to stop the rise of the others by preemptive or preventive strikes (offensive realism)? Or should it accept their rise and cooperate with them as best as possible in hopes of preventing them from becoming real, direct threats (defensive realism)?

International relations theory posits as a general rule that any rising power is of necessity revisionist because it wants to change the existing regional balance of power or international order to reflect its new power. Just as any power that is weakening compared to other powers is of necessity and by definition a status quo state since it wants at all costs to preserve its status.[96] In the late nineteenth century, the United States was rising, and revisionist by definition since it wished to prove itself worthy of great power status. Once having gained recognition, it then wanted to preserve this status by playing the role of offshore balancer of the European continental balance of power. Once World War II weakened all the European powers and the United States emerged as a nuclear superpower, at that stage it only acted defensively to conserve and maintain its status, at times acting to weaken the Soviet Union. This containment strategy served to confirm it as a status quo actor. Once the Soviet Union collapsed and the United States changed to the status of sole superpower, it has sought since then to preserve its primacy.

Following this logic, the United States is inclined to regard any state that calls for changing the current order as revisionist, and at least in theory could go so far as to strike against it—militarily, economically or diplomatically—in preventing the targeted country from posing still a greater future challenge. However, under the same logic of realism, operating as an offshore balancer might better serve U.S. interests. Offshore balancing preserves American power from eroding in debilitating conflicts with China and possibly other rising powers. It forces some of these rising powers to take care of their own security in a manner that will slow their overall rise. Thirdly, preserving U.S. military power solely for vital interests in Euro-Asia, while maintaining American credibility, can lower tensions and promote stability with the United States still in the lead over its competitors. With the economic downturn not expected to change appreciably for the better sometime soon,[97] this outcome in favor of a stable balance of power seems worth pursuing.

Nathan and Scobell conclude: "China's rise will be a threat to the U.S. and the world only if the U.S. allows it to become one. Therefore, the right China policy begins at home. The U.S. must resume robust growth, continue to support a globally preeminent higher-education sector, continue to discover new technologies, protect intellectual property from espionage and theft, deepen trade relations with other economies, sustain military innovation and renewal, nurture relationships with

symptom of this), the U.S. is still the most important factor in the market. Blackwill (2009); Steil (2009); Shah (2010).

[96] Davidson (2006).

[97] A compelling challenge to the common notion that the current crisis is different than previous stances can be found in Reinhart and Rogoff (2009).

allies and other cooperating powers, and by example, earn the respect of people around the world for American values. As long as the U.S. holds tight to its values and solves its problems at home, it will be able to manage the rise of China."[98] This is a difficult and long-term assignment, but it is in America's hands to accomplish this and to remain preeminent.

One concern the United States should address is the fact that some of its allies do not possess sufficient independent capabilities to transport forces around the world. This means that however powerful they might seem in regional terms, these allies are wholly dependent for now on the United States to transport their troops to any theater of action the respective allies might need to deploy in. Meaning that the United States could become directly committed, at least for the deployment phase, and probably through the withdrawal phase as well. Suggesting dependency, this also implies that the U.S. will not really be able fully to withdraw or completely to trust its local allies to maintain stability and order in more remote and less vital regions. The only comfort is to be found perhaps in the fact that potential adversaries lack the same transport capability; so that, in reality there might be less compelling need for involvement in regions where the United States has less significant interests and which are also just as remote from the major potential adversaries, China and Russia. Sub-Sahara Africa is first to come to mind.

In closing, it is rational to assume the United States can use its still impressive overall advantage and to minimize relative losses to adversaries by redeploying wherever possible from land to sea, enabling it to respond promptly and decisively when key interests are perceived to be threatened. This strategy goes hand-in-hand with firm alliances with reliable regional powers acting on America's behalf in accordance with their own respective national interests. To conclude, partial offshore balancing prolongs American military and political primacy by virtue of the fact that no power now on the rise can seriously challenge the United States in the arena it is strongest: the maritime scene. By wisely investing in offshore capabilities and redeploying in a way that actually reduces rather than encourages political tensions, America should be fully capable of confidently continuing to lead the international system, less dominantly and less unilaterally than perhaps in the first 20 years of its unipolarity, nevertheless the fact is that the United States can stay on top for an extended, even indefinite period of time. If only it is determined to stay on top.

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Interdependence, Balancing and Conflict in Russian–Turkish Relations

Tolga Demiryol

Abstract This article provides a realist account of the puzzling trajectory of Russian–Turkish bilateral relations since the early 2000s. Between 2003 and 2011 these two major Eurasian powers engaged in an unprecedented level of political cooperation under the framework of "strategic partnership." Bilateral relations deteriorated after 2011, indicating a return to a more competitive equilibrium. Two factors explain this pattern of cooperation and conflict: (a) the growth of economic interdependence between Russia and Turkey, based on energy partnership in particular, (b) the convergence of Moscow and Ankara's security interests in Eurasia.

This essay finds that while energy-fueled economic interdependence facilitated political cooperation, the convergence of regional security interests was the primary driver behind the rapprochement. Russia and Turkey balanced against what they perceived as the US encroachment in their sphere of influence. Security factors also explain why relations between Russia and Turkey deteriorated after 2011 even though economic interdependence remained robust. External changes like conflicts in the Caucasus and Black Sea region and the Arab Spring in 2011 drove a wedge between Russia and Turkey. Lastly, the long-term incongruity of the energy strategies of Russia and Turkey functions as a source of conflict in bilateral relations.

1 Introduction

Russian–Turkish relations followed a puzzling trajectory since the early 2000s. After decades of conflict during the Cold War and its immediate aftermath, Moscow and Ankara went to on to develop an exceptionally close political cooperation leading up to the declaration of a "strategic partnership" in 2010. Since 2011, however, bilateral relations have soured once again with Moscow and Ankara, indicating a return to a more competitive equilibrium. What explains this puzzling pattern of conflict and cooperation in Russian–Turkish relations? Why did

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Russia and Turkey form an alliance after 2003? Given the causal dynamics underlying this initial rapprochement, what accounts for the divergence after 2011?

Taking the long-standing debate between liberal and realist approaches to economic interdependence as a point of departure, this chapter discusses the causal impact of two factors on the patterns of conflict and cooperation: (a) the expansion of trade between Russia and Turkey, particularly in the field of energy, (b) the convergence of Moscow and Ankara's regional security interests. The primary finding of the analysis is that while energy-fueled economic interdependence facilitated political cooperation, the convergence of security interests as a result of external shifts was the main driver behind the Russian–Turkish rapprochement between 2003 and 2011.

Russia and Turkey were brought together, above else, by their shared aversion to what they perceived as the US encroachment in their sphere of influence, i.e. the Black Sea/Caucasus region and the Middle East. The 2003 invasion of Iraq and the 2003–2004 "color revolutions" in the South Caucuses closely shaped this threat perception. In order to balance against this perceived threat to regional security, Moscow and Ankara engaged in comprehensive policy coordination. Trade, to the extent that it played a causal role, was a strategic instrument in the hands of governments to incentivize cooperation by raising the costs of defection.

The decline in Russian–Turkish relations after 2011 similarly reflects changes in strategic rather than economic interests. Russian–Turkish economic interdependence remained strong in this period, yet political relations deteriorated visibly. The explanation of this anomaly is to be found in the changes in regional balances of power and threat. The Arab Spring in the Middle East and the conflicts in the Black Sea/Caspian fundamentally altered the way Moscow and Ankara positioned themselves vis-à-vis the perceived threats as well as each other. Furthermore, the disparity of the long-term energy interests and strategies of Russia and Turkey further exacerbated this process of divergence.

The chapter consists of six sections. Section 1 introduces the research question and summarizes the arguments. Section 2 provides evidence regarding the depth and extent of Russian–Turkish rapprochement between 2003 and 2011. Section 3 discusses the causes of the rapprochement in two parts. Part I reviews the debate between the liberal and realist approaches to economic interdependence and probes the adequacy of trade as a causal explanation of political cooperation in the Russian–Turkish case. Part II presents the alternative explanation of Russian–Turkish rapprochement as a product of neo-realist alliance formation. This section details the developments in the Black Sea/Caucasus region and the Middle East that constituted the basis of Russian–Turkish alliance. Section 4 turns to the period after 2011. The two parts of this section explain how exactly the divergence of the security interests of Russia and Turkey and the discrepancy between the long-term energy strategies of the two countries, brought about the decline in bilateral relations.

2 Russian–Turkish Rapprochement: 2003–2011

Russia-Turkey relationship is one of the enduring geopolitical rivalries of Eurasia. Since the imperial times, the two powers vied for control over the Black Sea/ Caucasus region, Middle East and the Mediterranean basin. During the Cold War Turkey served as a NATO outpost. Throughout the early 1990s, Russia and Turkey continued to see each other as threats, even though the ideological tensions of the Cold War had dissipated. Turkey remained committed to NATO, while Russia considered NATO expansion a major threat. Moscow and Ankara found themselves in opposite camps during the crises in Bosnia and Kosovo. Turkey's historical ties with the Turkic peoples of Central Asia and Ankara's eagerness to reconnect with the region made Moscow nervous. Turkey, in turn, was concerned with Russia's support for Kurdish separatism, which Turkish governments perceived as the biggest threat to national security at the time.

In addition to lingering Cold War security concerns, competition over energy transit routes out of the Caspian region was a major source of tension between Russia and Turkey throughout the 1990s. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum natural gas pipeline projects were promoted by the US as a means of curbing Russian monopoly over energy networks. US' efforts to turn Turkey into an alternative energy transit corridor between the Caspian region and Europe threatened Russian interests.

Given the long-standing geopolitical competition between Russia and Turkey, the extent of the "multidimensional partnership" (Aras 2009a) that the two countries formed in the 2000s is remarkable. The first sign of the new era of cooperation was the signing of "Action Plan for Cooperation in Eurasia" in 2001 whereby Russia and Turkey recognized each other as the two major Eurasian powers and committed to coordinate their policies on regional matters. Policy coordination between Moscow and Ankara was achieved through frequent high-level diplomatic contacts, particularly after 2003. President Putin visited Ankara in late 2004, becoming the first Russian head of state to visit Turkey in more than three decades. During the visit, the two sides signed "Joint Declaration on the Deepening of Friendship and Multidimensional Partnership" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2004). In 2005, President Putin and Prime Minister Erdoğan met four times, including an extended meeting in Sochi, where the two leaders reportedly reached an agreement to support each other's position on Chechen and Kurdish issues. This security cooperation marked a clear departure from the situation in1990s, when Turkey's attitude towards the Chechen cause and Russia's support for Kurdish separatism in Turkey were among the most divisive issues in bilateral relations. Russia and Turkey shared increasingly similar positions in the Caucasus and the Black Sea region as well. Turkey echoed Russia's concerns regarding the "color revolutions" in Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, and Kyrgyzstan in 2005 (Hill and Taşpınar 2006). The partnership that Russia and Turkey established in the first of half of the decade was described by a Turkish diplomat as" 'the most regular and substantial' that the Ministry has with any country" (Kınıklıoğlu 2006, p. 2).

After 2005, bilateral relations continued via regular senior-level intergovernmental meetings. In 2009, Turkish President Gül visited Moscow, becoming the first Turkish head of state to do so. During the visit, President Medvedev described the relations between Turkey and Russia as "multifaceted cooperation and multidimensional partnership" (The Kremlin 2009). The partnership extended into mutual diplomatic support on multilateral platforms: Turkey backed Russia's goal of joining the WTO and securing an observer seat at the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The high point of the political rapprochement between Russia and Turkey was President Medvedev's visit to Ankara in May 2010, where the two governments signed 17 cooperation agreements and officially launched a "strategic partnership." The partnership agreement involved the establishment of a High-Level Cooperation Council, annual summits, and a Joint Strategic Planning Group (Flanagan et al. 2013). During the 2010 meetings, the two parties reiterated their commitment to cooperate on energy projects and agreed to boost their trade level from $35 billion to $100 billion, a target that is difficult to reach yet still significant as it signals the level of commitment to continued cooperation on both sides.

3 Explaining the Rapprochement Between Russia and Turkey, 2003–2011

3.1 Economic Interdependence and Political Cooperation

What explains this remarkable shift in Russian–Turkish relations from competition towards cooperation? One factor that analysts underscore as the key to Russian–Turkish rapprochement is the growing economic interdependence between the two countries.[1] This argument is closely informed by the liberal theory of trade, which postulates that economic interdependence is a source of cooperation rather than conflict among countries (Baldwin 1993; Doyle 2005). Starting from the premise that states value absolute gains from trade (Snidal 1993), liberal and neo-liberal theorists of various stripes hold that interdependent states prefer to avoid the welfare losses that would result from disruption of trade due to political disputes (Baldwin 1980; Gasiorowski 1986; Mansfield and Pollins 2001, 2003; Gelpi and Grieco 2008). Greater economic interdependence thus incentivizes states to de-escalate political tensions with their trading partners and engage in cooperative behavior.

[1] Kınıklıoğlu (2006, p. 6) wrote for instance, "The true engine behind the deepening of Turkish-Russian relations is the ever growing trade dimension." Kardaş (2012, p. 89) too underlined economic interests: "The main driver of this rapprochement has been in the realm of economic interests," even though Kardaş also discusses the limits of economic interdependence as a source of political cooperation.

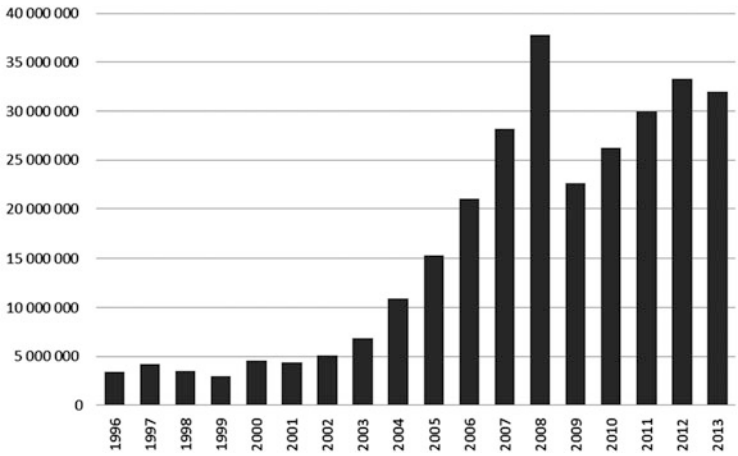

Fig. 1 Trade between Russia and Turkey, 1996–2013. Unit: $1,000. *Source*: Turkish Statistical Institute

To what extent can the Russian–Turkish rapprochement be explained as a product of economic interdependence between the two countries? Evidence indicates an overlap between the periods of trade growth and political cooperation between Russia and Turkey, lending credence to the proposition that there is a causal link between the two variables. Even though the first signs of an economic interdependence were apparent in the late 1990s (Sezer 2000), trade between Russia and Turkey really took off after 2003 (Fig. 1).

Turkey's trade volume with Russia grew from less than $6.8 billion in 2003 to $32 billion in 2013 (peaking at $37.8 billion in 2008). Russia is Turkey's top trading partner in terms of imports and ranks fourth in exports. Turkey's exports to Russia are rather diversified: food and food products (25 %), textiles (20 %), chemicals (9.6 %), and cars, equipment and vehicles (7 %). Turkey's imports from Russia are dominated by hydrocarbons: oil and oil products (37.6 %), natural gas (32.4 %), steel (8 %), coal (5.8 %), and other metals (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010). Turkey also has considerable investment in Russia, concentrated in foodstuffs, retail, electronics and construction industries. Turkish businesses invested more than $7.3 billion in Russia as of the end of 2011 (Flanagan 2013). Russian investments in Turkey, particularly in the fields of telecommunication and energy, are noteworthy as well. Tourism is also growing: number of Russian tourists visiting Turkey has multiplied over the last decade, topping 3.1 million people in 2010 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010).

Trade between Russia and Turkey had a restraining effect on potential political crises, as postulated by the liberal theory of economic interdependence. During Russia-Georgia conflict in 2008, for instance, Turkey opted not to confront Moscow directly and instead followed a strategy of appeasement. When asked about his government's timid reaction, Prime Minister Erdoğan replied, "Russia is our number one trading partner and has risen to the first rank in tourism. [W]e import

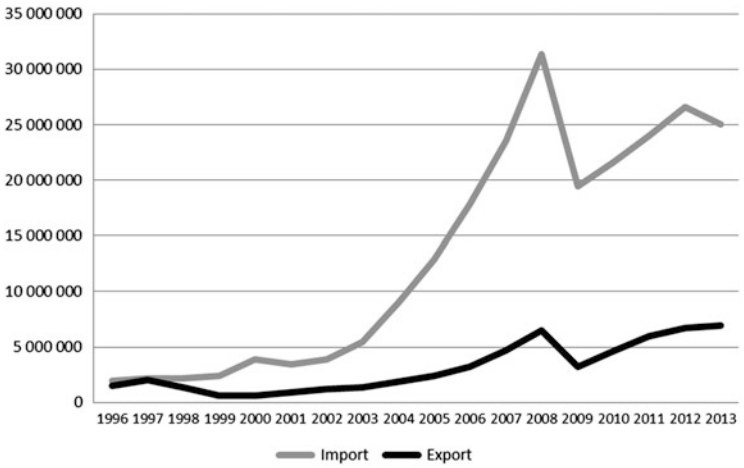

Fig. 2 The Share of Imports and Exports in Turkey's Trade with Russia, 1996–2013. Unit: $1,000. *Source*: Turkish Statistical Institute

two-thirds of our energy needs from them. Two-thirds of natural gas comes from them. . .We cannot ignore this." (Turkish Daily News 2008). Trade also contributed to political cooperation between Russia and Turkey by empowering domestic economic actors with a stake in political cooperation, which is yet another causal mechanism suggested by liberal scholars.[2] In Turkey, there are a growing number of business associations that have interests in the continuation of good relations with Russia.[3] These economic actors serve as domestic agents of political cooperation between Russia and Turkey by lobbying the government and shaping the public opinion in favor of Russia.

Russian–Turkish trade is growing, but it is heavily imbalanced in favor of Russia. As of 2013, Turkey's exports-to-imports ratio with Russia is at 28 %, with a trade deficit of more than $18 billion. Since 2003, Turkey's imports from Russia rose faster than exports, resulting in a widening gap (Fig. 2).

Russia's share of Turkey's total foreign trade grew from 5.8 % in 2003 to 7.9 % in 2014 even though Turkey's total foreign trade also rose from $117 billion to $403 billion over the same period (Fig. 3).

The primary cause of Turkey's account deficit with Russia is energy trade, which constitutes about 75 % of Turkey's imports from Russia. The importance of Russian gas in particular for the energy-starved Turkish economy is undisputable. Turkey's

[2] For the role of domestic actors, see Keohane and Nye (2011).

[3] The most influential members of the Russian–Turkish lobbies in Turkey include Russian–Turkish Businessmen Union, Russian Turkish Business Association, Middle Black Sea Development Agency, as well as the Chambers of Commerce throughout the Black Sea region. Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK), the major business association with close ties to the Turkish government, houses the Turkish–Russian Business Council, which has been very influential as a conduit between the private sector and the government.

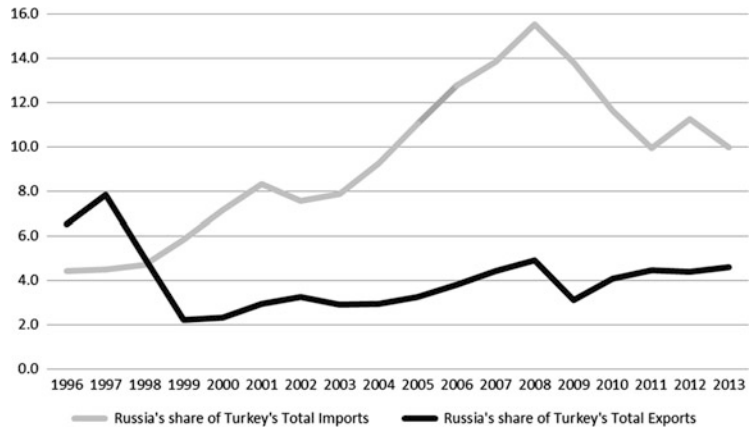

Fig. 3 Russia's Share in Turkey's Total Imports and Exports, 1996–2013. Unit: Percentage of Total Trade. *Source*: Turkish Statistical Institute

primary energy consumption rose from 88.4 bcma (billion cubic meters per annum) in 2000 and to 143 bcma in 2011 (BP 2012). Natural gas is the fastest growing energy source; the share of gas in total primary energy consumption increased from 17 % in 2000 to 35 % in 2011. Turkey imports about 99 % of its natural gas, 55 % of which is supplied by Russia via the Western Balkan and Blue Stream pipelines.[4] Turkey also imports more than 90 % of its oil and Russia ranks third among Turkey's suppliers (US Energy Information Association 2013).

Given the predominance of energy and the resulting trade imbalance between Russia and Turkey, can economic interdependence be the primary source of cooperation? Liberal and realist approaches to economic interdependence offer contrasting answers to this question. Realists consider trade imbalances and the resulting asymmetric interdependence a source of conflict (Barbieri 1996; Buzan 1984; Copeland 1996; Gasiorowski 1986; Mansfield and Pollins 2001; Waltz 1970, 2000). Economic interdependence undermines security of states in at least two ways. First, the unequal distribution of benefits from trade, realists assert, potentially shift the balance of power among states. Unlike the liberals that emphasize absolute gains from trade, realist value relative gains, which can be turned into political and military capabilities (Mastanduno 1993; Snidal 1993). Second, asymmetric interdependence involving "vital goods" like oil and natural gas are particularly damaging to the security of the dependent states as supply-cut offs can cripple them economically and militarily (Copeland 1996).

While realists consider asymmetric interdependence a likely cause of conflict, liberals contend that asymmetric interdependence can be a source of cooperation

[4] The rest of the imports come from Iran (21 %), Azerbaijan (10 %) via pipelines and from Algeria (11 %) and Nigeria (3 %) via LNG trade. (Dogal Gaz Piyasasi Dairesi Baskanligi [Directorate of Natural Gas Markets] 2012).

provided that there is mutual vulnerability between trading partners and the dependent partner has sufficient bargaining power in this relationship (Daoudy 2009; Binhack and Tichý 2012; Stulberg 2012). In other words, asymmetric interdependence can facilitate cooperation between dependent partners to the extent that the disruption of trade is costly to both parties (albeit in different ways). Such mutual vulnerability would in turn grant bargaining power to the more dependent party to be used as leverage against the dominant partner.

The question then becomes what, if any, are Russia's vulnerabilities vis-à-vis Turkey in this highly asymmetric relationship of economic interdependence? First, Turkey is a major market for Russian hydrocarbons. Turkey is Russia's second major gas recipient after Germany. Given that the majority of Russian state revenue comes from energy exports, any disruption in the energy trade would have immense political as well as economic consequences for the state elite. In addition to trade, Russia has significant energy investments in Turkey, including Turkey's first nuclear power plant that Russian Rosatom is building in Akkuyu, which gives Ankara some additional leverage vis-à-vis Moscow. Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Taner Yıldız underlined this very point when he said that with Turkey's nuclear cooperation with Russia, the relationship of dependence between the two states has finally become a mutual one (Turkish Energy News 2012).

Turkey is not only a major buyer of Russian hydrocarbons and an investment destination for Russia but also a critical transit corridor to European markets for Russian and Caspian natural gas. Turkey currently receives Russian natural gas from the Blue Stream and Bulgaria-Turkey pipelines, some of which can be re-exported to Europe. Turkey is also a major transit point for seaborne traded oil. About 3 million bbl/day (barrels per day) of the Caspian and Russian oil is transported by tankers through the Turkish Straits. There are also several Russian oil and gas pipeline projects in the planning stages that involve Turkey, including Samsun-Ceyhan, Blue Stream II, and South Stream pipelines.

Turkey's involvement in the South Stream project is arguably a testament to Ankara's ability to use its role as a transit country as a bargaining chip. South Stream project was designed to carry Russian gas underneath the Black Sea through Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary and Slovenia further to Austria. Turkey was initially hesitant to support the project, fearing that this might hurt relations with the EU, which was promoting Nabucco as an alternative at the time. Turkey's endorsement however was critical for the South Stream project, as the most feasible route for the pipeline would go through Turkey's maritime Economic Exclusive Zone in the Black Sea. Turkey however was complaining at the same time that Gazprom had raised the prices by almost 40 % since 2009. Ankara demanded lower prices and more flexible take-or-pay arrangements with Russia. Throughout early 2011, Moscow put pressure on Ankara to permit Moscow to use Turkey's EEZ for the project. Turkey even announced that it would discontinue its long-standing contract with Russia to buy gas through the Western Balkan pipeline after 2012. After lengthy negotiations, Turkey finally issued the permit to Russia in return for some concessions from Moscow including lower gas prices and more flexible tax-or-pay

obligations in the contracts (Kardaş 2012; Kim and Blank 2012; Sidar and Winrow 2011). Turkey's ability to negotiate with Russia in order to receive trade concessions supports the liberal claim that even asymmetric interdependence can foster cooperation, provided that the weaker party has enough leverage to engage in issue-linkage and bargaining. Even though Turkey was still the dependent partner in this asymmetrical relationship, Ankara successfully leveraged its position as a major importer and a transit state to renegotiate the long-term gas contracts with Russia.

3.2 Convergence of Security Interests and Balancing Against Threat

Despite overlap between the periods of trade growth and political cooperation, it is premature and potentially misleading to conclude that the rapprochement was driven by economic interests alone. Before one can confidently assign an independent causal role to trade as the primary driver of cooperation, one needs to account for the strategic context in which the economic interdependence between Russia and Turkey was taking place. This section argues that trade played a mediating role for the political cooperation which was first and foremost driven by the alignment of strategic interests of Russia and Turkey. Economic interdependence was an instrument rather than a cause of political cooperation between Moscow and Ankara.

The first signs of a Russian–Turkish strategic alliance came as early as 2000 when the newly elected Russian President Putin signaled his intention to cultivate better relations with Turkey (Erşen 2011). In 2001, Russia and Turkey signed the Eurasia Action Plan, recognizing each other as major Eurasian powers. There was also a growing interest amongst the Turkish elite in forging an alliance with Russia. In 2002, the then Secretary General of National Security Council, General Tuncer Kılıç, said that Turkey should cooperate with Russia and Iran against the European Union (Sabah 2002). Even though Turkish Prime Minister Ecevit said that these were the personal opinions of the general, Kılıç's remarks reflected a preference among the Turkish military elite for the need to search for alternative political partnerships in the face of continued disillusionment with the EU membership process. In 2002, *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP) came to power in Turkey. The priority of the new government was to improve relations with all neighbors, including Russia (Flanagan 2013; Weitz 2010). This change in priorities was the precursor to the "zero problems with neighbors" policy of the AKP government (Davutoğlu 2001, 2008; Aras 2009b), which remained in force until the Arab Spring made its implementation rather difficult it not impossible. Thus, by 2003 there already had been a shift in the way Russia and Turkey perceived each other. The threat perception of the Cold War period and the 1990s was slowly being replaced by a mutually recognized need to normalize relations (Aktürk 2013; Kınıklıoğlu 2006).

The Russian–Turkish rapprochement is best understood as a product of alliance formation behavior. According to the neorealist balance of threat theory, states ally against the greatest perceived threat to their security (Walt 1985, 1987). By 2003, the greatest threat to regional security and therefore to the Russian and Turkish interests, was the growing military and political presence of the US in the Middle East and Black Sea/Caucasus region. Facing what they perceived as an extra-regional intrusion into their sphere of influence, Russia and Turkey felt increasingly left out of the regional power dynamics, when they felt that they should have been in charge.

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was the catalyst that fixated the focus of both Russia and Turkey onto the US military presence as the immediate threat to regional stability. With President Putin in power, Russia had been already shown its resolve to resist any American advance in their neighborhood. Ankara was particularly concerned that a regime change in Iraq would jeopardize Iraqi territorial integrity, possibly paving the way for an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq. With these concerns in mind and a Turkish public opinion clearly against Turkey's involvement in the conflict, Turkish parliament denied in March 2003 the vote that would permit the US forces to use Turkish air space for operations in Iraq. The denial not only damaged the long-standing partnership between Ankara and Washington but it signaled to Moscow that Ankara was a credible ally. Washington's partnership with the Kurdish forces in Northern Iraq also deeply alienated Ankara. Ankara's falling out with Washington meant the disruption of the intelligence, military and political support that Turkey had been receiving from the US. Moscow stepped in to fill the void left by the US and Moscow emerged as a critical security partner.

The other region where Russia and Turkey jointly opposed to US and NATO presence after 2003 was the Black Sea and the Caucasus. This cooperative stance contrasted starkly with the situation in the 1990s, when Moscow and Ankara competed for influence in the region (Larrabee 2011). After the Cold War, Turkey had supported the newly independent states of Azerbaijan and Georgia (Kınıklıoğlu 2006). Ankara had very close relations with Baku under Haydar Aliyev. Turkey also cooperated with the US in its efforts to help Georgia build a new state after independence. Turkish government provided military support to Georgia and Azerbaijan by establishing military academies in Tbilisi and Baku.

The "rose revolution" in Georgia in 2003 and the "orange revolution" in Ukraine in 2004 changed the threat perception of Russia and Turkey. For both Russia and Turkey, the US was behind these so-called color revolutions (Hill and Taşpınar 2006). While Moscow was concerned about what it labeled an American plot to project power in the region, Ankara feared that the American attempts to democratize rapidly these regimes could destabilize the entire region and undermine Turkey's interests. The aspirations of the new governments in Georgia and Ukraine to establish closer ties with the EU and NATO also made Ankara nervous. Ankara considered Georgia and Ukraine's NATO membership a precursor to EU membership (Hill and Taşpınar 2006), which, coupled with the slow progress in Turkey's

accession efforts, led to a perception of further exclusion and encirclement in Ankara.

The US' push for a larger role for NATO in the Black Sea and Caucuses also brought Russia and Turkey closer. Turkey insisted that there was no need for a stronger NATO presence in the Black Sea/Caucuses region as the existing security structures were adequate to maintain the order. To that end, Turkey and Russia sought to reanimate the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. Turkey and Russia also insisted that the Black Sea Naval Force (BLACKSEAFOR), which was created in 2001 as a Turkish initiative with the participation of Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russia and Georgia, rendered a stronger NATO presence in the region unnecessary (Kınıklıoğlu 2006).

Russian–Turkish balancing act against the US and the possible loss of a strategic ally was a cause of concern for the US. In an article published in the Washington Post in February 2005, Richard Holbrooke wrote, "Now [Russia] is engaged in a little-noticed charm offensive to woo our all-important (but deeply alienated) ally Turkey into a new special relationship that would extend Russia's influence in that volatile region." (Holbrooke 2005).

Russia and Turkey's balancing against the US does not mean that these two regional powers formed a revisionist bloc that challenging the global hegemony of the US. The alliance that Russia and Turkey built in pursuit of shared regional interests was not a revisionist but rather a pragmatic one (Hill and Taşpınar 2006). Russia and Turkey were both status quo powers whose economic and political fortunes hinged upon regional stability. Territorial integrity of Iraq was of paramount importance for Ankara due to the Kurdish issue. Russia had significant economic interests in Iraq, not to mention political interests and military assets in the Black Sea/Caucasus region. The Black Sea/Caucasus region is also important for both Turkey and Russia since the region hosts the main routes of energy transit to Europe (Çelikpala 2013). Thus, Russia and Turkey were both drawn into this alliance, not in pursuit of a revisionist grand strategy but due to balancing against perceived threats. The next section discusses why this alliance unraveled after 2011.

4 Russian–Turkish Relations Since 2011: From Cooperation to Competition?

Russian–Turkish relations deteriorated sharply after 2011. From security in the Caucasus to NATO expansion and Middle Eastern conflicts, Moscow and Ankara assumed increasingly divergent positions on key regional issues. What makes this political divergence even more puzzling is that it occurred under conditions of expanding trade and continued economic interdependence. Russian–Turkish trade declined sharply after 2008, but this decline was mostly due to the contraction in

global trade flows following the financial crisis.[5] Since 2009, trade has been expanding once again, jumping from $22 billion in 2009 to $26.2 billion in 2010 and to $33 billion in 2012. Furthermore, energy interdependence remains strong and became even more multidimensional now that Russian companies are extensively involved in Turkey's energy sector, including Akkuyu nuclear power plant, the planned expansion of the Blue Stream pipeline, and Russian investments in Turkish natural gas and electricity infrastructure. The fact that political relations deteriorated despite continuing economic interdependence undermines the explanatory capacity of the liberal proposition that trade promotes cooperation.

How can we explain this downturn in Russian–Turkish relations after nearly a decade of unprecedented cooperation? This section analyzes the recent shifts in the external security environment and the long-term divergence of energy strategies of Russia and Turkey as the two major structural factors that caused the deterioration in bilateral relations since 2011.

4.1 The Shift in Security Parameters in the Caucasus and the Middle East

The first crack in Russian–Turkish alliance emerged during the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008. Ankara was disappointed that Moscow would not allow it to play any role in the resolution of the conflict. Russia even blamed Turkey for providing military assistance to Georgia. After the conflict, Russia ramped up its military presence in the Caucasus, which prompted the policy makers in Ankara to rethink their policies towards Russia (Winrow 2009). Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia all raised military expenditure after 2008, resulting in region-wide militarization (Novikava 2009).

Alarmed by Russian unilateralism in Georgia, Turkey actively promoted the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (CSCP) as a multilateral conflict resolution mechanism (Babacan 2008). Turkey also offered to play a larger role in the OSCE Minsk group, which aimed at solving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Russia however remained indifferent towards the Turkish proposal for renewed regional efforts for the resolution of the various frozen conflicts. The ineffectiveness of the regional conflict resolution mechanisms cast doubt on the claim that Russia and Turkey could jointly provide order in the region.

In contrast to Russia's unwavering pro-status quo position, Turkey assumed a more proactive stance in the Black Sea and the Caucasus, particularly after 2011. Ankara sought to promote interdependence among the three South Caucasus states in order to expand their trade and energy ties with Turkey. Georgia is not only a transit corridor of Azerbaijani gas energy destined for Turkey and Europe, but also a major trade route for Turkish goods to reach Central Asia. Turkey also has

[5] Turkey's trade volume with Russia declined from $37.8 billion in 2008 to $22.6 billion in 2009 while Turkey's total trade declined from $334 billion to $243 billion over the same period.

investments in Azerbaijani, Georgian and Abkhazian economies. Pending on the normalization of relations with Armenia and the opening of the Turkish-Armenian border, economic relations with Armenia also hold great promise for Turkey.

While the divergence of Russian and Turkish perspectives in the Caucasus was a gradual process, the manifestation of conflicts between Moscow and Ankara in the Middle East followed the sudden outbreak of revolutions in the region in 2011. The wave of protests throughout the Arab Middle East resulted in the overthrow of governments in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen and most importantly a full-blown civil war in Syria. As Arab Spring progressed, Turkey and Russia found themselves on the opposite sides of the conflicts. Turkey (eventually, if not immediately) sided with the opposition forces, particularly in Syria, whereas Russia threw its weight behind the status quo powers.

Arab Spring posed a challenge to Turkey's foreign policy in the Middle East. Turkey's "zero problems with neighbors" policy was based on cooperating with existing regimes without prioritizing democracy promotion (Öniş 2012). Syria in fact was the poster boy of Ankara's policy of zero problems with neighbors. After years of conflict with Damascus, particularly due to its support for Kurdish separatists throughout the 1990s, Turkey established very friendly relations with Syria after 2001. In 2002, Prime Minister Erdoğan visited Syria, despite international pressure on the Syrian regime for its interference in Lebanon. President Assad visited Turkey in 2004, the first ever visit by a Syrian president. A free trade agreement between Turkey and Syria was signed in 2004 and ratified in 2007. Visa requirements were lifted in 2009. A high-level strategic cooperation council was established in 2009, which signed various protocols and agreements, including the possible extension of the Arab natural gas pipeline to Turkey.

Relations between Ankara and Damascus took a very dramatic U-turn with the outbreak of the uprisings in Syria. After a brief period of uncertainty when Turkey sought to convince President Assad to agree to a diplomatic solution, Ankara started to support the Syrian opposition. Russia remained loyal to the Syrian regime, one of Moscow's closest allies in the region. Russia currently has various contracts for arms sales to Syria and Moscow reportedly provided logistical and military support to the Assad regime in its fight against various opposition groups. Similarly, Turkish government allegedly offered safe heaven, logistical support and arms to the various paramilitary groups fighting the Syrian regime. Russia and Turkey effectively fought a proxy war in Syria.

At various points during the Russian–Turkish proxy conflict in Syria, tensions escalated critically. In October 2012, Turkey forced a Syrian civilian aircraft traveling from Moscow to Damascus with Russian citizens on board, to land in Ankara. Turkish officials confiscated the cargo, which they claimed was military equipment being illegally delivered to Assad (The New York Times 2012). The incident caused a diplomatic crisis between Moscow and Ankara.

Ankara lobbied aggressively throughout 2013 to convince the international community, the US in particular, to intervene militarily in Syria to first establish a no-fly zone to protect the opposition forces and eventually even overthrow the Assad regime. Many indeed believed that a military intervention in Syria was

imminent in September 2013. However, Russia's mediation between Syria and the UN Security Council facilitated a last-hour diplomatic solution to the crisis, whereby Syria agreed to give up its stockpile of chemical weapons and allow international inspections. Turkey was rather disappointed with the deal, which Ankara insisted was a ploy by the Assad regime. Nonetheless, in the struggle between Moscow and Ankara over the fate of Assad's regime, Russia's diplomatic solution prevailed over Turkey's insistence on disposing of the current regime by force.

Growing concerns about the region-wide security implications of the Syrian conflict forced Ankara to reassess its relations not only with Russia but with the US and NATO as well. Ankara's relations with Washington had been improving significantly under the Obama Administration. Even though Ankara was not able to convince Washington to intervene militarily in Syria, Turkey worked closely with the US during the Syrian conflict, which indicated an improvement in bilateral relations, certainly in comparison to the historical lows that the strategic partnership had sunk into after the 2003 vote by the Turkish parliament denying air space to the US military. Turkey also reaffirmed its commitment to NATO. Ankara agreed to host the NATO early warning radar in its territory. This radar is a part of the missile defense system that NATO and the US sought to place in Eastern Europe, which angered not only Iran (which ostensibly is the primary target of the defensive shield) but also Russia, which has long opposed NATO's eastern expansion. Turkey also requested in November 2012 that NATO deploy Patriot missiles along the Syrian-Turkish border in order to protect Turkey from Syrian strikes. In February 2013, six missile batteries were deployed under NATO command and control in southern Turkey. The shifts in the external security conditions thus altered Ankara's attitude towards NATO presence in the region.

The 2014 Ukraine crisis was the latest chapter in the increasingly strenuous relations between Turkey and Russia. Turkey has important interests in Ukraine, including but not limited to the security of the Tatar population in Crimea. Moreover, since the beginning of the crisis, Turkey warned against the possible "domino effects" of the Ukraine crisis, cautioning that the crisis might reawaken several frozen conflicts in the region, including Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Kardaş 2014). As in the 2008 Russian-Georgian conflict, Turkey painstakingly avoided criticizing Russia too vocally on Crimea. Nonetheless, Turkey repeatedly emphasized the territorial integrity of Ukraine and called upon NATO and the international community for a multilateral solution to the crisis. Ankara's willingness to coordinate its efforts with NATO signaled that Turkish concerns regarding Russian unilateralism trumped Ankara's distrust towards NATO penetration into the Black Sea, representing a clear departure from the joint Russian–Turkish opposition to NATO presence in the region of the previous decade.

4.2 Energy as a Source of Conflict

Energy partnership between Russia and Turkey contributed to political cooperation in the short-term by incentivizing both parties to avoid escalating potential disputes. Despite this short-term complementarity of interests, however, the long-term energy strategies of Russia and Turkey are on an increasingly divergent path.

First, there is an incongruity between Turkey's aspiration to be a regional energy hub and Russia's desire to dominate energy transport from the Caspian and Middle East to Europe. Turkey has a very fortunate geographic position as a natural energy corridor between more than 70 % of the world's oil and natural gas reserves on the one hand and European and global energy markets on the other. Turkish decision makers are very keen on taking full advantage of the geopolitical location of the country by turning it into a regional energy center or hub rather than a mere transit corridor (Bilgin 2010; Misiagiewicz 2013; Umucu et al. 2011; Winrow 2011, 2013; Yorkan 2011). Being an energy hub would indeed bring vast economic and political benefits for Turkey. In addition to transit fees and re-export revenues (Stevens 2009) Turkey would have more reliable access to cheaper energy. A potential political prize could be a shorter and easier road to EU membership, even though European decision makers are less willing than their Turkish counterparts to establish an issue linkage between energy and accession (Müftüler-Baç and Başkan 2011; Roberts 2012; Tekin and Williams 2009a, 2009b, 2011). Yet being an energy hub is not an easy goal to achieve; it requires not only vast and expensive energy infrastructure (including storage facilities, maritime terminals, refineries, etc.) but also a network of pipelines that would transport gas from a multiplicity of sources. Diversification of energy suppliers and import routes are thus integral to Turkey's long-term energy plans, as outlined in the strategy document of the Turkish Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources (Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources 2010).

Russia's desire to control energy transport from the Caspian, the Middle East and most recently the Eastern Mediterranean clashes with Turkey's aspiration to play a key role in the East–west energy corridor as a regional energy hub. Russia considers Turkey a critical transit state and an alternative to Ukraine and Belarus, with which Russia had significant problems. Yet Moscow would rather prefer Turkey as a mere transit corridor that it can influence rather than a regional energy hub that can rival Russia's monopoly over energy transit routes.

It has long been Russia's policy to block alternative energy transit routes to Europe via Turkey. Russia had fervently opposed the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipelines (Babali 2005; Roberts 2012). Moscow also did not look favorably upon Nabucco either, which was conceived as the main artery of the Southern Gas Corridor project to carry Caspian (and possibly Middle Eastern) gas bypassing Russian pipelines. The South Stream project was indeed precisely tailored as a Russian-controlled alternative to Nabucco (Baran 2008). In fact, Russia's "wedge strategy" of offering lucrative energy deals to various European

countries in order to prevent them from acting collectively is the most important hurdle in front of the Southern Gas Corridor (Demiryol 2013).

Turkey also needs to diversify its energy imports in order to raise its own energy security as well. Unlike Europe were energy consumption is declining, Turkish energy demand is projected to double by 2023. Energy imports continue to burden the Turkish economy; two thirds of the current account deficit stem from energy imports. Diversification of suppliers and import routes is the key to having reliable access to cheaper gas. Caspian gas reserves are currently the main targets of Turkey's diversification efforts. To that end, Turkey signed a 6 bcma gas deal with Azerbaijan in October 2011. Ankara and Baku are jointly building the Trans-Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP), which will transport gas from Stage II of Shah Deniz gas field to Turkey.[6] Some of the Azeri gas will then be forwarded to Europe via the Turkey-Greece-Italy Interconnector (ITGI) and the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), which is currently under development. In addition to Caspian basin, Turkey is planning to diversify its suppliers by further branching out into the Middle East. In 2006, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey signed an agreement to extend the Arab gas pipeline through Syria to Turkey.[7]

Turkey is seeking to diversify its oil suppliers as well. Due to the international sanctions regime, Turkey cut back on its oil imports from Iran. This situation is however likely to change if negotiations between P5 + 1 countries and Iran are successful and the sanctions on energy exports are relaxed and eventually lifted, making greater quantities of Iranian oil (and possibly natural gas as well) available to Turkey.

Ankara also has very high expectations regarding Iraqi oil (Barkey 2011; Gunter 2011; Mills 2013; Sabadus 2012). Iraq is already the world's third largest exporter and given the vast reserves (fifth largest in the world), there is a lot of room for further development (IEA 2012). Iraq's largest oil export outlet is the Kirkuk-Ceyhan oil pipeline that runs from Northern Iraq to Southern Turkey. In addition to the state-owned energy company TPAO, private firms from Turkey are developing various oil fields in Northern Iraq. The Kurdish Regional Government is building a new oil pipeline to Turkey, with an initial capacity of 300,000 barrels per day (Reuters 2013). As of May 2014, oil from Kurdish controlled Northern Iraq started flowing to the Ceyhan storage facilities in Turkey. Pending on the resolution of the revenue sharing dispute between the Kurdish government in Erbil and the central government in Baghdad (Moradi and Saie 2013), Turkey will not only buy oil from Iraq in larger amounts but it will also be the main transit route for Iraqi oil

[6] This project was announced in 2011 and the intergovernmental agreement was signed in 2012, with an estimated completion date of 2018. The initial capacity will be 16 bcma, with six bcma being purchased by Turkey. Capacity will be increased to 23 bcma by 2023, 31 bcma by 2026 and ultimately 60 bcma.

[7] Turkey had been planning to buy four bcma of natural gas from the Arab Gas Pipeline. The plans had to be suspended for now, given the continuing political turmoil in the region.

to reach global markets.[8] Iraq also has significant gas reserves requiring further investment for development and transport, which Turkish public energy companies and private enterprises are more than willing to help with.

The latest component of Turkey's energy diversification strategy is the natural gas reserves discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean off the coasts of Cyprus and Israel. Turkey seeks to not only buy some of the gas from Cyprus and Israel, but also play a key role in transporting the gas to European markets (Emerson 2013; Misiagiewicz 2013; Mitnick 2013; Ratner 2011; Tagliapietra 2012). Of the two alternatives that are currently being considered to transport the gas to Europe—an underwater pipeline and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)—the former appears to be the more feasible option. Depending on the normalization of political relations between Turkey and Israel as well as the progress towards the resolution of the Cyprus issue, Turkey stands to benefit immensely from the Eastern Mediterranean gas reserves both as a buyer and as transit state.

It is not only Turkey, the more dependent party in the energy trade with Russia that is seeking to reduce its vulnerability via diversification of energy sources and import routes. Russia, too, is actively pursuing a long-term strategy to diversify its export markets and transit routes in order to reduce its reliance on a few critical countries for markets and transport. In the document "Energy Strategy of Russia for the Period up to 2030" the priorities of Moscow were identified as (1) lowering transit dependence, (2) diversifying export paths to Europe, (3) diversifying export markets (particularly into Asia) (Institute for Energy Strategy 2010).

The two major pipeline projects developed by Russia, the South Stream and Nord Stream projects, are products of this strategy of export route diversification. While Turkey is a partner to South Stream, Russia has reasons to be concerned with its reliance on Turkey as a transit corridor, as evidenced by Moscow's reluctance to endorse projects that might mean greater dependence on Turkey. Russia already makes heavy use of the Turkish Straits, through which the bulk of oil exports to Western markets pass. In order to reduce tanker traffic, Russia proposed the Burgas-Alexandroupoli pipeline,[9] which would carry Russian and possibly Caspian oil bypassing the Turkish straits and taking overland routes through Bulgaria and Greece (Kubicek 2013). Turkey, in turn, proposed an overland Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline as an alternative Bosphorus bypass. Russia, however, apprehensive about relying exclusively on a single transit state, avoided fully endorsing the pipeline through Turkey. Despite the inclusion of Rosneft and Transneft in the project in addition to the main stakeholders Turkey's Calık Holding and Italy's ENI, the Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline is stalled largely due to Moscow's objection that it is not economically viable (Today's Zaman 2013).

[8] On 23 June 2014, the first shipment of oil from Northern Iraq reportedly reached the Ashkelon port in Israel. While the dispute between Erbil and Baghdad is far from resolved as of June 2014, the chaos caused by ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) forces in Iraq, created an opening for Erbil to sell its oil on global markets.

[9] This pipeline is currently suspended due to environmental and supply concerns.

Lastly, the realities of Russian gas production and the structural shifts in global energy markets are forcing Moscow to rethink its export priorities, raising the significance of the Asian markets at the expense of Europe. Production in Russia's western oil and gas fields is declining (Vatansever 2010). The older fields in West Siberia and Volga-Urals region are maturing. The high cost of transporting gas from the eastern fields over long distances to European markets is prohibitive. Furthermore, European energy consumption is stagnant and the EU no longer appears willing to bear the political costs of its dependence on Russian gas, particularly after the Crimean crisis. With Europe looking as a more problematic customer, Russia is turning its gaze towards eastern markets.[10] A contraction in Russia-Europe energy trade in the long run might undermine Turkey's role as an energy transit state, taking away a core leverage of Ankara against Moscow.

Even though energy partnership is an integral part of the economic interdependence between Russia and Turkey, the incongruity the long-term energy visions between these two countries suggests that energy is also a source of competition and conflict in Russian–Turkish relations.

5 Conclusion

This chapter offered a realist explanation of the puzzling trajectory of Russian–Turkish relations since 2003. The main argument is that even though energy-fueled economic interdependence had a positive role in political cooperation, the causal impact of trade on cooperation was contingent on the alignment of Russian and Turkish security interests in the Middle East and Black Sea/Caucasus region. Between 2003 and 2011 Russia and Turkey behaved as status quo powers whose interests dictated extensive policy coordination to maintain regional order without the involvement of extra-regional powers, most notably the US and NATO. During this period, trade and energy cooperation primarily served as instruments in the hands of Moscow and Ankara, who sought each other's cooperation for strategic reasons.

Relations between Moscow and Ankara declined after 2011, even though economic interdependence in general and energy trade in particular remained strong. The primary reason for the Russian–Turkish divergence was the shifting perceptions of threat. Russia and Turkey started to view their interests in the Black Sea and Caspian regions differently. The process of divergence that started as early as the aftermath of the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008 continued until the 2014 crisis

[10] Russia's energy "pivot to Asia" is already in motion. Russia's Gazprom and China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) signed a $400 billion gas deal on May 21, 2014. The deal had been in the making for a decade as the two sides negotiated over price and other terms of the contract. In addition to China, Russia is also interested in being the sole energy supplier to India and South Korea. A $30 billion oil pipeline to India is under consideration, which will make India the major market for Russian oil exports. Gazprom is also working toward building a natural gas transport network to South Korea via the North.

in Ukraine, where the differences between Russia and Turkey gradually crystallized. In the Middle East, the moment of divergence was more sudden and tangible. Arab Spring, particularly the civil war in Syria, revealed that Russia and Turkey no longer shared similar concerns as status quo powers. Turkey, anxious to take advantage of the new opening that Arab Spring supposedly created, opted to side with the forces of change in the region whereas Russia continued to support existing regimes. Lastly, while energy trade continues to have a positive impact on short-term bilateral relations, the differences between energy interests of Moscow and Ankara indicate opposing and potentially conflicting strategies in the long-term.

Russian–Turkish relations for centuries have been marked by cycles of cooperation and conflict. It is yet unclear whether the divergence after 2011 will eventually lead to a complete return to the more competitive equilibrium that existed before 2003. It is certain, however, that the relations between Russia and Turkey will continue to shape the geopolitical dynamics of Eurasia. Given the rising importance of these two major regional powers, their bilateral relations will also be a significant element of the emerging multi-polar order.

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Congruous or Conflicting? Great Power Configurations in the Balkans

Marinko Bobić

Abstract Once again power configurations in the Balkans are changing. Rarely has any great power in the past exclusively controlled the Balkans. But neither has the Balkan Peninsula managed to avoid great power competition. Still, the European Union (EU) has made significant inroads of late toward overseeing this volatile region. Presently, however, a resurgent Russia, an increasingly influential Turkey and the financial crisis spreading across Europe are serving to rekindle the political contest over the Balkans and its future.

What can configurations of great power interaction between the EU, Russia and Turkey tell us about the Balkans today? Is the region facing renewed instability and fated to be mired in a zero-sum struggle, as realist thinkers such as Mearsheimer already in 1990 successfully predicted? Or perhaps regional configurations create an incentive for great powers to cooperate? On the basis of geopolitical analysis, this qualitative case-study compares foreign policies and strategies of each great power toward the other, as well as their foreign policies toward the Balkan states. What emerges from this analysis is fading confidence that the European Union can work in concert to maintain peace and stability in the Balkans without antagonizing Russia and Turkey. Even as secondary actors, Russia and Turkey have powerful cards to play should they determine—or even conspire—to undermine European policies.

1 Introduction

Global powers are judged upon whether their aspirations are matched by equally large-scale results. If we consider its combined economic, commercial, financial and trading influence, the European Union (EU) deserves to be ranked as a global power (Nugent 2006). This status and recognition are conditioned, however, by the European Union's ability to act as a bloc in order to influence other actors' behaviours according to EU policy preferences. By this criterion the EU's

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guaranteed future as a global power is by no means certain if judged by its inability thus far to cope with and to overcome the negative impact of the lingering financial crisis.

At the same time, the EU's two neighbours, Turkey and Russia, are growing in both power and ambition. Where these three actors have traditionally clashed is in the Balkans, the most familiar case being World War I. Today, all three actors are once again testing their powers and contesting for dominant influence, in a region whose foundations remain extremely fragile, thereby confirming John Mearsheimer who already in 1990 confidently predicted the Balkans would be unstable due to changing power configurations. Witness NATO, its role slowly replaced by other actors, such as the EU. The larger theoretical question thus becomes: Do great power configurations today create an incentive for the concerned parties to form consensual or conflicting policies in the Balkans?

The Balkan Peninsula has almost always had geopolitical configurations linking together the Western Christian, Eastern Orthodox, and Islamic worlds. Historically, the interaction of great powers in the Balkans has shaped the (in)stability of this North-Eastern Mediterranean region, with every major treaty involving the participation of external actors and great powers. Viewed from a broader geographic and political perspective, one notes the region presently has several focal points. First: Russia's reconfigured interests in the Balkans after the Kosovo War. Second: Turkish 'soft power' projection, making Ankara an indispensable factor in Balkan affairs. Third: for reasons of defense, stability and trade, the EU's conviction that the Balkans must come within its own direct sphere of influence. Whether the EU is in fact capable of such control largely depends upon whether it can keep Greece, Cyprus and other struggling economies on a stable economic track. History teaches us that without economic stability grievances will more often than not lead to various forms of political violence (see, for example, Copeland 1996).

The main question then becomes: What can configurations of great power interaction tell us about the Balkans today, given current developments? Are the Balkans mired in a zero-sum struggle, as realist thinking cautions? Once these balance of power configurations are established, what might be the consequences for the region as well as for the world? On the basis of geopolitical analysis, this qualitative case-study compares foreign policies and strategies of the respective great powers—Russia, the EU, and Turkey—toward each other, as well as toward the Balkan states. For example, how complementary or antagonistic are the (1) EU's neighbourhood policy, (2) Turkey's "Neo-Ottoman" vision, and (3) Russia's defined sphere of influence?

Although NATO is not included here in the triangular Balkan configuration, it remains an important secondary actor in the dynamic relationship between the EU, Turkey, and Russia. The logic for why NATO is not analysed on its own terms as a fourth leading actor rests on the fact that belonging or cooperating with NATO does not preclude crisis or violent conflict. For example, the Georgian war raged despite the existence of a NATO-Russia partnership; so, too, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus took place despite both being NATO members. For this reason, it would be naive to assume that membership in an international security organisation, in and

of itself can tamp down major disagreements among determined great powers. By the same token, the United States is also not included in the present analysis because from the perspective of the White House the western Balkans remain the primary responsibility of the European Union (Bugajski 2010).

2 Theoretical Framework (Great Power Peace)

Theoretically, this research is informed by the debate between two schools of thought: those who believe great power behaviour involves zero-sum clashes of interest, competitive behaviour and a propensity for conflict, including violent conflict; versus those who, on the other hand, believe the very nature of great power relations are changing, whether because of liberal and democratic norms, economic interdependence or international institutions.

With reference to the first school of thought, the larger theoretical importance of the Balkans is underpinned by Zbigniew Brzezinski's argument that any power that succeeds in dominating Eurasia controls two of the world's three most advanced and economically productive regions. In his own words: "a mere glance at the map suggests that control over Eurasia would entail Africa's subordination, rendering the Western Hemisphere and Oceania geopolitically peripheral to the world's central continent" (Brzezinski 1998). According to Brzezinski, the geopolitical Achilles' heel of the twenty-first century is the area he designates as the "Global Balkans"—the swathe of Eurasia from the Balkans up through central Asia—an area that is unstable, and the source for a potentially contagious crisis (Brzezinski 2008, 2012). This kind of thinking is very much a realist, zero-sum game, and prepares us for an intense contest among rival great powers for dominant influence and control of the Balkans.

Surprising many observers, the Cold War ended peacefully with Mikhail Gorbachev's opening to the West illustrating that great powers can also resolve conflicts short of war, contrary to Gilbert's belief that nothing in history was ever settled except by war (1983). If war has proven to be fading as a policy in Europe, perhaps the Balkan problem may also be settled peacefully? After all, the Balkans always tended to erupt into conflict because great powers could not or would not settle issues between themselves peacefully. Now, however, the possibility exists that great powers—at least the US, Europe and Japan—may see themselves as equal partners with democratic regimes pledged to resolve outstanding differences through negotiation and compromise.

One of the most popular theories in vogue today in the study of International Relations is that democracies do not fight each other (Doyle 1983). Prosperity, that is, economic growth and economic interdependence, are also said to be a major deterrent to war. In this spirit EU leaders believe that economic benefits have saved Europe, and can perform the same positive function in saving the Balkans (Haas 1958). For those who look beyond these prosperous democratic actors, the fact of two extremely bloody world wars still vivid in the collective memory, and the

continued existence of nuclear weapons, suggests the unlikelihood of a large interstate war (Van Creveld 1991). Theories such as these—the democratic peace, functional "win-win" cooperation, mutual deterrence—inform the second school of thought, with its confidence that great power relations are changing from conflictual to non-conflictual.

Still, there are those associated with the first school of thought who insist stability in Europe may prove to be a temporary phenomenon. In particular, realist rules of the game emphasize that traditional great power military competition could very well re-emerge as a potent force (Mearsheimer 1990; Waltz 2000). Even for the optimists of European integration, there is the argument that economic benefits which existed before World War I did not suffice to prevent bloodshed; nor is war always counter-productive (Labs 1997). Others add further that the European project has worked because for much of the time there was an external enemy, and also because the United States acted to provide security guarantees (Joffé 1984). From the standpoint of smaller or peripheral countries, what has preserved their independence is that leaders of great powers tended to be far more sensitive to prospective losses in their state's relative power, international status, or prestige than to potential gains (Taliaferro 2004).

These ideas represent the contours of theoretical disagreement over prospects for a more peaceful world, with particular reference to the Balkans which, again, Brzezinski has identified as an Achilles' heel in the international body politic. By offering the present-day Balkans as case study in great power relations, this chapter seeks to clarify whether the Balkans are indeed a contemporary reiteration of realist foreign policies resulting in power politics, or whether the reigning great powers can manage their respective claims to spheres of commercial, cultural, political and security influence in an enlightened way. The interest of this chapter is, first and foremost, in the durability of great power peace in a challenging region where nationalism traditionally has caused repeated conflict (Dannreuther 2013).

Worth recalling is that the Balkans were the first to revert to armed hostilities and warfare in the initial post-Cold War era and remains no less volatile and politically agitated. If, optimistically but also realistically, if today's great powers can reconcile their policies in a region so divided religiously, ideologically and materially, then we shall then be able to cite it as proof positive that even traditionally conflict-prone regions can be managed peacefully by great powers acting in concert in order to create and preserve stable balances of power.

3 Foreign Relations

3.1 EU–Russia

Of the three bilateral relations to be analyzed here, EU–Russian relations are the most tenuous. They have deteriorated recently owing to what Sakwa believes is a 'diminishing global role and status of both Russia and the EU' (Sakwa 2010).

According to Ulrike Guérot (2012), "Europe could soon find itself the object of benign neglect by both of the former Cold War rivals, with Europe's security and trade ties with both of them dysfunctional, under-performing or eroding". What started as a strategic partnership has culminated, at least for now, in the recent Ukrainian crisis following the ousting of former Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich.

Before the troubled relationship culminated, Russia and the EU attempted to forge closer ties, in part to avoid own marginalisation, especially Russia. The EU and Russia did after all reach an agreed position via the 1997 Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) covering the following four areas: political dialogue, trade and cooperation in economic matters, justice and home affairs, and bilateral cooperation. The economic focus of the PCA is on free trade and investment, while its more limited political goals strive only to regularize dialogue plus a commitment to pursing basic reforms (Hadfield 2008). Some criticise the agreement as being overly ambitious since it hopes to bring Russia closer to the EU legislative, economic and trading standards (Abellán 2004). Similarly, the EU Common Strategy (CS) on Russia, issued in 1999, only lasted a few years before the EU came to the realisation it could not 'help Russia to assert its European identity' (Hadfield 2008). More recently, the EU has involved Russia in climate change negotiations in order to attempt to establish a working relationship which in the future could extend into the area of oil and gas (Cameron 2009).

Nevertheless, despite such attempts, for the moment EU–Russia relations have plunged to a new low over conflicting plans for the borderline post-Soviet states. For example, the post-Yanukovych crisis in Ukraine has resulted in Russia exercising its muscle over Crimea, while the West (including the EU), by way of retaliation, has imposed sanctions on Russia (Barata 2014). We find the term 'the new cold war' increasingly common in the media. Which is not to imply, however, that the EU has embraced a single monolithic attitude towards Russia. The EU foreign and security policy remains intergovernmental in nature, operating voluntarily in parallel with EU structures. Yet given the European dependence on Russia, and the limited effectiveness of economic sanctions so far, it appears to outside observers that overall EU influence on Russia is relatively weak (Sakwa 2010; MacFarlane and Menon 2014).

Russia recently redefined its relationship toward the EU via its Middle Term Strategy for 2000–2010. This MTS document presents a strikingly different perspective of Europe from the Russian side, including, most notably, a shift in assumed geopolitical power centres and a far more vigorous role for the energy factor than conceived of by EU policy strategists. Moscow seeks at heart to preserve Russian national interests and to enhance both the role and the image of Russia in Europe and around the world. The two strategies designed to guarantee Russian interests are: first, the establishment of a pan-European collective security system, and second, conscious 'mobilising' of the EU in developing a 'socially-oriented market economy' in Russia (Hadfield 2008).

Clearly, Russia sees itself as a great power which cannot be dominated by the EU. If anything, political power is meant to emanate from Moscow, not Brussels. Russia under Vladimir Putin feels it can act to promote its vision of pan-European relations on the basis of state interests. This is not to say that Russia is resolved upon acting aggressively, as this would be ill-considered; merely, that Russia is no longer prepared to have engagement dictated on western European terms (Sakwa 2010). Some of the strongest Russian political positions include: strong opposition to Western policies in Ukraine and Georgia; concern over the US missile deployment in Poland and the Czech Republic; similar concern over NATO expansion eastward; downplaying the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty; a demand for visa-free regimes for Russian citizens, while also clashing over human rights and trade discussions (Cameron 2009).

This, too, is not to say that Russia wants a weak Europe. Rather, as seen by Sergey Karganov, Russia stands to benefit in the tactical sense if Europe's pretensions are downsized (Karganov 2010). Downsizing, in other words, might dissuade Europeans from imposing their norms in favour of an alliance based on mutual sensitivities and on mutual advantage. Such an alliance would allow Russia at one and the same time to move closer to Europe while preserving its distinctive cultural, political and national identity. Europe's declining role in the world would, of course, help in realizing this goal (Gomart 2010). However, in the face of the post-Yanukovich crisis in Ukraine, Europe's declining role in the wider world may not necessarily imply diminishing EU regional aspirations. In fact, with the Ukrainian crisis plaguing EU–Russian relations, the perception in Moscow of encirclement has strengthened the imperative for creating anti-Western alliances (Lukin 2014). Russia under certain circumstances and in the midst of heightened tensions may thus conceivably feel compelled to take increasingly unpopular measures in order to keep these regional EU aspirations in check.

As for the energy relationship, it continues to exist even against the wider backdrop of the strained geopolitical relationship, but also unavoidably reflects these tensions, most visibly seen in the EU–Russian Energy Dialogue. Nonetheless, energy still provides the strongest ties between the two actors. Even though Russia provides just 7 % of the EU's energy needs, Russia remains the EU's largest energy supplier while the EU also constitutes the biggest investor in Russia's energy sector, (Hadfield 2008; Cameron 2009). Given this dependency and Russia's energy disputes with its neighbours, most EU decision-makers urge the EU to diversify its energy sources especially after Russia has successfully used energy ties to influence NATO (Gomart 2010).

Part of EU strategy is to persuade Russia to adhere to some common energy standards via the EU Energy Charter's market-governance principles (Youngs 2007). Some of these standards are illustrated in the third energy package, which some label as 'a tug of war'. This is an EU law which requires any energy company within the EU to separate delivery activities from production and transport energy activities, which will be problematic for monopolies such as Gazprom. According to Guérot (2012), the European Commission launched an investigation into Gazprom, openly accusing it of monopolistic practices. Likewise, as a natural

consequence of growing regional political tensions, according to STRATFOR (2014), the European Commission has called for the suspension of the South Stream project. Reka (2014) believes this shows the seriousness of the EU's energy policy.

While these may prove somewhat effective at undermining Russian interests, it seems that EU strategies, and especially its energy-related policies, are hampered by a lack of cohesion, since it is up to the EU Member States to negotiate energy supply contracts (Hadfield 2008). Whether the EU 'market-governance nexus' will be able to overcome Russian 'geopolitical content' remains to be seen. But the two actors will not be able for long to ignore their high levels of trade. Alternatives such as the Eurasian Union are still very far from the "big leagues", with the EU still being the top trading partner of Eurasian states, according to Carol Matlack (2014).

3.2 Turkey–EU

Turkey seemingly shares many common positions on foreign policy with the EU. Not to be overlooked, however, is that these two actors on the Balkan fringe have historically had problematic relations, especially if we consider individual states within the EU and their separate assessments of Turkey and policies toward Ankara.

On balance, Turkey has a cool, but calibrated relationship with the EU, as well as progressive relations with individual countries in the EU, such as Germany. This traces in part to the Turkish slogan and wishful goal of a "zero problem policy with neighbours", as the Turkish foreign minister Davutoglu prefers to call it (Ruma 2010). Turkey also sees its engagement with the EU as a moderating and disciplining factor in order to meet security and stability goals (Alessandri 2010). The EU certainly welcomes 'zero problems' and has been pleased to see a number of positive measures adopted by Ankara. These include: removal of capital punishment, an improved human rights records, noteworthy developments in education, progress in transportation (especially aviation and railways) and technological industry, increased foreign trade, foreign tourism and agricultural production, extricating the military from civilian politics and increasing export revenue. Both parties—Brussels and Ankara—also benefit by forming a closer relationship to tackle international terrorism, drug smuggling, human trafficking and immigration (Aksu 2012). The EU also stands to benefit from Turkey's young population, vast farmland, touristic attractions and most importantly, Turkey's role as an energy corridor for Europe.

This does not mean that the history of problematic relations has ended. On the contrary, a new set of problems may be re-surfacing. Economically, the EU is playing a lesser role in Turkey than previously. While the EU used to constitute more than 60 % of Turkey's foreign trade, that percentage has dropped below 50 % today. Politically, the EU shows ongoing concern with worrisome signs pointing to the deterioration of democracy in Turkey, in the wake of the secrecy overshadowing the judiciary branch, crackdown on citizen protests, revelations about corruption, alongside increasing restrictions on freedom of speech and

secularism (Blockmans 2014). With Recep Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party winning local elections in early 2014 tensions have only increased between Turkey and the EU, exemplified by EU's concern over the blocking of Twitter and YouTube use in Turkey. Nor, to the consternation of EU member states Cyprus and Greece, is any major Turkish political party signalling genuine readiness to make changes on the Cyprus issue that might normalise the situation. In addition, the treatment of Kurdish civilians has also been a sore point violating European principles, as reported by Kramer (2009) and European Voice (2013).

It is altogether possible that the result will see Turkey turning back on its democratic experiment and challenging Europe indirectly through the Balkans (Brzezinski 2012). This is not entirely surprising given that Turkish democracy rests on an uncertain role of the military in politics, and also given that Turkey has a mixed record on torture and freedom of speech (Smith 2011). The Turks, for their part, are not particularly eager any longer to join the EU, with merely 30 % of the people supporting EU membership, reflecting a growing sense that the EU "does not want anything good for Turkey" (Aksu 2012). Taking all this into consideration, should relations between Turkey and the EU take a further negative direction, it is by no means clear who will be to blame.

The EU-Turkey bilateral relationship cannot be thoroughly evaluated without also pausing to consider the pattern of negotiations on Turkey joining the EU. Going back to 1963, when Turkey became an associate member, Ankara's candidacy has served as one of the major assets of its foreign policy. However, the accession negotiations have been suspended since 1997 after the European Council placed Turkey in a separate category of applicant states. Although never stated explicitly, many Europeans were, and still are, concerned by the fact that Turkey is a large Muslim State (Smith 2011); thus in 2008, only 31 % of the EU27 supported Turkey's membership (Wood 2013).

To be sure, the European reluctance to open full membership negotiations with Turkey has contributed to the EU's reduced leverage over Turkey. From 2002 to 2005, however the EU under pressure from the US did positively engage Turkey in preliminary talks, with Turkey, in return, undertaking some genuine reforms in order to satisfy the accession criteria. Except that in 2005, when formal negotiations finally opened, relations stagnated once again; only a few of the 35 negotiating issues were addressed and only one resolved (Smith 2011). Currently, one of the main preconditions for further progress is for Turkey to sort out the Cyprus issue.

Recently, the EU has once again attempted to mend relations with Turkey by agreeing to a new round of membership negotiations. However, this depends on the annual progress report on Turkey, as well as on how Turkey handles issues pertaining to democracy and human rights. It is unclear at the time of writing whether Turkey itself is ready to embrace these principles; for example, the Erdogan government has even expressed cultural incompatibility with the EU over the headscarf issue (Wood 2013). In addition, he has accused the West of trying to oust him from power. The European Voice (2013) reported that leading EU policymakers further accuse Turkey of turning away from secularism and towards an Islamist regime, thus disavowing European values and institutions.

While somewhat exaggerated, there is no doubt that difficulties in membership negotiations have resulted in Turkey's adoption of a 'neutralist' orientation, allowing Turkey to play its cards more freely on various tables at once (Alessandri 2010). If relations are to improve, Turkey must further accommodate European norms, while Europe, in exchange, must accept greater Turkish participation and influence in its councils. Such reciprocity is going to be difficult in the extreme given the EU's deep financial crisis and Erdogan's working premise that, if anything, Turkey has the upper hand over the EU.

3.3 Russia–Turkey

Since 2003, Turkish–Russian relations began to emerge outside the previous Cold War mindset, in which Russia considered Turkey under American tutelage. The rationale for the revised post-Cold War bilateral relationship has several components. Turkey and Russia have a practical shared interest in establishing economic and trade ties on the basis of co-dependence. For example, Turkey very much needs and depends upon the uninterrupted flow of oil and gas supplies from Russia, whereas Russia counts on Turkish products in order to diversify its import dependency away from the EU. Again, it needs to be emphasised that Russia is one of Turkey's principal trading partners. Secondly, they both need to balance their prospective clashing economic interests, such as parallel oil and gas pipelines. Thirdly, the two countries have political differences over the North Caucasus and Balkan regions, and in order to prevent serious friction leading to a sharp deterioration in relations, the two countries must be in close communication and consultation. Finally, Turkey is a vital outlet for Russia in gaining easy, unrestrained access to the Mediterranean, especially were such strategic maritime access to be blocked by the EU. Mirroring these incentives for a more balanced relationship, Al Jazeera (2013) reported in 2010 that the two countries formalized the Turkish–Russian Cooperation Council.

Among the above considerations and motives, trade and economic relations remain the number one priority for both Russia and Turkey. To such an extent that not even their serious political differences over Kosovo or Cyprus have impeded cooperation in the two realms of trade and economic affairs. This suggests the Russian-Turkish relationship can be defined as "cool pragmatism". Suffice to mention that the principle item in bilateral trade is energy; and, even more vividly, that Turkey imports approximately 91 % and 98 % respectively of its oil and natural gas consumption (Babali 2012). These statistics have led to close cooperation on the Blue Stream pipeline and the Akkuyu nuclear power plant project.

To be sure, even though the two countries are seeking a balanced interdependence under the "win-win" principle, energy experts in Turkey express concern at Turkey's one-sided approach to energy relations with Russia (Babali 2012). That the EU has energy plans of its own in Turkey does not appear to concern officials in Ankara; on the contrary: Turkey entertains hopes that it can

become a vital energy hub for any number of different geopolitical suitors and thereby further enhance its status and prestige as a rising great power.

The potential for improving relations also exists in the political sphere. Militarily, there is the view that Russia and Turkey may very well have suffered internationally by independently trying to protect their spheres of interest rather than in tandem. Consider how Turkey intervened unilaterally in northern Cyprus in 1974 to defend its interests in much the same way as Russia intervened in Georgia in 2008 and in Ukraine in 2014 in order to safeguard its own perceived interests. Similarly, both Ankara and Moscow then proceeded to confer diplomatic recognition on the respective entities formed by their direct military intervention.

These similar behaviour patterns encourage some Turkish strategists to envision joining Russia in a powerful Eurasian alliance (Torbakov 2008). Even while in other Turkish circles there are those who insist the Kremlin, because of traditional Russian territorial aggrandisement, remains a potential strategic threat and therefore must be kept in check, primarily by strengthening offsetting relations with the West. Nonetheless, the fact remains that Russia and Turkey may yet overcome these strains and resolve strategically to form a natural "alliance of the outsiders" motivated by the shared exclusion they could face because of EU policies inimical to their respective national interests (Sakwa 2010). New opportunities thus surface, despite the EU door closing (if it was ever truly open), or precisely because of its possible closing.

An immediate challenge is how Russian-Turkish ties continue to develop in the face of the ongoing Syrian civil war that started in 2011. Where Russia is sympathetic to President Bashar al-Assad, having harshly criticised Istanbul's role in supporting the 'Friends of Syria' group, Turkey categorically rejects any role for al-Assad in Syria's political future. While the two countries continue to enhance economic cooperation amidst the rift on their Syrian preferences, there may be a major problem were Ankara to decide at any point on sending troops into Syria. Another factor posing a potential threat to the relationship is Ankara's EU membership bid, which could in theory complicate Turkey's relations with Russia. Finally, Turkey has to be careful not to antagonise Russia in its desire to enhance historical links with Central Asia.

4 The European Union's Sphere of Control

Aforementioned relations are deeply interwoven in each regional power's Balkan policies. The European Union's primary aim in the Balkans is to secure stability and prosperity in the region via the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). At the EU-Western Balkans Summit in 2003, it was officially decided that the Balkan states would also become members of the EU, especially since the claim was made that "the EU has never really had a policy towards its neighbours, except enlargement" (Charlemagne 2006). Meaning that this progressive step was uncontroversial, it is a given that the Balkan states are now widely regarded as an

integral part of Europe. See, for example, the Thessaloniki Agenda for the Western Balkans—Towards European Integration; The Thessaloniki EU—Western Balkans Declaration. Moreover, the enlargement process was deemed as ongoing; a method for progressively and functionally building a Europe stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea. An economically and politically united entity; and one without conflict on its doorsteps—a point stated by Kudryashova (2012) and MacDowall (2011a).

More specifically for the Balkans, the EU developed a strategy characterised by the growing institutional restructuring of bilateral relations: a healthy dialogue between the civil societies, regional cooperation, and economic ties. The EU, for example, conducts a number of civil missions, such as the EULEX mission in Kosovo. According to MacDowall (2011a), however, it should be clear that the nature of prosperity and stability is clearly one that is based on constitutional democracy, as well as the free market. The Copenhagen Criteria spells out the necessary prerequisites for EU membership, such as democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights, protection of minorities, market economy, and other "European standards" (Calic 2003; Keil 2013). Krastev (2005) believes that if the European Union fails in integrating all of the Balkan countries as new Member States, then it will be seen as a 'neo-colonial' power in places such as Bosnia or Kosovo.

Along with ensuring peace and stability, the EU is using the Balkans as a testing ground for its own capabilities; that is, for creating its own sphere of influence. The Yugoslav wars only displayed how much the EU lacked cohesion in its external relations (Cameron 2006). To carve its sphere of influence, the European Union, interestingly just like Russia, is opposed to any border changes in the Balkans. This means that ethnic discrimination in Bosnia as well as Bosnia's constitution must be changed to make Bosnia an example of interethnic tolerance. Membership is a way for the EU to control Bosnia's sustainable development. Of course, recognising Kosovo but not Republika Srpska has a certain political bias, but this bias, too, offers a convenient way for the EU to test its capabilities.

The underlying logic is very much realist, based on zero-sum calculations if one considers that the EU, especially some of its member states, insist Serbia joins NATO while at the same time lending its considerable economic and political support to spreading Western influence. Corina Stratulat (2012) argues that embracing the Balkans is a logical channel for the West to keep its hard-won achievements, but also to prevent other actors (like Russia, Turkey, or even China) from entering the competition. Think of it this way: if the EU cannot control its own backyard, then how can it be a credible actor in the Middle East or other areas? So far, the non-integrated Balkan state registering the most far-reaching pro-EU reforms is Montenegro.

The European Union's priority for the Common Foreign and Security Policy is energy security (Youngs 2007). Namely: the EU seeks to reduce its energy dependence to a limited number of suppliers, such as Russia or, alternatively, Middle Eastern oil producers. Within this narrower energy context the EU's objective in the Balkans is to incorporate them into the European regional market for gas and petroleum products. This includes an area of energy pipeline competition. To

counter Russia's South Stream, new Western pipeline projects include the Trans-Anatolian pipeline (TANAP) and the EU's Nabucco pipeline. In effect, the EU hopes to use its energy policy as a way to export its norms for encouraging political reforms (Youngs 2007). It expects Russian-friendly states such as Bulgaria to show solidarity with the EU on energy supply in return for a more lenient EU policy toward Sofia on the issue of political corruption. Albania, for its part, regards itself as the country presently furthest removed from gaining membership in the EU, yet an important supplier of energy resources to Italy, making them major trade partners.

Clearly, the ties that bind in the geopolitics of energy dictate EU member states and central policy planners to seek, with or without competition, secure future energy needs in and via the Balkans. As Fisher observes: "instability in the Balkans would impact seriously on the requirement for a safe passage for oil and gas to the West" (2002).

Finally, the Balkan region constitutes a potential security threat to the EU. Not as a conventional military threat so much as a threat menacing human security. One prime example of such a threat is illegal trafficking in immigrants, often for purposes of exploitation. Many poor areas of the Balkans find thousands of people eager to leave. While some certainly have valid credentials and honest intentions to rebuild their lives, many of these would-be émigrés may be undesirables: criminals, potential terrorists or smugglers. Consider that Serbia's 2011 share for total illegal border-crossings in the Balkan region rose to 40 %, from 3 % in 2010, as reported by FRONTEX (2012). Similarly, drugs enter the European market trafficked through the Balkans, destroying the lives of many people. Further areas of concern are the two pressing issues of terrorism and money laundering. The EU's mission in Kosovo, for instance, is especially focused on promoting the rule of law, not only to prevent any new escalation of conflict, but also to make sure that Kosovo does not remain a safe haven for organised crime, terrorism, corruption and illegal immigration.

In a sense many of the EU's collective interests are threatened not so much by Balkan actors as by its own weaknesses, uncertainties and lack of clear direction. For one, Krastev (2005) claims that European public opinion is adamantly opposed to new members when there is such profound difficulty in financing current members, such as Greece or Portugal. There are also serious differences between Member States on what represent shared values, and on the nature and fair distribution of economic power centering on Germany. Bulgaria may have joined NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007, despite this, relations between Sofia and the European Commission have worsened. Thus, in November 2008 the European Commission suspended 220 million euros in promised aid, freezing an additional 340 million euros, until such time as the Bulgarian government would undertake serious steps to counteract fraud, embezzlement and corruption (Adamowski 2009).

Mutual frustrations such as these exacerbate the crisis of European solidarity; that is, defining common values and pursuing consistent policies. Kudryashova (2012) and Cameron (2006) illustrate these harmful tendencies by showing how Greece has vetoed negotiations with Macedonia, a country which is on the brink of

inter-ethnic conflict. Lastly, according to De Vivo (2013), the gradual decline in confident US leadership coincides with the Eurozone recession, which in turn is creating the perception of an EU unable to guide the Balkans towards a form of pan-European integration with incentives for major structural and economic reforms. Consistent with the dynamics of balancing power, the resulting loss of direction and political vacuum by default opens the area to the influence of other neighboring regional powers, particularly Turkey and Russia.

5 Turkey's Projection of Soft Power

In 2009, Turkey chaired the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), thereafter becoming an active as well as influential actor in the Balkans. This, in turn, has raised speculation, concern and even alarm—in Europe, in the Balkans, and in the United States—as to whether Ankara is nurturing ambitions reminiscent of the Ottoman Empire. This spectre of neo-Ottomanism is especially troubling for those who impart to Turkish leaders unbridled ambitions of elevating their country to the ranks of a 'global power' (Türbedar 2011).

Notwithstanding the alarmists, MacDowall (2011b) among others maintains that Turkey's leaders are merely reaffirming justifiable increased concern at the uncertain state of affairs in and across the Balkans. Nor is this heightened unease incompatible with EU membership for Turkey. Of relevance here, Turkey initially applied to join the European Economic Community as far back as 1987, and has come a long way on the difficult path of domestic reform on the prospect, dim at present, of eventually joining the EU. In which case widespread tension and multiple conflict in the Balkans, necessitating intervention and taking sides by Ankara, only serves to diminish its membership prospects. In attempting to align itself with the EU, whether formally or informally, Turkey readily admits to seeing itself as an indispensable actor in the Balkans (Alessandri 2010).

Besides which, the Balkan countries are arguably of more utility to Ankara as allies and trading partners from within the EU. According to this line of reasoning, unlike the EU, Turkey encourages the Balkan states to pursue their own path rather than having to accept imposed Western standards of modernisation and democratisation. So, too, does Turkey wish to maintain peace and stability in the Balkans, as communicated by then—Turkish President Abdullah Gül in May 2013, when he publicly stated that "our aim is to turn the region, which has experienced enmity and antagonism in its past, into an area of solidarity that will be helpful for further mutual cooperation" (Alessandri 2010). Accordingly, in moving from words to deeds, Turkey successfully mediated the signing of a reconciliation declaration between Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina (Szigetvári 2012).

Other than maintaining peace and stability, and using the Balkans as the bridge to the EU, Turkey has other compelling motives for being engaged in the Balkans. First, there is a long and shared history of Turks and the peoples of the Balkans, not particularly flattering for any side but which is nonetheless why Turks tend to

persist in regarding the Ottoman Empire not as an Asian but European entity (Nagy 2012). In this sense the populations and cultures of Turkey and the Balkans are familiar with each other. This is especially true of Turkish and other Muslim minorities in the Balkan states maintaining close ties with Turkey (for example lobby groups in Turkey, see Türbedar 2011). To be sure, Turkey is not only the beneficiary or recipient of cultural attention; it also actively promotes Turkish and Ottoman themes in the Balkans. Nagy (2012) lists Turkish soap operas, Turkish-funded universities, free Turkish language courses, renovation of Ottoman-era monuments, revision of history books, support for Turkish minorities, as examples of Turkish 'soft power' projection. Bulent Aras calls this a 'psychological breakthrough' in the Balkans in order to erase negative memories of the past (2012).

Second, having sponsored the first Balkan Summit in 2010, Turkish foreign policy emphasises the increased salience of economic relations (Ruma 2010). Modern, industrializing Turkey is an economically attractive partner, its foreign trade with Balkan countries rising to over 17 billion USD in 2011, up from 2.9 billion USD in 2000 (Türbedar 2011; Szigetvári 2012). Nagy (2012) reports that Turkey is among the top-three investors in several Balkan countries, such as Albania and Kosovo. However, despite these impressive and growing ties, STRATFOR (2010) maintains that Turkey is still far from being the most influential economic power in the region. Overall, it lags behind not only the EU, but also Russia. Hopes are that Ankara's influence will expand markedly with completion of the Nabucco pipeline project, bringing gas to Europe from Turkey's eastern borders with Azerbaijan, Iraq and Turkmenistan as sources of supply. The health sector is yet another area where Turkey hopes to cash in, thanks to the rapid expansion of its own private health sector.

A third powerful incentive for Turkey's engagement in the Western Balkans, according to a STRATFOR (2010) analysis, is the aim of forming close partnerships with sympathetic Balkan allies in support of Turkey's EU bid in the future, as well as to proving to the EU that Turkey is nothing if not an indispensable actor in the Balkans. For example, just like the EU, Turkey supports Bosnia's territorial integrity and its multi-ethnic composition. In fact, devout Turkish Muslims often refer to Sarajevo as the "Jerusalem of Europe" (Türbedar 2011). An exemplary event of a positive outcome for Turkey is that the Bulgarian Foreign Minister Kristian Vigenin has announced his country's support for Turkey's membership in the EU. Nonetheless, the main diplomatic focus is on Bosnia-Herzegovina, where Turkey has the strongest historical, cultural and inter-communal ties.

Taking this a step further, some people believe that Ankara actually wants to prove to the EU it can exercise a more effective and constructive influence on Balkan affairs than Brussels. Able to highlight concrete successes in the Balkans, such as reconciling relations between Bosnia and Serbia, Ankara can effectively use its leverage in the Balkans as a bargaining chip with the EU, especially in regard to Turkish accession into the EU.

Perhaps the greatest obstacles for Turkey in dispelling any image of it as a troublemaker or spoiler in Balkan affairs and in achieving its national interests are,

first, lingering regional prejudices and fears; second, the West's conspicuous lack of support and cooperation.

Residual prejudices and current fears usually centre on Turkey's historical role as the region's conqueror and oppressor—memories and fears which exist even among Muslim populations such as those in Albania. Although Turkey has made efforts to reduce such prejudices and fears (for example, with Turkish pop culture), in balancing politics Russia or even the EU can cynically manipulate these prejudices and fears to Ankara's disadvantage. This is especially true of bureaucrats in Brussels who consider the region its own sphere of influence (Ruma 2010; Freizer 2009). Likewise, many in Brussels are worried about Turkey's commitment to secularism and democracy in light of Erdogan's ruling AKP party's preference for pro-Islamic and non-democratic measures. Finally, an unexpected barrier to EU-Turkish mutual understanding may be Turkish citizens themselves, who so far have expressed more concern about secularism and the Kurdish question than the Balkans (Ruma 2010).

Similarly, according to STRATFOR (2010), the Turkish government has itself shown far greater interest in the Middle East where the US withdrawal is creating a power vacuum and an unforeseeable chain of events so close to Turkey. Scepticism about Turkish aims in the Balkans in fact extends much further beyond the EU's confines, as does broader Western lack of support or identification with Turkey's aims and policies. US diplomats, for example, have not shied away from openly expressing their concerns about Turkey's growing presence in Islamic communities throughout the Balkans.

6 Post-Soviet Russian Policy toward the Balkans

At the third axis of the trilateral Balkan relationship and in balancing against Turkey as well as the EU, Russia regards the Balkans as one of its most important geopolitical and strategic priorities (Nartov et al. 2007). Here, at least four considerations factor into Russian strategy, beginning with the uppermost priority of guaranteeing peace and stability on its western, Balkan frontier.

Historically, each and every Balkan war has negatively affected Russia, tracing back to the series of local revolts during the nineteenth century that resulted in suppression by Ottoman Turkey. In the many centennial commemorations of the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 saturation coverage was given to the so-called "trigger event" sparking the conflagration; the assassination of Austria's Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo which drew tsarist Russia into the crisis. Given this pattern, another initially localized Balkan war could once again prove extremely detrimental to longer-term Russian interests.

This primary goal in regional stability aside, current Russian interests in the Balkans stem from the breakup of Yugoslavia and its aftermath, which have fundamentally altered Russian perceptions of its interests in the Balkans. A watching world witnessed Russia's inability to project its influence and how the

other great powers no longer took Russian capabilities or concerns into consideration. The United States, along with NATO, intervened in the Balkans without seriously consulting or considering Russia's interests. More recently, as a direct consequence, Moscow's stance towards the Balkans is governed by Russia's larger relationship with the West. While laboring to ensure that its core interests in the Balkans are safeguarded Russia can, in addition, use its not inconsiderable influence in Balkan affairs as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the West over other vital interests, such as Georgia or the Ukraine (Duncan 2013).

The second policy priority for Russia in the Balkans is to preserve the twin principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Specifically, Russia's interest is to limit the Western notion of intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries, whether rooted in humanitarian law or other philosophical tenets. Moscow is worried that any such arguments could be used in Chechnya to foster secessionism. Western ideas must therefore be limited; in particular, notions of democracy which, if pursued, could undermine Russian visions of the state, or the role of the Orthodox Church. In this aspect, the Orthodox Church has been helpful in assuring strong cohabitation between citizens and their regimes.

This does not mean to imply that Moscow is limiting itself to a purely defensive role. Recognising that it may not be able to prevent the spread of popular Western ideals such as the right of national self-determination, Moscow has decided to recognise Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states. This is in line with Russian geopolitical thinking which separates separatists into two groups: "ours" and "theirs" (Malek 2008).

Third in the mix of motives are economic and energy-based interests that Russia is resolved to promote and protect in the Balkans. As previously mentioned, Russia is a major investor in the Balkan countries, and there is no doubt that energy is Russia's main interest in the Balkans as well as its main weapon of choice. Vladimir Putin has himself emphasised the imperative for Russian foreign policy to reflect the needs of Russian businesses, which doubtless traces to his coming from the kleptocratic elite who form Siloviki and who control industries such as Rosneft (Duncan 2013). Their power in Russia derives from income generated by the energy industry, thereby dictating Russia's abiding vested interest in defending investments by Russian businesses in general, and by energy companies in particular owing to heightened competition over lucrative contracts to supply gas.

The Balkans, as cited above, have a major role in providing an assured route for Russian gas to enter Europe, via Austria or Italy. In particular, the Russian 'South Stream' project, a gas pipeline, directly opposes the European-sponsored Nabucco project. Gazprom owns the two largest oil and gas companies in Serbia and also controls the market of petro-products, having successfully and quietly secured ownership of the Serbian gas distribution grid. Likewise, Russia is modernising Serbian railways and providing financing as well as boosting the travel industry. In the words of Dimitry Rogozin, "we need a strong Serbia which will safeguard its position" (Upitnik 2012). Montenegro has also benefited from Russian capital investment, receiving funds totalling approximately 2 billion USD by 2008, especially in the real estate sector (Smith 2008). Moscow also hoped to secure a military

anchorage in the Mediterranean via Montenegro; however, according to Reka (2014) Montenegro "betrayed" Russia and politically allied itself with the EU. In Croatia, business with Russia is a priority, despite Croatian membership in the EU and NATO. Croatian investors demonstrate an increasing interest in the Russian market and in pursuing joint projects. Slovenia, however, is the biggest investor in the Russian economy among ex-Yugoslav Republics. According to De Vivo (2013), more than 200 Slovenian companies are operating in almost 50 Russian regions while EU FDIs have steeply declined in the last few years.

In the final analysis, however, Bulgaria is the one Balkan country of crucial importance for Moscow, playing a vital role as it does in Russian natural-gas transit to Turkey, Greece and the Balkans. But at the same time Bulgaria has been earmarked as a transit country for the Western-backed Nabucco pipeline carrying Caspian natural gas to Europe via Turkey and designed to break Russia's gas supply monopoly (Adamowski 2009). It is thus not uncommon to find sharp differences among Bulgarian political parties over their dealings with Russia or the EU. In fact, at the time of writing, Bulgaria has announced suspension of the 'South Stream' project due to heavy, intense pressure from the EU and United States. Russia also has large investments in the oil and gas sector in Macedonia.

As for Greece, the two countries have strong historical ties and common interests which include energy cooperation, as witnessed by Greece's heavy dependency on Russian natural gas. Greece is occasionally inclined to play its "Russian card" even though that does not fundamentally change Greek foreign policy. Generally speaking, a great many Europeans tend to see Greece as decidedly "pro-Russian" whereas, interestingly, Moscovites and their leader are most inclined to regard and dismiss Greece as "not enough pro-Russian" (Dokos 2012).

Fourth and lastly, there is a desire in Russia's broader Euro-Asian geopolitical conception of world politics to form a broad continental bloc against the western Atlantic powers by utilising the vast demographic and strategic potential of the vast Eurasian land mass. De Vivo (2013) reports that Alexander Dugin, a Russian political scientist close to the Kremlin, recommends Russia adopt a multi-dimensional foreign policy weaving together close relations with the EU and China plus regional powers like Iran and Turkey. In terms of the Balkans, the preferred outcome for Moscow is that the Balkan countries do not join NATO; or as Nartov states, "to spoil plans of the Atlantists to impose solutions in the realm of security" (Nartov et al. 2007). Although Russia is specifically opposed to countries of the former USSR joining NATO or the EU, Russia does not have that much to lure the Balkan countries away from the West's grasp.

Clearly, Russia would prefer there not be any NATO or EU enlargements whatsoever. Nevertheless, realism and pragmatism necessitate the possibility for countries to join the EU without necessarily becoming either critical or hostile of Russia, as illustrated and confirmed by the examples of Slovenia, Greece and Cyprus (Cadier 2013). Nonetheless, anything but resigned to forfeiting the Balkans, Russia has remained active in the face of EU plans for expansion eastward. Giving out credits is one of Moscow's favourite "carrots". Serbia is expected to receive credits to the tune of 800 million USD. Russo-Greek military-technical cooperation

is another example, where Russia agreed to supply Greece with 420 armoured personnel carriers (Smith 2008). What makes the latter especially interesting, of course, is Greece's membership in NATO. Putin's statement during his visit to Athens in December of 2007, for example, voiced strong criticism of the US and the EU. Ultimately, for the Balkan countries to be part of the EU and NATO in no way prevents Russia from being an essential power-broker (Mangott 1999). Likewise, Russian commanders, admirals and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev have repeatedly pledged that the Russian navy would establish a permanent presence in the Mediterranean, thereby outflanking the Balkans and assuring some visible level of competition and balancing with the US, the EU, and Turkey (Smith 2008).

Upon closer reflection the greatest threat to Russia's enduring long-term interests in the Balkans is posed by the diversification of energy supplies from east to west, which, if realised, could seriously undermine Russia's economic recovery, growth and influence. When Bulgaria and Greece voted against building of the oil pipeline 'Burgas-Alexandropolis' this impacted negatively on Russian economic planning. Completion of the Nabucco project could have the same effect. Similarly, the 'South Stream' gas pipeline centering on Bulgaria and Serbia, much as tensions in the Ukraine, also increase the stakes for Russia. For Kudryashova (2012), there are also strains in relations between Moscow and Brussels over the status of Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina which could easily fuel disputes between Russia and the EU, or between Russia and Turkey. Any such imminent crisis in neighbourhood relations must be regarded as unwelcome and as untimely for Russia if the country's economy fails to diversify away from its undue dependency on the one sector of energy.

For the moment, the balance sheet on Russia's interests in the Balkans have had mixed results at best. A key source of the feared disruptions comes less from a cautious and divided EU or from a Turkey preoccupied with a destabilised Arab Middle East than from the Balkan regimes themselves. Any one of them might decide on a major foreign policy reorientation, or be pressured to distance itself away from Moscow, as happened in Serbia when former President Boris Tadic delayed signing a strategic partnership with Russia (Upitnik 2012), and which might be happening with Bulgaria's announced suspension of the 'South Stream' pipeline.

7 Conclusions

How do the Balkan states fare in being at the center of the regional rebalancing of power and in offsetting the pressures coming from the direction of Brussels, Moscow and Ankara? One of the most important observations is that stable peace in the Balkans is not yet secure, with strides toward achieving democracy and security governed by the interests of external intervening forces (Kentrotis 2010) and compounded by persistent ethnic tensions, unsettled inter-state issues and weak state-society structures at home. To wit: Bosnia-Herzegovina's viability remains

open to question, thus freezing Bosnia's progress toward joining the EU. In Albania, the socio-economic situation is perhaps the worst in Europe, which also makes its EU membership prospects difficult. As for Serbia, the crucial development to watch out for is the deepening tension caused by that country's desire to join the EU but also to deepen its relations with Russia. Kosovo has a good chance for EU membership since its territory is already under EU protection; but whether Kosovo Serbs will accept increasing influence from Pristina remains to be seen. Cameron (2006) and Kudryashova (2012) believe that Macedonia, just like Bosnia, faces a risk of inter-ethnic conflict, while Greece is effectively blocking Macedonia's membership due to the dispute over the name "Macedonia".

Suffering from structural economic, social and political defects, the Balkans remain the poorest and the poorest performing region on the European continent, with huge current account deficits, high unemployment rates, and a weak economic infrastructure. The rule of law lacks effective enforcement and no pan-Balkan initiative for regional unity has yet emerged. Thus, the Balkans remain mired today in an economic backwardness transcending borders and threatening the stability of the entire region.

As for summing up great power configurations, Russia will remain a significant factor in the international relations of the Balkans. Irrespective of EU policy in the Balkans, Russia will seek to increase the supply of Russian energy to the EU via Balkans. While it is unlikely that Russia will be able to counter-balance Atlanticism, it certainly regards a weakening of Western dominant authority as desirable (Blank 2013). In particular, as the persuasive powers of the EU and of the US weaken, Russia is considering the possibility of a diplomatic offensive to persuade the countries of the Balkan region to join the Customs Union between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan (De Vivo 2013).

Either way, the opportunities for Russia to exploit Atlantic weaknesses certainly exist. But whether Russia will seize these openings depends on its larger and more encompassing relationship with the West. With the current Ukrainian crisis straining this relationship, Charap believes Moscow will more boldly and aggressively begin to fill the role of spoiler on any number of topics that matter to Washington and Brussels (Charap 2014). The Balkans seem tailor-made for this ongoing balancing process.

Turkey hopes that its role as a Balkan regional power can suffice to sustain the dynamics of its impressive economic development. Although Ankara has recently clashed with the EU over its record on civil liberties, justice and rule of law, attempts continue to find satisfactory accommodation through 'win-win' solutions. Nevertheless, suspicions are still aroused among some EU policymakers by Turkey's increased involvement in the Balkans. This could become a more important issue if the regional balance tilts in Ankara's favour as the EU continues to suffer from internal crises while Turkey becomes a more attractive partner for Balkan states. Albania is one such state which is getting little attention by the EU, and has thus turned to Turkey for support.

Consequently, Turkey stands a good chance of using the Balkans as a bargaining chip in its dealings with the EU, such as over its own EU accession process. By

partnering with the Balkan countries and sanctioning their joining the EU, Turkey can conceivably renew its application for membership, confident of these countries' full diplomatic support. Taking a somewhat different tack, Turkish disappointment with the EU means that it is up to the latter organization and its constituent members to cooperate with Turkey and to coordinate their Balkan policies with those of Turkey. Similarly, in terms of the balance of power dynamic, the Turkish relationship with Serbia is being built as one stratagem for neutralising or containing Russia while still preserving a constructive relationship with this neighboring Eurasian great power (Aras 2012).

EU planners realise that the future of the Eurozone must heavily impact on the Balkan states, individually and as a regional grouping. For De Vivo (2013), this could already be felt in 2009, when the Balkan countries suffered a GDP contraction of 5.2 %. Given Turkish and Russian resurgence, one cannot but wonder to what extent the EU will become disengaged from the region, or at worst 'export its instability' (Blank 2013). It is paramount for the Europeans to promote stabilisation through integration, adopted in the late 1990s in the form of both military and civilian missions. But Brussels needs to identify new sources of interaction to make the enlargement process more substantial. In all likelihood Brussels will invest its full efforts in finding these new sources, and will keep trying until it fails. As Paddy Ashdown stated, "the EU will either succeed in absorbing this region successively into its own structures or risk importing instability in various forms, including through uncontrolled migration and illegal trafficking" (Cameron 2006). However, in order to gain the necessary influence, Guérot (2012) is convinced the EU member states must act together, assuming it is in the interest of other powerful actors such as Russia, and possibly Turkey, to weaken or restrain Europe.

We can safely conclude that the Balkans remain a prime target area of geopolitical contest between powerful actors. However, it is unlikely that any of the actors discussed in this essay wish to be embroiled in a costly war, so that economic and political instruments become the balancing mechanisms of choice. Also deserving emphasis is that what may seem on the surface to be purely economic or business interests really derive from geopolitical calculations that have an attendant effect as well on economic-political affairs (Blank 2013).

Turkey is embracing regional engagement while maintaining a "zero problems with neighbours" policy. Russia seeks to be looked upon once again as a truly great and global power. The EU is testing its Europeanisation model. Whatever their distinctive foreign policy calculations and style of statecraft, all three great powers are expected to become increasingly involved in the Balkans: Turkey and Russia because they confidently feel they have the capability to do so; the EU, because it has already given notice and raised its stakes in the Balkans.

In this model for tripartite balancing, rapprochement between Russia and Turkey (even a 'strategic partnership') indicates there should be no major discord between the two over the Balkans. In Turkey–EU relations, there has been a slight improvement due to respect for Turkey's impressive economic growth and the change of government in France less hostile to Turkey's claim to closer association. Such confidence-building is countered, however, by President Erdogan's heavy-

handedness since the start of this decade in handling domestic problems, making him and Turkey unpopular in certain EU and European circles. This aside, and apart from suspended membership negotiations, the two actors are largely in agreement with regard to the Balkans, especially since the EU is already busy with Ukraine and hardly wishes to open a new front with Turkey.

Therefore, it is EU–Russia relations which have deteriorated most of late due to the Eurocrisis, Ukraine's future, and Russia's economic challenges. Consider the European Commission's investigation against Russian state-owned energy giant Gazprom or Russia's takeover of the International Monetary Fund's role in its spheres of interest. This indicates that Russia remains a wild card in the Balkans and a potential spoiler if the costs of spoiling are not too high. Even though the EU considers the Balkans its own backyard, we can conclude that Turkey and Russia have significant political leverage that can be used if their direct relations with the EU deteriorate; and for this reason one ought to be sceptical that the EU will be increasingly able to act on its own in the Balkans.

On a theoretical plane, this research implicitly tests whether we can validate the realist premise that zero-sum interaction is a defining feature of EU–Turkey–Russia relations. Also, whether great powers can maintain peace in conflict-prone regions. This chapter on Balkan balancing tests these hypotheses by looking at how these three distinctive major powers see and define their national strategies as either congruent or conflictual. It is definitely the case that all three actors—the EU, Russia and Turkey—have a common minimalist goal in the Balkans of peace and stability. Ostensibly, peace and stability are liberal and enlightened principles. But as realists caution, the road to fulfilling these goals is paved with competition and not only noble, professed intentions.

Competition is not necessarily illiberal, or predetermined. Yet certain characteristics of the zero-sum paradigm do exist. We can see this in Russia's determined attitude to limit Western expansion (EU, NATO) into what it regards as its rightful sphere of influence; in the EU's stance that Turkey is too large and too Muslim for its becoming an accepted part of Europe. The realist school may tend to dismiss permanent peace yet does not exclude pragmatic cooperation among nations. Notwithstanding the failure of the EU to influence Russia not to annex the Crimea, and its embarrassing rejection of Turkey's application for EU accession, pragmatism continues to provide the foundation for positive, non-belligerent relations between rival actors who, above and beyond conflicting interests, can see the benefits in constructive engagement.

If we apply prospect theory to possible Balkan futures and accept that decision makers "react differently to gains and losses" and that "losses (no matter how small) hurt more than gains (no matter how large) gratify" (Taliaferro 2004), then the true test of Balkan peace will be when one of the three great powers overlooking the region begins to suffer concrete losses. So far, Turkey has mostly benefitted from its relations with the EU, and it has no policies which might conflict directly with the EU's own regional goals. Russia, on the other hand, has established certain policy "red lines" in the Balkans which, if crossed, will entail, if nothing else, a loss of face. This rule of thumb applies to a situation where the entire Balkan region

ends up defying Moscow's cautionary warnings and opts to join the EU, NATO or both organizations.

Losing the Balkans to the EU and NATO is arguably more detrimental to Moscow than it is to Ankara. Turkey might possibly even gain a foothold in the EU through the back door by having the Balkans as new, voting member states predisposed to lobbying for its inclusion as well. Conversely, Turkey, frustrated and alienated in relations with the EU, could shift its emphasis to perceived losses, plunging its troubled relationship with the EU still further. Whereas Russia emerges as a loser from the EU's defiant incorporation of the Balkans—without any tangible or symbolic gains to speak of—inclining Moscow to accept the risk of gambling for larger stakes in seeking to redress the imbalance (Taliaferro 2004, p. 32).

For the moment, the three great powers analysed in this chapter have no reason to sacrifice their pragmatic relations with each other over the Balkans. By the same logic of balancing politics, however, the indications are that none of the three leading actors would miss an opportunity to maximise its future standing in the region, especially if their three-sided relationship were to unravel over issues beyond the contested Balkans.

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Competing Hegemons: EU and Russian Power Projection in the South Caucasus

Scott Nicholas Romaniuk

Abstract This chapter analyzes the European Union (EU) and Russian approaches to the "Common Neighbourhood," and considers key factors in their respective power projection in the South Caucasus. It examines elements that specifically drive Armenia closer to the EU and Russia's efforts to balance this through its own external governance. In doing so, it looks at a range of "carrots" and "sticks" that both the EU and Russia, as geopolitical actors, employ to gain traction into this shared space. A theoretical framework of geopolitical strategies is employed to establish the context in which both the EU and Russia operate with respect to the South Caucasus, and establishes the basis for understanding how both actors respond to one another with the aim of dominating the region. Russia's geostrategic posture is better suited to secure a concrete zone of influence within the region despite protracted efforts by the EU to establish its influence over the South Caucasus.

1 Introduction

A common characteristic of states is their establishment and implementation of foreign policy agendas. International development, cooperation, migration, security, and trade policy are fundamental tasks integrated into all aspects of states' foreign policies. In its origins, the state was principally a security arrangement.[1] This has not changed.

Immense resources are often invested in efforts to maintain powerful armed forces, sophisticated intelligence services, civil and emergency defense systems,

[1] B.O. Fordham, "Economic Interests, Party, and Ideology in Early Cold War Era US Foreign Policy," *International Organization*, Vol. 52, Issue 2 (1998); for a critique of Soviet foreign policy and the danger of acting on interpretations of a state's foreign policy intentions, see, R. K. Herrmann, "American Perceptions of Soviet Foreign Policy: Reconsidering Three Competing Perspectives," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 6, Issue, 3 (1985): 375–411.

For an overview, see, J.W. Legro and A. Moravcsik, "Is Anybody Still a Realist?," *International Security*, Vol. 24, Issue 2 (1999): 5–55.

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external attack and internal subversion countermeasures, and diplomacy with the aim of preserving the state. As states act on their own unique foreign policy agendas (typically influenced by equally unique and complex national goals and political ideologies), the outlines of competition crystallize. Competition is usually brought about through numerous distinctions between conceptualizations of security for one state versus security for another. Despite the existence of reasonable understandings of national security, few, if any, are universally applicable. Resultant clashes lead to security dilemmas, which remain defining features of international relations today.[2]

The Cold War portrays how variation in foreign policy agendas served to generate a diversity of international (including violent and armed) conflict. The foreign policy of the United States (US) and its friends and allies focused primarily on the containment of the Soviet Union and Communism. Britain based much of its foreign policy on the threat of Communism and the impact of the Soviet Union as the world's new great power.[3] Charles de Gaulle fashioned French foreign policy so as to oppose exclusive leadership of the Western Alliance by the US and to pursue French independence, influence, and stature.[4] Foreign policy objectives of the Soviet Union were extensive, inconsistent, dependent upon Moscow's expansion and constriction of political contacts, and fluctuated as changes in leadership occurred.[5]

The break-up of the Soviet Union into multiple states precipitated considerable shifts in foreign policy agendas. After 1991, states were forced to contend with new challenges as the "world of pro-US and pro-Soviet alliances broke down" and regional powerbrokers tested prospects for peace and reconciliation.[6] Climate change, international (nuclear) terrorism, and economic and budgetary problems beset the US, European countries, the new Russian nation, and the Soviet successor states. The biggest change was the shift from bipolarity to multipolarity. Eventually, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—the so-called BRICS nations—and a united Europe competed against a dominant US and engaged in new modes of regional and interregional rivalry.

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[2] J. Jackson-Preece, "Security in International Relations," IR3 140, 2790140—Undergraduate Study in Economics, Management, Finance, and the Social Sciences, University of London (2011): 17. Available at: http://www.londoninternational.ac.uk/sites/default/files/programme_resources/lse/lse_pdf/subject_guides/ir3140_ch1-3.pdf

[3] A. Deighton, "Britain and the Cold War, 1945-1955," in *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, eds. Melvin Leffler and Arne Westad (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010): 112.

[4] P. H. Gordon, "French Security Policy After the Cold War: Continuity, Change, and Implications for the United States," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007): 3. Available at: http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2007/R4229.pdf.

H. Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighbourhood: Competition and Conflict with the EU," Natolin Research Papers. (Brugge, Belgium, College of Europe Natolin Campus, 2011): 5. Available at: http://www.coleurope.eu/file/content/studyprogrammes/eais/. . ./adomeit.pdf.

[5] Soviet foreign policy can be categorized by year and should take into account the various political, financial, economic, military/security, and regional focuses of Soviet leadership.

[6] "Post-Cold War Foreign Policy." Available at: https://www.boundless.com/political-science/foreign-policy/history-of-american-foreign-policy/post-cold-war-foreign-policy/.

Russia's "Near Abroad" became an important part of the new strategic visions and external policies of the European Union (EU) and Russia. The competitive friction between the EU and Russia in the region has, since the collapse of Soviet Communism, become a high-stakes political power game and fuelled the resurgence of a nineteenth century "Great Game." Specifically within the Caucasus, questions presiding over the establishment of zones of influence alongside political and economic control have taken a leading position in the ongoing debate over the reorganization of the European "Common Neighbourhood" and the geopolitical positions of both the EU and Russia. Shunning the term "Common Neighbourhood," Russia has pursued many opportunities in what it refers to as the "regions adjacent to the EU and Russian borders" or the expanse comprised of the former Republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), known collectively as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)—the "CIS Area" or simply Russia's "Near Abroad."[7] Russia has not been reticent, especially in the past ten years, about its intentions to defend this territory.

Fixed notions of the EU and Russia's geopolitical positions within Europe are giving way to newer and broader perceptions about the wider European space so as to replace the geostrategic dominance of one regional power with another. Some states have also managed to escape falling under the influence of the EU and Russia. Both actors have ushered in a zero sum-game that translates into the gain of one actor at the expense of another. Since 2003, the EU has sought to produce a "ring of friends[8] surrounding the Union and its closest European neighbours, from Morocco to Russia and the Black Sea," through the use of conditionality and institutional reform with the ultimate aim of creating or achieving stability on the European periphery.[9] Russia has established that democratization, institutional development and liberalization, and the exploitation of economic resources and opportunities by the EU by means of its ambitious external governance policies runs headlong into its own interests within a sphere overlapping its own regions of interest. The region dealt with in this chapter is seen as one of the most strategically valuable. It directly concerns the states of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.

In this chapter, I pursue the themes of hegemonic competition, power rivalry, and security in the "Common Neighbourhood" by examining key factors in EU and

[7] H. Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighbourhood: Competition and Conflict with the EU," Natolin Research Papers. (Brugge, Belgium, College of Europe Natolin Campus, 2011): 5. Available at: www.coleurope.eu/file/content/studyprogrammes/eais/. . ./adomeit.pdf.

[8] The term refers to the EU's formulation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The ENP moves beyond the pre-existing framework of close relations with Mediterranean countries (i.e., the Barcelona Process, which was launched in 1995).

[9] R. Prodi, "A Wider Europe—A Proximity Policy as the Key to Stability," SPEECH/02/619—Sixth ECSA-World Conference, Jean Monet Project, "Peace, Security and Stability International Dialogue and the Role of the EU." (Brussels, Belgium, December 5–6, 2002). Available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/02/619.

Russian approaches to power projection in the South Caucasus.[10] I conduct a qualitative analysis using a longitudinal perspective to examine key factors that drive Armenia closer to the EU and Russia's efforts to balance this through its external governance. Both the EU and Russia, as geopolitical actors, utilize a range of "carrots" and "sticks" to gain traction into this shared space. I employ a theoretical framework of geopolitical strategies to establish the context in which both the EU and Russia operate with respect to the South Caucasus and form the basis for understanding how both actors—as competing hegemons—respond to one another in their respective attempts to exert their dominance in the region. I argue that despite protracted efforts by the EU to establish its influence in the South Caucasus more generally, Russia's geostrategic posture is better suited to secure a concrete zone of influence over the region.

2 Theoretical Framework

Prior to assessing EU and Russian power projection in the South Caucasus, I first consider the theoretical framework of the study, namely (offensive) realism. Since this chapter is not primarily a theoretical discussion, but rather the application of a theory to explain the behavior of states in a contested region, only the basic aspects of the theory, its core assumptions, and hypotheses are introduced.[11]

In the Scientific Research Program of realism, five core assumptions can be determined, which feature prominently within the scientific discourse. These are namely, that (1) the central question of realism is the cause of war and the conditions leading to peace; (2) the structure of the international system is the necessary, but not always the sufficient explanation for the behavior of states; (3) the focus rests on geographically based groups, or units, as the central actors in the international system; (4) these are rational in their behavior and guided by the logic of national interest; and (5) the nation-state can be conceptualized as a unitary actor, meaning different domestic groups are neglected.[12] Since the national interest of the state (as the primary actor within an anarchic system) is survival, states aim at building capabilities to defend themselves against other states, and to

[10] The term South Caucasus here refers specifically to the states of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. It also includes Adzharia, Nakhichevan, and the disputed regions of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Nagorno-Karabkh. It does not refer to the adjacent regions of Turkey or Iran, or territory within the Russian Federation.

[11] For an overview, see, J. W. Legro and A. Moravcsik, "Is Anybody Still a Realist?," *International Security*, Vol. 24, Issue 2 (1999): 5–55; L. Feng and Z. Ruizhuang, "The Typologies of Realism," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 1, Issue 1 (2006): 109–134.

[12] O. R. Holsti, *Theories of International Relations and Foreign Policy: Realism and its Challengers*, in C. W. Kegley, Controversies in International Relations Theory: Realism and the Neoliberal Challenge (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 1995): 35–65.

maintain the general balance of power that holds the system together[13]—in other words, realists live in a zero-sum world. Along these lines, offensive realists argue that the ultimate security is obtained once a state has the most power in the system with other states orbiting around it like satellites, and thus becoming the hegemonic power.[14]

In this context it becomes evident that I perceive the EU to behave as a "state-like" actor, which is of course a highly contested view.[15] As former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger famously remarked, "Who do I call if I want to call Europe"?[16] It is still evident that in many issues, the EU does not act like a unitary actor. However, in the South Caucasus, as I show, there is a coherent EU foreign policy aimed at expanding the EUs' sphere of influence. Therefore, for analytical purpose, I consider the EU as a "state-like unit," following the logic of national interest defined as obtaining power in order to survive.

The working hypothesis of this chapter is that both the EU and Russia act according to the offensive neorealist logic. They are expected to strive to expanding their power capabilities, to act as regional hegemonic powers in the South Caucasus, countering the other's force, and finally tilting the balance of power in their respective favor. Since natural resources, size of population, and size of country are critical factors concerning the material capabilities of the state (both the EU and Russia in this case), it is expected that both have a vital interest in preventing the other from entering their neighbourhood.

3 Russia's "Special" Sphere

Russia's "Near Abroad," a post-Communist term that refers to the territory extending beyond the Russian Federation and overlies the "Common Neighbourhood," is comprised of 14 former Soviet republics of the former Soviet

[13] H. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations (5th Edition)*. (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978); J. J. Mearscheimer, "Structural Realism," in T. Dunne, M. Kurki, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007): 71–89.

[14] J. J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. (New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001); J. J. Mearscheimer, "Structural Realism," in T. Dunne, M. Kurki, and S. Smith (eds.), *International Theories: Discipline and Diversity*. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007): 71–89; Power is here distinguished in its manifest variant, as military capabilities, and latent one, which are sources that can be mobilized for military purposes, such as the size of the country, size of its population, and the wealth of the nation.

[15] Formulating part of the discourse on the nature of the EU in international political and in the field of international relations, see, K. Smith, "The European Union: A Distinctive Actor in International Relations," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. 9, Issue 2 (2003): 103–113; B. Demirtaş-Coşkun, "The EU's New Position in the International Order: From Regional to Global Power?," *Perceptions*, (Spring 2006): 49–75; N. Wright, "The European Union: What Kind of International Actor?," *Political Perspectives*, Vol. 5, Issue 2 (2011): 8–32.

[16] J. Meek, "What is Europe?," *The Guardian*. (London, UK, 2012). Available at: www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/dec/17/eu.turkey1

Union.[17] It is seen as a "special" area of interest by the Russian government and over which Russia attests that it retains a distinct responsibility.[18] Even within a few years after the Soviet Union fell, mention was made of a "Pax Russica" and a Russian "Monroe Doctrine" that underscored the former Soviet Republics as an area of special security interest for Moscow:

> The territory of the former USSR [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics] is a sphere of specific vitally important Russian interests. This is based on a number of objective factors: the retained economic interdependence of states; the close scientific and cultural ties; a direct dependence of the security of Russia on the situation in the contiguous regions of the former USSR; the moral and political responsibility of Russia for the fate of the Russian speaking minorities; the exclusive role of Russia in curtailing the distribution of the military arsenals of the former USSR (including nuclear weapons and their delivery systems); the natural status of Russia as the axis of military political stability in continental Eurasia.[19]

The term "Near Abroad" was first used by Russia in its "accounts of its relations with the other former republics of the Soviet Union, implying the existence of a special and unequal relationship."[20] (Fig. 1). Russia is said to dominate the "Near Abroad," yet many flashpoints of conflict exist that challenges the idea that Russia is the region's single dominating authority.[21] As will also be seen, Russia is not the only actor projecting its influence in the region, and it cannot be claimed that Russia's power is at any rate uncontested. A notable truism here can be identified. Competition between states with their own specially tailored foreign policy goals transcends the Cold War and post-Cold War periods, and thus demonstrates the continuity of great power politics.

In 1989, the Soviet census showed that approximately 25 million ethnic Russians were living in the Soviet republics, excluding Russia.[22] This represented 17 % of the entire ethnic Russian population in the Soviet Union and was compounded by a further 11 million Russian-speaking peoples living beyond the Russian Republic. The total number of "Russians" living in what is seen as Russia's "Near Abroad"

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[17] G. P. Harstedt and K. M. Knickrehm, *International Politics in a Changing World*. (London, UK and New York, NY: Pearson Higher Education, 2003).

[18] H. Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighbourhood: Competition and Conflict with the EU," Natolin Research Papers. (Brugge, Belgium, College of Europe Natolin Campus, 2011). Available at: www.coleurope.eu/file/content/studyprogrammes/eais/. . ./adomeit.pdf.

[19] M. Smith, *Pax Russica: Russia's Monroe Doctrine*. (London, UK: The Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, Smith 1993): 10.

[20] G. P. Harstedt and K. M. Knickrehm, *International Politics in a Changing World*. (London, UK and New York, NY: Pearson Higher Education, 2003): 323.

[21] Since the region's transition from Communism, the Caucasus has been plagued three main ethno-territorial conflicts that have persisted over approximately the past two decades: (1) the Armenian-Azerbaijani in Karabakh, (2) Chechnya and the North Caucasus, and (3) that of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Cornell and Starr, 2006).

[22] O. Cara, "Black Sea and Baltic Sea Regions: Confluences, Influences, and Crosscurrents in the Modern and Contemporary Ages," The Second International Conference on Nordic and Baltic Studies of the Romanian Association for Baltic and Nordic Studies (ARSBN), May 20–22, 2011.

Fig. 1 The "Near Abroad". Source: G. P. Harstedt and K. M. Knickrehm, *International Politics in a Changing World*. (London, UK and New York, NY: Pearson Higher Education, 2003)

stands at roughly 40 million[23]—about 8 % of the EU's total population and 28 % of Russia's total population in 2011.[24]

Ethnic dimension of Russians and Russian-speaking peoples in these territories alone heavily substantiates Russia's responsibility over its peripheral regions. Numerous complex policy problems, nonetheless, exist throughout these states adding critical dimensions that, in effect, contradict or entirely abjure Russia's fundamental claim to or influence over the "Near Abroad." While many ethnic Russians represent a relatively elevated figure of the total population, few actually speak Russian. Since many Russian's have lived in the regions for extended periods of time, they may be seen as "natives" of those states and not intrinsically "Russian." It is therefore reasonable to claim that they might not easily be used by Moscow with the view of leveraging Russian power and projecting it abroad.[25]

The "unwanted legacy" of ethnic Russians living on the Russian rim extends over the Caucasus and deep into Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.[26] Russia's attention to these states has principally been drawn by ethnic conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, their large oil reserves, and their competing political

[23] G. P. Harstedt and K. M. Knickrehm, *International Politics in a Changing World*. (London, UK and New York, NY: Pearson Higher Education, 2003): 328.

[24] The World Bank, (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2011). Available at: http://data.worldbank.org/.

[25] G. P. Harstedt and K. M. Knickrehm, *International Politics in a Changing World*. (London, UK and New York, NY: Pearson Higher Education, 2003): 328.

[26] Russia is historically seen as a power that colonized lands adjacent to its borders, unlike Britain and France, which colonized lands overseas. In addition to the three main states in the South Caucasus there are a number of other territories that are not sovereign states. They include, for example, Chechnya, Dagestan, Kalmykia, Karachai-Cherkassia, and North Ossetia.

values. Political corruption, internal strife, and socio-economic stratification complicate this rich mixture. Indeed, little effort was needed on Russia's part in order to pull Armenia into its sphere of influence by incorporating it into the Russia-dominated CIS. Challenges, though, persisted in executing its policy successfully as regards Georgia and Azerbaijan.

4 Competition in the "Common Neighbourhood"

The 2004 and 2007 rounds of expansion with membership inclusion of the so-called EU "newcomers" extended the EU's borders to the Black Sea. Its expansion brought to light new and daunting questions of the geopolitical realties of a region on the threshold of the EU's borders on which the ENP—a single policy introduced towards all of its neighbours—originally focused.[27] As the EU widened, it began to share a frontier with states that straddled the spheres of interest of both the EU and Russia. These regions became known collectively as the "Common Neighbourhood"—they include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, and Georgia (Fig. 2). Within the framework of the ENP, they composed the Eastern Partnership Group (EaP)—a core group within EU foreign policy—and described as both a historical and critical space in Russia's backyard.

The EU confronted the uncertainties of security and insecurity of a handful of "groups"[28] of states through the ENP, by extending "the benefits of economic and political cooperation to [its] neighbours in the East while tackling political problems there."[29] As the primary means through which the EU engages the countries in the "Common Neighbourhood," the ENP establishes an ever-evolving venue for countries to make critical reforms as time moves on, and "align their policies and legislation with the EU with the unspoken assumption that this will help their future membership prospects."[30]

[27] European Commission (EC), Communication from the Commission, "European Neighbourhood Policy," Strategy Paper. (Brussels, Belgium, 2004). Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/strategy/strategy_paper_en.pdf.

[28] The ENP includes six groups: (1) EU Member States, (2) Current Enlargement Agenda, (3) ENP East Group (EaP), (4) Other ENPI (Partnership Initiative) States, (5) ENP South Group Union of the Mediterranean (UfM), and (6) Other UfM States.

[29] European Security Strategy, "A Secure Europe in a Better World." (Brussels, Belgium, 2003). Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf. Commission of the European Communities, *Wider Europe—A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*. Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. (Brussels, Belgium, 2003). Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf.

[30] O. Prystayko, "EU-Russia Common Neighbourhood," EU-Russia Center (EU-RC), (Brussels, Belgium, 2008): 56. Available at: http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=99781.

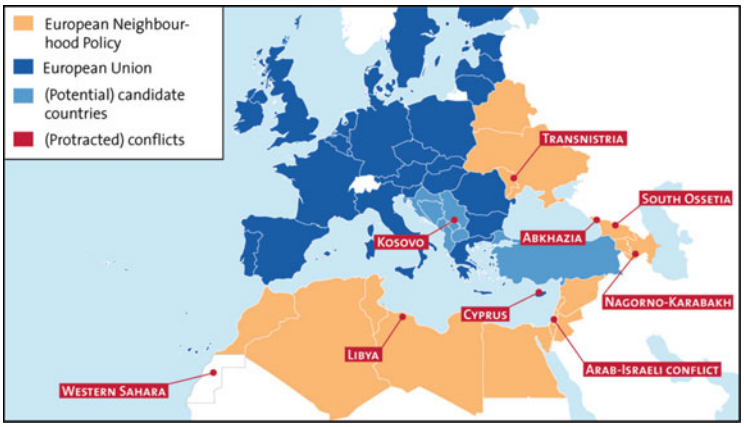

Fig. 2 The "European Neighbourhood" with Protracted Conflicts. Source: Center for Security Studies (CSS), "The European Neighbourhood," CSS Analysis in Security Studies Policy No. 96. (ETH Zurich, Switzerland, 2012). Available at: http://www.sta.ethz.ch/CSS-Analysis-in-Security-Policy/CSS-Analysis-in-Security-Policy-Archive/No.-96-EU-Foreign-Policy-Still-in-the-Making-June-2011

Unlike Russia, which does not have a single foreign policy toward countries in the "Common Neighbourhood," the EU's ENP instrument offers country-specific action plans (APs)[31] to assist with each state attracted to prospects of joining the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) at any point it the future. Focusing on such aspects of societal development as political rights and civil society follows this. These two indicators suggest that the EU has had a poor impact on the region since the APs were first put into place. As of 2007, new procedures of financing contained within the Neighbourhood Instrument combined with the Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) and *Mesures d'accompagnement financières et techniques*—the main financial instrument of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership (MEDA) programs to support priority sectors of democracy.[32]

Figures 3 and 4 show a lack of performance in the aforementioned areas. Azerbaijan reveals no change over time in its political rights rating while Georgia improved only slightly and Armenia appears to have regressed significantly. Over time, neither Azerbaijan nor Armenia have hinted at any advancement in their civil society sectors while Georgia fluctuated slightly; but fails to demonstrate any positive performance by and large. Nonetheless, given that the ENP was originally modeled on the enlargement process—that is "its raison d'être is expansion—its

[31] Action plans were agreed upon by the EU and the EU neighbour states for which the plans were tailored in 2005 and 2006, and were in effect for 3 or 5 years.

[32] D. Irrera, "Enlarging the Ring of Friends: Lessons from the European Neighbourhood Policy in the Southern Caucasus," Paper prepared for the ECPR—Standing Group on the European Union, Fourth Pan Conference on EU Politics. (Riga, Latvia: University of Latvia, September 27–28, 2008): 5. Available at: http://www.jhubc.it/ecpr-riga/virtualpaperroom/078.pdf.

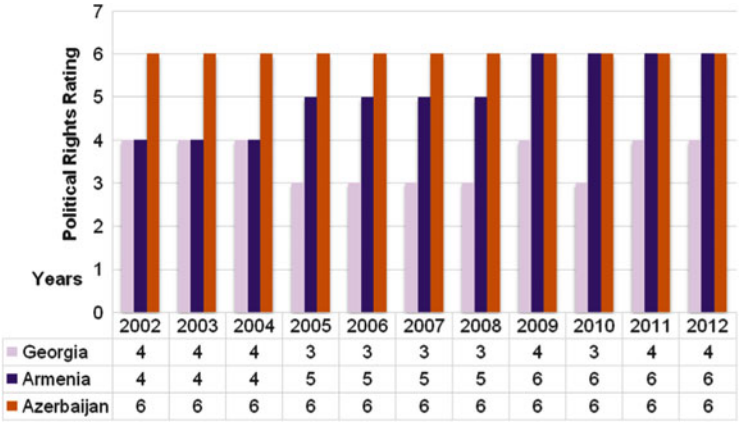

Fig. 3 Political Rights Rating for the South Caucasus—Part of the ENP East Group (EaP), 2002–2012. Source: Freedomhouse.org, "Country Ratings and Status, FIW 1973–2012." (Washington, DC and New York, NY: 2012). Available at: http://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world 7 = Low, 1 = High

path dependency is strong, and Russia's behavior has adapted accordingly.[33] Even without a single foreign policy aimed at the region, Moscow has not received the ENP as a discreet citation to the EU's reform stimulus or regional ambitions.

Russia counteracted EU integration policy in the region by "integrative constructs of its own, ranging from the Russia-Belarus constitutional 'Union' via the Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC) to the military-political Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)."[34] Poisoning EU-Russia relations directly, implementation of the ENP has had a number of other side effects that have soured ENP-country relations with Russia. Georgia showed its desire to cozy up to the EU with the view of enjoying the full benefits of membership early, and joined the ENP framework in June 2004.[35] Armenia and Azerbaijan expressed their eagerness to move towards the EU constellation as well and formally joined the ENP framework in 2004 with relations regulated according to the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). Georgia has adamantly pressed for NATO membership in the

[33] J. Kelley, "New Wine in Old Wineskins: Promoting Political Reforms through the New European Neighbourhood Policy," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 44, Issue 1 (2006): 31. Available at: http://studium.unict.it/dokeos/2011/courses/1001283C0/document/kelley_JCMS_2006.pdf.

[34] H. Adomeit, "Russia and its Near Neighbourhood: Competition and Conflict with the EU," Natolin Research Papers. (Brugge, Belgium, College of Europe Natolin Campus, 2011): 6. Available at: www.coleurope.eu/sites/default/files/research-paper/adomeit_0.pdf.

[35] Eurasia Partnership Foundation, "Recommendations on Georgia's Action Plan for the European Neighbourhood Policy." (Tbilisi, Georgia, August 24, 2005). Available at: http://www.epfound.ge/files/eng-enp-action-plan-ngo-recomm_ixj-3ptqy_1.pdf.

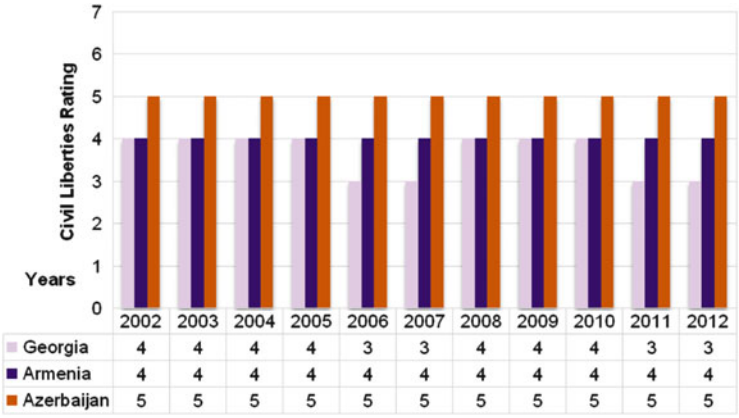

Fig. 4 Civil Liberties Rating for the South Caucasus—Part of the ENP East Group (EaP), 2002–2012. Source: Freedomhouse.org, "Country Ratings and Status, FIW 1973–2012." (Washington, DC and New York, NY: 2012). Available at: http://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world. 7 = Low, 1 = High

past but has also struggled to resist Russian efforts to preserve its claim of responsibility over it.

All of the ENP-target countries face quite a broad array of heavy challenges in meeting the criteria set by the EU. Six are identifiable as the most prevalent. They include: (1) lack of commitment by national governments, (2) complexity of bureaucratic procedures, (3) inadequate performance with respect to the use of external assistance, (4) lack of formality in reporting progress to the EU, (5) improper assessment of national weaknesses and reasons for lack of improvement, (6) and poor development of civil society within the processes of AP implementation.[36] To add an additional reason to those noted; Russian involvement in the relations of the countries with the EU has played a decisive role.

Russia's combination of pressure and force reached its apogee during the previous decade. During the 1990s, a political coup took place in Azerbaijan that supplanted the anti-Russian regime and instilled a pro-Russian government. Since then, Moscow has been involved in Ukraine's 2004 national elections, the use of force in the Russo-Georgian war of 2008, and the recent Crimean crisis that began in February 2014 and lasted for roughly 3 weeks. These events call attention to Russia's efforts in maintaining and making its presence felt in the "Common Neighbourhood." The absence of these events would have made the EU's path to influence in the region an easier task but not necessary a foregone conclusion. Instead, they served as direct impediments to the EU's efforts in displacing Russia's attempts to establish dominance in the South Caucasus in addition to other parts of the former-Soviet space.

[36] O. Prystayko, "EU-Russia Common Neighbourhood," EU-Russia Center (EU-RC), (Brussels, Belgium, 2008): 58. Available at: http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=99781.

5 European Geopolitics and Geopolitical Actors

A wide range of instruments is at the disposal of the EU and Russian governments to achieve their aims in the clash zones. Nicu Popescu and Andrew Wilson provide a thorough overview of both states as dueling blocs in the "Common Neighbourhood." Table 1 presents a few tools employed to achieve their foreign policy goals.

The EU stands as a "project" predicated upon the idea of "re-territorialization that in part transcends but also somewhat reconfirms state-centered geopolitics."[37] The geopolitical[38] nature of the EU assumes different perspectives but all are used to model its evolution in terms of a "Westphalian" (state-centered), "Imperial" (Core-Europe-dominated), and "Neo-Medieval" (fragmented and regionalized) political order.[39] As a political entity aspiring to be a "force for good" that uses normative power[40] to export its values and norms to surrounding states, the South Caucasus has been a major focus of the EU's geopolitical power.[41] This concentration has only intensified, especially after 2004—frequently referred to by the EU as "the most successful foreign policy" move.[42] The EU has played a central role in reshaping the post-Soviet political, economic, and social landscape in and around Europe since the collapse of the Soviet order. As such, the term New Regionalism (NR) was put to use in order to understand the normative structure of the EU's geopolitical role with a variety of programs and projects. Some of these, though, have yet to prove truly effective in achieving the EU's goals and strategies in spite

[37] J. W. Scott, "Bordering and Ordering The European Neighbourhood: A Critical Perspective on EU Territoriality and Geopolitics," *Trames*, Vol. 13(63/58), Issue 3 (2009): 236. Available at: http://www.kirj.ee/public/trames_pdf/2009/issue_3/trames-2009-3-232-247.pdf.

[38] For an in-depth look at competing conceptions of geopolitics, the term "new geopolitics," and "critical geopolitics," see Jehlička, Tomeš, and Daněk (2000), Agnew and Corbridge (1995), and O'Tuathail and Dalby (1998).

[39] C. Browning, "Westphalian, Imperial, Neomediaeval: The Geopolitics of Europe and the Role of the North," in C. Browning, (ed.), *Remaking Europe in the Margins: Northern Europe After the Enlargements*. (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005): 85–101. C. S. Browning and P. Joennniemi "Geostrategies of the European Neighbourhood Policy," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 14, Issue 3 (2008): 519–552. Available at: http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/1008/1/WRAP_Browning_0674383-060709-enp_browning_joenniemi_final2.pdf. J. W. Scott, "Bordering and Ordering The European Neighbourhood: A Critical Perspective on EU Territoriality and Geopolitics," *Trames*, Vol. 13(63/58), Issue 3 (2009): 236. Available at: http://www.kirj.ee/public/trames_pdf/2009/issue_3/trames-2009-3-232-247.pdf.

[40] For an assessment of the EU and its use of normative power in international relations, see Manners (2002, 2008).

[41] E. Barbé and E. Johansson-Nogués, "The EU as a Modest 'Force for Good': The European Neighbourhood Policy," *International Affairs*, Vol. 84, Issue 1 (2008): 81–96. Available at: http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/International%20Affairs/2008/84_181-96.pdf.

[42] J. Kelley, "New Wine in Old Wineskins: Promoting Political Reforms through the New European Neighbourhood Policy," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 44, Issue 1 (2006): 31. Available at: http://studium.unict.it/dokeos/2011/courses/1001283C0/document/kelley_JCMS_2006.pdf.

Table 1 EU and Russian power projection

EU	Russia
Border control and monitoring missions	Military intervention
Multilateral organizations	Interventionist policy
"Territorialization"	"Passportization"
Economic controls/leverage	Economic (energy) Coercion/manipulation
Financial assistance	Trade sanctions
Institutionalization	Political and ideological pressure
Freedom of the press	Media control

Source: N. Popescu and A. Wilson, "The Limits of Enlargement-Lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood," Policy Report—European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). (London, UK: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2009). Available at: http://ecfr.3cdn.net/dc71693a5ae835b482_5om6bvdkn.pdf

of them engineering a wonderful perception of its critical short- and long-term goals.[43]

"At the center of the geopolitical imagination," according to James Wesley Scott, "has generally figured a hegemon or powerful state with the authority, economic clout and military and/or diplomatic prowess to influence the course of international politics."[44] As an actor in the post-Cold War political order, the EU fits this description. Although the political and military weight of Russia does not entirely match that of the former-Soviet Union, conceptualizations of Russia as a post-Cold war geopolitical power reflects a variety of perspectives entertaining political, military, and territorial factors. In short, modern Russia can be described as a manifestation of its former-Soviet hegemonic self. If the construction of the EU is to be seen as an "attempt to create a coherent political, social, and economic space within a clearly defined multinational community,"[45] then Russia's involvement in the South Caucasus is a firm case of that state fulfilling perceptions of a neo-imperial (or hegemonic) approach much like that of the EU. It is no accident that the reification of this area has been made repeatedly in post-Cold War political rhetoric as one of principal Russian interest, and is likely to retain its potency for some time to come.[46]

[43] J. W. Scott, "Bordering and Ordering The European Neighbourhood: A Critical Perspective on EU Territoriality and Geopolitics," *Trames*, Vol. 13(63/58), Issue 3 (2009): 236. Available at: http://www.kirj.ee/public/trames_pdf/2009/issue_3/trames-2009-3-232-247.pdf.

[44] J. W. Scott, "Bordering and Ordering The European Neighbourhood: A Critical Perspective on EU Territoriality and Geopolitics," *Trames*, Vol. 13(63/58), Issue 3 (2009): 234. Available at: http://www.kirj.ee/public/trames_pdf/2009/issue_3/trames-2009-3-232-247.pdf.

[45] J. W. Scott, "Bordering and Ordering The European Neighbourhood: A Critical Perspective on EU Territoriality and Geopolitics," *Trames*, Vol. 13(63/58), Issue 3 (20099): 237. Available at: http://www.kirj.ee/public/trames_pdf/2009/issue_3/trames-2009-3-232-247.pdf.

[46] V. Kopeček, "Russian Geopolitical Perceptions and Imaginations of the South Caucasus," in "Beyond Globalization: Exploring the Limits of Globalization in the Regional Context," Conference Proceedings. (Ostrava, Czech Republic: University of Ostrava, 2010): 99–105. Available at: http://conference.osu.eu/globalization/publ/12-kopecek.pdf. S. E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*. (London, UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2001).

6 EU Power Projection in Russia's Backyard

As stated previously, the EU has had a significant and quite a unique impact upon the states that lie beyond the traditional boundaries of Europe. In recent years, the EU has proven its capacity to act as a geopolitical and normative power even in countries with strong Soviet legacies and that lie further to the east such as those of Central Asia. After the USSR dissolved, Western Europe assisted Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) with their own unique transitions toward liberal-democratic societies and free(er)-market economies through conditionality that awarded compliance with "European Norms."[47] I emphasize a dual purpose of the EU's conditionality here when taking into account state interests of the EU through a realist lens. Table 2 presents several components of the EU's conditionality that also act as "levers" over target stated—in this case Armenia.

Armenia is not the only state with which the EU is concerned in the South Caucasus. The region holds a special place in EU interests for a number of reasons, many of which have become far more palpable with the changing geopolitical order and the advent of critical new security concerns within the international system over the past two decades. Chief among these is the EU's interest in energy diversification and the securing of alternative sources of energy, which can rightly be seen as an issue on the rise.

The South Caucasus is therefore of vital strategic importance for the transportation of oil and gas if the EU is to meet its burgeoning energy demands. The EU is interested in the region for the sake of building democracy within these states, though one cannot neglect questioning the legitimacy of the EU's intentions in this sense. The South Caucasus' geographic position in military and communication terms renders it an area of security ambition.[48] Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan have undergone a maturation process since 1991 that has given them the flexibility to make a contribution to regional security and even the overall security architecture of the EU as well as that of the US. Fulfilling certain roles in the fight against terrorism and transnational crime has helped to establish this reality.

D. Trenin, "Russia Reborn: Reimagining Moscow's Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 88, Issue 6 (2009): 64–78.

[47] For the Soviet-successor states involved in the 2004 and 2007 EU accessions, the requirements defined by the *acquis communitaire* for the most part provided an undisputed set of guidelines that were meant to achieve the ultimate final promised reward of membership. S. N. Romaniuk, "Not So Wide, Europe: Reconsidering the Normative Power of the EU in European Foreign Policy," *Romanian Journal of European Affairs*, Vol. 10, Issue 2 (2010): 53. Available at: http://www.ier.ro/documente/rjea_vol10_no2/RJEA_vol10_no2_Not_so_wide_Europe_Reconsidering_the_Normative_Power_of_the_EU_in_European_Foreign_Policy.pdf.

[48] S. E. Cornell and S. F. Starr, "The Caucasus: A Challenge for Europe," Silk Road Paper—Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program (Washington, DC, 2006): 23. Available at: http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/Silkroadpapers/0606Caucasus.pdf.

Table 2 Primary EU "Levers" over Armenia

Visa liberalization
Deep free trade prospect
Advisors in the presidency and government

Source: N. Popescu and A. Wilson, "The Limits of Enlargement-Lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood," Policy Report—European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). (London, UK: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2009): 50. Available at: http://ecfr.3cdn.net/dc71693a5ae835b482_5om6bvdkn.pdf

Despite these features, Armenia's proximity with Turkey, Russia, and Iran in addition to its discordant relations with its smaller neighbours, presents the EU with ongoing foreign policy (and security) dilemmas. Many of these obstacles center upon five distinct matters: (1) developing a precise security architecture and process (es) of integration, (2) the resolution of ethnic, inter-state, and regional conflict, (3) the management of a web of complex relations between states and non-state actors including the EU, the US, NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations (UN), and the Council of Europe (CoE), (4) strengthen and maintain civil society to bring about a healthy legal, political, social, and economic environment across the region, and (5) generate a positive relationship between former-Soviet Republics with Russia.

Armenia's European aspirations can be taken as a positive and negative feature in the EU's regional approach. On one hand, it lends the EU a degree of leverage to approach Armenia in such a way as to overcome some of the aforementioned challenges it faces. On the other hand, it produces a negative affect with Russia, arousing suspicion over the EU's intentions not merely in the South Caucasus. Russia is impelled to react to the EU as it encroaches upon its historical area of interest—an area over which Russia established its hegemony roughly 200 years ago—and sphere of influence as it has slowly realized its status as a great power over the past decade.[49]

The EU is able to provide financial support and invest in the socio-political and even economic development of the South Caucasus through its multimillion-dollar aid programs after the "Rose Revolution" in Georgia. The formation of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development (GUAM),[50] and its relationship with NATO shows that orphaned states of the Soviet Union have the potential of moving measurably closer to Euro-Atlantic structures despite the presence and

[49] S. E. Cornell and S. F. Starr, "The Caucasus: A Challenge for Europe," Silk Road Paper – Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program (Washington, DC, 2006): 23. Available at: http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/Silkroadpapers/0606Caucasus.pdf. D. Trenin, "Russia in the Caucasus: Reversing the Tide," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Vol. 15, Issue 2 (2009): 143–155.

[50] GUAM members include: Georgia (G), Ukraine (U), Azerbaijan (A), and Moldova (M). In 1999, Uzbekistan joined the organization but subsequently withdrew in 2005. Latvia and Turkey are currently observers.

expansion of Russian forces in the area, and Russia's use of military force against Sakaashvili's authoritarian-style Georgia witnessed in 2008.

A paramount barrier facing the EU in its efforts to gain influence in the South Caucasus is the current Eurozone crisis and economic uncertainty that has all but removed the incentive of EU membership from the table within the framework of the ENP. With a "no vacancy" sign currently posted, the EU has virtually lost its golden "carrot" in its attempt to reform and democratize the countries that lie to the East, particularly Armenia, which in all accounts requires the most help in breathing life back into nearly every facet of its society. The question of whether the EU still retains a sharp financial instrument, a "specific and innovative feature of the ENPI [European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument] in its cross border cooperation component," and ability to fund other programs and pay for costly initiatives remains to be seen.[51]

7 Russia's Geopolitical Power Potential

Russia and Armenia share a special relationship. As the Soviet Union collapsed both states succeeded the political order but with significantly different impacts upon the new political environment of the post-Soviet era. The nature of Russia-Armenia relations casts doubt upon whether or not Russia retains much of its old messianic ambitions as its Soviet predecessor. Much can be said about the nature of Russia's engagement with Armenia over the past decade. It may be said that these old ambitions are part of the motor behind Russia's actions. Table 3 outlines some of the instruments of Russian power over Armenia.

Russia's multi-vector foreign policy, with the aim of building upon its influence in the South Caucasus and bringing Armenia closer to the Russian core, centers upon (1) military dependence, (2) political-security position in relation with Georgia and Azerbaijan, and (3) the exploitation of Armenia's economic fragility.[52] The third and most recent period of Russia's policy toward the Caucasus began when President Putin came to power in 2000.

The new National Security Concept and Military Doctrine are two central strategic tools in Russia's approach to the South Caucasus with the former

[51] L. Alieva, "EU and South Caucasus," Bertelsmann Group for Policy Research, CAP (Center for Applied Policy Research) Discussion Paper—Paper produced for the conference "Looking Towards the East: Connecting the German and Finnish EU Presidencies." (2006): 8. Available at: http://www.cap.lmu.de/download/2006/2006_Alieva.pdf.

[52] K. Abushov, "Regional Level of Conflict Dynamics in the South Caucasus: Russia's Policies Towards the Ethno-Territorial Conflicts (1991–2008)" PhD Dissertation. (Münster, Germany, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, 2010). Available at: http://miami.uni-muenster.de/servlets/DerivateServlet/Derivate-5792/diss_abushov.pdf.

Table 3 Primary Russian "Levers" over Armenia

Support for authoritarianism
Control of strategic economic assets
Military presence
Support on Nagarno-Karabakh
Migrants

Source: N. Popescu and A. Wilson, "The Limits of Enlargement-Lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood," Policy Report—European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). (London, UK: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2009): 50. Available at: http://ecfr.3cdn.net/dc71693a5ae835b482_5om6bvdkn.pdf

emphasizing the use of military power in Russia's relations with other post-Soviet republics.[53] As many of the CIS countries faced social, political, and economic turmoil over the past 10 years, the Putin administration concerned itself with the general security and integration process of the CIS. Poor integration and security crossed paths with the resurgence of transnational terrorism that even Russia found itself vulnerable too, and with which it was inevitably forced to contend.[54] Putin could not escape the need to augment both his political and military presence around Russia if he was to achieve the preservation of a fragile "Near Abroad"—a policy referred to as "controlled destabilization," particularly in Georgia and Azerbaijan—while simultaneously building a stronger and increasingly positive relationship with the both the EU and the US.

Russia exhibited its "Near Abroad" policy through involvement in the Nagarno-Karabakh conflict and the Abkhazian-Georgian conflict—two persistent conflicts in the region. The Armenian minority presence in Georgia gave Russia a concrete reason to keep its troops stationed in Javakheti province's capital Ahalkelek.[55] With the establishment of a military base, Russia pulled Armenia deeper into its sphere by providing locals with employment, security, and the Armenian government with political weight over its neighbours to the south. With increased backing from its powerful Russian friend to the north, Armenia recognized and unreservedly accepted Russia as a "natural protector" of the country.[56] Diminishment of the

[53] K. Abushov, "Regional Level of Conflict Dynamics in the South Caucasus: Russia's Policies Towards the Ethno-Territorial Conflicts (1991–2008)," PhD Dissertation. (Münster, Germany, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, 2010). Available at: http://miami.uni-muenster.de/servlets/DerivateServlet/Derivate-5792/diss_abushov.pdf.

[54] As Russia struggled with separatism in Chechnya, the reorganization of international security frameworks in the wake of 9/11 enabled Putin to apply pressure to Chechnya, which gave Russia a stronger hand in the Caucasus.

[55] E. Souleimanov, "The Prospects for War in Nagarno-Karabakh." (Washington, DC, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2012). Available at: http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5795.

[56] Russia was unable to establish military bases in Georgia and Azerbaijan so pursued Armenia dependence upon Russia assistance as a means of traction in the region.

distance between Moscow and a region of strategic interest in the face of the EU and the US projecting their own influence over it was the product of such events.[57]

Russia's strategy successfully implemented the use of Armenia to apply pressure to Azerbaijan during the Nagarno-Karabakh conflict, which began before the Soviet Union fell apart.[58] When both Armenia and Azerbaijan gained independence in 1991, the conflict spread. From this event, it became clear that support for Armenia was a preferred option for Moscow for the discernible reason that Armenia was part of the CIS and that Russia already possessed a military presence there.[59] As Georgia increasingly looked to the EU, the US, and NATO, and while Azerbaijan assumed a more pro-Turkey posture in its interstate relations, Russia realized that Armenia was its more favorable option in maintaining its strategic policy in the South Caucasus. Acting upon this view, the understanding that the Nagarno-Karabakh conflict was a means of taming Azerbaijan in light of its drift towards the Western camp was only strengthened. A consistent flow of weapons by Russian military leaders solidified a highly desirable relationship with Armenia until a Russian-backed coup in Azerbaijan successfully altered this geopolitical dynamic.[60]

The development of Russian-Armenian economic relations helped to formulate a strategic partnership between the two states (Fig. 5). The use of energy as sway under Putin was made possible across the CIS but one can see this as a significant case in Armenia. Russia divided the CIS into energy "importing" and "exporting" countries, thus enabling the isolation of those states most vulnerable to Russian power. Azerbaijan is a major energy exporter while both Armenia and Georgia are heavy importers.[61] Russia's management of Armenian assets was thought to yield a great deal of high paying jobs, employment, and improve Armenia's overall economic condition. "Economic desperation of the 1990s," as Ian J. McGinnty states, "necessitated the reopening of the [Medzamor[62] nuclear power] plant [MNPP] with Russian financial assistance."[63] Russia's state-owned Unified Energy System (RAO UES) similarly acquired six of Armenia's nine hydroelectric plants.

[57] Following 9/11, the US started building its military forces in the Caucasus and Central Asia with the stationing of soldiers in Uzbekistan and in Georgia—a country that has sought entry into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

[58] S. E. Cornell, *Small Nations and Great Powers: A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*. (London, UK: RoutledgeCurzon, 2001).

[59] Azerbaijan's Parliament did not ratify its membership with the CIS. This compounded with Russia's lack of military presence in Azerbaijan meant that Moscow retained relatively no control over the country.

[60] E. Souleimanov, "The Prospects for War in Nagarno-Karabakh." (Washington, DC, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2012). Available at: http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5795.

[61] Economic Survey of Europe, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). (Geneva, Switzerland, 2003): 177. Available at: http://www.unece.org/ead/pub/surv_031.html.

[62] The Metzamor plant supplies Armenia with approximately 40 % of its domestic energy (Socor, 2002).

[63] I. J. McGinnty, "Selling its Future Short: Armenia's Economic and Security Relations with Russia," CMC Senior Theses, Paper 58. (2010): 9. Available at: http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/58.

Fig. 5 Conflicts and Energy Transit in the Caucasus. Source: Center for Security Studies (CSS), "Conflicts and Energy Transit in the Caucasus" CSS Analysis in Security Policy No. 39. (ETH Zurich, Switzerland, 2012). Available at: http://sta.ethz.ch/var/plain_site/storage/images/graphics/conflicts-and-energy-transit-in-the-caucasus-09-08/2294-2-eng-GB/Conflicts-and-energy-transit-in-the-Caucasus-09-08.jpg

The result was the satisfaction of Armenians' energy demands by an additional 33 %.[64]

Russia's acquisitions extend further still to include thermoelectric energy facilities, electronic and robotics plants, and a cement factory that has left Russia in control of around 90 % of Armenia's energy sector.[65] As Russia gained almost complete control over Armenia's vital energy lifeline, the policy choices of the Kocharyan administration during the 1990s were arguably based upon pure necessity and not on the best interest of Armenia's future. In spite of the fact that the geopolitical realities of the present day differ from questions of the 1990s and the immediate aftermath of Soviet dissolution, Armenia's deals have resulted in Russia dominating the Armenian economy, most notably in terms of its energy sector, to this day. Russia's control over Armenia fostered greater leverage over the region and generally improved Russia's position as a regional hegemon. The result has virtually sidelined the EU in its policy options with the view of exerting greater influence over the region much less curtailing Russia's ambitions over both Armenia and the South Caucasus as a whole.

The EU's soft power has not been very successful in pulling Armenia and its neighbours closer (this is prevalent in a number of ways), and the extent to which the EU can continue relying upon the "magnetism" of the EU model to reform and

[64] I. J. McGinnty, "Selling its Future Short: Armenia's Economic and Security Relations with Russia," CMC Senior Theses, Paper 58. (2010): 10. Available at: http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/58.

[65] I. J. McGinnty, "Selling its Future Short: Armenia's Economic and Security Relations with Russia," CMC Senior Theses, Paper 58. (2010): 10–11. Available at: http://scholarship.claremont.edu/cmc_theses/58.

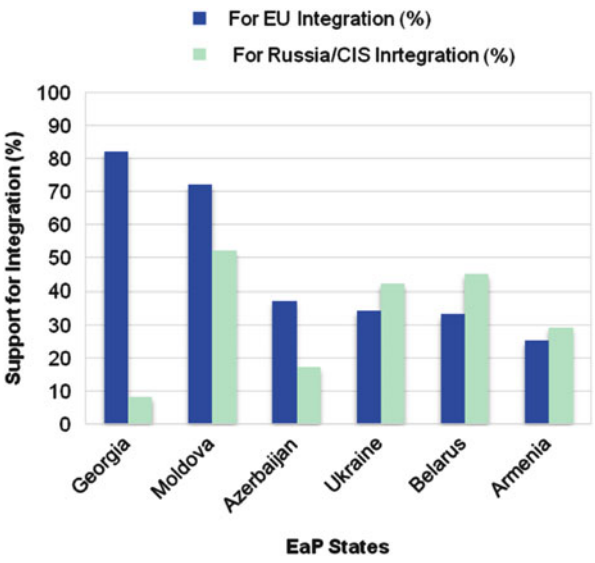

Fig. 6 Support for Russia/CIS Integration Vs. EU Integration in the EaP, 2008. Source: N. Popescu and A. Wilson, "The Limits of Enlargement-Lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood," Policy Report—European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). (London, UK: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2009): 28. Available at: http://ecfr.3cdn.net/dc71693a5ae835b482_5om6bvdkn.pdf

Table 4 Migrant workers and remittances from the six EaP countries in the EU and Russia

EaP states	Russia	EU	Estimated annual remittances (2008)
Belarus	300,000–700,000	60,000–70,000	$2–3 billion
Ukraine	2 million	3 million	$8.4 billion
Moldova	344,000	350,000–500,000	$1.6 billion
Georgia	1 million	50,000	$1 billion
Armenia	2.5 million	150,000	$1.5–2 billion
Azerbaijan	2 million	100,000	$1–1.5 billion

Source: N. Popescu and A. Wilson, "The Limits of Enlargement-Lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood," Policy Report—European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). (London, UK: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2009): 43. Available at: http://ecfr.3cdn.net/dc71693a5ae835b482_5om6bvdkn.pdf

liberalize the states that lie to the East is dubious at best. By contrast, Russia's use of coercion and incentives for economic benefits, political structure, open markets, and a secure energy future, has proven fruitful in tempering the effects of the EU (Fig. 6). The connection between these varying strategies and tactics are an expression of Russia's determination to systematically eliminate impediments to its dominance that have been established by the EU. (Table 4). It is clear that Russia is able to offer the states in its "Near Abroad" with choices that have proven difficult to reject. EU and Russian soft power has swayed public opinion in the South Caucasus, with Armenians favoring integration with Russia over the EU.

8 Conclusion

To recapitulate, in this chapter I have shown the competing nature of the EU and Russia in the South Caucasus, particularly as it relates to Armenia since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the implementation of the ENP in 2003. From the discussion in the preceding text I made the claim that even though both the EU and Russia have undertaken great measures to exert their influence over the South Caucasus, Russia's political, economic, and military posture sets it ahead of the EU in the region. This is partly due to the fact that Russia's political visions are predominantly sustained by neo-imperial thinking whereas the EU employs multiple geopolitical methods of applying its influence. The Russo-Georgian war of 2008 and the recent events in Crimea, however, is a sharp example of Russia's willingness and ability to intervene in the "Near Abroad" by means of intensive application of force whenever it chooses to do so, while the EU lacks the same option to strategically engage the region.

Both the EU and Russia are different actors in terms of politics but with much the same political agendas however they may appear or act in given contexts. It is evident that efforts on the part of the EU seek to create a buffer zone between its current member states and more unstable, and potentially hostile regions that stand opposite of them. However, if the soft and hard security threats are to be appropriately contained at this point, then the EU will be required not only to maintain a buffer zone but also to possess the capacity to manage it. This image is in line with the concept of dealing with the common neighbourhood through a lens of security whereby the EU attempts "to keep the outside at bay."[66] The EU's reading and treatment of its own neighbourhood will be the leading determinant of how it is able to project its power against Russia's in the future.

What can confidently be said is that Russia uses Armenia's military dependence, political-security position in relation with Georgia and Azerbaijan, and Armenia's economic fragility as critical leveraging points in meeting the objectives of the "Near Abroad" policy in the South Caucasus. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, particularly the Nagarno-Karabakh conflict, is a case of the difference in EU-Russian policy in their shared neighbourhood. It seems likely that Russia is not interested in resolving the conflict in the region, which it can use to meet its interests and tilt its military, economic, and political weight there with the aims of improving its power position over that of the EU's.

Russia's interventionist policy in the CIS, including the South Caucasus where it commonly uses the power of incentives and coercion, is not going to ebb. Consequently, the nature of politics in the region and the forcefulness of Russia mean that the region has become an area of intense competition in which the EU will have to adapt further still to operate in its primary interests as a state first and foremost.

[66] C. S. Browning and P. Joennniemi "Geostrategies of the European Neighbourhood Policy," *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 14, Issue 3 (2008): 537. Available at: http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/1008/1/WRAP_Browning_0674383-060709-enp_browning_joenniemi_final2.pdf.

Russia offers Armenia concrete benefits, such as active labor markets, reliable energy, and straightforward membership into multilateral organizations; whereas the EU offers Armenia loose options rooted in ambiguous terms like "European Neighbourhood Policy, Eastern Partnership, European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, governance facility, autonomous trade preferences, and neighbourhood investment fund."[67]

The *coup* in Azerbaijan showed Russia's past ability to successfully sculpt the region politically, while its recent efforts have proven its capacity to rather effortlessly wrestle control over lines of communication and pipeline routes that would transport critical energy resources to much-needed and largely under saturated markets. The Abkhazia and South Ossetia outcomes that subsequently led to Russian de facto control is testimony to the country's military capabilities as well as its capacity in state-level hostage taking in order to exert influence over even those states that may not have been considered under the control of Moscow's foreign policy. The acquisition of vital Armenian production facilities reconfigured the economic footing of the entire country so as to bring it under Russian control, and therefore made the country politically subservient to Moscow.

A strong bedrock of "historical and cultural affinity—the presence of Russian minorities in neighbourhood countries, the Russian language, post-Soviet nostalgia, and the strength of the Russian Orthodox Church"—exists in the region on which Russia can build its influence. This presents a slippery slope for the EU—one that may be overcome if only because the EU is not as poor as Russia, although there may be little charge to such a claim. Whereas the global economic downturn has been predicted to contain much of Russia's activities in the South Caucasus, the EU will likely be forced to scale-down to a greater extent than Russia. Market constraints in the "Near Abroad" put Russia in a stronger position to build its influence by simply buying-out Armenia to a greater extent than it already has. As the EU symbolizes X, Y, and Z, Russia—rather than competing directly with the incentives put forward by the EU—has merely presented itself as an alternative model. This is apparent in Russia's economic initiatives such as Moscow's 2009 $7.5 billion USD contribution to an anti-crisis fund with the view of stabilizing and breathing life into its allies' economies.[68]

While both actors have presented concrete bases for building their respective influence in the South Caucasus, Russia has shown itself to be stronger and faster than its sluggish bureaucratic counterpart, and able to stay several steps ahead of the EU in nearly every political and economic facet. As a result, "the EU often finds its

[67] N. Popescu and A. Wilson, "The Limits of Enlargement-Lite: European and Russian Power in the "Troubled Neighbourhood," Policy Report—European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). (London, UK: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2009): 27. Available at: http://ecfr.3cdn.net/dc71693a5ae835b482_5om6bvdkn.pdf.

[68] N. Popescu and A. Wilson, "The Limits of Enlargement-Lite: European and Russian Power in the Troubled Neighbourhood," Policy Report—European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). (London, UK: European Council on Foreign Relations, 2009): 30–31. Available at: http://ecfr.3cdn.net/dc71693a5ae835b482_5om6bvdkn.pdf.

activities in the neighbourhood frustrated by Russia's attempts to shut it out of its 'Near Abroad.'"[69] It is clear that both actors are able to project their power in the "Common Neighbourhood." Despite the fact that the result will be a very difficult geopolitical morass for all states located in the South Caucasus to manoeuvre, given their awkward lodgment between two competing actors, a number of critical factors suggest that Russia is, and will, remain ahead of the EU in establishing a true zone of influence over the South Caucasus and being considered the region's hegemon.

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Russian Perspectives on US–China Relations and the Twenty-First-Century Global System

Igor Zevelev

Abstract Russia's foreign policy is characterized by a combination of several conflicting narratives which coexist in a general space of rhetoric on identity, security, and civilizational divisions. Russian perceptions of the United States and China provide a powerful lens for framing not only how modern Russia conceives its foreign policy, but also for understanding its national identity transformations. Culturally and historically, Russia deems itself a part of Western civilization. China looks alien and lacking intellectual and emotional appeal to many Russians. However, the image of the United States in the eyes of the Russian political elite is essentially ambivalent and conflicting, while China is described as a reliable partner. Finding the right balance between the Euro-Atlantic and Asia-Pacific vectors will be the key challenge to Russian foreign policy in the years to come. The USA is watching China closely and cautiously; part of this caution will be keeping an eye on Chinese relations with the rest of the world. China is doing the same when it looks at the United States. Within this triangular construct, not losing sight of Russia will be a priority for both the USA and China. This situation creates many opportunities for Russia—if it plays its cards right.

Today, Russia's foreign policy is characterized by a combination of several conflicting narratives which coexist in a general space of rhetoric on identity, security, and civilizational divisions. Russian perceptions of the United States and China provide a powerful lens for framing not only how modern Russia conceives its foreign policy, but also for understanding its national identity transformations.[1]

The image of the United States in the eyes of the Russian political elite is ambivalent and essentially contradictory. On the one hand, the US is portrayed as a power striving for dominance and unipolar world, undermining confidence, and attempting to engage "political engineering" during Russian elections. On the other

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[1] Earlier versions of some sections of this article were published in Zevelev (2012: 104–118).

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hand, Vladimir Putin, after repeating these denunciations ritualistically in his major foreign policy manifesto published a week before 2012 presidential elections, proclaimed that Russia was prepared "to make great strides in our relations with the U.S., to achieve a qualitative breakthrough" (Putin 2012). In July 2014, Putin was already much less optimistic: "Our contacts with the United States of America are of great importance for the whole world. We do not intend to shut down our relations with the USA. True, bilateral relations are not in their best shape, but—I would like to stress this—not through Russia's fault. We have always tried to be predictable partners and conduct our affairs on the basis of equality. However, in return, our lawful interests were often ignored" (Putin 2014b).

The Russian vision of China has been much less schizophrenic for the last 15 years. China is described as a reliable partner and a major player on the global economic arena. In July 2014 Putin argued: "We need to strengthen overall partnership and strategic cooperation with the People's Republic of China. We can say that a strong Russian-Chinese connection has taken shape on the international arena. It is based on a coincidence of views on both global processes and key regional issues. It is of primary importance that Russian-Chinese friendship is not directed against anyone: we are not creating any military unions. On the contrary, this is an example of equal, respectful and productive cooperation between states in the twenty-first century" (Putin 2014b).

Opinion polls show that the attitudes of the Russian elites towards the United States and towards China are very much in line with popular attitudes. According to the Levada Center, 56 % of those Russians who in October 2012 thought that their country had foes, named the United States amongst them. This figure was appallingly high in comparison with 11 % of those who thought that China was a foe and 20 % of those who named Islamists and adherents of fundamentalism in his context. In May 2013, 20 % of Russians named China among the closest friends and allies, while only 4 % thought of the United States in those terms. The United States ranked first in the category of the most unfriendly countries in the poll (Obschestvennoye mnenie 2012: 198–200; Obschestvennoye mnenie 2013: 218–219).

Why does the growing assertiveness of Chinese foreign policy worry all of China's neighbors more and more, but Russia seems to remain unfazed? Why is there no open public debate in Russia about the rise of China and subsequent challenges? This situation is particularly intriguing when viewed against the backdrop of very lively discussions of Russia's relations with the United States and with the West in general. This raises further questions about the role of the China factor in US-Russia relations.

One cannot answer these questions without addressing a broader issue of existing self-perceptions and visions of the world in modern Russia. To be sure, an analysis of Moscow's visions of the US and China will shed more light on Russia herself than on Russia's partners. Perceptions of other countries are formed not by the behavior of those countries and outside factors, but rather by the identity of the beholder. This essay will focus, therefore, on Russian perceptions and discourses about the United States and China. It begins with an overview of Russian foreign

policy debates,[2] and then proceeds to a discussion of the existing schools of thought regarding "the West" and China. Finally, the images of the US and China in Russian foreign policy thinking and the role of China in Russian-American relations are closely examined.

1 Theoretical Framework and Overview of Russian Discourses

Various types of identities can and do coexist and interact on the contemporary world arena. This alone creates mutual communication gaps, misperceptions, tensions, and conflicts among states. Interactions between Russia, the United States, and China on the international arena may be understood not only as a relationship between three nation-states differing in terms of power and their political systems, but as a point of convergence between entities with strikingly different perceptions of self and of the world. Simple scales of the maturity of liberal democracy (a "liberal" perspective) or "might" (a "realist" perspective) are not effective measurements for these differences. A constructivist approach, however, would allow us to address apparent paradoxes of these states' foreign policies and take a look at the idiosyncrasies of their domestic discourses. This can, in turn, reveal differences in how these states form and formulate their national identities.

Rodney Bruce Hall in his seminal book contended that states project their self-perceptions into a global arena and the resulting interactions among national collective identities shape the international system (Hall 1999). He suggested a dynamic approach which stipulated the replacement of old types of collective identities by new ones.[3]

Worldviews affect foreign policy, and foreign policy events affect worldviews. Countries debate their worldviews and identities (Nau 2002). Collective national identities are not simple sums of individual identities. National identities are formulated and maintained by elites. Collective identities are never "out there," but the result of a dynamic intellectual discourse and a political struggle that never ends. Identity is a provisional and fluid image of ourselves, as we want to be, limited by the facts of history. Historic sources of identity are a toolkit. People construct, negotiate, manipulate and affirm a response to the demand for a collective identity (McSweeney 1999: 77–78).

Various Russian foreign policy schools of thought have been active players in shaping the country's discourse on what Russia is and should be in the future. They

[2] Part of this research was coauthored with Andrew Kuchins. See Kuchins and Zevelev 2012: 181-209.

[3] According to Hall, dynastic-sovereign collective identities were replaced by territorial-sovereign, which are in turn change to national-sovereign (Hall 1999: 29).

shape the attitudes towards the main actors on the international arena.[4] Accordingly, Russia's perceptions of the West are closely intertwined with internal discourses about national identity and debates about Russia's development pathways. Russia's view on China, on the other hand, is far more removed from Russia's perceptions of self, and is based rather on foreign policy and economic calculations. This asymmetry in perceptions of leading international actors influences Russia's foreign policy in ways that hinder its adaptation to fundamental changes on the international arena. If Russia continues to craft its foreign policy as a function of its own existential search for an identity, Russia will run the risk of missing important opportunities and overlooking grave threats. The rise of a new brand of conservatism among Russia's political elites is likely to follow this dangerous pattern and get in the way of developing realistic and flexible policies towards the US and China.

Amongst Russian political elites we witness the paradoxical combination of an unwavering belief in the existence of a European (i.e., Christian) civilization on the one hand, and anti-Western rhetoric on the other hand. While relations with the USA are constantly securitized, relations with China are usually formulated in pragmatic, rational terms. Rising anti-Western rhetoric in the Kremlin, especially in 2014, contrasted sharply with the absence of any publicly expressed concern over China. Official documents and statements demonstrate an apparent indifference on the side of the Kremlin towards China's military growth and its increasingly assertive foreign policy in 2008–2014.

Intense debates are constantly unfolding in Russia with regard to Russia's relationship with "the West," which for Russians is often a broad, abstract and floating concept. "Pro-Western" and "anti-Western" camps of political, intellectual and public figures have emerged. This kind of public discursive action is almost absent when it comes to China, which is a topic of calm and professional discussion among experts in the field. How will this affect Russia's readiness to face new challenges on the international arena, where US–China relations are becoming structurally more and more important?

For the purposes of this chapter, we will categorize the leading schools of thought and policy practitioners in Russia in 1992–2012 into three groups: (1) pro-western liberals; (2) great power balancers; and (3) nationalists[5] Vigorous and lively debate amongst Russian experts and government officials about Russia's

[4] Russian foreign policy debate is rooted in the discussion of IR theory, but has its own purposes, structure, and

dynamic. For the overviews of the Russian discipline of international relations theory, see Shakleina 2002; Bogaturov et al. 2002; Tsygankov 2005; Kokoshin and Bogaturov 2005; Andrei Tsygankov and Pavel Tsygankov 2010: 6375-6387.

[5] The discourse of national identity informs Russian theory of international relations, which in turn shapes foreign policy perspectives. Andrei Tsygankov and Pavel Tsygankov when analyzing Russian theory of international relations argued that "Russia has developed three traditions or schools of thinking about Self and Other—Westernist, Statist, and Civilzationist" (Tsygankov and Tsygankov 2010: 6376).

foreign policy course evolved primarily over Moscow's relationships with the West and newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. China played little role in these discussions.

The three groups are more or less ideal types. Some schools of thought might include the features of other perspectives, and there is natural affinity among some subgroups belonging to different major clusters. These affinities might serve as the basis for intellectual and political coalition building on concrete foreign policy issues.[6] Intellectual sources and theoretical foundations of political outlooks of all three major groups (pro-western liberals, great power balancers, and different strains of nationalists) may be divided into endogenous and external. For at least a century and a half, the debate over Russian identity and its role in the world was focused primarily on Russia's relation and interaction with the West that remained a reference point in Russia's political imagery.[7] China was viewed as an important Asian country, but it had little relevance to the transformations of Russian national identity.

1.1 Liberals

Modern Russian pro-western liberals' roots are within the Westernizers' intellectual tradition. They also rely heavily on contemporary Western liberal internationalism and usually advocate collective security, globalization, membership in WTO, etc. In the terms of international relations theory, this group combines aspects of liberal institutional and realist thinking. Some pro-western liberals of early-90s described their goals not just of integration with the West, but assimilation on the terms of the West. This was the core foreign policy goal of the Yeltsin government in its first year when Yegor Gaidar was acting Prime Minister. Russia should subordinate its foreign policy goals to those of the West since the hope, and even expectation for many, was that Russia would soon become a fully Western country. Becoming part of the West greatly overshadowed traditional Russian images of itself as a great power, and sovereignty and the role of the state were also diminished by the goal of transformation into a market democracy. The view of China was a combination of ignorance and arrogance.

[6] Our grouping is both similar and different from Anne Clunan's taxonomy (Clunan 2009). Clunan's analysis covers the period from 1991-2004 (to the end of Putin's first term). She identifies the following seven categories on a spectrum of national self-images which then inform foreign policy preferences: Western (liberal internationalist), Western (democratic developmentalist), statist (statist developmentalist), statist (Eurasian statism), national restorationist, neocommunist, and Slavophile. These categorizations collapse roughly into our three schools. Clunan argues that the Statist and Western self-images, and their subgroups, are the most politically relevant to the formulation of Russian foreign policy.

[7] The roots of this Western-focused discourse can be traced back to the nineteenth-century debates between Slavophiles and Westernizers. Slavophiles emphasized the unique character of Russian civilization, based on Slavic Orthodox communitarian traditions, and they are opposed to alien Western civilization. In contrast, Westernizers argued that Russia should emulate and learn from the West.

It was not long into the 1990s until this most liberal pro-western wing lost traction in Russian politics and emphasis on Russian sovereignty, a greater role for the state, and the goal of re-emerging as an independent great power gradually came to predominate in Russian policies as well as policy debates. Today these views have been so marginalized that in Marlene Laruelle's categorization they are associated with strictly opposition politicians who have no significant influence in Russian politics, or what some call the "a-systemic" opposition (Laurelle 2009).

Dmitry Trenin has insisted that the only rational option for Russia is to fully stress its European identity and engineer its gradual integration into a Greater Europe. This may be a several-generation project. Meanwhile, Trenin argued for "building Europe" within Russia's own borders, demilitiraizing its relations with the West, nourishing its partnership with NATO, and making accession to the European Union a long-term policy goal (Trenin 2001). In his later works, he admitted that Russian leaders gave up these European dreams and returned to the familiar road of great-power policy (Trenin 2009). In *Post-Imperium*: *A Eurasian Story*, Dmitri Trenin more recently has argued that Moscow needs to drop the notion of creating an exclusive power center in the post-Soviet space. Like other former European empires, Russia has no choice but to reinvent itself as a global player and as part of a wider community (Trenin 2011).

1.2 Great Power Balancers

While this school of thought bears much in common with realism, for the purposes of our analysis, we term this broad group great power balancers because their interpretation of the dynamics of the international system is more state-centric and focused on Russian national interests in the context of the balance of power. Great power balancers are well represented politically and have a foremost influence on the government. The founding father of the Great Power school of thought in Russia is Evgeny Primakov, who was an academic as well as Russia's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister at different stages of his career. Primakov, both as a statesman as well as for his straightforward realist conception of international affairs, is most likened to Henry Kissinger in the United States. Russian great power balancers may be called broader defensive realists advocating maintaining sphere of influence on the territory of the former Soviet Union and striving to containing American global preeminence.

An important faction within Great Power proponents group includes former pro-western liberals who were disappointed with the Western polices towards Russia, NATO enlargement in particular, and moved to more assertive Great Power stance in mid-late 90s. Russian liberal internationalists dreamed of a "common European home" and were against NATO expansion. By mid-90s, many influential Russian foreign policy experts started to argue that by embracing the ideology of liberalism and democracy, Russia seemed to confine itself to the secondary role of a country "in transition" in the international arena. Many in Russian foreign policy

community thought that transitional countries are always led, judged, praised, and punished for progress or lack of it by other international actors. Absence of an equal partnership with the US and other Western countries led to adjusting Moscow's overarching concept of international relations. Kozyrev's pro-western liberal approach reflected in the line "Russia is joining the civilized world" was replaced by Primakov's view of Russia "as one of centers of power in a multipolar world" when the latter was appointed Foreign Minister in 1996.

Great power balancers do not reject Western experience and are effectively in favor of learning from the West. Their notion of Russia's modernization relies in some respect on the historic tradition established by Peter the Great. They would like to import Western technology, attract direct foreign investment and compete successfully with the West. The existence of "polarity" on the global arena is taken for granted and never perceived as simply one of possible analytical lenses. They strive to play the great power game not just on regional stage, as many nationalists do, but on global stage—in G-8, G-20, the UN Security Council, etc. Nevertheless, unlike current Chinese policy, Russian policy based primarily on great power balancers' views, seems to approach global economy with its guard up.

In 2008–2010, "civilizational" approach became popular among the proponents of the Great Power status for Russia. Some interpretations of the "Russian civilization" make Great Power proponents closer to the pro-western liberals by emphasizing the unity between Russia and the West, while some other understandings of the matter unite Great Power proponents with the neo-imperial strain of nationalists. Ideologically, the concept of civilization has proved to be attractive to the Russian authorities. In the nineteenth century, it was usually nationalist conservatives, above all philosophers Nikolai Danilevsky and Konstantin Leontiev, who spoke about a special Russian civilization. The late Samuel Huntington, a conservative, thought in similar terms. Neo-imperialist ("Eurasianist") Alexander Dugin has long been arguing that Russia is not a country but a civilization. The idea of civilizations is hardly compatible with liberal concepts of globalization and the universality of democratic values.[8]

To date, the Russians have formulated two possible approaches to Russia's civilizational affiliation. One was set forth by President Dmitry Medvedev in his speech in Berlin in June 2008: "The end of the Cold War made it possible to build up genuinely equal cooperation between Russia, the European Union and North America as three branches of European civilization"(Medvedev 2008). What is notable about these and similar formulations is desire of deeper integration among the three wings of European civilization to maintain and strengthen their competitiveness globally, and the implication that the three should not fight against each other but rather cooperate to better compete against others. The Russian officials do not speak in this manner in Beijing and most other places outside the belt from Vancouver to Vladivostok (Kuchins 2011).

[8] See the discussion of the concept of "civilization" in contemporary Russian discourse about national identity in Zevelev 2009.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, however, said that the adoption of Western values is only one of two basic approaches to humankind's development. In his words, Russia advocates a different approach, which suggests that "competition is becoming truly global and acquiring a civilizational dimension; that is, the subject of competition now includes values and development models" (Lavrov 2008). In this interpretation, the world may look to be driven by Great Civilization balance of power rather than Great Power balance of power. The more civilizationally oriented the balance becomes, the more likely the competition will become more intense or Cold War-like compared to a non-ideological Great Power balance.

Indeed, there is an impression that many in Russia, including the Russian authorities, do not see much contradiction between these two approaches and view them not as mutually exclusive but as complementary. One approach is intended for the West, while the other is intended for neighboring states and fellow Russians abroad.

1.3 Nationalists

The nationalist school of foreign-policy thought is made up of at least three subgroups: neo-imperialists (supporters of Russia's regional domination in the post-Soviet space), ethnic nationalists and the new right. Many of them challenge the boundaries of the Russian political community, but draw different conclusions regarding desirable foreign policy under given circumstances.[9]

In the first half of the 1990s, the neo-imperialist project was aimed at restoring Russian statehood within the borders of the former USSR. Over time, aspirations were reduced to goals informed by realist approaches, namely, to turning the former Soviet states surrounding Russia into a buffer zone of dependent protectorates. Such aspirations began to be formulated in more modern terms, appealing to concepts of "economic integration" and "soft power."

The essence of an ethno-nationalist program is to unite Russia with the Russian communities in the near abroad and build the Russian state within the area of settlement of ethnic Russians and other Eastern Slavs This would mean the reunification of Russia, Belarus, part of Ukraine, and northern Kazakhstan.

The modern Russian ethnonationalism is a radical departure from the mainstream Russian tradition shaped by imperialist and liberal perspectives. The founding founder of ethnonationalism as a consistent worldview in modern Russia is Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Solzhenitsyn was arguably the first giant figure in the Russian intellectual history to challenge the imperialist tradition and condemn centuries-long empire-building as detrimental to the Russian people, wasteful of its resources, calling it a misdirection of human energies, and deprivation of

[9] The following discussion of Russian nationalists' views is partly based on material in Zevelev 2001.

Russians of their national character. The magnitude of Solzhenitsyn's rebellion against tradition can be truly appreciated if it is put into the context of several centuries of intellectual discourse that allowed Nikolai Berdyaev, a leading philosopher of the first half of the twentieth century, to call Russia "providentially imperialist" (Berdyaev 1997).

Paradoxically, in this context, Solzhenitsyn, though speaking out against the westernization of Russia, looks like a radical Westernizer. He effectively argues for building a Russian nation-state along the path of nation-building in the nineteenth century Europe. During World War I, Nikolai Berdyaev contended that "our nationalism always makes an impression of something non-Russian, extraneous, sort of Germanic... Russians are almost ashamed of their Russianness" (Berdyaev 1997). Solzhenitsyn has not been ashamed of being a Russian. He has been more concerned with preservation of his people, which was almost ruined, according to him, by the self-imposed burden of an empire (Solzhenitsyn 1995).

Russian ethnic nationalism is not a well-organized political force at the moment, yet it may rise quickly. The deep economic crisis of the 1990s and the difficulties faced by Russians in neighboring states created prerequisites for political mobilization around this issue. The inflow of migrants to big Russian cities during the last decade has provoked a rise in xenophobia and in the activities of extremist groups. However, Russian ethnonationalism has not become a serious force in Russia yet and it does not have any significant impact on the country's policy towards neighboring states. Supranational aspects of Russian identity in various forms (imperial, Soviet, civilizational and universalist) continue to play a significant role.

Over the course of the last 2 years we have witnessed the rise of a new trend in public and foreign policy thought in Russia—the new right. Members of this group position themselves as right-wing antiglobalists. Mikhail Remizov, one of the intellectual leaders of this group, is acutely aware of the importance of US–China bipolarity for Russian politics. In the face of new power shifts, Remizov views Russia's preservation of its sovereignty as its central goal and main challenge (Remizov 2012). The rejection of liberal values by the neo-imperialists, the ethnic nationalists and the new right results in a distinctively anti-American reading of international affairs on the part of these groups.

2 Russian Beliefs About Self, Global Trends, the US, and China

The findings regarding competing discourses on Russian identity and different perceptions of the main global trends are summarized in Table 1.

For at least a century and a half, the debate over Russian identity and its role in the world was focused primarily on Russia's relation to and interaction with the West. The discussion shifted the main focus in 2009–2011. Russian foreign policy dependency on the definitions of Russian identity became less evident in this period

Table 1 Beliefs about Self and the World

Major groups	Intellectual sources and theoretical foundation	Desired image of Russia	View of main global trends
Pro-Western liberals	Russian nieteenth century Westernizers; modern liberal internationalism	A part of the West	Globalization; democratic versus authoritarian states
Great power balancers	Visions of a multipolar world; civilizational approach	Global power; influential pole in a multipolar world	Attempts to establish a unipolar world versus "real" multipolarity
Nationalists	Nineteenth century Russian conservatism; twentieth century Eurasianism; old-style geopolitics; the concept of "divided nation"	Independent center of power; distinct civilization separate from the West	Hobbesian war of all against all; Anglo-American sea power versus Russia-led heartland

of time. It became more focused on the evolution of the international relations system. The discussion became more nuanced and geopolitical imagination broadened. The "China factor" was the main driver of this change. The implications of the relative decline of US power in the world were viewed with more discernment, and there is more open discussion of the pros and cons of China's rise. There was also more open acknowledgement about the importance of the West as a partner in Russia's efforts to modernize its economy. In sum, there were a number of signs of more realistic and more contentious views of the United States and China, their roles in the world, and implications for Russian interests. When the Ukrainian crises unfolded in 2014, Russia returned to open opposition to the policies, culture, society, economics, and international role of the United States.

Russian liberals used to be all pro-Western. Today, Westernizers can credibly promote a hard-headed national interest—at least they have developed robust argumentation to that effect. Westernizers can not only pursue modernization for the sake of becoming closer to the West, but out of genuine motivation to promote the national interest. And liberal Westernizers can define this interest in terms of power or in any other way typical of realists or nationalists. Many Westernizers often use typically great power balancer's (realist) arguments: Russia needs to ally with NATO to balance off China. Other Westernizers point out the importance of good relations with China. Not unlike realists or nationalists they argue that Russo-Chinese diplomatic cooperation and trade are important assets for Russia.

It may be argued that US policies after the end of the Cold War generated two processes on the international arena. Firstly, the US was engaged in a typical social process of interaction with other actors. Secondly, and it is more atypical, the US policies constituted an ecological process for other actors. In other words, they created and changed the whole environment for other states by structuring international relations in a way no other actor was capable.[10] This could alter the other

[10] Paul Kowert and Jeffery Legro when analyzing the sources of international norms suggested that there were three processes that generated, maintained, and changed them: ecological, social, and internal. See Kowert and Legro 1996: 470.

Table 2 Beliefs about the US and China

Major groups	Image of the USA	Image of China
Pro-Western liberals	Proponent of liberal democratic values; strategic partner	Authoritarian state, potential strategic challenge
Great power balancers	Power striving for dominance and unipolar world and interfering in domestic affairs of sovereign countries	A global balancer in a multipolar world and strategic partner that values the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in other countries' domestic affairs
Nationalists	Ideological and strategic opponent	Important partner; source of immigrants and potential challenge for the Russian Far East; for communists—ideologically

states' policies significantly. Even if a country's international goals remained the same, structural changes on the world arena caused by the US preeminence and assertiveness could require a different course of actions to achieve these goals. This might concern not only small and medium-sized states, but also the centers of global power. From this perspective, the beliefs about the US held by major groups within Russian foreign policy community may be a litmus test for their broader vision of the international arena and desirable foreign policy. This proposition looked less viable after the US suffered major international setbacks during the George Bush's presidency. During this period of time, particularly in 2003–2008, Russia made it clear that it did not recognize unconditional American leadership and insisted on its own status of Great Power. However, Russia, as a former superpower on par with the United States, still measured itself against a former Cold War rival. China has been viewed in Russia as just another Great Power. The differences in beliefs about the US and China among major Russian groups are summarized in Table 2.

Until the spring of 2014 discussions of the Russian national identity did not always have much to do with Russia's concrete foreign policy and national security agendas. The revolution in Ukraine allowed Russia (and from the Kremlin's perspective even *forced* Russia) to securitize the question of identity, that is, to bring it into a sphere of the most important governmental questions for the survival of the nation-state.

The events of the spring of 2014 brought about fundamental changes in the process of Russian national identity construction. The resulting situation illustrates the theoretical point made by Ilya Prizel: "While the redefinition of national identities is generally a gradual process, under situations of persistent stress even well-established identities can change at a remarkable rate, and a people's collective memory can be 'rearranged' quite quickly" (Prizel 1998: 8). In most cases such changes occur as a result of regime change, opposition victory or radical international changes. In Russia this occurred in a different fashion.

Why are Russian domestic discourses taken out into the international arena and then securitized? The answers to these questions lie in the nature of Russian relations with the West and the United States in particular. The overarching, imaginary "West" began to be perceived as a power which tries to spread its values to Russia and the surrounding "Russian world," thus threatening to change Russia's unique and increasingly conservative national identity.

The imaginary "West," in the Kremlin's interpretation, now has not only NATO as a tool of expansion (including potential expansion into Ukraine), but also the EU's foreign policy. If before the expansion of the EU's influence was not perceived as a threat, in 2009, with the introduction of the Eastern Partnership program, Moscow began to see the EU's political agenda as a way of creating and widening a rift between Russia and its neighbors. Moscow reacted harshly to the EU's refusal to take into consideration Russia's interests during talks over the Association Agreement with Ukraine.

An important aspect of this rhetoric was a particular emphasis on the historical dimensions of the Russia-West relationship. In the President's address to State Duma deputies, Federation Council members and heads of Russian regions and civil society representatives on March 18th 2014, Putin clearly stated, "we have every reason to assume that the infamous policy of containment, led in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, continues today" (Putin 2014a). China was totally absent in Russian debates about the nature of the twenty-first century international system that intensified in 2014 when the Ukrainian crisis unfolded.

3 Policy Implications: The China Factor in the American-Russian Relations

American policymakers usually do not keep an eye on Russia when they look at China. There is enough evidence to argue that this situation may change in the near future. The China factor will increasingly shape US attitudes and policies towards Russia in the second decade of the twenty-first century. This may significantly amplify Russia's role on the international arena in spite of its continuing demographic and economic decline.

In Russia, in the United States and in China there are three similar schools of foreign-policy thought: the realists (in Russia these are the great Power balancers), the liberals, and the isolationists (which include some of the Russian and Chinese nationalists). At the same time, there are approaches that are distinctive to each particular country: the neoconservatives in the United States, the neo-imperialists in Russia, the "Asia first" advocates and the supporters of the global South idea in China.[11] In all of these countries, realists play the leading role, especially within the

[11] See the excellent overview of China's foreign policy schools of thought in Shambaugh and Ren Xiao 2012: 36–72.

state apparatus. Of course, the schools of realist thought in the United States, in Russia and in China differ from each other. They also have varying intellectual allies: neoconservatives (under George W. Bush) or liberal internationalists (under Obama) in the United States, the nativists (nationalists) in China, and the liberals (in 2001–2002 and 2009–2011) or neoimperialists (in 2012–2014) in Russia. The local flavor of the realist school of thought in each state is becoming more and more local and increasingly pronounced. There is some overlap between the schools: realists in the USA fear and distrust Beijing, and their Chinese counterparts reciprocate in their perceptions of the USA. It logically follows that American and Chinese realists perceive Russia as a declining power which no longer plays a leading role on the international arena (especially in the Asia-Pacific region) despite its formal parameters like possession of nuclear weapons, energy resources and a vast territory. Many of Russia's realist-statists eye Washington with exceptional mistrust and hope for a Russia–China coalition to balance American power. Yet there is also a rising awareness of Russia's relative weakness and its subsequent need to be more flexible in forging relations with other states in the future.

Barak Obama's approach to China builds on that of George W. Bush, who tried to encourage Beijing to become a "responsible stakeholder" in the international system, while hedging against its growing military power. US relations with India, Japan, Korea, and ASEAN countries have been progressively influenced by the character of Washington's affairs with Beijing. However, the US approaches to China as just an element of the Asia-Pacific international system is rapidly becoming outdated and insufficient in view of Beijing's amplifying global assertiveness. The liberal internationalists and some realists would argue that the best strategy for engagement with China may be to invite a number of other international actors to the "negotiating tables" of world affairs. Balancing China's global clout by fostering partnerships with existing and rising great powers will be one of the major challenges to United States foreign policy in the twenty-first century.

Some experts believe that China is gradually becoming a revolutionary power—a process boosted by Beijing's increased self-confidence in the aftermath of the 2008 "global" financial crisis, which not only left China unscathed, but also increased Beijing's relative strength. If China indeed strives to revise global norms and institutions, it will need partners in this endeavor. A rival take on the matter holds that China does not want to contest the basic rules of the liberal international order, but that it wishes to gain more influence and maybe eventual leadership within a general trend of continuity in global governance institutions. The argument is that China's economic successes are tied to the liberal internationalist organization of world politics, and it has deep interest in modernizing this system cautiously and gradually. No matter what analytical lens is better suited to conceptualize China's assertive international behavior, it is safe to predict that China will seek to engage other countries, including those that are not fully satisfied with the current international order.

The increased global competition between the United States and China allows Russia to assert its international posture in a manner that is disproportional to its demographic, economic, and political weight. Russia's policies towards the US and

China over the past 20 years have been inextricably linked to shifting modes of interaction and balance between the various camps of foreign policy thought. Under certain circumstances, the Kremlin may try to position Russia as a "swing state" in relations between the US and China, a role that neither India nor any other great power, can effectively claim.

The concept of swing states was developed, in part, by Daniel M. Kliman and Richard Fontaine. They argued: "In the American political context, swing states are those whose mixed political orientation gives them a greater impact than their population or economic output might warrant. Such states promise the greatest return on investment for U.S. presidential campaigns deciding where to allocate scarce time and resources. Likewise, in U.S. foreign policy, a focus on Brazil, India, Indonesia and Turkey can deliver a large geopolitical payoff, because their approach to the international order is more fluid and open than those of China or Russia" (Kliman and Fontaine 2012: 5–6). From our perspective, Russia is potentially the most important global "swing state." Indeed, it is not open at this moment, but a quick look at its post-Soviet history suggests that its identity is fluid and a work in progress. This may mean that its foreign policy orientation will change in the future.

Russia's role in the US-Chinese conundrum plays out on three levels. Firstly, Russia may either choose to expand common ground with the Unites States in the future, or try to balance its global leadership by cooperating with China. This range of choices is important for the USA on many policy levels. On the one hand, Russia wants be reckoned with as a power that shares common economic and security spaces with the United States and Europe against an international backdrop of economic interdependence and new threats. On the other hand, Russia and China share commitments to concepts of absolute state sovereignty and the idea of a multipolar world in which no single country dominates. Russia and China have very similar attitude to global governance and view it as a Western concept that is used and abused by the West. They share the Hobbesian world view (Grant 2012: II and 110). China will probably see Russia as a useful balancer to the United States, especially after the Obama administration declared the "pivot" towards the Asia-Pacific in late 2011.

Russia is tied to the United States by arms control agreements and a pledge to non-proliferation. At the same time, nuclear weapons, including non-strategic ones, remain relevant to the immediate security of both Russia and China, both of whom are apprehensive about their conventional limitations and nuclear-armed neighbors.

The currencies of the BRICS countries have been used only inside their respective nations. However, BRICS leaders have periodically expressed support for conducting bilateral trade between themselves in their own national currencies to reduce dependence on the US dollar. This may eventually undermine its role of a global reserve currency or at least give the BRICS countries much more leverage in world finances.

Secondly, the United States and the West in general are no longer seen by the Russian elite as the only model for either the political system or for economic and social policies. What has been called "the rise of the rest" is not just about economic

and political power, but also has to do with a global competition of ideas and models. Emerging-market states "are learning to combine market economics with traditional autocratic or semi-autocratic politics in a process that signals an intellectual rejection of the Western economic model" (Halper 2010). China has the potential to reshape the world to the detriment of Western normative ideals—first and foremost, perceptions of democracy and human rights. This can already be seen on the African continent in a clash between European and Asian notions of development. The Kremlin has particularly marveled at China's remarkable ability to increase its economic clout during the crisis, a result of a tightly managed, top-down policymaking machine that could avoid the delays of a messy democratic process.

Thirdly, Russian-Chinese efforts to coordinate their stance on regional issues have been taken to a new level with regard to the developing situation in the Arab countries. This is bound to pose a challenge to the West in pursuing its agenda in the Middle East. Russian-Chinese collaboration, as well as latent competition, is already in full display in Central Asia where the two powers cooperate in the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and seek to limit the role of other actors. Tighter Russian-Chinese coordination in case of the showdown between Washington and Tehran may also be a big challenge to the United States and Europe.

Most Russian experts understand that a U.S.-Russian alliance against China is as much of a nonstarter as a Russian-Chinese alliance against the United States (Bazhanov 2010). However, there are distinct foreign policy schools of thought regarding China and the West in Russia. Their respective influences on concrete policies varied throughout 1992–2014. Pro-Western liberals who dominated the scene immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union were dismissive of China, but quickly lost their ground to different strains of great power balancers. In 1998, then prime-minister Yevgeny Primakov floated the idea of a "strategic triangle Moscow-Beijing-Delhi" as a desirable counterweight to the Western dominance on the global arena. After a brief period of Putin's own version of the early "reset" in Russian-US relations in 2001–2002, Russia's policies sought to balance, or at least contain, US unipolar hegemony. Russian-Chinese cooperation was seen as a convenient tool in this game. Any hint of criticism regarding China was muted. This phase of great power balancers' absolute dominance in Russian foreign policy concluded in the second half of 2008 with the near concurrence of the Georgia war and the global financial crisis. The inclination of the part of the Russian elite to identify the United States as the primary global threat to Russian interests has eroded when a cautions pro-Western liberal approach got a new momentum under President Medvedev. However, the new trend was inconsistent.

In the latter half of 2008, after the war with Georgia and with the beginning of the world financial crisis, Dmitry Medvedev seemed to have stopped viewing the United States as the main global threat to Russia's interests. At the same time, Moscow developed a stronger fear of becoming a junior partner in its relations with Beijing. In 2009-2011, the liberal approach to foreign policy became far more influential and pronounced. China's growing strength and the relative weakening of

the United States brought about a more nuanced discussion which included debates over the advantages and drawbacks China's rise might bring for Russia. The tone of official statements changed. When Chinese journalists asked Russia's Ambassador to China Sergei Razov about the spreading "theory of the Chinese threat" in April 2011, the diplomat acknowledged that such speculations enjoyed some popularity in Russia and were shared by some citizens, but that they did not reflect Russia's official stance on the matter.

Vladimir Putin's return to office and concerns over maintaining stability in the country in the spring of 2012 brought about a situation where domestic political considerations began to increasingly affect the foreign policy course. This was evident, above all, in relations with the United States and Europe. The Kremlin claimed that the West had provided backing for the Russian opposition, encouraging human rights activism and pushing for political reform, thus meddling in the Russia's internal affairs. Arguments were made for a turn towards the Asia-Pacific region. This was primarily a policy response to the objective growth of the role of China and other Asian countries in the world. Yet Russia used this opportunity to demonstratively show the West its readiness to turn to alternative partners on the world arena.

A new balance between the three schools of foreign policy thought in Russia emerged in 2014. Events throughout the year have revealed the strong influence from the side of nationalist discourse on the Kremlin's policies. There is reason to believe that Russia forged a new foreign policy doctrine in 2014. It includes elements of realist-statist discourses and nationalist ideas. Almost all public intellectuals who can be considered neo-imperialists, from Gennady Zyuganov to Alexander Prokhanov, Eduard Limonov and Sergei Udaltsov, voiced strong support for the Kremlin's actions with regard to Crimea as events unfolded in the spring of 2014. Ethnic nationalists were divided on the issue, and many of them are wary of Moscow's return to an imperialist project which could go against the interests of the (ethnically) Russian people. Wary ethnic nationalists include politicians and intellectuals whose views moderately lean towards ethnic nationalist ideas (Alexey Navalny, Vladimir Milov), and those whose ideas are more radical and marginalized (Dmitry Demushkin). At the same time, some intellectuals from these circles (such as Valeriy Solovey) have detected certain nationalizing trends in the Kremlin's seemingly imperialist agenda, in the sense that the Kremlin is may be towards the convergence of political and ethnic borders.

Most liberal westernizers harshly criticized the actions of the Kremlin towards Ukraine, and for this they were dubbed the "fifth column" by some of those who supported the annexation of Crimea. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, liberals consistently lobbied for the development of a new civil society within the new state borders, for prioritizing Russia's relations with Western states, for good-neighborly relations with post-Soviet states, for giving precedence to the need for economic development, and against the use of force under any circumstances. Decisions made by the Kremlin in the spring of 2014 went against practically everything liberal westernizers stood for. Liberal westernizers found themselves facing a coalition of realist-statists and nationalists in the Kremlin.

The analysis of relations between Washington, Beijing and Moscow in "triangle" terms was characteristic of the realist approach in all three countries for many years. However, this approach has already been rendered obsolete mostly due to a stark change in the balance of power. US policy towards China will no longer be based on its stance towards Moscow, signifying a radical change from the Nixon-Kissinger era. Chinese relations with the USA are no longer formed in China as a result of influences from Russia, as it had been during Sino-Russian tensions of the 1960s and 1970s. As for Russia, the US–China factor will become ever more important for foreign policy.

The balance of power between the USA and China is shifting, and the need to react to rising ambitions in Peking will become a primary factor on the foreign policy agenda of Russia in the coming years. China strategies in Russia are still largely derived from the desire to counter the US and challenge its hegemony. This is done through the UN Security Council and through official rhetorical action on the part of Russian political elites. There has been no evidence that the China factor has any influence on Russian-US relations as seen from Russia. Russia continues to view China as an Asian neighbor and key economic partner, but not as a new global power.

Moscow will have to bear in mind the dynamics of US-Chinese relations in building its policy in the Asia-Pacific region, in developing bilateral relations with Washington and Beijing, and in formulating its global strategy at large. As it was argued earlier, Russia is likely to become a "swing state," i.e. a country that has minor power relative to the two leading powers, but which is still capable of choosing one or the other alternately as a partner. Temporary coalitions may be formed with the United States on some issues, and with China on others. Diversified and multi-tiered partnerships with the United States and China would be the best strategy for Russia. This creates favorable conditions for gaining a firmer foothold on the international arena, but each step has to be considered and calculated very carefully.

Moscow already seems to be playing this game, although politicians may not be directly aware of this. On the one hand, Russia cooperates with the United States on a number of international security issues, including arms control, Afghanistan, Iran, and the war against terrorism. The participation of Russia's Pacific Fleet ships in the major international naval exercise RIMPAC in the summer of 2012 indicated that, despite the problems in Russian-U.S. relations, the partnership in the sphere of maintaining international security keeps developing even when the liberals' influence in Moscow is minimal. The fact that not only Russia, but also India took part in the exercises caused China to worry.

On the other hand, Moscow has been trying to counterbalance global leadership of the USA by cooperating with China on issues relating to state sovereignty, strengthening the UN Security Council, and advocating for a multi-polar world order in which no single state is in a dominant position over all others in world affairs. The way in which veto power has been used in the UN Security Council is a telling illustration of certain overlaps in how Russia and China view the world. In 2007-2012 the right of veto was used seven times. In five of the cases, Moscow and

Beijing acted together to block the resolution on Myanmar (2007), Zimbabwe (2008), and Syria (in 2011 and twice in 2012). Additionally, in 2009 Russia barred the adoption of a resolution prolonging the mandate of the UN observer mission in Georgia and Abkhazia. China abstained. The fact that joint Russian-Chinese vetoes have all been aimed at preventing international intervention into internal affairs of sovereign states indicates that the primary concern of Moscow and Beijing is retaining sovereignty as a pillar of the international political system.

As US analyst Richard Weitz has pointed out, Russia and China pursue independent but parallel policies on many global and regional development issues. Weitz believes the reason behind this lies in the fact that the main security concerns for these two states lie in different regions—in Eurasia for Russia, and in the Asia Pacific region for China. In areas of overlap (Central Asia, North Korea or the arc of instability in the Muslim world which touches the territories of Russia and China), the powers strive to avoid major contradictions, and have thus far been successful. This is a classical approach within the framework of realism.

The realists in Russia and China operate in similar ways, use similar terms, and thus can easily come to a mutual understanding. However, realism is not the only influential strand of foreign policy thought. Interaction among different schools of political thought in the United States, China and Russia will largely determine the nature of their relations. National leaders must take into account domestic political factors and, to use the term developed by Robert Putnam, play "two-level games," i.e. interact with partners in the international arena, but bear in mind internal restrictions resulting from the overall line-up of social and political forces.

Cultural and ideological factors are always at work, and they can modify constructions erected by classical realist approaches. In the United States, the liberals and conservatives see eye to eye in their commitment to the advancement of human rights and democracy worldwide. In China, the nationalists pepper politics with anti-American rhetoric and may easily reintroduce rhetoric regarding traditional Russian imperialist tendencies. Russia's great power balancers, together with certain strands of nationalists, are obsessed with preserving the great power image and with resisting the liberal West at any cost; but under certain circumstances they will see a growing threat from the side of Beijing.

In the United States, the realists are having the hardest time. Advocating for human rights and democracy worldwide is part of American national identity, which is based on universal values and political institutions. This sets the US apart from other states. The system of checks and balances and the influence of civil society on politics make it impossible for any American presidential administration to act solely out of realist considerations. This, in turn, complicates the situation for Beijing in Moscow in their dealings with the USA.

According to the Russian liberally-minded foreign policy expert Dmitri Trenin, "For the first time in their recent history, Russians have to deal with China which is more powerful and dynamic than their own country" (Trenin 2012: 1). Until recently, Russian officials and analysts were confident about maintaining overall military superiority over China for at least the next decade despite growing economic disparity. However, today the Russian leaders understand that the

conventional military balance between the two countries is tilting in China's favor (Trenin 2012: 8). Some recent displays of growing Chinese defense capabilities, combined with a more confrontational style of Chinese diplomacy, appear to cause the same unease in Russia as in other countries. It will be probably premature to claim, as Charles Grant did: "Fear of China's rising power is growing in Moscow. That is one reason why Russia has been relatively soft towards the Americans and the Europeans since its war with Georgia" (Grant 2012: 105). Nevertheless, the Russian military has begun to refer to China's growing military potential as a reason why Russia needs to acquire more warships and retain tactical nuclear weapons despite US pressure to negotiate their elimination in the next round of the arms control talks. For example, the Commander in Chief of the Russian Navy, Adm. Vladimir Vysotsky in his interview to ITAR-TASS cited Beijing's interest in the Arctic as a reason to field a larger fleet (Zachem Kitay rvyotsya v Arktiky 2011).

Culturally and historically, Russia deems itself a part of Western civilization. China looks alien and lacking intellectual and emotional appeal to many Russians. Russia is not perceived as an Asian country anywhere in Asia. Sergey Karaganov emphasized that "there is no Asian alternative to Russia's cultural and political orientation towards Europe" (Karaganov 2011). Economics, geography and the nature of the international relations system, however, can make Russia and China true strategic partners. Finding the right balance between the Euro-Atlantic and Asia-Pacific vectors will be the key challenge to Russian foreign policy in the years to come. The USA is watching China closely and cautiously; part of this caution will be keeping an eye on Chinese relations with the rest of the world. China is doing the same when it looks at the United States. Not losing sight of Russia will be a priority for both the USA and China. This situation creates many opportunities for Russia—if it plays its cards right.

Today, the way Russia perceives the USA and China can tell us more about Russia than about anything or anyone else. The rise of China and the gradual decline of the role of the USA on the international arena demand significant de-ideologization of Russia's view of the world. Political realism must be freed from the chains of outdated dogmas and from Russia's ambitions to oppose the imaginary and abstract "West." Maintaining a balance between the Euro-Atlantic vector and the Asian-Pacific vector of Russian foreign policy should not be a game of U-turns one way or the other, but should rather be characterized by flexibility and readiness to adapt to a rapidly changing world.

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Is Russia a Great Power in Asia?

Stephen Blank

Abstract Moscow's professed interest in regional security is first and foremost an effort to leverage its geographical position and attributes of great power standing, membership in the Security Council, vast energy reserves, nuclear weapons, geographical expanse, etc. for purposes of global standing. Ultimately Russian policy remains rhetorical rather than an actual policy capable of being carried out through practical action. The central argument presented in this chapter is that despite Russia's obsession with and craving for recognition of the status of a recognized great power in Asia, it still falls short. Western policy omits Russia as a factor in Asian security, while Washington in particular steadily refuses to view Russia as an Asian great power.

1 Introduction

Russia's global and Asian great power status have become highly topical issues. Since 2008 Asia's place in Russian foreign policy has grown steadily. Yet despite Russia's obsession with and craving for recognition of the status of a recognized great power in Asia, it still falls short.

Russia and foreign analysts recognize this problem. In January 2013, Aleksandr' Gabuyev and Yelena Chernenko, observed that,

> Russia in its present state is less and less important for Washington as a country. In conditions when the center of the United States' foreign policy attention is shifting toward Asia, Russia is becoming of less and less interest. American analysts are virtually disregarding it in the context of relations with China, given Moscow's extremely weak position in Asia.[1]

Despite the current Ukraine crisis and Russia's continuing Asian initiatives this still holds true. Fyodor Lukyanov, Editor of Russia in Global Affairs, told Gabuyev in 2011 that Russia is under-represented in Asia, lacks the required infrastructure to

"Russia deserves to be a great power"—Boris Yeltsin

[1] Gabuyev and Chernenko (2013).

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maximize its economic potential, and is not regarded abroad as a truly Asian power. He also questioned whether Russia has a coherent Asian policy and strategy.[2]

Asian opinions are also ambivalent at best. As anecdotal evidence, in 2010 a US Army Colonel who leads officers on tours of Asian think tanks told a conference on Korea that Chinese, Japanese, South Korean, and Mongolian think tanks unanimously told his group in 2010 that Russia would soon play no role in East Asian security.[3] Apparently many Chinese researchers also contended then that Russia is neither a major nor an Asian power.[4] This might be an unduly harsh assessment, but expert analyses reflect it. Indeed, despite recent confident statements by Russian officials about Russia's Asian position, Moscow has good reasons for its fears.[5]

For example, Bobo Lo, a specialist in Russian foreign policy at Chatham House, wrote that based on his research and interviews China respected Russia as a great albeit declining power but in many ways showed contempt for Russia and its decline even though it was judged as being in some respects as being more advanced, more prosperous, and militarily more powerful. Lo observed, however, that China's strategy is to manage Russia's decline without provoking it.[6] While humoring Russia's pretensions and flattering it as it declines, China exploits its ties with Russia for all they are worth without conceding any strategic point to Moscow.

> The Chinese approach to *Russia as a great power*, is the diametric opposite of the West's. They seek to manage, rather than integrate or convert Russia. They talk up partnership while, in practice, assigning much greater significance to the indispensable relationship with Washington. They indulge Russia's pretensions for dressing up as a great power. While seeking to limit its influence in regional and global decision-making. High-sounding allegiance to a 'global multipolar order' and formalistic participation in BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, China [and since then South Africa] summits are left unsupported by substance. And the Chinese have been careful to separate themselves from Moscow's more confrontational policies.[7]

American and Western assessments accord with Lo's insight being either brutally candid about Russia or simply omitting it altogether from the Asian equation. Thus Lo and Fiona Hill of the Brookings Institution recently wrote that,

> Overall, Russia's economic footprint in the Asia-Pacific is extremely modest. It accounts for only one percent of total regional trade and just over two percent of China's external trade. Putin might speak of boosting those figures but the increasingly neo-colonial character of Moscow's trade relationship with Beijing is a sore point. Most of Russia's trade with China comprises natural resource exports in exchange for Chinese manufacturing and consumer imports. Beijing has shown little interest in Russian industrial products

[2] "Russia is Under-represented in Asia, Moscow, *Kommersant*, November 29, 2011, *FBIS SOV*, November 29, 2011.

[3] As stated at the Korea Economic Institute conference, October 22, 2010, American University, Washington, DC.

[4] Lo (2010), pp. 8, 12.

[5] Borodavkin (2011), pp. 28–32; Brutents, pp. 84–100.

[6] Borodavkin (2011), pp. 13–14.

[7] Borodavkin (2011), p. 14.

> except for arms, and even that demand has stalled in recent years. (There have been no major arms contracts since 2006, although this may be about to change if China goes through with the purchase of 24 SU-35s and four Lada-class submarines.) China is frustrated, too: Moscow has consistently refused to allow Chinese companies to acquire substantial equity in Russian energy projects. In fact, the Kremlin often appears to regard Beijing as the investor of last resort — the "partner" it turns to only when all other possibilities have been exhausted. Region-wide, moreover, Russia has no discernible influence on security decision-making. That remains largely the purview of China, Japan, South Korea, and the United States. --- *In short, Russia's pivot is not so much policy as talk*. The country has been slow to diversify relations in Asia, and Asian elites — including those in China — regard Russia as neither Asian nor a credible player in the region. They believe Russia is still rooted in Europe, or at best, partly in Central Asia, and that it has little to contribute in the East beyond natural resources and weapons. Compounding the problem, Putin has taken a particularly top-heavy approach to foreign policy, in which he and his highest officials deal personally with leaders of other countries. That kind of operation is difficult to pull off in Asia, since Putin and his inner circle have few close contacts and little expertise there. Unlike the United States, Russia does not have the presence, the capabilities, or even the degree of interest to make its pivot a strategic and economic reality.[8] (Italics mine).

The Ukraine crisis has forced Russia to open the door to Chinese investors but did not otherwise change the other assessments here.

Western and especially US policy omits Russia as a factor in Asian security.[9] Washington steadily refuses to view Russia as an Asian great power.[10] Western writing about Asian security also overwhelmingly ignores Russia in Asia, generally seeing it as undergoing irretrievable decline as a great power and that it might completely lose that status in the near future. Andrew Cooper and Daniel Flemes wrote that,

> If Russia has some characteristics of a rising power (resources generally and energy specifically), it is a power in which many of its status characteristics are legacies from the era of bipolarity (UN Security Council/P5/veto attributes) or of democratic transition (G8 membership). With a shrunken territory as a result of the break-up of the USSR, a declining population and a lack of diversification in its investment and trade profile, Russia can be framed as much a country in decline as in ascendancy.[11]

Noah Feldman described Russia as "a second-tier power increasingly allied with China" who shares with China the goal of weakening US power and discouraging American-led regime changes wherever they occur.[12] And still other analysts observe that in terms of projecting military power beyond its borders—a classical

[8] Hill and Lo (2013).

[9] Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, *Speech to the International Institute of Strategic Studies Shangri-La Dialogue*, Singapore, June 1, 2013, http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1785 completely ignores Russia in discussing Asia-Pacific security. As one State Department official told the author in 1995, "We will have a policy for Russia in Asia when Russia has a policy for Russia in Asia."

[10] Blank (2012a), pp. 249–266.

[11] Cooper and Flemes (2013), p. 946.

[12] Feldman (2013), p. 107.

definition of what constitutes a great power—Russia again fails to qualify as a great power. Neither has the Ukraine crisis resolved that issue. Indeed, only the U.S. would qualify on that account and will be the only power to be able to do so for some time to come.[13] If these analysts are correct not only is Russia not a great power in Asia, whatever it says, but it increasingly cannot play an independent sovereign role there. Even some prominent Russian experts believe this outcome may come to pass. Thus IMEMO's Director, Aleksandr' Dinkin, among others, writes that absent radical reform Russia by 2030 will be only a middle power like Turkey.[14] Arguably the more one examines Russian policy, the more problematic its claims to global and Asian great power status become. Given the widespread consensus of Russia's failure to reach its "great power potential" in Asia we ask here is why and how is this happening despite Moscow's efforts to defend and sustain Russia's historic great power role there. Is Russia really a great Asian power?

Undoubtedly Russia's failure to be a global or Asian great power represents a veritable nightmare scenario. Russian elites fully believe that if Russia is not a great power then it is nothing, once again reduced to the medieval state of appanage princedoms. Thus the assertion of Russia as a great power is an instrument of both domestic and foreign policy whose validation depends upon its acceptance by internal and external observers. Indeed, the assertion of Russia's inherent or intrinsic great power status becomes ever more strident and forceful at times of domestic crisis and weakness, precisely to generate domestic and foreign support for the regime. But it also represents an attempt to overcome Russian elites' inner uncertainty about Russia's status as a great power by constant reiteration of this mantra to convince themselves that foreigners believe it too so therefore it must be true.

2 The Concept of Russia as a Great Power

Yeltsin's remark above encompassed many of the problems raised by the driving thrust of Russian foreign and defense policy, namely to impress upon both domestic and foreign audiences that Russia always is and remains a great power regardless of any external circumstances or considerations. Whether factually accurate or not, this is an assertion of will and of faith. The identification of Russia as a great power remains without exaggeration an article of faith with Russian elites.[15] Ambassador Extraordinaire and former Deputy Foreign Minister Nikolai Spassky wrote that.

[13] Wang and French (2013), p. 985.

[14] Paul Goble, "Window on Eurasia: Russia Stands to Lose World Power Status by 2020, IMEMO Director Says," *Johnson's Russia List*, September 21, 2010.

[15] One cannot emphasize this point strongly enough for these elites cling to this belief as if it were the bedrock or foundation of a religious faith even if they are wholly secularized in their view of world politics.

> The problem is that the Russians still do not see any other worthy role for their country in the 21st century other than the role of a superpower, or a state that realizes itself principally through influence on global processes.
>
> Characteristically such sentiments are widespread not only among the elites, but also among the public at large.[16]

> Similarly, in 2000 John Loewenhardt reported that although Russia's status as a leading pole in global affairs was understood to be increasingly more rhetorical than real,

> In one of our interviews a former member of the Presidential Administration said that the perception of Russia as a great power "is a basic element of the self-perception of high bureaucrats." If a political leader were to behave as if Russia was no longer a great power, there would be "a deeply rooted emotional reaction in the population."[17]

Confirming these observations, Sergei Rogov, Director of the USA Institute and an advisor to the government and Foreign Ministry wrote in 1997 that,

> First of all, Moscow should seek to preserve the special character of Russian-American relations. Washington should recognize the exceptional status of the Russian Federation in the formation of a new system of international relations, a role different from that which Germany, Japan, or China or any other center of power plays in the global arena.[18]

Dmitri Trenin, Director of the Moscow Center of the Carnegie Endowment, agreed that Russian analysts argued then that current difficulties are transient but Russia is *entitled* to this "presidium seat" in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and on global issues.[19] But the multiplicity and frequent stridency of such assertions reveal their inherently problematic nature. Postulating this entitlement presupposes that Russia neither did nor now possesses this status either in its own eyes or that of others. Moreover, few external observers accept this Russian assertion. Meanwhile many statements of President Vladimir Putin, leading officials, and analysts of Russia's foreign policy demonstrate that much, if not all, of Putin's overall project depends on convincing domestic and foreign audiences that Russia truly is such a great power, entitled to this status, and if not a great power risks disintegration.[20]

Consequently much of Russian foreign policy is Russia's determined and obsessive quest for status as it sees itself, and strives to make others see and accept Russia as Moscow wants to see itself and be seen.[21] According to Trenin, Russia's complaint in August 2013, that President Obama's cancellation of the projected

[16] Spasskiy (2011), p. 23.

[17] Loewenhardt (2000), p. 171.

[18] Rogov (1997), p. 10.

[19] For Trenin's views and other such expressions see, E-mail Letter from Darrell Hammer, Johnson's Russia List, February 5, 1997, Trenin (1997), E-Mail Transmission; Waller (1997a), pp. 2–6; (1997b), pp. 4–7.

[20] Tsygankov (2005), pp. 132–158.

[21] Ushakov (2007)

summit with President Putin showed that Washington refuses to treat Moscow as an equal "hits at the core problem of bilateral relations: fashioning an equal relationship between the evidently unequal partners".[22] Therefore, Yeltsin's statement adroitly conflates the uncertainty of Russian and foreign perceptions with its dogmatic assertion of great power status, while this conflation of the "is" and the "ought" wholly typifies Russian foreign policy.

3 The Asian "Vector"

Paradoxically this assertion that Russia is and/or must become and be seen as a great Asian power is a major cause for the failure of Russian policy to achieve that goal. Russia's quest for great power status impedes achievement of this objective. Today the primary vector of Russian foreign policy is shifting to Asia. Asia's economic dynamism set against Europe's stagnation and decline, the rise of China, the potential for conflict near Russia's borders in Korea or between China and the US or Washington's allies, and the danger that failure to develop Russia's Asian territories will marginalize Russia all drive this policy. In addition as Russia's energy fields in Western Siberia become increasingly depleted and high rates of energy demand continue in East and South Asia, it becomes all the more imperative for Russia to invest heavily in its Eastern Siberian and Arctic energy holdings in order to ship them to Asian consumers. Some Russian analysts also believe that the visible Sino-American rivalry in Asia either obliges Russia to step up its Asian game or offers it opportunities to play a mediating or enhanced independent role there. Thus some Russian analysts assert that Russia now fosters "a bidding war" between Beijing and Washington or the latter's allies to enhance its "market value" to each party and its freedom of maneuver.[23]

Indeed, Russia's earlier Asian policies suggest that playing off rivals or exploiting "inter-imperialist contradictions," is a favorite tactic. Moscow employed it consistently in 2003–2006 in its energy deliberations with Japan and China.[24] Predictably the fascination with this tactic leads some to a typically exaggerated belief in Russia's capabilities. Thus Lukyanov now says that "The balance of power between America and China will to a large extent depend on whether and on which side Russia will play," a typically ethnocentric and exaggerated valuation of Russia's Asian if not global role.[25]

One key objective is to sustain or recover Russia's former great power status in East Asia even as Putin's system comes under increasingly visible domestic stress. In East Asia Russia's assertion of great power status is more contested than

[22] Trenin (2013).

[23] Fenenko (2013); Rogov (2013)

[24] Blank (2012a, 2012b), pp. 25–36.

[25] Radyuhin (2013).

anywhere else. In 1999–2000 few observers accepted this valuation.[26] By 1999 many observers openly asserted that Russian foreign policy's effective remit did not go beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union. Lowell Dittmer actually called Russia of this time a diplomatic nonentity.[27] Foreign, if not domestic, observers seriously doubted that Russia was a great power or entitled to claim this status.[28] And the weakness of Russian policy in Asia was particularly evident within this generally unhappy situation.[29] For example, it was only because North Korea insisted on Russian participation in the six-party process concerning its nuclearization that Russia was able to gain entry into that process in 2003. Notably China did not support its entry at first, despite the already existing upsurge in bilateral Sino-Russian relations, a revealing commentary on Beijing's perceptions at the time.

Therefore a new and different direction was needed, one that asserted Russia's strength of purpose and resolve, and that developed fresh capabilities against the Western and thus (both implicitly and explicitly) democratic challenge. Analysts of Putin's foreign policies must understand is that, first and foremost, it was and is an instrument for stabilizing the regime's ability to pursue a domestic agenda of reconstructing centralized power, even autocracy, and then economic development. The enduring constant of Putin's tenure since 2000 has been an unrelenting focus on strengthening the state and its capacity to act for the entire country and society at the expense of all other actors.

The many official statements that the purpose of Russian foreign policy is to provide a stable environment within which Russia could develop economically underscore the strong connection between foreign policy and domestic politics. As Stanislav Secrieru wrote, "Russia's internal agenda represents a constitutive part of a plan designated to reclaim the great power status on the international areana".[30] This quest for great power status in Asia and elsewhere has, at its logical corollary empire, the belief that Russia cannot compete for global or Asian standing and influence without a bloc of satellites behind it. Thus Trenin wrote in 2009 that,

> Russia has been defining itself as a self-standing great power with global reach. Its current ambition is to become a full-fledged world power, one of a handful of more or less equal key players in the twenty-first century global system. Seen from that perspective, the former imperial borderlands of Russia are deemed to be both elements of its power center and a cushion to protect Russia itself from undesirable encroachments by other great powers. --- The aim is to bring about a less U.S./Western-centric system.[31]

Many Putin statements underscore that he has hitherto understood foreign policy As being intended primarily to allow him to pursue his domestic agenda to

[26] Rosefielde (2007).

[27] Dittmer (2003), p. 39.

[28] Freedman, pp. 22–35, Neumann, "Russia as a Great Power," pp. 13–28.

[29] Blank and Rubinstein (1997).

[30] Secrieru (2006), 19.

[31] Trenin (2009), pp. 4–5.

reconstruct Russia as a great and centralized power that would let him pursue a stronger foreign policy. Many official statements also reiterate the point that the primary aim of Russian foreign policy is to create a secure environment for the development of the state and economy. Even some Russian analysts agree that the primary purposes of Russian foreign policy pertain to the domestic arena.[32] And a Swedish analysis observed that,

> Russian national identity was always intimately linked to that of its position as a great power (Derzhava) and 'great powerness' (Derzhavnost'). This aspect of Russian identity is far from dismantled in Russia today and the power and legitimacy of Russia's leadership is to a degree linked to its ability to project, at he very least to a domestic audience, an image of great powerness.[33]

Russian officials and analysts have asserted a new coherence, purpose, and vigor in Russia's Asian policy, claiming that Russian foreign policy's center of gravity was shifting to the East.[34] According to Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin in 2011, President Medvedev identified three main thrusts of his foreign policy: relations with the West, CIS, and the APR.[35] Russian officials acknowledge that Asia is the dynamo of the global economy and assert the emergence of a "polycentric world order" largely composed of rising Asian powers.[36] To play in this new order, Russia must ensure favorable conditions for its modernization, elicit large-scale foreign investment, participate in Asian integration and other processes, and propose a new Asian order free of military blocs (i.e., the US alliance system).[37] Russia's pivot is also driven as much by its anxiety about the vulnerability of its sparsely populated eastern flank as by its desire to project influence. Russia simultaneously seeks to protect its landmass, boost its presence in the Pacific, bridge the yawning gap between its own policies toward Asia and Europe, and figure out a way to work with China and other regional players.[38]

Consequently Moscow vigorously pursues summitry, high-level diplomatic meetings and speeches, energy and arms sales in East Asia, its main currencies of power there. Furthermore, Russia, as it has since Leonid Brezhnev, continues to" proceed from the assumption that one of the most important prerequisites and components of the denuclearization process is the formation of regional common

[32] Lukin (2007), pp. 167–193.

[33] Anderman et al. (2007), p. 32.

[34] "Speech by Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin to the Russian International Studies Association," Moscow, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, www.mid.ru, in English, September 27, 2010, *FBIS SOV*, September 27, 2010.

[35] "Speech by Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin to the Russian International Studies Association," Moscow, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation*, www.mid.ru, in English, September 27, 2010, *FBIS SOV*, September 27, 2010.

[36] Lavrov (2010), pp. 13–14.

[37] Lavrov (2010), pp. 13–22.

[38] Hill and Lo (2013).

security institutions which would be based on the principle of equal security to all parties".[39]

4 Russia's Problematic Great Power Status

Moscow encounters great difficulties in making its claim stick. Because the quest for global great power status in general and in the APR in particular is primarily an identity project for both domestic and foreign audiences Russia's paramount security interest (and not only in the APR) is to secure its recognition as a great power by virtue of its supposedly inherent and universally accepted attributes of great powerness. In practice this meant gaining membership in all the important East Asian security organizations, APEC, ASEM, ASEAN's annual summit, the ASEAN +3, The East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM) etc. Moscow only completed this task in 2012 when Russia hosted the annual APEC summit in Vladivostok.[40] But those tangible gains also coincided with large-scale identity projects like Moscow's enormous investments to make Vladivostok hospitable and worthy of being a major conference center, and to gain the coveted status of being a genuine Asian great power. However, the APRC conference apparently was more of a prestige project than a tangible economic political gain.

It thus follows that Russia is at least equally concerned with being and being seen than with having or doing something to justify its claims. And since East Asian land borders are now largely set and the Sino-Russian border accords are rightly taken as a major achievement of Putin in cementing friendship with China, territorial expansion is excluded as a way of demonstrating great power status. Russia must prove its great power status in Asia by other means. Certainly military power no longer suffices. Indeed, it is commonly accepted that the real attributes of great powerness are not only or not just military power but also large-scale economic power that Russia admittedly lacks. Despite its claims to being or becoming a great Asian power Russia regularly solicits China, Japan, South Korea, India, and ASEAN, investments in Russia to help it obtain desperately-needed capital and technology, hardly the sign of a great power. This has been a core element in Russian foreign policy's overall agenda since 2010 if not before.[41]

Because vindication of an identity as a great power in Asia remains Russia's paramount interest in the APR the quest for economic investment and technology transfer is ultimately intended not just to make Russia richer but to make it a more

[39] Moscow, *ITAR-TASS*, in English, December 18, 2009, *FBIS SOV*, December 18, 2009.

[40] Artem Lukin, in Hawaii books.

[41] "Programma Effektivnoe Ispol'zovnaiya Na Susteme Osnove Vneshnepoliticheskikh Faktorov v Tselakh Dolgosrochnogo Razvitiia Rossisskoi Federatsii," *Russky Newsweek* May 10–16, 2010, http://www.runewsweek.ru/country/34184/

effective strategic competitor.[42] Russia's assertion of a great power identity is discernible, not only in efforts to get into the Korean six-party process and have its equities respected there but also in its constant displays of power, exercises, overflights, boastful territorial claims in the Arctic and Asia. Russian policy in the APR is at least if not more about gaining recognition than about achieving concrete political-economic-military goals or shaping Asia's future trajectory. Despite claims to the contrary, Russia's primary goals in the APR are possession rather than milieu goals.[43] This is not to deny that Russia has tangible material and political interests and goals or ideas about how to achieve them or how Asian security should be structured. A recent report from the Valdai Club went into painstaking detail concerning them.[44] Nonetheless being there is equally if not more important than actually doing something.

There are several examples of this primacy of possession goals in Russia's Asian policy; as being seen as opposed to doing something. Despite membership in key security organizations Russia plays no role in the many Asian fora devoted to interstate economic cooperation and coordination.[45] Neither is Moscow involved in nor interested in joining the US-proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (PPP). While the TPP is visibly a US-inspired integration project for East Asian economies except for China, it is not interested in proposing an alternative or in joining existing Asian international institutions. This also applies to the more recent formation of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa). As Robert Lieber has observed,

> Not only are the BRICS reluctant to cooperate on global governance issues, but their record of cooperation with each other is also limited. Although they have been meeting as a group annually since 2009, and even agreed in principle to establish a BRIC bank, the differences among them remain considerably greater than their commonalities and little in the way of tangible achievements has resulted. For example, China had sought to have the funding burden for the new bank split equally among the five BRICS, while the others preferred that China take on the greater burden. Despite a degree of commonality as emerging powers, the differences among the BRICS are at least as important as what unites them. Only three are democratic (Brazil, India, South Africa), while two are authoritarian or semi-authoritarian (China, Russia). Two are geopolitical rivals with unresolved border and territorial disputes (China, India). One is primarily an energy, raw materials, and weapons exporter (Russia). And two (Brazil, South Africa) are showing signs of pushing back against predatory export behavior and foreign influence on the part of China.[46]

This distrust between BRIC members, in this case Russia and China, appears in the following issues:

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[42] Wallander (2005).

[43] Wolfers (1962), pp. 73–77.

[44] *Toward the Great Ocean—2, or Russia's Breakthrough to Asia*, Valdai Club, 2013, http://valdaiclub.com/publication/67120.html

[45] Benjamin J. Cohen, "Finance and Security in East Asia"; Miles Kahler, "Regional Economic Institutions and East Asian Security," both in Goldstein and Mansfield (2013), pp. 50–55, and 66–95.

[46] Lieber (2013/14), p. 15.

- China's pursuit of commercial dominance in Central Asia has led Russia to organize a Eurasian Economic Community (EURASEC) and Customs Union, one of whose outcomes is the imposed reduction of Chinese trade with both Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.
- The mounting calls for either leaving or multilateralizing the INF treaty, mainly because of Chinese missile developments and Russia's insistent demand that any future strategic arms negotiations be multilateral, i. e. include China.
- The twenty-year failure to date to negotiate a gas accord with China despite countless statements that such an agreement would be imminent. And when the agreement was finally signed in 2014 it was widely acknowledged that it was only signed because Moscow needed to offset Western pressure on Ukraine and that China got the better of the deal which in many ways is still incomplete.[47]
- Moscow's conspicuous disinclination to support Chinese territorial demands against both Japan and ASEAN members.[48]

Meanwhile if Russia really is a great power either in Asia or globally then its constant refusal to contribute to global governance or responsibility represents an abdication of its status. If being a great power means self-sufficiency and pursuit of a completely independent power that "defects" from global or even regional governance then the concept of great power is entirely inadequate to Russia's Asian challenges.[49] And Russian policy would then be inadequate regarding Asia. Indeed, in 2010 Lukyanov noted that Russia's role in major international organizations like the G-8 had declined due to the formation of the G-20 but that this was part of a larger trend.

> A curious picture is emerging. Russia possesses influence (and sometimes even increases it) in these structures whose role is generally shrinking in a global context. This applies to differing extents to NATO, the OSCE, and the European Union alike. But Moscow finds itself in secondary roles in the places to which real political and economic activity is shifting. --- It is now time to offer proof to the East, although Russia has an acute shortage of arguments to make there.[50]

Predictably Lukyanov ties this trend to the danger of falling into the second tier of powers but also spells out the risks for Russia in Asia.

Much of this policy failure is clearly traceable to the content of Russia's great power concept that entails Russia's self-sufficiency and total independence. Russia's abstention from integrationist projects and relative absence in Asia owes much to the fact that it aims to assert its great power status abroad in ways similar to the ways that Putin presents himself at home. Just as the autocrat is utterly unbound by any domestic institution or persons, Russia insists upon retaining, or claiming to retain a free hand unbound by any integration charter or organization. Russia,

[47] This is the subject of a future paper by the author.

[48] Blank (2014a, 2014b).

[49] Wang and French (2013), pp. 985–999.

[50] Lukyanov (2010).

according to Coral Bell and Trenin, is either an "independent variable with an uncertain trajectory," or else

"Strategically speaking, Russia is still second only to the US in a nuclear–strike capacity, and has the widest diplomatic options of any of the powers".[51] Therefore Russian leaders endlessly intone that Russia is a self-sufficient power when nothing could be farther from the truth or a more self-defeating concept.

In a real sense the very nature of Russia's "political constitution" inhibits or impedes achievement of its desired status in Asia and elsewhere. One account of Russia's turn from supporting US activities in the war on terror to an adversarial relationship, largely due to the invasion of Iraq, stresses the role of so called "positional goals,' i.e., status and prestige not material or tangible interests in determining Russian policy.[52] As Robert Legvold incisively observed in 1997, Russia wants status, not responsibility.[53]

Likewise, in the six-party process, foreign diplomats have privately ridiculed Russia's contribution to the process as being "more nuisance then value", another sign of its low standing in Asia and on the Korea problem.[54] At one point there was speculation that Russia is wearying of the Six-Party talks due both to North Korea's behavior but also because the bilateral talks between the US and North Korea have sidelined it and Japan, relegating them to a lower status in the talks.[55] And when Russia gears itself up to undertake a major initiative towards North Korea as it did in 2011 the results are disappointing. Thus even though Kim Jong-Il agreed to consider Russia's pet project, a trans-Siberian and Then Trans-Korean pipeline to bring gas to South (and possibly eventually North) Korea and royalties to the DPRK, 2 years later the project remained dead in the water signifying Moscow's lack of leverage upon Pyongyang.[56]

Thus Russia, to a great extent remains absent in Asia. At the same time the fact that Russia's great power identity is the key interest to be secured here if not

[51] Trenin (2007); Bell (2005), p. 36.

[52] Ambrosio (2005), pp. 1189–1210.

[53] Legvold (1997), p. 67.

[54] Lo, *Axis of Convenience*, p. 240.

[55] Ferguson (2008).

[56] Vladimir Putin Took Part in the APEC CEO Summit." http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/6086, October 7, 2013; "Russian President Addresses South Korea Business Forum, " www.kremlin.ru, in Russian, November 13, 2013, *FBIS SOV*, November 13, 2013; Moscow, *Interfax*, in English, November 12, 2013, *Open Source Center, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Central Eurasia*, Henceforth, *FBIS SOV*, November 12, 2013; Seoul, *Yonhap*, in English, November 12, 2013, *FBIS SOV*, November 12, 2013; Aleksandr' Zhebin, "Russia-DPRK: People Do Not Choose Their Neighbors. Pyongyang Ready to Be Friends with Moscow Again," Moscow, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, in Russian , October 14, 2013, FBS SOV, October 14, 2013.

Moscow, *Interfax-AVN Online*, in English, October 11, 2013, *FBIS SOV*, October 11, 2013.

globally helps explain why Russia arguably remains relatively unsuccessful in securing its geopolitical objectives or milieu goals in the APR.[57] As Hill and Lo acidly observe,

> Notwithstanding the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Russia in April 2013—the first by a Japanese prime minister in a decade—relations with Japan remain strained. During a recent massive Russian military exercise in the Russian Far East, Japan and the United States were the putative invading enemy forces. Moscow and Tokyo have still not signed a formal peace treaty under World War II, and their territorial dispute over the Southern Kuriles (known as the Northern Territories in Japan) seems as intractable as ever. On the Korean peninsula, Russia is the least influential player in the so-called six-party talks in North Korea. Indeed, its contribution has been described in the past as" more nuisance than value" by regional diplomats. Russia is almost entirely peripheral to attempts to resolve the impasse between North and South. Moscow was never able to convert North Korean leader Kim Jong Il's well-documented fondness for lengthy Russian train trips into influence over North Korean policy; and Kim Jong Un does not seem to have inherited his father's predilection for Russian landscapes.[58]

Even where Russia advances specific military-political arrangements pertaining to Asian security for attaining milieu goals, the "hidden text" represents a demand for an unmerited and externally asserted status and equality. And this is also true in Europe.[59]

In September 2010 Russia and China jointly proposed a multipolar Asian order. In June 2011 they jointly declared that the world steadily evolves towards multipolarity, that they will advance their earlier joint proposal, and comprehensively deepen their partnership that is a factor for peace in the APR. As part of this joint proposal both governments ostentatiously signed an agreement recognizing each other's territorial claims upon Japan and denouncing efforts to "undo" the post-1945 territorial status quo.

Accordingly both governments agreed to promote multilateral mechanisms across Asia.[60] Moscow's diplomats immediately began pushing these ideas to Asian audiences.[61] This Sino-Russian proposal is based on "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, and cooperation." All states would respect each other's sovereignty (i.e., no criticism of their domestic politics) integrity (i.e., support for Russian and Chinese postures on outstanding territorial issues, the Kurile Islands, the Senkakus, Taiwan, and possibly even China's claims on the Spratly Islands, non-alliance principles, equal and transparent security frameworks, equal and

[57] Hill and Lo (2013).

[58] Hill and Lo (2013).

[59] Anderman et al. (2007), p. 35.

[60] "Joint Statement of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on the Current International Situation and Major International Issues," Beijing, *Xinhua Domestic Service* in Chinese, June 16, 2011, *Open Source Center, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Central Eurasia* (Henceforth *FBIS-SOV*), June 16, 2011.

[61] Robert Karniol, "Russia's Place in Asia-Pac Security Set-Up," Singapore, *The Straits times Online,* in English, June 22, 2011, *FBIS SOV*, June 22, 2011; Moscow, *Interfax,* in English June 6, 2011, *FBIS SOV*, June 6, 2011.

indivisible security, etc.[62] Russia seeks India's assent to this formulation, and even covertly solicited Japan's endorsement even while publicly humiliating Japan over the Kurile Islands and flying regular overflights into Japanese air space. This showed its endemic desire to play both sides against the middle and its fundamentally anti-American orientation.[63] Since the vagueness of the proposal benefits only Russia and China and squarely denounces the US alliance system in Asia, while greatly resembling Moscow's European Security Treaty of 2009–2010 it remains a shallow self-serving indicator of Russia's concept of Asian, if not global, multipolarity.[64]

But, equally important: it shows the demand for equality and inclusion based on Russia's mere assertion of those facts without any genuine examination of actual Asian conditions. Moscow demanded an exalted status simply on the basis of its assertion of this proposal that utterly disregarded contending claims in Asian security issues, hardly a way to achieve that status. Thus Moscow associated itself with Beijing to present itself as a system-forming power with regard to Asian security without doing anything specific to commit itself to Asia or offer genuine proposals for security there. Indeed, Moscow could not even uphold its agreement with China concerning disputed territorial claims. In 2012 when China called its sovereignty in the Senkakus a core interest, Nikolai Patrushev, head of Russia's Security Council, told Japanese officials that Russia will not take sides in this dispute. Japan and China must solve this problem through mutual dialogue. Furthermore, Japan and Russia agreed to "strengthen the bilateral dialogue in a bid to expand cooperation in the fields of security and defense amid the rapidly changing security environment in the Asia-Pacific region".[65] Clearly Moscow retreated from supporting China's territorial claims.[66] And in 2013, as Chinese threats against Japan over these islands mounted, Russia conspicuously offered to begin a serious effort to normalize relations with Japan and obtain Japanese investment. Russia has good reasons for doing so but they hardly substantiate either the 2010–2011 proposal or Russia's claims to an identity of interests with China or to true great power status in Asia.

Undeterred by the illogic of its first proposal, at ASEAN's annual Foreign Ministers' Conference in Brunei in 2013, Russia submitted a new or revised (the details have not been released) collective security proposal for Asia, drafted together with China. This document again aims to weaken the US position, especially in Southeast Asia.

> The proposal contained not only familiar regional and international security guidelines and codes of conduct, but also offered ambitious ideas that resonated with ASEAN strategists.

[62] "China, Russia Call for Efforts in Asia-Pacific Security," *China Daily*, September 28, 2010.

[63] Conversations with US analysts, Washington, D.C, March, 2011; Shukla (2011); Lavrov (2011), pp. 3–5.

[64] *European Security Treaty*, www.kremlin.ru, November 29, 2009.

[65] Blank (2012b).

[66] Blank (2012a, 2012b).

> Since the end of 2011, ASEAN strategists have been searching for ways to deal with the US rebalancing policy and, at same time, preserve the grouping's bargaining power. In other words, ASEAN too is looking for a rebalancing policy --- What has brought China and Russia together is their common objective to mitigate what they perceive as US hegemony. Beijing and Moscow also want to ensure that Washington's revitalized security alliances and rebalancing strategy don't weaken their presence and influence in Asia.[67]

The two sides also expected to further their collaboration at the EAS summit organized by ASEAN for heads of state in October 2013, a conference that Russia has conspicuously failed to send its president to attend in the last 2 years.[68] In addition,

> Beijing and Moscow have identified the EAS as the most appropriate platform, along with the existing guidelines and codes of conduct in the region, for building a new regional structure. This is a far cry from the past when Russia was used to pushing its version of collective security without considering regional concerns. Today Russia is more willing to work with ASEAN and other regional and international groupings. China and Russia—also pivotal dialogue partners of ASEAN—want to be on par with ASEAN in setting the agenda and shaping the future security landscape of the region. And that is a welcome and refreshing change for regional economic development and security.[69]

Unfortunately Russia's past record and what we can discern from this report belie this conclusion. A demand for weakening US alliances in Asia cannot succeed nor does it benefit Russia although it certainly benefits China. That weakening would leave Moscow face to face with a Beijing that will soon eclipse it in virtually every index of usable power and undermines chances for an equilibrium in the APR even if it temporarily produces the narcotic of "equal security". Indeed, this confirms Lo's observation above of China giving Russia empty declarations to salve its ego while pocketing the concrete strategic gains to be had for China.[70] China's continuing unilateralism in East Asia and Russia's visible unhappiness with it also belies this joint plan.

The 2010–2013 proposals with China in many ways extend a dominant motif of Russian policy in Asia, i.e., cooperation with China, to boost Russia's overall Asian standing so that it could then gain the resources (tangible and intangible) with which to check China's hegemonic aspirations in Asia through enhanced ties with all Asian actors. Just as Russia leveraged its earlier cooperation with China to gain entrée into Asia and its security institutions it has used this proposal to that end. Thus it has consistently sought to overcome the neglect of Russia as a major Asian player that clashes with its self-presentation as a great power and its determination to be accepted as such in Asia.

Accordingly, as compensation for and in reaction to this neglect Russia through diplomatic proclamations like this joint proposal with China and the lure of its energy and arms sales either ought to be or already constitutes a pole of either if not

[67] Chongkittavorn (2013).

[68] Chongkittavorn (2013).

[69] Chongkittavorn (2013).

[70] Lo (2010), pp. 13–14.

both the regional and/or global international orders. Therefore logically it is both a regional and global great power and pole in Europe and Asia where it serves as a pivot around which other states who share its interest in restraining US power can coalesce. Consequently Russia demands a voice in the reconstruction of a new global architecture of security despite its inability to sustain its own joint proposal with China.[71]

This is not the only problem inherent in this proposal and in Russia's quest for great power status. The joint proposal with China for a security order represents an effort to persuade other Asian states not of its equality in Asia but of its "supra-equality" as a great Asian power who is also a "system-forming power." Russian leaders invoke US decline and Russia's rise, claiming that "We do not want to return to confrontations between blocs. We do not want to split the world into various military and political groups. But Russia has sufficient potential to influence the construction of a new world system".[72] Thus Russia is a "system-forming" power in its own right, both globally and in Asia.[73] Not content with merely a regional role, Russia sees itself as an integral global power who is essential to building this global order. Or as Sergei Yastrzhemskiy, Putin's foreign policy advisor, said in 2007, "Russia should play its role whenever we have relevant interests".[74] That project is achievable only by leveraging Russia's presence in key regions to midwife anti-American coalitions to force the US to acknowledge its equal status and role. Therefore Russia cannot be excluded from participation anywhere in the world where it has "relevant interests". However, nothing here refers to East Asia's actual needs and concrete security agenda. Instead this global campaign aims essentially to force Washington to give Moscow the respect it craves.[75]

In this context the joint proposal extends the hidden rationale behind Russia's China, if not Asian policy since 2000 and perhaps even earlier. The quest for status or possession goals rather than milieu goals has also led Russian leaders to see the Asian security agenda and its Asian policy not so much as pertaining to Asia and Asian issues. Instead it has seen Asia as more of an adjunct to its global campaign to force Washington to take its interests seriously and grant Russia more respect, equality, and overall status. Early in Putin's tenure it became clear that for him and Russia, a fundamental, if not primary purpose of the rapprochement with China was to counter what both governments discerned as global US pressure. Russia's China policy may well have been and still is primarily an effort to leverage the complex

[71] President Vladimir Putin, "Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security," www.kremlin.ru, February 12, 2007.

[72] President Vladimir Putin, "Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security, February 10, 2007", www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2007/02/10/0138;

[73] Rangismaporn (2009).

[74] "Interview With Sergei Yastrzhemskiy", Moscow: *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, in Russian, February 22, 2007, *Open Source Center, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Central Eurasia* (Henceforth *FBIS-SOV*), February 22, 2007.

[75] Ushakov (2007).

relations in the Sino-Russian-American triangle at the global level rather than an effort to enhance Russia's regional standing in Asia or actually confront complex Asian issues. Thus in 2000, Russian Ambassador to China, Igor Rogachev, told a Chinese interviewer,

> Grounded in our common understanding of the multi-polar trend in the world order, Russia and China are both endeavoring to build a more stable, fair, and democratic new international order. Russia sees developing a partnership with China as a key factor promoting the formation of such an order. In which sense, the Russia-China partnership is also an indispensable force for keeping the world stable.[76]

Likewise, in Putin's first meetings with Chinese President Jiang Zemin in 2000, Chinese Vice Premier Qian Qichen briefed the press as follows,

> Qian added that the two-hour private meeting between Jiang Zemin and Putin was sincere, friendly, cordial, frank, concrete, and pragmatic. It could be summed up in five key points. In their view, China and Russia have common strategic interests based on a solid, extensive popular view. In view of the two countries' responsibility toward world peace and security, it is necessary to consider the conclusion of a treaty of friendship and cooperation so that the two countries can become good neighbors, friends, and partners. According to Qian, the treaty will be in force for 30 years or even longer. Both China and Russia are faced with military threat and blackmail from US hegemonism. Therefore, it is necessary to substantiate the material basis of the strategic cooperative partnership between the two countries and, proceeding from the common strategic interests of the two countries, expand their relations of cooperation.[77]

Indeed, at Putin's first meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan in March, 2000 he said, "the relations between Moscow and Beijing "are resolving the problem of stability in the world both on a global scale and in bilateral relations".[78] Apparently China then agreed in seeing even a weakened Russia as "the strongest geopolitical lever" it had against the US.[79]

This orientation actually predated Putin's presidency. Russian statements of a decade or two ago concerning policy in Asia show that today's and earlier objectives resemble each other. Similarly the assertion of equality with other players upon a merely self-proclaimed basis without any commitment to a particular course of action or policy proposal was already a prevailing motif in Russian policy.

Speaking at the IISS Shangri-La conference in Singapore in 2011, Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov said that,

> Russian-Chinese proposals are aimed at helping the countries of the region to realize that security is indivisible and at abandoning attempts to strengthen one's security at the expense of others. New regional security architecture should be based on the universal

[76] Guifeng and Tiegang (2000).

[77] Hong Kong, *Tai Yang Pao*, in Chinese, July 24, 2000, *FBIS SOV*, July 24, 2000.

[78] Ilya Kedrov and Dmitry Kosyrev, "Will Putin's First Visit Be to China? He Is Also Awaited in India, Japan, and Other Countries", Moscow, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta,* in Russian, March 2, 2000, *FBIS SOV,* March 2, 2000.

[79] "Media Treatment of Putin Visit Signals Beijing Intent to Continue Boosting Ties"], *FBIS SOV*, August 2, 2000.

> principles of international law, non-aligned approaches, confidence and openness, with due regard to the diversity of the APR and an emerging polycentric balance of forces.[80]

Ivanov's suggestion that this proposal simply grow out of ASEAN's and the EAS' existing mechanism in whatever flexible form the members want, i.e., that Russia and China retain a veto power over its ultimate manifestation, underscores this proposal's essential insubstantiality and fundamental lack of seriousness regarding a multilateral or multipolar forum that would exercise real influence on Asian security. A truly serious proposal would obviously spell out critical details of the structure and process involved.

> We do not suggest—I repeat, we do not suggest—creating a new regional organization. A flexible mechanism of multilateral interaction relying on the existing structures and forums, which could be incorporated into an extended partnership network, is likely to serve the needs of the region better. We call this approach 'network diplomacy'. Besides, we consider it reasonable to establish connections not only between organizations and forums, but also between specialized agencies, notably counter-terrorism, anti-drug centers, and disaster relief centers. We would like to see ASEAN as the *primus motor* of this process and consider the Association to be a core factor of regional policy and integration.[81]

Ivanov's remarks display the essential continuity with the 1990s and the present in the absence of any specific action that Russia proposed to enhance Asian security other than its entry into the game. Writing in 1996 Karasin observed that the era of imbalance and tilting towards the West in Russian foreign policy was over. Moscow would now, he said, conduct a policy of intensifying its Asian politices even while conducting vigorous policies in the West. The motives for doing so were Russia's desire to participate in all the most important, regional, political, and economic organizations. It sought such membership because security and stability in the APR were only attainable through common efforts by all countries without exception (an indicator that Moscow was essentially isolated then). Russia desired stability and security in the APR so that there were no negative surprises for it or for others. Already then Russia advocated a multipolar world with Russia as a pole in its own right offsetting the US and its alliance system and sought to join as an equal among equals (a telltale phrase) the regional economic process that already prefigured the APR's development into today's dynamo.[82]

Writing while Foreign Minister Evgeni Primakov was proclaiming an Asian orientation of Russian policy and a strategic triangle with China and India, Karasin not only hypocritically denounced such talk of triangles but also clearly acknowledged the extra-Asian wellsprings of Russian foreign policy. Moscow clearly coveted entry into Asia to counter the US. As he wrote,

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[80] *Speech Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov to the IISS Shangri-la Conference, Singapore, June, 2011*, http://www.iiss.org/conferences/the-shangri-la-dialogue/shangri-la-dialogue-2011/speeches/sixth-plenary-session/sergei-ivanov/.

[81] *Speech Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov to the IISS Shangri-la Conference, Singapore, June, 2011*, http://www.iiss.org/conferences/the-shangri-la-dialogue/shangri-la-dialogue-2011/speeches/sixth-plenary-session/sergei-ivanov/.

[82] Karasin (1996).

> The guidelines of our Asia Pacific policy are as follows, Russia proceeds from the premise that with the era of the domination of the two super-powers over and the emergence of new centers of power (China, India, and Japan), the international community has adopted new "rules of the game." At the same time, we are against the division of the countries of the region into predominant powers and dependents, into "the leading and the led ones," and into the main and the second-hand. I think that strategic "axis", "triangles" and other similar structures should become things of the past, as they smell of confrontation. Our strategic partnership with China, India, and other Asia Pacific countries is not aimed at the division of the spheres of interests between certain groupings. It is aimed to pull together the efforts towards the construction of a multi-polar and democratic order which would guarantee each country, large or small, peace, security, justice, and development.[83]

This statement, we might note, came as Primakov was striving to assemble exactly such a triangle with China and India.

In 2000 Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov told the General Assembly of the Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies that,

> The Russian policy in the formation of a security system in the Asia-Pacific region is based on equal and well-balanced cooperation both with the main centers of power in the region, such as the United Sates, China, and Japan, the ASEAN member states and India, and with all other states.[84]

But at the same time consolidation of friendly ties with China is" among the most important tasks for ensuring Russia's national security" and "This statement sounds axiomatic today".[85] Karasin also said that the main goals of Russia's APR policy were "maximum participation in [international] security structures" to help ensure "stability and predictability" in that region." Second, it aims to secure its borders and introduce long-term confidence-building measures. Third, it wants to establish economic-political relations with all countries of the region to promote the development of the RFE.[86]

Thus Russia's approach to the APR from its inception aimed at possession rather than milieu goals. One problem not connected directly with the quest for status is the fact that Moscow's Asian security proposals resemble its abortive 2009 draft European Security Treaty, another clearly anti-American and anti-NATO document.[87] Such proposals merely reinforce the general Asian perception that Russia really is a European power and that its real and primary interests lie there rather than in Asia. At the same time the remarkable continuity in goals outlined by Karasin in 1996 with contemporary security and policy goals as stated in the joint proposal and Sergei Ivanov's speech shows that Russia still sees itself as an outsider in Asian politics or at least as an incomplete participant and player in Asia. Russia's 2013 Foreign Policy concept states that,

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[83] Karasin (1996).

[84] Moscow, *ITAR-TASS*, in English, April 20, 2000, *FBIS SOV*, April 20, 2000.

[85] Moscow, *ITAR-TASS*, in English, April 20, 2000, *FBIS SOV*, April 20, 2000.

[86] *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty,* February 11, 2000.

[87] *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty,* February 11, 2000.

> Strengthening Russia's presence in the Asia-Pacific region (APR) is becoming increasingly important since Russia is an integral part of this fastest-developing geopolitical zone, toward which the center of world economy and politics is gradually shifting. Russia is interested in participating actively in APR integration processes, using the possibilities offered by the APR to implement programs meant to boost Siberian and Far Eastern economy, creating a transparent and equitable security architecture in the APR and cooperation on a collective basis.[88]

And when the concept talks about strengthening Asian regional security organizations its aspirations are again clearly self-serving for the document says that, "Russia considers it vital to create and promote a partner network of regional associations in the APR. In this context, special emphasis is placed on enhancing the role in regional and global affairs of the SCO whose constructive influence on the situation in the region as a whole has significantly increased".[89]

Therefore its proposals, both then and now, are really about overcoming its loss of global status, i.e., vis-à-vis the United States, more than they are connected with genuinely resolving current Asian security issues. Rather than actually participate in resolving those issues like a true great power, Russia plays its own game. Moscow's professed interest in regional security is first and foremost an effort to leverage its geographical position and attributes of great power standing, membership in the Security Council, vast energy reserves, nuclear weapons, geographical expanse, etc. for purposes of global standing. Ultimately Russian policy remains rhetorical rather than an actual policy capable of being carried out through practical action.[90]

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[90] Hill and Lo (2013).

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Eurasian Great Power Triangle

Artyom Lukin

Abstract Can America afford to compete with two Eurasian great powers simultaneously? It clearly was able to act that way in the 1990s, at a time when Russia was weak and China not yet strong enough. Thus while building up its hegemony in the Asia-Pacific, Washington encroached upon Moscow's traditional sphere of influence in continental Eurasia. Enjoying its unipolar moment, the U.S. was not afraid of angering both Russia and China. This policy of confronting the two great powers is still largely in place to this day. The Ukraine crisis of 2013–2014 has only served to underscore the unresolved antagonism between Russia and the U.S.-led West. The battle over Ukraine, whatever its final outcome may be, will inevitably make Russia less "European" and more "Asian", pushing it closer to China. To avoid a new edition of confrontational bipolarity, Washington, Moscow and Beijing must strive to reach at least some modicum of accommodation.

1 Setting the Scene: The Asia-Pacific Theater as Part of the Eurasian Geopolitical Continuum

It is impossible to make sense of the Asia-Pacific's geopolitics without first placing it within a wider *Eurasian* context. For the Asia-Pacific theater is very much part of the huge Eurasian theater. The concept of Eurasia denotes a vast area which includes East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, Northern Eurasia/Russia, Europe, and the Middle East. Since the advent of modern geopolitics Eurasia has been seen as the "heartland"—as arguably the most crucial area of the world.

Rather clearly defined, like the "Middle East", Eurasia has always been a geopolitical continuum, with most of its different parts not isolated or insulated from one another but rather merging into one another. Of late this interconnectedness has become even more pronounced. The vast Eurasian space—with extremely diverse regions and countries—is increasingly becoming an integrated strategic

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complex. Already in the 1990s Zbigniew Brzezinski anticipated this when he wrote of Eurasia as a "grand chessboard."[1] It seems that now Eurasia is reaching a degree of security interdependence that events in one corner of this supercontinent have direct, significant implications for regions at the opposite end. The Ukraine crisis, for example, becomes indirectly relevant to the Sino-Japanese dispute over the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

Geopolitically, the Asia-Pacific is nothing other than the eastern seaboard of Eurasia with the adjacent waters of the Western Pacific. Under this interpretation, at present not all of the Pacific Rim countries can be viewed as relevant to the Asia-Pacific geopolitics. Among the Pacific states on the American continent, only the United States counts as a true Asia-Pacific power due to its outposts close to Asia, such as Alaska, Hawaii, and Guam, as well as its military commitments in the Western Pacific.

Whereas the Asia-Pacific is now Eurasia's chief *maritime* theater,[2] Eurasia's main *continental* theater comprises Europe, Northern Eurasia/Russia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. One important reason why Eurasia is emerging as an integrated security area is the dominant role of great powers with far-flung geopolitical interests on the supercontinent which quite often overlap and even clash with one another. Apart from the established great powers involved in Eurasian affairs, such as Russia, the US, and some European states, the recent decades have seen the emergence of new, powerful, and ambitious players, most notably China and, to a lesser extent, India. Thus the Eurasian geopolitical space is getting far more crowded in terms of the presence of great- and would-be great powers.

While in the 1990s and the 2000s, the geopolitical order of Eurasia could very much be described as America's hegemony, this is no longer the case. Washington's "unipolar moment" is clearly over and Eurasia has now entered the age of multipolarity. It would not be a gross overstatement to claim that a multipolar balance of power, under which geopolitical influence is more or less dispersed among several players, has already arrived in Eurasia. This multipolarity is complex and multilayered, as its constituent poles have different geopolitical potentials. Geopolitical poles are understood as players who have significant material capabilities as well as ambitions and political will to shape international order.

The top tier of Eurasian geopolitical order is represented by the US, Russia and China. Although the days of Washington's undisputable primacy are gone, the US remains the most formidable military force in Eurasia and controls a vast network of political alliances and partnerships.

Russia, though a far cry from the Soviet Union, is still a very powerful player, its influence deriving in large part from its pivotal position in Eurasia's heartland. As long

[1] **Zbigniew Brzezinski. *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy And Its Geostrategic Imperatives*. N.Y.: Basic Books,** 1998**.**

[2] This is not to say that the Asia-Pacific is Eurasia's only maritime theater. To be sure, the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Indian Ocean are also maritime areas adjacent to Eurasia. However, these theaters do not now serve as arenas for strategic competition or at least the level of geopolitical rivalry found within them is significantly lower than that in the Asia-Pacific.

as Russia is a transcontinental country, with direct presence in both Europe and Asia, Moscow will remain a principal contending actor in Eurasia. And should Russia succeed in creating the Eurasian Union promoted by Vladimir Putin this would only further reinforce Moscow's position as one of Eurasia's truly leading powers.

In recent years, China has begun in earnest to project its influence beyond its immediate neighborhood, becoming not just an East Asian but a Eurasian power. In this, it is helped by its meteoric economic growth and rising trade and investment linkages, as well as by the buildup in military projection capabilities. Like Russia, China's geopolitical position in Eurasia is in a very real sense, pivotal, linking South Asia, Central Asia, Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia.

To be sure, there are other major players in Eurasia, such as the EU and individual European states, India, Japan, Iran, and Turkey. Yet it is currently the US, Russia and China who are the most prominent contenders in the Eurasia arena. In continental Eurasia the main contest now seems to be between the US-led West and Moscow over the control of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and the Caspian region, while Beijing, though increasingly more influential in these regions, is still taking more of a backseat. By contrast, in *maritime* Eurasia, or the Asia-Pacific, the two preeminent players are China and the US, with Russia a secondary power. This reinforces the definite impression that the US, despite overall relative decline, is still very much the pivotal power, being a major force *both* in the continental and maritime theaters of the Eurasian geopolitical complex.

2 The Asia-Pacific Theater

As noted earlier, the Asia-Pacific is the eastern, predominantly maritime, part of Eurasia. It encompasses the countries of East Asia, including Australia, and the Western Pacific. South Asia and the Indian Ocean can also be treated as a part of the greater Asia-Pacific, albeit still a peripheral part. The geopolitical order of the Asia-Pacific is now in a power transition, with the U.S. gradually losing the degree of primacy enjoyed ever since the end of World War II. The current U.S. position in the region might be described at best as "residual hegemony", in that America now retains unquestionable superiority only in the military dimension—and even this is not guaranteed to last for long.

In which case, what kind of order is going to replace America's preeminence in the Asia-Pacific? It is clear that at present, and for the foreseeable future, America's and China's respective geopolitical capabilities in the Asia-Pacific overshadow those of any and all the other players. In this regard, the current geopolitical landscape in the region can be characterized as bipolar. In fact, as early as in the late 1990s, some scholars started to describe the East Asian/Asia-Pacific order as dominated by Washington and Beijing.[3]

[3] Robert R. Ross. *The Geography of the Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-first Century*. International Security, Vol. 23, No 4 (Spring 1999), pp. 81–118.

3 The US–China Rivalry

Relations between the two Pacific superpowers, often billed as "the most important bilateral relationship of the twenty-first century", remain quite problematic and, indeed, precarious. US–China disagreements are, of course, many and diverse. That said, one can argue that not all of them are of equal importance, with many of the current differences between Washington and Beijing belonging to the secondary level of politics, such as trade/currency disputes and the issue of human rights. However high-profile and contentious they might appear, these and other bilateral problems are not insurmountable. The US used to have serious economic quarrels with Western Europe and, especially Japan, but those disagreements were successfully worked out eventually.

Human rights/lack of democracy in China is actually not a major problem, either. For all its democracy promotion rhetoric, the US counts among its friends some thoroughly undemocratic regimes, such as the ones in the Middle East. Nor does China necessarily view its human rights reputation as a crucial area which should be defended at any cost. Indeed, Chinese leaders themselves occasionally admit they have to improve their human rights performance.

The essence of *low politics* is mostly about money that, after some haggling, can be relatively easily distributed and shared among the interested parties. *High politics*, or geopolitics, is basically about the distribution of power. Sharing political power is much more difficult than economic assets. It is the realm of high politics that really matters between the US and China. Specifically, this means that Beijing would like to see America's strategic presence significantly reduced in the Western Pacific and its own preeminence established in East Asia, whereas the US, for its part, is keen upon staying the dominant force in the Asia-Pacific while denying China any such opportunity to carve out any rival sphere of influence in the region.

The re are those who argue the US might be willing to offer Beijing a nominally co-equal standing in the world order, as within the G-2 global governance condominium proposed by Washington a few years ago. Yet China, for all its status sensitivity, will not buy into such proposals. Beijing knows that, irregardless of Washington's lukewarm stance, it is on course for earning world power ranking anyway. Instead, what China wants from Washington are concrete geopolitical concessions in the Asia-Pacific. First, it wants America to remove its *de facto* extended deterrence which is currently shielding Taiwan, while preventing Beijing from executing national unification on its terms. Second, it seeks recognition of the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and South China Sea as areas within China's sphere of special security interests. In other words, Beijing does not want to see US aircraft carriers patroling its coastal waters. Third, America must stop the policy which the Chinese call "strategic encirclement" of China, which Americans themselves sometimes refer to as "hedging".

In fact, the Chinese demands are not altogether unreasonable. After all, Taiwan is internationally recognized as an inalienable part of the PRC, and China has legitimate grounds for worrying about having its strategic security compromised by any foreign military presence in its own immediate backyard. Reasonable or not,

America is unlikely to make these concessions, given that geopolitical thinking in the US still views as unacceptable the possibility of any single power dominating continental Eurasia and/or the Asia-Pacific. The Munich precedent, still deeply ingrained in Western and American political psyches, teaches that just as acceptance by Britain and France of Germany's claims to the *Sudetenland* inadvertently led to later direct confrontation, substantial concessions to a determined challenger like China at present will only make the situation worse. That if allowed to retake Taiwan Beijing would simply be encouraged further down the path of expansionism.

In all probability, such a line of thinking is misguided. China held suzerainty over much of East Asia in the past, but never attempted to conquer other parts of the world. Indeed, it might well be that the West projects onto China its own mentality of pursuing absolute power and dominance.

This suggests that America faces a fundamental dilemma regarding China and basically has two options. The first is to make a grand bargain with Beijing, recognizing Chinese claims over Taiwan and the Western Pacific in the hope that China would then behave as a responsible regional hegemon. Such a move might then remove the main issues of contention between the two great powers, paving the way for their close partnership and possibly even duumvirate in global affairs. However, there is no perfect guarantee that such accommodation would actually ensure peace and stability, since there would always remain a risk that China, having got what it initially desired, would not stop there and raise its demands further and further. Again, the analogy of Munich. Besides, as noted earlier, American policymakers would have first to profoundly change their geopolitical mindset to embrace this approach.

Which is why the other option appears more plausible and, in fact, is being exercised by America. The Obama administration's "Pacific pivot" aims at preventing China's rise as a dominant East Asian power, with the potential for leading to a dangerous head-on confrontation. If anything, a US–China standoff is going to be even more perilous than the Cold War one between the US and the Soviet Union. The USSR, particularly in its latter days, was essentially a status quo power, whereas China is clearly not satisfied with the existing geopolitical reality.

4 Second-Tier Powers in the Asia-Pacific

While America and China are by far the main players in the Asia-Pacific arena, there are also other resident significant powers in the region. Their capabilities, and ambitions, may be no match for the US and China, yet still substantial enough to make them important players. These second-tier poles are Japan, India, and Russia.

4.1 Japan: A Potential Third Pole

Japan may be facing demographic decline and economic uncertainty, but it is still a formidable force in the Asia-Pacific, with the world's third biggest economy, state-of-the-art technologies, the second most capable Pacific navy (after the US), and "virtual" nuclear capability. Yet Japan's status as an Asia-Pacific great power is quite special, because Tokyo is a strategic client of another great power, the US. Voluntary reliance on America for essential security, as well as the constitutional self-restrictions regarding possession and use of military force, deprives Japan of the strategic independence necessary for a truly great power, thereby relegating it to the second echelon of the Asia-Pacific major players.

However, were Tokyo to resolve to substantially weaken its strategic ties to the US or even terminate the bilateral alliance altogether such a dramatic move would in effect transform Japan into a third pole in the Asia-Pacific geopolitics. That pole may be not as powerful as America and China but still meaningful enough to significantly reconfigure the Asia-Pacific order. In fact, Japan freeing itself from American protection and going strategically on its own, possibly even acquiring nuclear weapons, might then become more secure and more self-confident, and therefore in a position to contribute to the region's stability.[4]

4.2 India: Still a South Asian Power

While Japan's ambitions currently look quite modest measured against its capabilities, India's geopolitical aspirations clearly exceed strategic resources presently in its possession. India seeks a great-power ranking in the Asia-Pacific as well as in global politics, but it does not qualify for a number of reasons, especially when compared to China, India's main Asian rival. In terms of international politics, India very much remains a South Asian power, its sphere of influence mostly confined to the neighboring countries along its borders. Besides which the smoldering conflict with Pakistan ties Delhi down and continues to constrain its freedom of action elsewhere. India's strategic forays outside South Asia have not been a resounding success. In particular, despite investing a lot of efforts in its "northern strategy", Delhi failed to establish a solid presence in Central Asia despite investing considerable effort in its "northern strategy"[5] The "Look East" policy, designed to enhance India's ties with Southeast Asia nations and counter the rise of Chinese

[4] The Australian analyst Hugh White makes compelling case that Japan should become an independent great power (Hugh White. *The China Choice: Why America Should Share Power*. Collingwood: Blackink, 2012, pp. 85–88).

[5] Alexander Cooley. *Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia*. N. Y.: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 169–171. See also Micha'el Tanchum. *India's Central Asia ambitions outfoxed by China and Russia*. Oct. 12, 2013. http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/10/12/indias-central-asia-ambitions-outfoxed-by-china-and-russia/

influence has so far produced limited results. So, too, is India's influence in Southeast Asia overshadowed by China's, especially in terms of trade and investment.

As one way to raise its standing in the Asia-Pacific, New Delhi is promoting the concept of the Indo-Pacific as a geopolitical and geo-economic area encompassing, and connecting, the Pacific and Indian Oceans.[6] This is essentially a construct to re-interpret the geopolitics of the Asia-Pacific so as to put India at the centre of a re-imagined region, incidentally diluting China's centrality. This Indo-Pacific idea has been vigorously embraced by the US, Australia, and Japan, all of them interested in bolstering India's position as an effective counterbalance to China.

Despite Delhi's geopolitical ambitions, it does not seem possible for India to become a first-rank power in the Asia-Pacific in the foreseeable future. To achieve that it needs first and foremost to close a huge gap in economic performance with China. One hope for India may lie in demographics. Compared to China, whose people are rapidly aging and whose pool of labor force is beginning to shrink, India has a much younger population and is expected by 2030 to overtake the Middle Kingdom as the world's most populous nation.

4.3 Russia: Pursuing Limited Objectives

Historically, there is only one short period when the Eastern, or "Asian", orientation gained top priority in Russia's foreign policy. That was at the turn of the twentieth century, when the Russian Empire under Czar Nicholas II sought to become the dominant power in Northeast Asia, which led, in turn, to a confrontation with Japan and resulted in a disastrous defeat during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905. Ever since this stinging failure the East Asian/Asia-Pacific theater has always been secondary to Russia's other geopolitical concerns. This essentially remains the case today. So that despite having a Pacific coastline of 16,700 miles, Russia is definitely not a first-rank great power in the Asia-Pacific.[7]

Russia presently lacks two crucial elements to be a first-tier great power in the Asia-Pacific. First, its naval capabilities in this predominantly maritime theater are relatively weak. Second, its economic presence in the region is still negligible: Russia accounts for roughly a mere one percent of the Asia-Pacific trade flows.

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[6] Shyam Saran. Mapping the Indo-Pacific. 29 October, 2011. http://www.indianexpress.com/news/mapping-the-indopacific/867004/0 ; Rory Medcalf. Indo-Pacific: What's in a name? 16 August, 2012. http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2012/08/16/Indo-Pacific-Whate28099s-in-a-name.aspx

[7] For example, Hugh White describes Russia's strategic position in the Asia-Pacific as "tenuous" (White, op. cit., p. 91). In a major foreign policy article outlining the Obama administration vision for the Asia-Pacific then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton failed to mention Russia at all (Hillary Clinton. *America's Pacific Century*. Foreign Policy. Nov. 2011. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/americas_pacific_century?print = yes&hidecomments = yes&page = full).

Perfectly aware of its inadequate geopolitical leverage in and over the region, Moscow realistically pursues a set of few limited objectives *vis-á-vis* the Far East Asia-Pacific sphere. Most important, Russia defensively seeks to ensure effective sovereignty over its Far Eastern territorial holdings, which is not a foregone conclusion given the proximity of increasingly powerful Asian neighbors. Second, Russia has a stake in the security of Northeast Asia which it borders on. Moscow wants its voice to be heard and heeded, especially on Korean Peninsula issues, although even in this case Russian policymakers understand that they can only play second fiddle to China and the U.S. Finally, Russia sees the Asia-Pacific as an economic opportunity which dare not be allowed to go forfeit. Given Europe's economic stagnation as well as the threat of Western sanctions over Ukraine, Russia is making substantial efforts at shifting its economy toward the dynamic Asia-Pacific.

Looking beyond Northeast Asia, Russia's geopolitical role in the Asia-Pacific is for the most part marginal. It does claim Vietnam as a "strategic partner" in Southeast Asia, but even so Moscow is clearly not eager to become involved in the regional disputes, such as the one over the South China Sea, where it has neither a direct stake nor strategic leverage. Which may be explanations for why the last two Russian presidents have absented themselves from annual meetings of the East Asia Summit, the region's foremost security forum for heads of state, despite Russia's admission as a full member in 2011.[8]

Kremlin strategists seem unwilling to play a pro-active strategic role in the Asia-Pacific. Principally because there are currently no direct security problems in the Asia-Pacific theater posing serious risks to Russia, at least in the short-to-medium term. Doubtless also because of its preoccupation with the Crimean region on its western front. Moreover, in this area, unlike in Europe, Central Asia or, to some extent, the Middle East, Moscow has no post-imperial spheres of influence that it feels compelled to fight for. In sum, at the moment Russia's chief interest in the Asia-Pacific lies in the realm of economics rather than security.

5 Would-Be Great Powers in the Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific geopolitical order also includes third-tier powers, such as South Korea, North Korea, Vietnam, Australia, Indonesia, and Thailand, which possess enough capabilities to exercise a noticeable influence in their neighborhoods. Two of them, the Republic of Korea and Indonesia, may very well rise to the ranks of Asia-Pacific formidable powers in the not too distant future.

[8] ***Artyom Lukin.*** **Putin skips the East Asia Summit (again).** ***Oct. 22,*** 2013. ***http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/10/22/putin-skips-the-east-asia-summit-again/***

5.1 Korea: A Great Power After Unification?

South Korea currently boasts the 13th largest economy and displays a growing willingness to pro-actively shape international order. By some estimates South Korea has the best army in Asia.[9] Seoul has become a prominent member of the G-20 and also plays a major role in Asia-Pacific regional institutions. It is perhaps significant that the Korean national character appears to possess a special messianic streak. Consider, for example, the recently deceased Reverend Moon, who managed to spread his Unification cult worldwide. Without this kind of messianic zeal and determination it becomes rather more difficult to become a great power.

However, despite a remarkable growth in its economic, political and military standing over the past several decades, South Korea still falls short of a great power, mainly due to its lack of strategic independence. Similar to the case of Japan, in terms of national defense the ROK critically depends on the United States, as manifested by the U.S.-Korea alliance, in which Seoul is the obviously junior partner. Besides, judging by sheer numbers, South Korea does not have the hard-power weight befitting a great power when compared to other middle-range powers, such as France where South Korea loses out on all key measures. Population-wise, there are 49 million South Koreans versus 66 million French just as South Korea's GDP of 1.6 trillion USD is overshadowed by France's 2.2 trillion. So, too, in military-strategic terms, where the crucial difference between Seoul and Paris lies in France's ability to independently provide for its security, underpinned by the French nuclear arsenal.

For all its global ambitions and more dynamic, compared with the West, economy, South Korea will hardly be able to grow into a great power. The best it can hope for is to establish itself as a strong *middle power*. Great power hood can only be achieved Korean unification.

Were unification to happen, The combined population of the South and the North would be 74 million, considerably greater than France's or the UK's. The economic consequences of unification are more difficult to figure out. There is a widespread belief that unification with the destitute North would only deal a hard blow to South Korea's own industrial economy. Yet, the opposite could also turn out to be the case. Admittedly, the South will have to spend great amounts of investment capital on the North. But these investments would also pay off, and quickly, since the North has an abundance of the most precious economic resource—labor, which is cheap and disciplined which South Korean industrialists would be able to put to effective use. Rather than hurting Korea's economy, unification might give a significant boost to the unified nation's development while significantly raising its GDP.

Reunification of the North and the South, while as yet entirely hypothetical, would certainly increase Korea's military-strategic weight, given that both possess formidable armed forces. The most intriguing question is whether a new Korea would retain the

[9] Ralph A. Cossa and Brad Glosserman. *Power and leadership: recognizing (and appreciating) the difference*. Oct. 30, 2012, http://csis.org/files/publication/Pac1267.pdf

DPRK's nuclear legacy. Finally, whereas the two Koreas now divert huge resources in confronting each other, after the unification they would be free to redirect them toward raising their country's international standing. Similarly, reunification stands to significantly reduce, or even completely remove, the need for Koreans to rely on other powers (for the South the U.S. and for the North, China) in order to ensure their national security, thereby leading to a strategically independent Korea.

There are signs Seoul is already positioning itself as a player who is not prepared to be a client for either Washington or Beijing, but instead seeks for itself the role of intermediary or bridge between geopolitical and geo-economic poles. One latest indication is the "Eurasia initiative" launched by President Park Geun-hye, which envisions South Korea as a natural hub linking the Asia-Pacific with the continental Eurasia.[10]

5.2 *Indonesia: A Great Power by 2050?*

Although the Southeast Asian regional community organization, ASEAN, aspires to act as a major strategic actor and shaper of the geopolitical order in the Asia-Pacific, it is as yet hardly up to the task. For it to become an effective collective actor in terms of foreign and security policy the Association has very far to go before reaching the required level of internal cohesion and solidarity. Even the European Union has still not fully accomplished such a feat. And, unlike the EU, which has built a solid security community, ASEAN is still plagued by serious internal conflicts sometimes resulting in violent clashes between its own members.[11]

This said, Southeast Asian countries there still stands out one among the Southeast Asian countries which merits being considered as a potential great power. This is Indonesia, with a population of over 250 million people and ranking 16th in the world in terms of gross domestic product. Its economy displays high growth rates, while its political system is praised as a successful model for combining Islam with secular democracy. However, it is still too early to predict whether Indonesia will actually become a great power. With its nation-state building process far from complete and separatist movements active in different parts of the sprawling archipelago, Indonesia's cohesiveness remains fragile. Overall the country remains poor and lacks a strong technological base. Its military capabilities are also modest so that even under favorable circumstances it will require at least several more decades for Indonesia to claim a great power mantle for itself and to become a major pole in the Asia-Pacific regional balance.

[10] The "Eurasia initiative" aims to make Eurasia "into a single united continent, a continent of creativity and a continent of peace." (Remarks by President Park Geun-hye at the 2013 International Conference on Global Cooperation in the Era of Eurasia. October 18, 2013. http://english.president.go.kr/pre_activity/speeches/speeches_view2.php?uno = 8522&board_no = E12&search_key = &search_value = &search_cate_code = &cur_page_no = 1)

[11] One of the recent examples was the 2010 Thai-Cambodian mini-war over a border dispute.

6 Can Europe Be a Strategic Actor in the Asia-Pacific?

Can any external actor from outside of the region enter the Asia-Pacific geopolitical scene in a meaningful way? If so Europe would be the strongest candidate. However, because the EU lacks its own military arm the only possibility for Europe to play any major strategic role in the Asia-Pacific would be via NATO. The alliance's operations in Afghanistan, in Libya, as well as in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden would seem to suggest that NATO is in fact capable of conducting missions beyond the North Atlantic area. But does this suggest the NATO countries are seriously considering involving the alliance in Asia-Pacific affairs? Does NATO even have a mandate to intervene in Asia-Pacific conflicts, given that Articles 5 and 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty stipulate that the alliance be limited to providing assistance and to intervening only if one or more of its formal members are attacked in the "North Atlantic area" meaning Europe or North America. Some NATO analysts argue the interpretation of these clauses ought to be broadened to encompass the Pacific coast of the US and Canada, as well as their possessions in the Pacific as far as Wake Atoll (which is 12,045 km/7,485 miles from Brussels but only 3,207 km/1993 miles from Tokyo).[12]

In the final analysis, however, the basic obstacle to a Pacific role for NATO lies not in the legal parsing of the North Atlantic Treaty but rather a for NATO in the fact that most European NATO members lack both the material capabilities and the motivation for assuming any strategic commitments in the Asia-Pacific, particularly those which might eventually force them to fight alongside the U.S. in a clash with China.

The predominant majority of NATO members, with the important exception of Britain, are not at all enthusiastic about a more far-reaching globalist agenda for NATO promoted by Washington. The strongest voices against any such expanded role are France and Germany, with Paris and Berlin fearful that this kind of strategic globalism would seriously weaken NATO's internal unity and damage relations with both Moscow and Beijing. As for the newer NATO members in Central and Eastern Europe, they regard the alliance's main mission as serve as Europe's protector from the perceived "Russian threat".[13] The Russian bear remains a far greater concern for Warsaw, Riga, and other Eastern European capitals than the Chinese dragon. Thus, for both old and new European NATO members the Asia-Pacific falls short of being a truly vital region.

Apart from differing perceptions of threats and strategic priorities, NATO's Pacific role is further constrained by material limitations. Due to the serious economic malaise Europe is cutting military expenditures so that preparing for a Pacific war is obviously out of the question. Furthermore, if fighting were to break out in the Asia-Pacific in all likelihood the principal battle theater would be

[12] Julian Lindley-French . *Pacific NATO?* January 10, 2013, http://isnblog.ethz.ch/uncategorized/pacific-nato

[13] Ioanna-Nikoletta Zyga. *Emerging Security Challenges: A Glue for NATO and Partners?* Research Paper No 85. NATO Defense College, Nov. 30, 2012, http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/current_news.php?icode=470

maritime, whereas only 13 of the 28 NATO countries possess blue water navies. Europe all told has just one big deck aircraft carrier (France's *Charles de Gaulle*), meaning that NATO could hardly offer anything more than a token military presence in the Pacific.[14]

Finally, NATO's European members are unlikely to look East for the reason that continental Europe appears to have almost completely lost what Hans Morgenthau terms *animus dominandi*. In other words, Europeans have exhausted their earlier enthusiasm for expansion and conquest. They are all but reconciled to the prospect that any quest for world dominance will be reduced to a contest between America and China—a contest in which Europeans do not wish to become engaged in, basically preferring to be left alone. Europe at mid-decade gives the appearance of seeking a comfortable, tranquil, and inward-looking existence.

Despite repeated encouragement for NATO to shift its attention toward the Asia-Pacific,[15] the United States apparently does not really expect this to actually happen, making it all the more urgent for Washington to find other allies and partners who might be more interested in countering China. One way to accomplish this is to reformulate the geopolitical concept of Asia-Pacific in a more expansive way. For example, in a major policy speech Vice President Joseph Biden emphasized the Asia-Pacific identity of not only India but also those Latin American countries sharing a Pacific coast.[16] The logic is clear: in order to cope effectively with the Chinese challenge Washington needs to forge a coalition by enlisting as many countries as possible—from India and East Asian states to Oceania and the Americas. It is this potential multinational Indo-Pacific coalition—its composition still unknown—that could very well replace NATO as the main strategic alliance of the twenty-first century.

7 The Asia-Pacific's Geography: Force for Peace or War?

As noted earlier, the Asia-Pacific is essentially an area where the continent of Eurasia meets the Pacific Ocean. How does this particular structure of geography impact the strategic equation in the Asia-Pacific?

The American scholar Robert Ross argues that the geopolitical division of the Asia-Pacific into two zones, the East Asian mainland and the maritime space of the Pacific, contributes to peace and stability.[17] The continental part of East Asia is controlled by a land power, China, while the oceanic areas are dominated by the

[14] Robert M. Farley. *European Powers No Longer Have Role Across Pacific*. Aug. 14, 2012. http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/726942.shtml

[15] **Marcus Weisberger.** ***Panetta: NATO Needs to Join U.S. Rebalance to Asia-Pacific*****. Jan. 18, 2013. http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130118/DEFREG02/301180017/**

[16] Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden on Asia-Pacific Policy. July 18, 2013. George Washington University, Washington, D.C. http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2013/07/20130718279134.html#axzz2ZVASNLIE

[17] Ross. Op. cit.

U.S., with neither Beijing nor Washington capable of mounting a serious strategic challenge in their rival's respective domain. Even if China were to gain complete hegemony in the mainland East Asia this would not necessarily undercut American primacy in the Pacific, resting as it does on the U.S. Navy's might and on maritime allies, such as Japan, Australia, and the Philippines. Conversely, a rise in American power in the Pacific will not substantially alter the balance of power on the continent of East Asia. Furthemore, Ross asserts that geopolitically the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan are not of vital importance to the U.S. Even if China were to gain control over these territories, America's predominance in the Pacific Ocean proper would not be weakened to the point of a gross imbalance of power.

Thus geography itself pulls the two competitors apart, considerably reducing the risk of a direct, head-on clash. This is how Asian-Pacific bipolarity—the U.S. vs. China—differs from the far more confrontational and unstable bipolar balance that had existed between the United States and the Soviet Union. The main strategic theater for Moscow-Washington mutual containment centered on the European plains, and in Berlin, where these two rivals literally confronted each other unrestricted by natural barriers, while NATO's fear of Warsaw Pact superiority in conventional capabilities forced the West to premise its strategy on a dangerous nuclear escalation.

Ross first made the above argument in 1999 and still sticks to it. In a recent publication he sharply criticizes President Obama's "Pacific pivot", which, by involving the U.S. in Beijing's territorial disputes and by increasing America's military presence nearer to China's borders, needlessly provokes Beijing.[18] According to Ross, U.S. dominance at sea remains secure, and the bipolar balance in the Asia-Pacific remains stable. Therefore Washington might best be advised to refrain from a military build-up in China's close vicinity—in areas crucial to Beijing but of peripheral geopolitical interest for Washington.

Ross's theory, positing the Asia-Pacific's geopolitical dualism of land and sea domains, makes considerable sense. Indeed, it is hard to imagine the U.S. launching a massive continental war against China with troops landing on the shores of Shandong or Fujian. It is equally implausible to imagine Chinese warships attacking Hawaii. Nevertheless, for several reasons the geographic foundations of stable bipolarity in the Asia-Pacific may prove to be less firm than one might expect.

First, China is no longer satisfied with being a land power and is openly expressing and displaying its naval ambitions. In May 2007 at negotiations with an American delegation Chinese representatives reportedly suggested that the Pacific Ocean be divided into spheres of influence, with the U.S. overseeing areas east of the Hawaii Islands and China charged with the western part of the Pacific.[19] At the time this may have sounded like a joke, yet in June 2013, during a summit meeting with Barack Obama, PRC Chairman Xi Jinping declared that "the vast Pacific ocean has enough space for two large countries like the United States and

[18] Robert S. Ross. *The Problem With the Pivot*. Foreign Affairs. November/December 2012, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/138211/robert-s-ross/the-problem-with-the-pivot

[19] Andrey Kurmazov. *China's Maritime Threat*. Rossiya v ATR. April 2013, p. 69. (in Russian)

China."[20] Might this statement be interpreted as a reassuring message that Beijing recognizes the America's interests in the Pacific? Or might it express China's determination to seek a naval standing in the Pacific equal to America's.

Chinese statements aside, its actions indicate that Beijing is building up its naval capabilities in earnest, with Xi Jinping himself declaring the PRC should become a "powerful maritime nation."[21] Some analysts predict that China's growth into a naval power is inevitable, and as an initial step Beijing would attempt to establish its mastery over the South China Sea.[22]

Second, the U.S.–China strategic relationship increasingly focuses on the open seas as the main potential theater for military brinkmanship. China is actively promoting so-called Anti-Access/Area Denial capabilities designed to block adversarial entry into its coastal waters or at least to significantly hamper any maneuvers by the U.S. Navy adjacent to those waters. In particular, Beijing is developing "aircraft-killer" missiles and expanding its submarine fleet. Parallel with this, China is apparently pursuing the goal of strategic dominance within the so-called "first island chain" encompassed by the Yellow, East China and South China seas.

In response, American officials state their own resolve to retain a "decisive military edge" in the region, chiefly by introducing new technologies and combat platforms.[23] Moreover, U.S. strategists have formulated an Air-Sea Battle doctrine designed to neutralize enemy attempts at blocking the U.S. Navy's access to Western Pacific waters.[24] Interestingly, in many respects Air-Sea Battle is a new edition of the Reagan-era Air-Land Battle formula aimed at enhancing NATO's capabilities in confronting the Warsaw Pact in the European theater.[25]

Third, one detects a steady escalation in the intensity of disputes between China and other states over island- and maritime-jurisdictions, especially in the East China Sea and South China Sea. At present most East Asian boundary disputes are at sea rather than on land. A few centuries ago "nobody cared about the

[20] Rowan Callick. *A Power-Packed Dialogue*. The Australian. June 10, 2013. http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/features/a-power-packed-dialogue/story-e6frg6z6-1226660979072

[21] Wang Yizhou. *Opportunities and Challenges for China's New Leaders in Building Mutual Trust with the World*. Global Asia. Fall 2013, p. 36.

[22] Robert Kaplan. *The South China sea is the future of conflict. Foreign Policy*. September/October 2011. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/08/15/the_south_china_sea_is_the_future_of_conflict

[23] **Jane Perlez. *Hagel, in Remarks Directed at China, Speaks of Cyberattack Threat.* The New York Times. June 1,** 2013**. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/02/world/asia/hagel-reassures-asian-allies.html?src = rechp&_r = 0**

[24] Sydney J. Freedberg Jr. *DoD Sheds First Clear Light On AirSea Battle: Warfare Unfettered*. June 03, 2013. http://breakingdefense.com/2013/06/03/dod-document-sheds-first-new-light-on-airsea-battle-warfare-unfettered/

[25] Jose Carreno, Thomas Culora, George Galdorisi, and Thomas Hone. *What's New About the AirSea Battle Concept?* U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings Magazine 136/8/1. August 2010. http://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2010-08/whats-new-about-airsea-battle-concept

uninhabited rocks in the middle of the ocean except the fishermen who tried to avoid wrecking upon them".[26] Nowadays these "rocks" and the approaches to them have become serious bones of contention in East Asia. The situation is further aggravated by the fact that some sides to the maritime disputes with China (namely, Japan and the Philippines) have security treaties with the United States which commit Washington to granting them necessary assistance in case of attack against their territories. These defense obligations could very well pave the way for a U.S.–China clash.

Tension is also generated by divergent interpretations of the legal status of exclusive economic zones (EEZs). China insists that military and intelligence-gathering activities within its EEZ are unacceptable. The US, for its part, is engaged in expansive activities of exactly such a kind within China's 200-mile maritime belt and categorically rejects these demands by Chinese spokesmen as running counter to the international law principle of "freedom of navigation". This fundamental disagreement has resulted in a number of serious and ominous incidents at sea and in the air.[27]

It remains true that the United States remains the strongest sea power while China is still a predominantly land power. Nevertheless, recent developments, such as the rise in Beijing's naval ambitions and capabilities, coming amidst the intensification of the South China Sea and East China Sea disputes, increase the risk of misunderstanding or even direct conflict between the Asia-Pacific's two preeminent states.

The main danger of an armed conflict lies in the Western Pacific waters adjacent to China. In this case, the essential qualities of maritime space tend to be strategically destabilizing. Unlike delineating and demarcating land spaces, it is impossible to draw clear and visible boundaries at sea. Sovereignty claims over areas in the East Asian seas are today under serious legal dispute. In this sense, the situation with respect to inter-state boundaries in the contemporary Asia-Pacific is far more precarious and explosive than in Central Europe during the Cold War, where borders of the antagonistic blocs were at least very clearly marked and recognized by both sides.

Washington is unlikely to follow advice that America studiously avoid entanglement in China's maritime disputes with its neighbors. Were the U.S. to fail to back its allies and partners (Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, and others) in their territorial and maritime disputes with China, this would substantially undermine Washington's reputation as the region's main arbiter and security guarantor. It could possibly even destroy cooperative alliances with those very same maritime countries whose support has long enabled the U.S. to be undisputable hegemon in the Asia-Pacific.

On densely populated land, such as in Europe or on the Korean Peninsula, massive hostilities unavoidably lead to enormous civilian casualties and material damage, inducing caution in political leaders and military commanders. By contrast, on the open seas risks are far lower. As Robert Kaplan argues, military operations at sea are often seen as a "clinical and technocratic affair, in effect

[26] David C. Kang. *East Asia before the West*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012, p. 7.

[27] Jeff M. Smith. *China Comes Around?* PacNet #41. June 11, 2013. http://csis.org/publication/pacnet-40a-us-china-new-pattern-great-power-relations-times-they-are-changin

reducing war to math".[28] On the other hand, this line of reasoning could have the opposite effect of lowering the threshold for a decision to provoke or engage in a naval war.

The greatest risk is that once having begun as a localized skirmish a conflict at sea could easily escalate. The above-mentioned doctrine of Air-Sea Battle calls for also striking at land targets as part of the effort at destroying an adversary's capacity to continue waging the war at sea. For example, American commanders would have to contemplate attacking Chinese missile launch sites on the coast or attempt to disable Chinese radar and surveillance facilities. How might Beijing then react to strikes on its national territory is anybody's guess, although senior Chinese military officers have occasionally voiced their "private" opinion that in such a scenario China might even be forced to resort to nuclear deterrence.[29]

By distancing the Asia-Pacific's two principal antagonists from each other the huge Pacific Ocean still serves as a formidable barrier, thus reducing the likelihood of a major war between them either on the high seas or, by extension, the Chinese mainland. At the same time, there is a growing risk of conflict in those areas where China's and America's geopolitical spheres of influence do come into direct touch with one another; namely, in the offshore seas of the Western Pacific. These contested offshore areas have the very real potential for becoming the powder keg of the Asia-Pacific, not unlike the notorious "powder keg of Europe" in the Balkans on the eve of World War I. Thus geography's impact on the Asia-Pacific contemporary strategic landscape remains at once salient and ambivalent in both deterring and facilitating regional as well as great power balancing acts.

8 US–Russia–China Triangle: Pulling Eurasian Geopolitics Together

As discussed above, the U.S., China and Russia are at the moment the most ambitious, powerful, and capable geopolitical players in Eurasia. Their influence is noticeable in all parts of Eurasia, althoughs distributed unevenly. Russia is a formidable force in Northern Eurasia, Europe and Central Asia and is also a significant actor in the Middle East, while its positions in the Asia-Pacific are rather tenuous. By contrast, China now targets East Asia as its primary sphere of influence and incrementally increases its geo-economic control over Central Asia, whereas in other parts of the continental Eurasia its strategic presence remains relatively low-profile. Finally, the United States, as befits the world's only authentic full-service superpower, is present the full length of Eurasia although its influence is strongest

[28] Kaplan. Op. cit.

[29] ***Chinese general who threatened US with nuclear strike is Pentagon's guest of honor*. March 5,** 2013**. http://rt.com/usa/china-general-zhu-nuclear-876/**

on the western and eastern edges of Eurasia, exercised through NATO in the west and through Washington-centered bilateral alliances in the east.

Again, it is the triangular strategic interaction of the United States, China, and Russia which is the most important geopolitical configuration in Eurasia at present. The existence and functioning of this triangle makes Eurasia a far more interconnected geopolitical space than it might otherwise have been. In a sense, the triangle "pulls" Eurasian geopolitics together, binding the maritime Asia-Pacific theater with Eurasia's chief continental theaters.

The Moscow-Washington-Beijing strategic triangle first came into being in the early 1970s, when China and America formed a coalition against the Soviet Union. This same triangular balancing configuration re-emerged in the late 1990s, this time in a different mix—with Moscow and Beijing finding common cause against America's hegemonic pretensions. There have always been suspicions, however, that Russo-Chinese "strategic partnership" may not be durable and that Russia may eventually abandon China and tilt toward the West.[30] A solid Sino-Russian alliance is deemed impossible by many observers due to serious cultural and civilizational gaps, an abiding lack of trust, and the absence of broad-based shared interests between the two nations. Yet there are historical cases of effective alliances where participants had neither a shared socio-cultural affinity nor a wide-ranging commonality of interests. One example is the Franco-Ottoman alliance established in 1536 between the king of France and the Turkish sultan, representing the first alliance between a Christian nation and non-Christian empire. Lasting for more than two-and-a-half centuries, the main reason for its longevity being a mutual adversary—the Habsburg Empire. A more recent case, although of far lesser duration, is the Sino-American strategic alignment of the 1970s and 1980s, sustained by shared concerns toward the Soviet Union, then Russia.

At the moment, China and Russia perceive of their vital national interests as mutually non-exclusive at the very least. As Dmitri Trenin observes, the Russia-China bond "is solid, for it is based on fundamental national interests regarding the world order as both the Russian and Chinese governments would prefer to see it."[31] Moscow is not inimical to China's rise as a great power as this creates for Russia economic and political alternatives other than the West. For its part, China sees its security interests as generally compatible with those of Russia.[32] This convergence of basic interests constitutes the foundation for strategic partnership, while the existence of a common foe—the U.S.—may be transforming the partnership into a *de facto* alliance.[33] Whether this ongoing conversion from partnership to alliance is actually completed will mainly depend on the intensity of Russian-American and

[30] See, for example, John Mearsheimer. *The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia*. 2010. http://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/A0056.pdf

[31] Dmitri Trenin. *Russia and the Rise of Asia*. Moscow: Carnegie Moscow Center, Nov. 2013, p. 6.

[32] Rex Li. *A Rising China and Security in East Asia*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

[33] The characterization of Russo-Chinese relationship as a 'de facto alliance' is increasingly used by Russia's leading foreign policy experts (See, for example, Sergey Karaganov. *International Crisis: Avoiding a Second Afghanistan*. July 28, 2014, http://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/news/29501801/izbezhat-afganistana-2 (in Russian))

Sino-American disagreements. Both Beijing and Moscow appear to proceed from the assumption that their antagonism toward Washington will not dissipate any time soon.

If an alliance-type relationship between China and Russia eventually arises, how might it look? General patterns can already be discerned. This is hardly going to be an alliance of the classical type, designed for the joint use of military force against other states whether for defensive or offensive purposes.[34] The case against a Sino-Russian *military* alliance is simple: neither side actually needs it. Russia and China are nuclear-armed powers with formidable conventional armies, which makes them more than capable of independently guaranteeing their national sovereignty and, when necessary, projecting power in their perceived zones of influence.

The strategic value of the alliance will primarily lie in economic and diplomatic dimensions. As a full-scale hot war between contemporary great powers becomes ever more problematic due to the enormous destructive force of nuclear warheads and other modern arms, conflictual behavior is shifting into trade and finance as well as into new 'spaces' such as cyber. In the twenty-first century, economic sanctions, embargos, black lists and hacker attacks are becoming weapons of choice in the rivalries of major powers. This is what Russia has experienced in the Ukraine crisis. And this is what China may face if and when it clashes with the U.S. Thus mutual economic support becomes crucial for Moscow and Beijing. Bonding with China would give Russia a considerable degree of economic independence from the sanction-prone West, while China would enjoy secure access to Russia's vast reserves of natural resources enabling its voracious economy to continue functioning even in the case of a U.S.-imposed naval blockade.

In terms of diplomacy, Moscow and Beijing could provide each other support in the geographic areas deemed their legitimate spheres of influence. Moscow might recognize East Asia as China's domain in exchange for Beijing's support of Russian privileged interests in the post-Soviet space.[35] In fact, Russia appears to have already tacitly acknowledged the primacy of Chinese interests in East Asia. One of Russia's leading experts on East Asia, Georgy Toloraya, regrets Moscow's passivity in Asia-Pacific affairs for fear that an independent stance on its part might anger China. In particular, that Russia has "almost accepted Chinese domination in the Korean affairs."[36]

The summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) held in Shanghai in May 2014 underscores Russia's growing, albeit

[34] A political-military alliance between Russia and China is highly unlikely in the short-to-medium term, but cannot be ruled out 10–20 years from now, provided the security situation in Eurasia continues to deteriorate.

[35] Even before the Ukraine crisis, in 2008, a Russian senior foreign ministry official admitted that China wanted Russia to keep low-profile in the Asia-Pacific as a precondition for Beijing not interfering with Moscow's interests in Central Asia (*Russia and Multilateral Arrangements in the Asia-Pacific*. (Alexander Lukin, ed.). Moscow: MGIMO-University, 2009, p. 21 (in Russian)).

[36] *Asia-Pacific Cooperation and Russia's Place in the Regional Development*. (Konstantin Kokarev, Elena Suponina, Boris Volkonsky, eds). Moscow: Russian Institute of Strategic Studies, 2013, p. 104 (in Russian).

still tacit, acceptance of China's leading role in East Asian security. Xi Jinping's statements at the summit were unusually blunt and specific, attacking U.S.-led alliances in the Asia-Pacific as 'the outdated thinking of Cold War' while proclaiming 'security problems in Asia should be solved by Asians themselves.'[37] Leading many observers to suggest that China may now be ready to abandon Deng's 'lie low' strategy and seek the dominant role for itself in constructing Asia's new security framework, in which America ought to play a very limited part, if any at all.[38] In comparison to Xi's energetic rhetoric, Putin's speech at CICA was bland, offering Moscow's standard boilerplate on the need for 'a new security architecture' in the Asia-Pacific—one 'that guarantees equal interaction and a genuine balance of power and harmony of interests' based on the 'concept of indivisible security.'[39]

It is clear that the Ukraine crisis has forced Russia to be more preoccupied with defending its interests in Eastern Europe, thereby reducing its ability to pursue whatever geopolitical ambitions it might otherwise have in East Asia. The more Russia gets bogged down in the Ukraine and other post-Soviet rivalries the more it needs China and the more it defers to Chinese interests in Asia. Moreover, the Ukraine crisis diverts the U.S. attention from East Asia and eases American pressure on China, giving Beijing a freer hand in the region.[40] Thus, from a cynical realpolitik perspective, it makes a lot of sense for China to tacitly encourage Russia to stand its ground in the conflict with the West.

Central Asia will be another crucial area of Sino-Russian diplomatic cooperation. Whereas China seems ready to recognize former Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe and South Caucasus as Russia's area of dominance, the post-Soviet republics of Central Asia are likely to emerge as a condominium of Moscow and Beijing. Should they form an entente, Moscow and Beijing would have Central Asia as well as Mongolia to themselves, effectively shutting out all external powers from the heart of Eurasia.

A Sino-Russian entente could assume the form of a bilateral alliance or a multilateral pact, possibly based on the Shanghai Cooperation Otrganization framework. If current trends continue, what might ultimately emerge from a Sino-Russian rapprochement is a Eurasian league, which, in controlling the continent's heartland, would be reminiscent of the World War I Central Powers (*Mittelmächte*)

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[37] Xinhua. *China Focus: China's Xi proposes security concept for Asia*. May 21, 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-05/21/c_133351210.htm

[38] Gaku Shimada. *China wants to set agenda for Asian security*. May 22, 2014. http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/China-wants-to-set-agenda-for-Asian-security; Shannon Tiezzi. *At CICA, Xi Calls for New Regional Security Architecture*. May 22, 2014, http://thediplomat.com/2014/05/at-cica-xi-calls-for-new-regional-security-architecture/

[39] Vladimir Putin. *Speech at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia summit*. 21 May 2014, http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/7208

[40] A Chinese general, former military attaché in Moscow, was reported as saying that, thanks to the Ukraine crisis, "China will get at least a 10 year respite in its global contest with America" (Vasily Kashin. *The Second World: Russia Started the Accelerated Shift toward China*. May 22, 2014, www.vedomosti.ru/newspaper/article/683781/rossiya-nachala-process-uskorennogo-sblizheniya-s-kitaem)

alliance.[41] It may also resemble Karl Haushofer's notion of the anti-Western "continental bloc" of Germany, the Soviet Union and Japan.[42]

9 Conclusion

The Asia-Pacific is evolving toward bipolarity, with the U.S. and China the two biggest players. To be sure, as discussed above, there are other not unimportant actors in the region, but they lag significantly behind Washington and Beijing in terms of their overall capabilities and are being increasingly forced to define their positions in relation to the dominant Sino-American rivalry in the Asia-Pacific. This antagonism has already become a main concern of contemporary global geopolitics; nor is it likely to subside any time soon. China wants an end to America's strategic primacy in East Asia/Western Pacific and, as many suspect, aims to turn the region into its own sphere of dominance.

The geography of Asian-Pacific geopolitics, characterized by its division into maritime and land zones, is having a mixed effect on the stability of the region's bipolarity. On the one hand, the Pacific Ocean, with its "stopping power of water",[43] pulls the contenders wider apart, reducing the risks of a major clash. On the other hand, Chinese and American spheres of interests increasingly come in touch, and even overlap, in the offshore areas of the Western Pacific, raising the likelihood of a dangerous confrontation there.

Essentially the eastern seaboard of Eurasia, the Asia-Pacific is intimately connected to this vast land mass. Which is why the China-U.S. contest is, in turn, significantly affected by what happens on the Eurasian continent and which is where Russia comes into play. A secondary Asia-Pacific power, Russia is a first-rank Eurasian great power, interacting with both the U.S. and China. The resulting strategic triangle of Russia, China and the U.S. has been in existence for more than four decades; and remains critical for global politics and for global balancing. At present, they are still the three powers leading all others in terms of material resources *and* the political will to shape geopolitical developments in and across the entire expanse of Eurasia.

The United States, for its part, pursues a familiar balancing strategy of dual containment vis-à-vis *both* Russia and China. Washington seeks to counteract

[41] The Central Powers were one of the warring coalitions in World War I. The two main participants of the Central Powers alliance were Germany and Austria-Hungary—strategically located in the middle of the continental Europe.

[42] The leading Nazi geopolitician Karl Haushofer put this idea forward in 1940. The continental bloc concept is almost forgotten in the West, but is well known, and increasingly popular, within Russia's strategic community.

[43] The "stopping power of water" is John Mearsheimer's characterization of geographic limitations on power projection (John Mearsheimer . *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: Norton, 2001).

Russia in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, while confronting China in East Asia. Such a policy may lead, and in fact is already leading, to consolidation of Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation, suggesting Washington could inadvertently nurture the tacit alliance between Moscow and Beijing. This, in turn, would entail the arrival of bipolarity in Eurasia, with a Sino-Russian bloc pitted against America and its allies. Even if stopping short of a formal military alliance, such a formidable Moscow-Beijing axis considerably strengthens China's hand in the Asia-Pacific, emboldening Beijing to take a tougher posture toward Washington.

This raises a crucial issue on which the U.S. will ultimately have to take a stand. Can America afford to compete with two Eurasian great powers simultaneously? It clearly was able to act that way in the 1990s, when Russia was weak and China was not yet strong enough. Thus Washington encroached upon Moscow's traditional sphere of influence in continental Eurasia while at the same time building up its own hegemony in the Asia-Pacific. Enjoying its unipolar moment, the U.S. was not then afraid of angering *both* Russia and China. This same policy of confronting the two great powers is largely in place to this day, with the Ukraine crisis of 2013-14 only serving to underscore the unresolved antagonism between Russia and the U.S.-led West. The confrontation over Ukraine, whatever its final outcome, will undoubtedly make Russia less "European" and more "Asian", pushing it closer to China.[44]

To avoid a new edition of confrontational bipolarity between two opposing blocs, Washington, Moscow and Beijing must strive to reach at least some modicum of accommodation. This, of course, will not be easy, especially for the U.S., which is extremely reluctant to recognize that Russia and China should by right have any substantial geopolitical interests beyond their respective immediate borders. If, however, the U.S., Russia and China do manage to come diplomatically to some kind of mutual understanding, it would set the stage for a benign version of multipolarity and non-belligerent balancing, and later perhaps to a multilateral architecture in Eurasia, in which not only Washington, Moscow and Beijing but also all other Eurasian stakeholders can invest and become more profitably engaged.

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Pulling Their Punches: BRIC Foreign Policies in the Middle East

Guy Burton

Abstract What impact are emerging powers having on US hegemony? This chapter analyses the foreign policies of four emerging global powers—Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC)—in the Middle East. Although their supposed cohesion as a group with common interests and objectives has been challenged, they do constitute a significant global economic and demographic group. Conditioned by their status as (1) energy producers (Brazil and Russia) or consumers (China and India) and (2) democracies (Brazil and India) or authoritarian regimes (China and Russia), BRIC policies towards the Middle East are discussed in terms of four specific issues where US involvement has been strong: the containment, invasion and occupation of Iraq; the Israel-Palestinian conflict; Iran's nuclear program; and the Arab Uprising. Although variations exist in BRICs' individual policies, there is a common commitment towards promoting state sovereignty and against intervention, resulting in a relatively critical attitude towards the US position. At the same time though, the BRICs have not pursued policies which directly challenge or undermine US hegemony. Explanations for this may be due to common regional objectives between the US and the BRICs (especially stable energy markets and prices), individual limitations and collective incoherence by the BRICs, and willingness to free ride on US-provided regional security. However, such security will not persist without emerging powers sharing the burden in the future.

Are new emerging global powers challenging the US-led international system? One view is that a more multipolar world will mean the US faces greater confrontation. Another view is that it will not (see, for example, Amin 2006; Beeson and Higgott 2005; Hurrell 2006; Layne 2009; Khanna 2008; Cox 2001; Parsi, 2003). By examining the role of four rising powers—Brazil, Russia, India and China (the BRICs)—and their relationship to the US, the chapter reveals that despite being critical of US hegemony, they have not directly challenged the US in any substantive way.

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The paper examines this stance in relation to the Middle East.[1] The Middle East is chosen for several reasons. First, if the BRICs are to realize global power status it is necessary to study their influence beyond their own respective regions. The Middle East is relevant given its high strategic and geopolitical concern as the primary global source of proven energy supplies (i.e. oil and gas). Both energy consumers and producers have a vested interest in maintaining stable energy supplies and prices. This will continue even as global oil production increases over the next decade, including in the US and Canada (Maugeri 2012). Second, the region occupies key geopolitical space—a space that has been susceptible to external influences and pressures.

On the one side, internal conflicts have been exploited and exacerbated by outside actors, as occurred during the superpower rivalry between US-backed Israel and pro-Soviet Arab regimes during the Cold War. More recently the Middle East became the site where US global hegemony was arguably challenged most, through Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Iran's pursuit of its nuclear program and militant Islamists who attacked US military and civilian targets during the 1990s and 2000s. On the other side, these internal conflicts have brought in external non-state participants who are perceived as a threat by state actors; just as European states are concerned about the involvement of their citizens in conflict settings like Syria and Iraq and the danger they may pose when they return, so too do India and Chinese officials express similar fears. Third, the region is home to one of the most intractable and internationalized conflicts today: the question of Palestine, and the civil conflicts which have drawn societies out across ethnic and sectarian lines in Syria and Iraq. Since the UN vote in favor of partition in 1947, the issue has remained high on the global agenda, through UN resolutions and various internationally-supported peace initiatives. Meanwhile, the shift from a US dominated unipolar world to a more multipolar one has occurred alongside a decade of war and occupation in Iraq and the escalation of violence in Syria since the Arab Uprising in early 2011.

But why choose the BRIC countries as a case of emerging powers? They are not a natural or cohesive group with common interests. They were grouped together by Goldman Sachs' Jim O'Neil in 2001 as shorthand to forecast future emerging markets. Their differences were evident at the first annual and largely symbolic BRIC summit (Tett 2010; Sharma 2012). In addition, there are political differences (i.e. democracy in Brazil and India and authoritarianism in Russia and China), disparities in relative power (i.e. Brazil and India as primarily regional powers and Russia and China as global powers) and tensions between India and China over their influence in the Indian Ocean and over India's developing ties with the US—which may be perceived as a challenge to China (Abraham 2007; Chenoy and Chenoy 2007; Mitra and Schottli 2007; Shuja 2006; Ramani 2007; House of Commons Library 2007: 73; Kronstadt et al. 2011: 11–12).

[1] The Middle East is here understood to be the region which covers the countries of the Arabian peninsula, Turkey and those between the two (i.e. the Mashreq). In addition, Iran and the eastern parts of the Maghreb (i.e. Egypt and Libya) are included for the purpose of this paper.

Against this, the BRICs offer a recognizably compact number of emerging powers which constitute several regional—and potentially global—actors. Moreover, their emergence has coincided with a shift from a unipolar to a multipolar international system. A comparative study of their foreign policies may illustrate not only differences, but similarities. Also, the BRICs constitute a significant global group: they make up over a third of the global population (2.9bn) and 19 % of global GDP in 2011 (up from 8 % in 2000) (World DataBank n.d.). Additionally, they believe themselves entitled to play a global economic, military and political role (Hurrell 2006). They have individually cultivated closer involvement with global institutions like GATT, WTO, UN, IMF and World Bank and begun to perceive of themselves as a bloc, through the establishment of annual summits since 2009 (and which now include South Africa since 2011).[2] They are coordinating their foreign policies, as shown by the joint declarations following these summits (York 2013; Conway-Smith 2013).

1 Global Power and BRIC Perspectives on the Middle East

For both the US the Middle East's location as the primary source of global energy supplies means that there is a key interest in ensuring regional stability and order, to ensure regular oil and gas production and stable prices. This has prompted the US to provide military assistance and support to its allies (Israel, Saudi Arabia, the oil monarchies) and confront its rivals (Iran, Iraq under Saddam Hussein) over past decades. Washington's more muscular approach to the region is in contrast to its principal Western ally, the European Union (EU), which favors a more conciliatory and collaborative approach, through economic liberalization, rule of law and assistance based on conditionality (Everts 2004). Furthermore, while the EU relies more on Russian, Caspian and North African oil, prompting it to institutionalize links with the region (Bahgat 2006), the US is increasingly self-sufficient in energy supplies.

Given the US and European experience, what might be assumed to be the BRIC approach towards the region? As noted above, it may be confrontational on one hand, by challenging the hegemonic powers. Alternately it may be more accommodating, especially if it shares common interests. What may account for their relative positions may depend on at least three main considerations: one, their status as energy producers or consumers; two, their political orientation; and three, their geopolitical situation in relation to the region.

[2] Although South Africa is now considered part of the BRICS grouping, it is excluded in this study on account of its limited economic size and influence: its GDP is 28th in the world (in contrast to China as 2nd, Brazil 6th, Russia 9th and India 10th) and it makes up only 2.5 % of BRICS GDP (Smith 2013; Beatty 2013).

First, in energy terms the BRICs may be distinguished between those that are producers (Brazil and Russia) and those that are consumers (India and China). The latter owe much of their current and continued economic development and growth on growing supplies of energy, much of which imported from the Middle East. By contrast, neither Brazil nor Russia is dependent on the supply of energy imports from the Middle East since both are energy producers. This might suggest that Brazil and Russia would have less economic and political investments in the region while India and China would be concerned with maintaining the status quo, so as to ensure stable energy markets and prices.

Second, the BRICs can be distinguished in political terms between those which are democratic (Brazil and India) and those which are not (Russia and China). This might suggest that the democracies would be more supportive of popular demands for greater civil and political rights and invest in policies towards such ends, as might be expected to have occurred during and after the Arab Uprising. By contrast the more authoritarian regimes would be expected to be less encouraging of such demands and both pursue and support measures designed to contain them.

2 Parameters of BRIC Engagement with the Middle East

Geopolitically, the BRICs' positions towards the Middle East may be affected by the extent to which each individual country is 'bound' to the region through wider economic ties and security-related concerns. From this perspective three of the four—Russia, China and India—are more tied to the region than Brazil. The significant economic development of China and, to a lesser extent, India, has meant growing trade between these two countries and the region. While this is primarily in the form of energy imports, there are also significant exports in the form of manufactured goods. In addition to trade issues, India, China and Russia share common security concerns, not least in a perceived threat of religious inspired militant groups. This concern operates in two directions: on one side, the threat of religiously inspired militant groups engaged in regional conflicts which may undermine political stability and economic trade; on the other side, the involvement of their citizens with militant Islamist groups, including al Qaeda during the 2000s and, more recently, the Islamic State (previously known as Islamic State in Iraq and Syria)—and the potential impact they might have should they return home.

By contrast, the depth of Brazilian involvement in this aspect is relatively less: first, it has a relatively lighter diplomatic and economic footprint in the region; second, its Syrian and Lebanese communities are long established and highly integrated into Brazilian society, having migrated in the early part of the last century and are therefore not perceived to be susceptible to radicalization. The difference between the four BRICs in this regard may therefore affect the extent to which pursue policies which maintain the status quo or advocate for change, with the former supported by those who have vested interests like India, China and

Russia and against Brazil, whose weaker ties may provide greater opportunities for experimentation.

But what has been the basis of individual BRICs' involvement with the region? Why do some of the countries' approaches to the region differ? Moreover, how do BRIC actions in the present compare with the past? To what extent are contemporary concerns similar or different from before? To consider this, the following section highlights the main features of each BRICs' previous involvement with the region.

2.1 China

China's present engagement with the Middle East is linked to its economic liberalization and development since the late 1970s. Between the 1980s and 2004 it shifted from being East Asia's largest oil exporter to the world's second-largest oil importer (with nearly two-thirds coming from Saudi Arabia, Oman and Iran). By the mid-2000s it counted for nearly a third of global growth in oil demand (even though most of its energy needs are met by coal) (Lai 2007). Growing energy dependence has pushed its leadership to increase and diversify oil supplies from the Middle East and other regions (Africa, Russia, the Americas and Central Asia), while also securing their transport routes (Zweig and Bi 2005; Lai 2007). The latter includes the Indian Ocean, which contributes to tensions with India.

China's economic focus contrasts with its previously political approach to the Middle East (Schihor 1992; Emadi 1994). Between the 1950s and 1970s, China emphasized Third World solidarity with the region and challenged the Soviet Union for leadership of the socialist bloc (including Soviet allies like Egypt's Nasser and the Baathists in Syria and Iraq). In the 1980s Beijing became a key arms supplier in the region, selling to both Iraq and Iran during their conflict; during the decade Egypt, Syria, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran accounted for 90 % of Chinese arms exports. While this caused some friction with the US, this led to a Chinese trade surplus by the beginning of the 1990s (Schihor 1992; Emadi 1994). That relationship was also useful for China in the wake of the Tiananmen Square crisis. The violent clampdown on protestors led to Western sanctions and diplomatic isolation. Beijing shored up Third World and Middle Eastern support for its position, where most governments in the region (including Israel and Saudi Arabia which did not have diplomatic relations at the time with China) accepted Beijing's explanations and non-interference within states (Schihor 1992).

2.2 India

India has a long history in the region. Many Indians worked as traders, merchants and pearlers in the Gulf prior to the discovery of oil. During and after the First

World War Indians were present in the British civil service and troops. Following independence in 1947 India's presence in the Middle East declined due to domestic difficulties and challenges from Pakistan. Despite this, India contributed to UN peacekeeping operations, including the UN Emergency Force following the Suez Crisis and the current UNIFIL force in Lebanon. In addition, there is a substantial Indian diaspora within the Gulf region, mainly from Kerala state. Indians make up 20 % of Saudi Arabia's 7 m expatriates while around 4.5 m work in the Gulf as a whole, mostly in low-paid and unskilled jobs. In 2003 their official remittances were estimated as worth 3.5 % of national GDP and 22 % of Kerala's GDP, although including informal ones could mean a figure at least five times higher; by 2007 around $7.3bn was believed to have been sent home (Kemp 2010: 5, 23, 25, 41, 52–53; House of Commons Library 2007: 25–26).

In addition to remittances, India is also heavily reliant on Middle East oil. In 2009 it constituted the fourth largest energy consumer after the US, China and Japan, with around 70 % of its oil supplies having been imported; by 2030 the total amount is expected to rise to 90 % (Kronstadt et al. 2011: 54–55). Although coal remains the main source of energy (over half of the country's usage while oil counts for 35 %) (Kemp 2010: 33), the fastest growing need is in natural gas; in January 2005 India signed a 25-year agreement with Iran to import liquefied natural gas from Iran (House of Commons Library 2007: 36–37). The agreement was the culmination of growing economic ties between the two countries since the 1990s when New Delhi had felt the pressure both to diversify its energy supplies (from the two-thirds supplied by Iraq and Kuwait before 1990) and to find another trading and transport route following the collapse of its Soviet sponsor in Central Asia.

2.3 Russia

The collapse and fragmentation of the Soviet Union after 1991 meant the loss of nearly a quarter of national territory and removing its direct connection to the Middle East (Rubinstein 2004: 89). Whereas the US and the Soviet Union had used the region as a proxy in the Cold War, its end meant Moscow's retreat from direct involvement in the affairs of the Middle East. Only after 1993 did south and west Asia become increasingly important when Russian business began work in Iraq's oil sector and in its arms sales to Iran, Iraq and Syria (Gidadhubli 1995). By the late 1990s this involved three zones of decreasing importance: Central Asia and the Caucasus; Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey; and the Arab countries and Israel (Gresh 1998). Moscow's concern with the former Soviet republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus brought it closer to the Middle East and Iran and Turkey (Legvold 2001).

Despite Russia's 'return' to the Middle East, Rubinstein (2004: 20–21) has suggested that its policy has been less coherent and centralized. During the Yeltsin era there were diverse and competing institutions shaping foreign policy, including individual government ministries. For example, in the case of Iran the Ministry of Atomic Energy provided nuclear technology while Federal Security Service

provided scientists to help with its nuclear program and the arms exporting ministry sold weapons, including for intermediate-range missiles which Russian law forbids (Rubinstein 2004: 90–91). Regarding Turkey, despite Ankara's growing dependence on Russian energy exports (which doubled between 1991 and the end of the 2000s) and as a transit route for supply lines, there are limits to the relationship owing to the fragmented nature of Russian decision-making (Harris 2004: 275; Freedman 2001; Zanotti 2012).

2.4 Brazil

Historically the Middle East was important for Brazil for two reasons: migration in the early part of the last century and, after 1945, for energy imports to fuel its state-led industrialization programs. However, Arab oil producers' decision to cut production after the 1973 war adversely affected Brazil's national development strategy, raising the cost of energy imports and contributing towards the country's debt burden. Rising costs prompted the country to move away from oil dependency towards the domestic production of alternative and renewable energy sources, including ethanol and biomass (Goldemberg 1983). Along with the discovery of its own oil deposits, Brazil has shifted to an energy producer.

Owing to Brazil's limited contact with the region, the Middle East has been a source for promoting the country's diplomatic ambitions over the past decade. Under President Lula (2003–2010) and his successor, Dilma Rousseff (2011–), Brazil has promoted itself as a rising global power and stressing its commitment for national sovereignty, self-determination and a commitment to multilateralism. Along with establishing 37 new embassies and 25 new consulates, the Brazilian leadership has demanded that global governance and international institutions be 'democratized,' by expanding the permanent membership of the UN Security Council (UNSC) to include Brazil. Also, Brazil has emphasized South-South engagement, participating in the creation of the India-Brazil-South Africa partnership (Meyer 2012: 10, 13; Soares and Hirst 2006). In the Middle East, Brasilia has employed both bilateral and multilateral diplomacy: between 2003 and 2010 Brazil's trade with the Middle East tripled to $20bn and Lula led on the institutionalization of links between his and the Middle East region through the Arab-South American summits, the first which took place in Brasilia in 2005 and subsequently in Qatar in 2009 (Amorim 2011).

3 Contemporary BRIC Approaches to the Middle East

Despite the varying levels of previous engagement with the Middle East and the emphasis on economic or political concerns, the extent to which the BRICs challenge or accommodate US hegemony can arguably be assessed across several

key regional issues where US plays a prominent role: in relation to Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iran's nuclear program and the Arab Uprising, and particularly the civil conflict in Syria. The section considers each on turn, noting the key features of each individual BRIC's stance and actions.

3.1 Iraq

Iraq has been a venue for domestic and external conflict in various forms since 1990: specifically the 1991 and 2003 Gulf Wars (and subsequent US occupation until 2011) and, most recently, the emergence (or return?) of sectarian violence headed by the Islamic State.

In 1990 Iraq under Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, incurring international condemnation, including by the BRICs (although India was less critical, owing to the large number of Indians in the country and Iraq's status as India's third largest supplier of oil, see Ramachandran 2002; Srivastava 2005). The US put together a multinational military coalition. Successive UNSC resolutions were passed, imposing sanctions on the Iraqi regime and eventually authorizing the use of force to remove Iraq from Kuwait; this occurred in early 1991. While the Soviet Union voted for the resolution which authorized force, China abstained, arguing that a peaceful solution was still possible. China's abstention meant that no veto took place, satisfying the US (which held out the prospect of financial incentives and improved diplomatic relations following the Tiananmen Square crisis) and winning regional support by opposing foreign intervention (Schihor 1992; Emadi 1994).

After 1991 the US pressed for international sanctions against Baghdad to contain the regime. However, both the BRICs and the wider international community were unhappy with sanctions, perceiving them as punitive punishment and a means to remove the Saddam regime. At the same time, much of the BRICs' criticism was due to the denied economic opportunities (van Walsum 2004: 191): Russian industry was unhappy at the greater share of US involvement in reconstruction work in Kuwait after 1991 while China's concern with reliable energy supplies and prices coincided with its oil-dependent economic boom during the 1990s (Malone 2004: 171). Through the UN-sponsored 'Amorim Panels' chaired by Brazil's representative (and later Lula's foreign minister), the international community tried to mitigate the sanctions regime's worst excesses, introducing 'fast-track' procedures to imported certain items and discussing humanitarian and disarmament issues (Malone 2004: 119).

By the early 2000s Washington had concluded that containment had not achieved disarmament. It opted for invasion and regime change in 2003, incurring significant international opposition. The BRICs were opposed to war although neither China nor Russia was prepared to veto an additional resolution authorizing war. Instead they conceded space to more vocal and confrontational opponents, including France and Germany, to take a more confrontation approach against the US (Lo 2004; MacFarlane 2006; Lai 2007).

Although the US disregarded the international community in launching its invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq, it has arguably lost out to the BRICs economically after 2003. Both China and Russia have gained much since the end of the conflict: Chinese trade with Iraq has increased from $517m in 2002 to $17.5bn in 2012 (compared to US-Iraqi trade of $3.8bn to $21bn over the same period) and its state firms are playing key roles in the development of the Ahdab, Rumail and Halfava oil fields (Al-Tamimi 2013; Schivenza 2013); Russian firms have also sought to enter the oil sector while also agreeing an arms sale worth $4.2bn in 2012—the largest such purchase made by Baghdad which is neither American or Western in origin (Russia Today 2013; Lukyanov 2013). Indian trade with Iraq has also expanded, especially in the construction of infrastructure, manufacturing and services, although not to the same degree as that realized by China (Khan 2008; Pant 2011; Ramachandran 2002; Srivastava 2005). By contrast, Brazilian trade with Iraq remains limited, largely as a result of the almost negligible contact which occurred in the wake of the post-1991 sanctions regime—although its representatives claim cooperation is taking place in the educational and cultural sectors (Fares 2007; Folha de Sao Paulo 2013).

Despite their growing economic and other links with Iraq, the BRICs do not appear willing to intervene directly in the weakening capacity of the Iraqi state and its increasingly polarized political scene between Sunni and Shia, Arab and Kurd. Armed conflict between different communal groups which had declined after 2007 has been on the increase, especially between January and June 2014 when the Baghdad government effectively lost control of much of the Sunni-dominated territory in the west. By mid-2014 the Islamic State had become the dominant militant group based in eastern Syria and western Iraq and threatened Iraqi Kurdistan, a situation which was only overturned once the US and its Western allies committed itself to airstrikes. With a new government in Baghdad and a formal request for assistance, in September US President Barack Obama announced a strategy to degrade the Islamic State, including weapons supply and military training along with airstrikes in Iraq and potentially across the border in Syria.

The transnational nature of the conflict presents difficulties for BRICs like Russia and China. Both stress the principle of national sovereignty and are opposed to foreign intervention in Syria (see below). At the same time, the rise of Islamic State has provided an impetus to Russia's arms trade with Baghdad, contributing to an additional $1bn sale of rockets and mortars in June 2014 in addition to its 2012 deal. Meanwhile, the Chinese position has sought to have it both ways. While it has persistently criticized the US for its post-2003 occupation of Iraq, its criticism was been largely muted in relation to more recent airstrikes and proposals to challenge the Islamic State in Iraq. At the same time it has shown no inclination to participate in any actions against the Islamic State. This may be attributed to the fact that most of its investments are largely based in the south of the country and therefore are not directly threatened (BBC 2014; BRICS Post 2014e; Roberts 2014; Tiezzi 2014).

At the same time, countries like India and China cannot ignore the challenge presented by the Islamic State. In mid-2014 its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, condemned the ill treatment of Muslims globally, including by the Indian and

Chinese governments. China's then Middle East envoy acknowledged that 100 Chinese citizens were training with ISIS, which has fed into domestic concern about Islamist terrorism, including a number of visible attacks across the country in recent years). Similarly, in India, several nationals have been reported to have travelled to the region to join the conflict while domestically there is official concern regarding the potential threat of sectarianism between Sunni and Shia (Keck 2014b, c).

3.2 Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

In 1993 Israel and the Palestinians signed the Oslo accords, to begin negotiations that would resolve the conflict on the basis of two separate states based on the 1967 borders and Jerusalem as the shared capital city. A Palestinian Authority was set up to provide a measure of self-rule in parts of the occupied West Bank and Gaza and along with a program of donor-provided assistance. Despite a slow start, the process eventually broke down owing to opposition on both sides, leading to renewed violence during the second intifada (2000–2005) and the current deadlock. Oslo opened the door for international actors to play a greater role, with the US the most visible and active. However, the US has not been impartial. Since the 1960s its political elite has closely aligned itself with Israel: between 1970 and 2012 it used its UNSC veto 83 times; on 42 of those occasions it was to protect Israel from censure (by China and the Soviet Union/Russia have used their vetoes eight and 13 times respectively in the same period) (Zunes 2012).

In November 2012 the UN General Assembly upgraded the Palestinians to observer status. The US saw the vote as undermining the Oslo process while the BRIC countries welcomed it as a potential source forward. Similarly, BRIC countries have been generally supportive of the creation of a unity government between the main Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas, as occurred in June 2014 and despite US concern based on its labeling of Hamas as a terrorist organization (Panda 2014a; Voice of Russia 2014).

Notwithstanding their positions at the UN and in relation to Palestinian political unity, the BRICs have not contributed to improving the Palestinians' position in any significant or material way. Instead, their actions have tended to reinforce the status quo, namely Israel's stronger position and continuing occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. For example, in the early 1990s both India and China developed relations with Jerusalem. For India, full diplomatic ties were established in 1992, after which date trade increased from $200m to $4.4bn in 2013 and with Israel becoming India's second largest arms supplier by 2002. While the previously dominant Indian National Congress party remained relatively supportive of Palestinian ambitions and ambivalent towards the idea of a state based on religion, this tendency has become less important with time. Moreover, the election of the Hindu nationalist BJP in the 2014 elections is expected to deepen links between New Delhi and Israel (House of Commons Library 2007: 82; Gupta 2014). China realized that to play a greater role in the region it would need to have diplomatic relations with all

countries, prompting it to abandon its previous demand that Israel withdraw from the occupied territories (Schihor 1992).

Meanwhile, during the 2000s Brazil under Lula demanded that a broad international conference be set up to advance the peace process. However, the Brazilian proposals were weak on substance: they offered no suggestion as to how Israel might be compelled to engage with—and make concessions to—the Palestinians (Amorim 2011; Reis and Lunrath 2010; Folha de Sao Paulo 2007). Finally, Russia has declined to play much in the way of a meaningful role. Although Moscow's influence in the region has declined since the end of the Cold War, it was included as a member of the Quartet (the US, UN, Russia and the EU) in 2002 to advance the Oslo process. However, it does not have the same financial and diplomatic weight as either the US or the EU. Consequently, when it has pursued a contrary course of action, such as speaking to Hamas after its 2006 election win and 2007 takeover of Gaza, its effect has been only mildly irritating. It has not challenged its relations with Israel, which are based on an extensive diaspora and trading links on the one hand and Putin's close personal ties with elements of the Israeli leadership on the other (Freedman 2001; Nichol 2012: 53; Economist 2013; Nizameddin 2008).

The BRICs' peripheral status and reticence over the issue looks set to continue for the foreseeable future. In April 2014 US Secretary of State John Kerry's failed to broker a final status agreement between Israel and the Palestinians following year-long shuttle diplomacy. Around the same time a national unity government was agreed between the two main Palestinian factions: Fatah which controls the West Bank and the Islamist Hamas party which controls Gaza. Seeking to undermine Palestinian unity, Israel provoked a confrontation with Hamas. Israeli missile strikes and troops killed over 2000 Palestinians—most of them civilians—in Gaza while around 70 Israeli soldiers died. During this asymmetrical conflict it was notable that while all four countries stressed the importance of a diplomatic solution, only Brazil made an explicit statement against Israeli behavior, when it recalled its ambassador to Tel Aviv for consultations, leading to a diplomatic spat between the two countries. Brasília's action was in line with other Latin American countries which did the same and which have upgraded relations with the Palestinians over the past 5 years.

In contrast, Russia, India and China avoided any direct involvement during the conflict. Moscow expressed support for Egyptian-led mediation efforts while in China the government has sought to appear neutral. However, Beijing's unwillingness to engage with the conflict obscures the increasingly partisan and extremist public opinion which is emerging, especially among its Muslim citizens (Mu 2014). India's stance has similarly demonstrated foreign policy concerns combined with domestic considerations: the country's political parties represent a wide range of opinions on the conflict, with the leftwing political parties supporting the Palestinian cause and the new BJP government identifying with and sharing Israeli concern over the notion of 'Islamist terrorism' and wider society expressing revulsion at excessive Israeli violence (Taneja 2014a, b; Guha 2014). Officially, however, India has avoided making any explicit statements, an approach which has been both praised and criticized in equal measure: on one side, it has been hailed as a more

mature and pragmatic approach; on the other, it has been condemned as a failure to take a stand on important international questions, which may undermine the country's claim to great power status, including a seat on the UNSC (Kumar 2014).

3.3 Iran's Nuclear Program

Iran's nuclear program has prompted contrasting opinions in which the US has tended to adopt a policy of isolation and confrontation while the EU has sought 'conditional engagement' which rewards good behavior while threatening punishment. As a group the BRICs have advocated for greater dialogue and negotiation between Iran and the West (BRICS Information Centre 2012; Sridharan 2013). But at the same time they have not rejected US-led sanctions; between 2006 and 2010, when all four BRICs were on the UNSC, four sets of sanctions were presented, voted on and passed against Iran (BBC 2012). However, their interpretation of resulting sanctions is selective, claiming that the US-imposed ones are unilateral (Russia Today 2012). The reasons for the BRICs' mixed approach are three-fold. First, economic considerations play a key role. China and India want access to Iran's energy supplies, but fear confrontation with the US and the West. Beijing is concerned for its commercial relations with the West and the Middle East while New Delhi's growing political and economic partnership with the US since the late 1990s could be undermined by developing further relations with Iran. Indeed, this seems to have been reflected in Chinese and Indian actions over the past few years. China has not only imported significant amounts of Iranian oil, but increased it (especially ultra-light) between 2013 and 2014. At the same time, China stayed on the right side of the US by reducing the amount of crude it imported and thereby being exempted from sanctions. Meanwhile, India has accommodated some of the Washington's demands on sanctions by seeking out alternative sources to import oil. Just as Chinese imports have risen, those to India have declined, with the shortfall coming from Colombia and Mexico. Meanwhile, Russia is unwilling to tie itself to Tehran's proposal to establish a gas equivalent of OPEC; although the Iranian proposal would enable both countries to corner the sector, Moscow wants a free hand when dealing with consumers (Kemp 2010: 78–79; Lo 2004; Chenoy and Chenoy 2007; Katz 2008; Panda 2014b; Dickey and Ighana 2014).

Second, three of the four BRIC countries have been complicit in Iran's nuclear program. Between 1985 and 1997 China helped Tehran develop its civilian nuclear capability. Since the late 1990s, Moscow assisted in the construction of the Bushehr nuclear plant and offered the Iranians enriched uranium (Nizameddin 2008). At the same time, Russia has been concerned at the prospect of Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon, since it would contribute to both instability in the Middle East and in the buffer region of former Soviet countries between Iran and Russia (Richter and Loiko 2013)—although this did not prevent it reaching an agreement to complete construction of two nuclear power plants in June 2014 (BRICS Post 2014f). In 2005 India agreed a strategic partnership, which included a ten-year defense framework

agreement and a program to support civilian nuclear cooperation in 2005 (Kronstadt et al. 2011). However, it soon found itself on the receiving end of the US pressure, with Washington sanctioning several Indian scientists between 2004 and 2006 who were believed to have provided nuclear assistance to Iran (Kronstadt et al. 2011: 36). The prospect of additional and tighter sanctions has led to further fears regarding India's oil supplies and investment, including a previously proposed pipeline between India and Iran (Chenoy and Chenoy 2007; Kronstadt et al. 2011: 35–36).

Third, efforts to find a solution which does not include the West or the UNSC have failed. In 2010 Brazil reached an agreement with Turkey on a fuel-swap deal with Iran, which would have led to controls on Iran's uranium enrichment program. Brazil's diplomacy was proactive, but it was quickly opposed by the US and its allies on the UNSC, who voted for sanctions on Tehran and effectively killing the Brazilian-Turkish with Tehran (Amorim 2011; Zakaria 2010). Subsequently Brazil has been notably cooler towards Iran. This was reflected in the transfer of power from Lula and his personalist diplomacy to Dilma Rousseff in 2011. As well as stressing the issue of human rights, Rousseff was perceived as supportive of the more traditional diplomatic approach by the foreign ministry (Elizondo 2011; Romero 2012).

Following the 2013 presidential election in Iran and a political shift from the confrontational Ahmadinejad to the reformist Rouhani, negotiations were restarted in November between Iran and the P5 + 1 group (i.e. US, Britain, Germany, France, Russia and China). An interim agreement was reached to find a more substantial result by July 2014. Although Tehran claimed differences were present within the P5 + 1 group, especially between Russia and China on one side the US and the rest on the other, the months of talks have demonstrated little significant splits; instead, the main points of contention have continued to be between Iran and its interlocutors regarding the extent of enrichment and the role of its existing facilities following the completion of any agreement (Keck 2014a, b, c; Maloney 2014).

Tehran has suggested that there are differences within the P5 + 1 group, especially between Russia and China on one side the US and the rest on the other. At the same time, Dickey and Ighana (2014) have suggested that the US and its allies have sought to create tensions between Iran and its supporters like China. However, the talks have not demonstrated any significant splits, neither between the West and Russia/China, nor between Russia/China and Iran. Instead, the main points of contention have continued to be between Iran and its interlocutors regarding the extent of enrichment and the role of its existing facilities following the completion of any agreement (Keck 2014a; Maloney 2014).

3.4 Arab Uprising

Between December 2010 and February a wave of protest and social mobilization swept the region, initially bringing down the Tunisian and Egyptian regimes and destabilizing others, including Bahrain and Yemen. In both Libya and Syria though,

the regimes refused to budge and responded with growing levels of repression. During 2011 this led to a growing militarization of the rebellion in Libya and leading to Gaddafi's defeat and murder in October 2011. By early 2012 what had begun as a non-violent uprising in Syria a year earlier was also becoming increasingly violent, as different groups took up arms against the repressive Assad regime. By mid-2014 the popular mobilizations had been largely curtailed as a counter-revolutionary tide moved across the region (and perhaps most strikingly in Egypt where the 2013 coup against the directly elected Islamist president was followed by the election of a former general).

Given the difference between the BRIC governments in relation to their political orientation—Brazil and India as democracies and Russia and China as authoritarian—this might have arguably led to support for the protestors by the former and opposition by the latter. Whereas the position of the authoritarian regimes may be understood, since Moscow and Beijing both feared the demonstration effect that the protests might have on their own publics (Baev 2011; Pollack 2011), the stance of the democracies was less clear; one might expect them to be more supportive in their promotion of protestors' civil and political rights and chastise those regional governments which repressed their populations (Tiwana 2014).

Instead of this split the BRICs pursued a broadly similar line, which emphasized the maintenance of the state system and opposition to any external intervention. This position was evident as the first counter-revolution took place in Libya which gained international attention and which exposed a fault line between the BRICs and the US/West (Pollack 2011; Plett 2011). In March 2011 the US and its European allies proposed a UNSC resolution which would establish a no-fly zone and allow the use of all means to protect civilians and civilian-populated areas short of a 'foreign occupation force' (Security Council 2011). The BRIC countries opposed intervention, suspecting that it was the intention of the West to use the resolution as a means to overthrow the Gaddafi regime (Baev 2011; Pollack 2011; Light 2012; Lazareva 2011). But rather than reject the resolution outright, all four countries (who were on the UNSC at the time) opted to abstain (Pollack 2011; Baev 2011; Kronstadt et al. 2011).

Although the BRICs shared a common position, there were different intentions and objectives present. While Russia and China were especially vocal in their view that intervention in Libya was a means for the West to remove a government, Brazil focused on the humanitarian dimension. In her speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2011, Brazil's president, Dilma Rousseff, argued that intervention was only justified after all peaceful means of resolution were exhausted. Although the UNSC resolution legitimized the use of force, it was arguably the first instance that states' 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) civilians had been expressly stated (i.e. states' responsibility to protect their own citizens, the international community's assistance to help states achieve this and UN member states' responsibility to act collectively to provide that assistance where states are failing).[3]

[3] The 'responsibility to protect' is a principle which has gained traction within the international community during the past decade and accepted by the UN in 2005.

(Security Council 2011; Kolb 2012) However, Rousseff went further than the 'responsibility to protect', stating that if intervention occurred, those doing so had a 'responsibility while protecting.' (RWP) (Rousseff 2011; Evans 2012) In other words, an external force was obliged to protect the local population while restoring order, thereby imposing a higher standard. For Brazil's representative at the UN, this constitutes a third option between national sovereignty and external intervention, by seeing 'political solutions rather than going immediately into coercive measures' (Santos 2012).

BRIC policy on the Libyan conflict has contributed to their present position in relation to the Syrian uprising. As the conflict has become increasingly militarized and violent, the BRICs (and South Africa) have collectively criticized human rights violations and the poor security and humanitarian situation in the country. Stressing the need for a 'syrian-led' solution, they have opposed any outside intervention. Of the four, Russia and China have been most able to do this, through the vetoing of draft resolutions at the UNSC while Brazil and India have been more neutral in their calls for political dialogue (Gladstone and Droubi 2014; Morin 2014). That position was reiterated in mid-2013 by their joint opposition to US and Western intervention, following suspicions that it had used chemical weapons against civilians in 2013 (Reuters 2013). Following the West's failure to coordinate and act, Russia was at the forefront of negotiating a deal with Damascus in November 2013 to remove and destroy its stockpile of chemical weapons (BRICS Post 2014a).

As with Libya, differences exist between the BRICs concerning intentions and objectives. For the two democracies, Brazil and India, their capacity to take a greater role is partly constrained by institutional factors, such as the absence of a permanent seat on the UNSC. At the same time, there are nuances between the two: for Brazilian policymakers, the focus is on humanitarian protection; this is apparent in its financial assistance and provision of refuge for displaced Syrians in 2013.[4] Since outlining those proposals, its involvement in relation to the conflict diminished during 2014, an election year. India has reiterated its commitment to political dialogue and a solution, which has enabled others, like Russia, to claim Indian sentiment is in line with its own.

For the two authoritarian regimes, Russia and China, as well as having influence through the UNSC there are more direct economic and political considerations (Hayoun 2013). The two countries fear that external involvement in Syria may not only open the door to the removal of the Assad regime, but also to their ties to the country; in Russia's case, its various economic and military ties with Damascus which it has developed since the late 1960s. These include current arms contracts worth around $10bn a year and Russian companies' development of oil exploration and pipelines (Light 2012; Lazareva 2011). Perhaps unsurprisingly, Beijing and Moscow have largely adopted much of the rhetoric from Assad regime, which claims to be putting down a domestic insurgency by foreign extremists and

[4] By August 2014 Brazil had issued 4,200 humanitarian visas to Syrians, who can then apply for refugee status; 1,245 applications for refuge have been approved (Brodzinsky 2014).

terrorists. Consequently, the two countries have promoted alternative resolutions in the UNSC to encourage the regime and domestic opposition to unite and root out terrorism (BRICS Post 2014b, c, d). However, despite the contrary stance taken by Russia and China to others on the UNSC, some analysts questioned their relative influence on the Syrian regime. Allison (2013), for example, argues that notwithstanding Moscow's business interests in the country, its influence over the Assad government is largely overstated. Indeed, should the situation in Syria deteriorate further, it is not expected that Russia will be able to achieve more than coordinate emergency planning with the West.

Indeed, the matter became more pronounced during 2014 when the Islamic State not only consolidated its position in eastern Syria, but began taking over parts of western Iraq. The radical and militant nature of the Islamic State, combined with its transnational character and rejection of the existing state system, brought the US and the West together with the BRICs in opposition. In September 2014 the UNSC passed a unanimous resolution to stop the recruitment, finance and assistance of 'foreign terrorist fighters'. Where the US and its allies differed from Russia and China was over the legitimacy of its decision to carry out airstrikes in Iraq and Syria. Moscow and Beijing criticized the action in Syria on the grounds that neither the government had requested it (in contrast to Iraq) nor was it the result of a UN resolution (Carter et al. 2014; Botelho et al. 2014; Quinn 2014).

4 Accounting for and Transforming BRIC Reticence?

The case of the BRICs as emerging powers highlights the tension between a hegemonic power (the US) on one side and the emergence of new regional—and potentially global—powers on the other. At the same time it poses questions about whether they will pursue common or different interests, based on their own position in relation to individual economic and political interests (i.e. energy markets and prices and their democratic/authoritarian status), and the extent to which they have a direct stake or occupy a more distant position in relation to the region.

Yet even though there are significant differences between the BRICs themselves in this regard, it is arguably possible to talk of some broad themes which they share. When applied to the case of the Middle East and its key challenges, at least two main observations must be made. First, although these rising powers do criticize the US and its hegemonic position, they tend not to confront US interests directly. Instead they pursue approaches which are broadly in line with Washington's lead. When they do adopt a contrary position, it is usually because the US presence is absent (e.g. in the case of Syria). Second, although there are differences among BRIC countries (as energy producers/consumers and democracies/authoritarian regimes), they tend to pursue policies which are broadly similar, even if the intent and objectives may differ.

How then to account for the BRICs' approaches in the Middle East, from unwillingness to overly challenge US dominance on the one hand while adopting

similar lines of action? Three main explanations may suffice. First, the four countries face individual constraints and limitations. As energy consumers, India and China are increasingly dependent on the region—and its hegemon—to maintain the international order so as to maintain a steady supply at a reasonably constant price. Meanwhile both Russia and Brazil face problems of distance and disconnection from the region: both countries face difficulties in applying their influence in the region into direct leverage. For example, despite Brazil's growing economic ties to the region, they remain partial and insufficient to force significant changes in the actions of particular state actors. Their historically limited relationship with the region is especially felt in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict where Brasilia has no significant economic or political weight. Meanwhile, Russia has been able to bloc foreign intervention in the Syrian conflict, but as of September 2014 that appeared to be changing as a result of local and transnational developments on the ground associated with the Islamic State.

Second, the BRICs face challenges with regard to acting as a coherent group even as they adopt some lines of action which may appear—at least on the surface—to be similar. Although they have begun to hold regular meetings and articulated common positions, these tend to hide their individual concerns which outweigh any collective considerations. Group 'unity' has been apparent on issues like sanctions against Iraq and Iran and the Arab Uprising where they have been able to be clear about what they are against (i.e. foreign intervention), but it is arguably not so clear what alternative and more productive measures they are for. The case of Syria is especially pertinent, where Brazil emphasized humanitarian issues (e.g. RWP) during its time on the UNSC in 2010–2011, and Russia its political and economic ties to the regime. In sum, the result is a set of policy stances on various issues which appear to command a consensus befitting their group status, but on closer inspection reveal significant differences.

Third, BRIC inability and unwillingness to challenge US hegemony may be the fact that the advantages outweigh the costs, contributing towards a free rider phenomenon. Indeed, the BRICs may be perceived as having the best of both words: on the one hand criticizing the US while on the other hand benefiting from US regional dominance. As a result, they act as free riders. They pursue deeper political and economic contacts under a security umbrella which is financed and run by Washington. India and China benefit from not having to intervene directly in the region in order to ensure a regular supply of oil. Russia is able to pursue its more limited post-Cold War priorities in Turkey, Iran and Syria, knowing that it does not have to underwrite any costs. Furthermore, the likelihood is that the BRICs will continue to benefit from the US security umbrella, even as the structure of global oil production changes over the coming decade, making the US more self-sufficient and less dependent on oil imports. Even as it becomes increasingly independent in its oil supply, it will still play a continued role in the wider global oil market, including the Middle East, since increasing oil production may lead to falling oil prices and potential geopolitical instability (Maugeri 2012).

The prospect of regional disorder in the Middle East within the context of an increasingly multipolar international system in the future arguably points to the

need for other, emerging powers to share the security burden alongside the US. The presence of various transnational threats from both states (e.g. Iran and its nuclear program) and non-state actors (e.g. disaffected social groups in Iraq after 2003, religious extremists across the region) and aspirational states (like the Islamic State) point to an increasingly volatile environment. These pressures may stretch the capacity of the US to provide support to the region, which may also be increasingly undermined by rising anti-American sentiment. Therefore, it may fall to other emerging powers like the BRICs which are not perceived in the same negative light, to share the burden of regional security.

Even if the BRICs do not appear willing to participate in the management of regional security in the Middle East, the prospect for it happening appear to be in place. Their unwillingness to challenge the prevailing US-led order demonstrates the extent to which they have become 'locked in' to support for the current system. This development reflects the wider global trend faced by the BRICs, where the tendency has been towards greater incorporation and integration in existing structures of governance. Ironically, central to this process was the US, which despite a unilateralist tendency during the first half of the 2000s (and most noticeable in its decision to invade Iraq in 2003), sought to grant them a stake in the Bretton Woods system. This was evident in several ways, including the revision of international trading systems into the WTO (to also include China) and the inclusion of China, India and Brazil alongside other regional powers in the G20 (Drezner 2007).

Similarly, even the BRICs' present use of 'soft balancing' tactics against the US in the region suggests potential future collaboration with Washington rather than continued obstruction in the region. Soft balancing entails the use of temporary coalitions and bargaining through institutions in order to slow down and frustrate US foreign policy objectives. These approaches are distinct from the more traditional—or 'hard'—forms of balancing, such as the buildup of arms and military alliances associated with balance of power theory (Pape 2005; Paul 2005). That the BRICs opt to soft balance the US may be attributed to the absence of an existential threat stemming from Washington's regional security umbrella, since historically, 'harder' forms of balancing occur when one or more states fear another, more preponderant power and consequently opt to group together in serving as an effective counterweight (Claude 1989). In short, the BRICs have arguably less reason to fear from US action in the region than they have for supporting it.

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Strategic Hedging by Non-Great Powers in the Persian Gulf

Yoel Guzansky

Abstract Since taking clear sides in a great power contest risks making their security situation worse, smaller and more vulnerable states may very well adopt behavior which simultaneously includes elements of *both* balancing and bandwagoning. Because alliance commitments are uncertain and intentions can change, there is a great deal of value in maintaining maximum freedom of action through strategic hedging, in order to increase benefits at times from allies or rivals but at other times simply in order to survive.

1 Introduction

Do states balance against threats or bandwagon with the threatening actor? The answer is that sometimes they do both simultaneously. The discussion in the literature regarding whether States have a greater tendency to balance against a threatening state or to bandwagon with it remains ongoing, but these theoretical concepts largely represent a simplistic dichotomy and a sweeping conceptualization.[1] The neo-realist argument is that States seek to increase their security by the use of a strategy of *either* balancing *or* bandwagoning. External balancing is defined as allying with other actors in the face of a rising power as opposed to internal balancing (through an arms buildup, for example), while "bandwagoning" suggests allying oneself with the source of the threat in order to prevent harm or to

[1] See Suzanne Werner and Douglas Lemke, 'Opposites Do Not Attract: The Impact of Domestic Institutions, Power and Prior Commitments on Alignment Choices', *International Studies Quarterly* 41/3 (1997); Robert Powell, *In the Shadow of Power* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1999); Anders Wivel, 'Balancing Against Threats or Bandwagoning with Power? Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship after the Cold War', *Cambridge Review of International Relations* 21/3 (1997); Evelyn Goh, 'Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies', *International Security* 32/3 (Winter 2007/2008); Brock Tessman, 'System Structure and State Strategy: Adding Hedging to the Menu', *Security Studies* 21/2 (2012).

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gain in any prospective division of spoils.[2] Balancing and bandwagoning, however, do not cover the entire spectrum of strategic choices—especially for smaller, non-Great Powers.[3]

While the geopolitical importance of the Persian Gulf has been acknowledged ever since U.S. Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan first drew attention to it in his 1890 study on *The Influence of Sea power Upon History*, and is only further underscored by the frequency and intensity of conflicts arising along its shores in recent decades, the international relations and regional balancing politics of the area have not been sufficiently studied.[4]

The following case studies and individual country regional policy orientations—centering on the Persian Gulf—seek to demonstrate that, on a continuum between total defection and full cooperation, a sphere of maneuverability exists which states can exploit in order to improve their security situation. Precisely because they cannot be convinced with absolute certainty as to the true intentions and full commitment of their allies, and because the interests of one's ally will never be entirely identical, states often resort to *strategic hedging*. Furthermore, less than full cooperation with an ally and a certain amount of independence in foreign relations is likely to be a beneficial course of action for the smaller power. This is especially true if the latter wishes to create the impression that it reserves the right to reconsider its policy toward the very country its ally perceives as a real or potential competitor. In the small power's view, hedging of one's bets leverages its stronger alliance partners, thereby enhancing its own bargaining situation and bargaining power. However, in many cases, hedging is used merely as a defense mechanism in struggling to manage and contain perceived threats.

Frequent tumult in and around the Arabian Peninsula, and the potential for the Persian Gulf to again become a theater of war, insures the Gulf's critical importance for regional and global security. Because of their perceived sense of threat from Iran, the relatively smaller Gulf states might have been expected either to balance against Teheran's power or, alternatively, to bandwagon with it. However, we find these states consciously choosing to adopt a "mixed policy" featuring identifiable elements of *both* balancing and bandwagoning. This pattern of foreign policy behavior stands in contrast to the neorealist assumption that they, the Gulf states,

[2] Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (New York: Cornell University Press 1987) 21 and Stephen Walt, *Revolution and War* (New York: Cornell University Press 1996) 33. See also Randall L. Schweller, 'Bandwagoning for Profit', International Security 19/1 (1994), 80.

[3] Patricia Weitsman, 'Intimate Enemies: The Politics of Peacetime Alliances', *Security Studies* 7/1 (1997), 162. See also Jan Angstrom and Jan Williem Honig, 'Regaining Strategy: Small Powers, Strategic Culture and escalation in Afghanistan, The Journal of Strategic Studies 35/5 (2012), 670.

[4] Gregory Gause, 'Balancing What: Threat Perception and Alliance Choices in the Gulf', *Security Studies* 13/2 (2004) and Gregory Gause, 'Systematic Approaches to Middle East International Relations', *International Studies Review* 1/1 (1999). Also James Russell, 'The Arab Gulf States: Beyond Oil and Islam', *The Middle East Journal* 64/4 (2010) and Philipp Amour, 'The History and International Relations of the Gulf Region Reconsidered', *International Studies Review* 14/2 (2012).

would opt unequivocally either to balance[5] or to bandwagon as a way of definitively coping with threats.[6]

This chapter seeks to develop and refine the thinking behind this strategy of hedging by analyzing the foreign policy of Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Oman toward Iran. It argues that the strategy of hedging allows the Gulf States, each with its own emphases according to the gravity of the threat it anticipates, to partially or declaratively bandwagon with the very same actor they are simultaneously balancing against. As such, this strategy reduces the danger of conflict with revolutionary Iran in the short term, while preserving contingency plans for addressing the severity of the threat as well as the uncertainty of the relationship with Iran in the long term.

The concept of "strategic hedging" will be defined here in the context of small, non-Great Powers, with empirical evidence provided for identifying as well as analyzing the actual conduct of such a pragmatic, realistic policy. The first section introduces the concept of "hedging", while the second section offers evidence and illustrations of strategic hedging in the Gulf. In the third section findings from an analysis of case studies are presented together with a comparison of both the advantages and disadvantages of this strategy, before then concluding with a conceptual note on directions for possible future research.

2 The Concept of Strategic Hedging

While the concept of hedging is not completely foreign to international relations theory, it has yet to be sufficiently developed. As Tessman explains, it is a situation in which States seek "to strike a middle ground."[7] Commonly found in the fields of economic policy planning and financial risk management, the term is defined here as an attempt by an actor to adopt both cooperative and competitive policies toward its main rival. Resulting in what Medeiros calls "a geopolitical insurance strategy of sorts",[8] a strategy of hedging is uniquely suited to an anarchic system in the sense that it allows for a smaller power interested in offsetting or dissipating security threats to improve its situation in relation to the rising power while avoiding a major confrontation. In the present context, the strategy makes it acceptable to maintain

[5] Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, *263* and Walt, *Revolution and War*, *19*.

[6] Randall Schweller, 'Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In', *International Security* 19/1 (1994), 75-78. Schweller objects to the usual assumption that States generally tend to balance against threats. He claims that bandwagoning is more common than was at first believed and that its goal is actually to attempt to maximize the expected gain to the state from joining a rising power.

[7] Tessman, 'System, Structure and State Strategy', 205 and Brock Tessman and Wojdek Wolfe, 'Great Powers and Strategic Hedging: The Case of Chinese Energy Security Strategy', International Studies Review 13/2 (2011), 216

[8] Evan S. Medeiros, 'Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability', *The Washington Quarterly*, 29/1 (winter 2005-06), 164.

significant ties with the threatening force and, at the same time, to form alliances to balance the impending threat.

Hedging is meant to cope with the limitations imposed on a state in acting independently toward larger powers while also aiming to keep open the maximum number of possibilities. Such a strategy involves a large investment of inputs in both directions (in order to maintain the alliance and to preserve good relations with the threatening power) as well as risk because, in the worst of all possible worlds, it is liable to invoke the wrath of both adversary and ally. Yet, on the other hand, it offers the promise of reducing the possibility for strategic surprise since the road to full balancing or full bandwagoning is arguably shorter. When Acharya discusses security arrangements in south-east Asia, he claims that hedging is a policy 'in which States are uncertain whether to balance, bandwagon, or remain neutral'.[9] In the current context, however, it would be more accurate to view this strategy as a conscious decision by states to simultaneously use various active components, allegedly contradictory, in order to offset risks. The literature on nuclear strategy also uses the term. Levite describes hedging as a situation in which a nuclear threshold state seeks to keep open the possibility of acquiring nuclear weapons in a relatively short time, thereby increasing its bargaining power. [10]

There is some overlap between this strategy and adopting a restrained policy based on improving defense and aspiring to balance as the preferred alternative for achieving security, as proposed by defensive realism. According to this theory, it is safer to balance against a potential threat because bandwagoning increases the resources of the strong state and requires confidence in its ability to control its appetite in the future. Defensive realists will seek enough power to balance, resulting in, according to their theory, a low-threat environment.[11] What defensive realism and a strategy of hedging have in common, therefore, is an attempt to evade the consequences of the security dilemma in a situation in which any attempt to achieve power beyond what is required will lead to the opposite results. But a strategy of hedging does not rule out the possibility of adopting characteristics of bandwagoning, even by engaging in selective security cooperation as well as other forms of functional, nonmilitary cooperation with the threatening power as a means of avoiding or reducing the costs of a possible future confrontation with it.

The strategy is similar to a situation in which there is soft balancing, which includes cooperation with the stronger actor while attempting to limit and undermine its policy through the use of economic, diplomatic, and institutional means and is often used to describe E.U.-U.S. relations.[12] Nevertheless, even here, there is no complete theoretical match, especially since, in the case of hedging as opposed

[9] Amitav Acharya, 'Will China's Past Be Its Future?', *International Security* 28/3 (2004), 153.

[10] Ariel Levite, 'Never Say Never Again: Nuclear Reversal Revisited,' *International Security* 27/3 (2003) 63, 66.

[11] Benjamin Miller, 'Explaining Changes in U.S. Grand Strategy: 9/11, the Rise of Offensive Liberalism, and the War in Iraq', Security Studies 19/1 (2010), pp. 32-35.

[12] Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, 'Hard Times for Soft Balancing,' *International Security* 30/2 (2005), 84 and T.V. Paul, 'Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy,' *International Security* 30/1 (2005), 58-59.

to soft balancing, the states see the adversary as a real and immediate threat to their security,[13] and therefore consciously choose to cooperate with it in order to avoid harm while concurrently adopting elements of hard balancing against it.

Some of the characteristics of this hedging strategy can also be identified in buck passing, a policy in which states shift the burden of deterrence and even fighting against the adversary to a senior member within an alliance. States that believe the advantage lies in defense may abandon allies and rely on efforts by others to balance; and, as a result, the adversary may gain the advantage. Hedging, however, is a broader concept. It does not only emphasize free-riding by the state on the efforts of its alliance partner because of the desire to reduce costs, or due to expectations of improved relative status.[14] It is also based on concern for its own national security, including attention given to actually taking active security-related steps vis-à-vis the rival.

States may adopt a strategy of hedging under the following conditions:

1. So long as there is uncertainty regarding the willingness of their allies to fulfill prior commitments and come to their aid; or if membership in the alliance is actually causing them losses. Even if there is a formal commitment to mutual aid, states may evade such a commitment and hedge if, in their view, fulfilling it would harm essential interests.
2. When a small power, and certainly one caught in a disadvantageous geostrategic situation, is compelled to prepare constantly for worst-case scenarios; and is interested, on the one hand, in reducing potential damage and, on the other, in maximizing gains in terms of possible future scenarios.
3. If the non-Great Power is incapable of tipping the balance of power in the region by itself. This could be true for many states, especially weak ones, when assessments indicate the two sides in a contest to be roughly equal, while the price for "dancing" with both is not high.

3 The GCC and Iran

Destabilization of the Middle East regional *status quo* in the wake of the Islamic revolution in Iran and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War after 1979 suddenly and dramatically increased fears in Saudi Arabia and the smaller Gulf States, forcing their realization in the immediate need for establishing a regional framework for security cooperation. Formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) shortly thereafter, in 1981, actually resulted from earlier processes started even before the withdrawal "east of Suez" by the British and as early as the 1960s. Its goal, as declared in the founding charter, was 'to effect coordination, cooperation and

[13] Galia Press-Barnathan, 'Managing the Hegemon: NATO under Unipolarity,' *Security Studies* 15/2 (2006), 273.

[14] Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder, 'Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity,' *International Organization* 44/2 (Spring 1990), 141.

integration in all fields.'[15] The GCC also expressed common interests: the monarchical character of the regimes, their religious ties as Muslims and Sunnis, their common Arab origin, and their concerns vis-à-vis revolutionary, Shi'a, non-Arab Iran. The swift conquest of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990 not only dramatically exposed their individual and collective weaknesses but also their different threat perceptions—with the latter rendering the organization essentially unable to fulfill its most basic security function. The fraternity and public solidarity shown by the organization's leaders were really meant to cover up competing and even contradictory interests as well as differing views of the strategic environment.[16] Nevertheless, events in the early 1980s did force the increased pace of cooperation as well as contributing to a change in its character, as the member states and their leaders came to recognize that patterns of cooperation did in fact enable them to more credibly confront the multiple threats then and prospectively facing them.

Examining the GCC organization through the theory of alliances is thus useful because the trigger for its establishment was immediate and physical security, and centered on the specific security component in their relations as sovereign, independent states.[17] What distinguishes alliances (a defensive one in the case of the GCC) from other associations, such as alignments, coalitions and regimes, is the formal or informal commitment to security cooperation given over time, and which is not necessarily dependent on a specific event or the alliance's wider security context.[18] It is also important to examine security frameworks, such as those existing throughout the developing world, because most of the research on this subject is based on observations made in the western hemisphere.[19] Although the Persian Gulf region composed of non-Great Powers is consider to be vital to international stability and energy security it is often ignored by "big theory" scholarship.

[15] 'Charter of the GCC', GCC Secretariat General, http://www.gcc-sg.org/eng/indexfc7a.html?action = Sec-Show&ID = 1.

[16] For more on the GCC and the security of the Gulf see: Gregory Gause, *The International Relations of the Persian Gulf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010) 241-250; Lawrence Potter and Gary Sick (eds.) *Security in the Persian Gulf*: *Origins*, *Obstacles and the Search for Consensus* (New York: Palgrave 2002) Ch. 3 and 10 and Gregory Gause, *Oil Monarchies*: *Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press 1994) 119-145.

[17] Joseph Kechichian, 'The Gulf Cooperation Council: Search for Security', *Third World Quarterly* 7/4 (1985); R.K. Ramazani, *The Gulf Cooperation Council*: *Record and Analysis* (Virginia: Virginia University Press 1988) and David Priess, 'Balance of Threat Theory and the Genesis of the Gulf Cooperation Council', *Security Studies* 5/4 (1996).

[18] Avi Kober, *Coalition Defection*: *The Dissolution of Anti-Israeli Coalitions in War and Peace* (Connecticut: Praeger 2002) 23–24, 141.

[19] Ulf Lindell and Stefan Persson, 'The Paradox of Weak State Power: A Research and Literature Overview', *Cooperation and Conflict* 21/70 (1986) and Carlo Masala, 'Alliances' in Myriam Valety and Victor Mauer, *The Routledge Handbook of Security Studies* (New York: Routledge 2010).

The survey below reflects the basic concerns of Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, Bahrain and Oman: cooperating with Iran while attempting to preserve the framework of the GCC, established primarily but not exclusively because of the Iranian threat.

The argument here is two-fold: that contrasting threat perceptions have made it difficult to establish a joint, institutionalized security strategy; and that cracks in the front of unity do weaken the states' ability to act as a united bloc vis-à-vis Iran. Consequently, when perceptions of the Iranian threat—with its different dimensions, military buildup, nuclear ambitions, political subversion, and terrorism—are essentially shared, each GCC constituent member has chosen to hedge in relation to the different dimension and/or level of the threat that it anticipates. And still the GCC framework has endured rather than breaking apart in sharp discord.

- *Kuwait* has a long history of hedging, dating back to diplomatic maneuvering between the British Empire and the Ottomans and between Iraq and Iran. In each instance Kuwaiti leadership attempted to appease the different factions, while preserving local independence and assets.[20] Subsequently, Kuwait's approach to Iran at present is similar to that of Saudi Arabia's, with considerable caution due to: (a) Kuwait's geographic proximity to Iran, (b) the considerable Shi'a minority present in Kuwait, (c) Iran's negative attitude and subversive activity directed toward the Emirate. Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait awakened nationalist feelings among the resident Shi'ites who, following the country's liberation from Iraqi occupation, knew enough to swear renewed allegiance to Kuwait's ruling al-Sabah family, although many continue to have reservations.[21] During the earlier 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq War, Iran also violated Kuwaiti sovereignty, entering its airspace on several occasions, and was apparently behind terrorist attacks in the 1980s as well as instances of subversion in recent years.[22] However, the consistent Kuwaiti response has been one of restraint, and it has sought to contain the fallout from these provocations and to prevent serious or permanent damage to relations with Teheran. During Iraq's invasion in August 1990 Kuwait even sought to draw closer to Iran, albeit temporarily, as a balance-of-power counterweight to Baghdad. Such a move, however, evoked criticism from the more southern GCC nations who perceived of Iran as the greater strategic threat. Today Kuwait continues to regard Iran-influenced and Shi'a—dominted Iraq as the more immediate threat—greater now since America's phased withdrawal from Iraq in December 2011. As a result, its steps toward normalization with the new Iraq have been, and remain, hesitant and slow.

[20] Jill Crystal, 'Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar', (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990) 107.

[21] The Shiites are more integrated into the social and economic systems in Kuwait than in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia and can, therefore, be found in sensitive sectors, such as the national oil company (a Shiite even served in the past as Kuwaiti oil minister), the army and the police.

[22] Iran cell planned attacks in Kuwait, minister says', *Reuters*, April 21, 2011. http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/21/us-kuwait-iran-spying-idUSTRE73K3NO20110421

Despite Iran's negative activity, Kuwait therefore continues its attempts at appeasing Iran: by hosting the Iranian president in 2006 and openly supporting his ambition for civil nuclear capabilities, and by declaring that it will not serve as a base for attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities.[23]

- The emirate of *Qatar*, arguably more than any other GCC state, has tended to regard attempts by the Arab Gulf states at collective security arrangements as overly ambitious and lacking in substance. Consequently, most of its efforts lie in delicately balancing the power of its stronger Iranian, Iraqi and Saudi neighbors. This hedging strategy, responding to the changing correlation of regional forces, has been notably successful thus far, enabling the emirate to achieve a threefold set of vital interests: protecting itself from the perils of small-state vulnerability, reinforcing its political position, exploiting the current but possibly temporary power vacuum to its own advantage.[24]

Qatari policy represents a combination of opportunism, ambition and strategic maneuvering, backed by tremendous economic power and a willingness to use that economic clout for political purposes. What makes this course of action all the more effective is the weakness and defensiveness of former centers of power inside and outside the region, especially Iraq. No less fortuitous for a small state actor is the preoccupation of the larger players—the Iranians, the Saudis and the Americans—with offsetting each other, and with their clash over the larger issues centering on the longer-term fallout from the destabilizing "Arab Spring", the specter of Middle East nuclearization and, not least, the menace of Islamic extremist movements.

Never having been a target for Iranian subversion, Qatar has made a point over the years of maintaining ongoing relations with Teheran, primarily as a kind of diplomatic insurance policy. By contrast, the palace coup of 1995 caused a rift between Doha and Riyadh, causing the new Qatari ruler, Shaykh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, to challenge the Saudis on border dispute issues, and to support anti-Saudi propaganda via the Qatari based *al Jazeera* network.

During this period of tensions with Saudi Arabia, troubled relations with Riyadh have led the Qataris to limit their participation in security frameworks dominated by Saudi influence. Al-Thani turned instead to cultivating Iranian backing so as to insure the peaceful development of Qatari natural gas fields adjacent to Iranian territorial waters.

Considered the "bad boy" of the Gulf, Qatar maintains correct relations with Iran as part of its aforementioned policy directed at increasing its regional status. Keeping in Teheran's good graces also works to insure that Qatar does not become a prospective target of Iran.[25] It therefore avoids criticizing Iran publicly. It works

[23] 'Kuwait urges Iran to address worries on nuclear plant', *New York Times*, December 24, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/25/world/middleeast/kuwait-urges-iran-to-cooperate-with-un-nuclear-watchdog.html

[24] Lina Khatib, 'Qatar's Foreign Policy: The Limits of Pragmatism', International Affairs 89/2 (2013), 418-419. See also Rabi, Uzi, 'Qatar's relations with Israel: challenging Arab and Gulf norms', *Middle East Journal* 63/3 (2009) 444.

[25] Author's interview with a consultant to the Emir of Qatar, Doha, May 2012.

to improve relations in a number of non-political, non-sensitive fields. It engages in reciprocal state visits, and already in 2007 extended an invitation to the Iranian president to attend the GCC's annual summit meeting in Doha, for the first time since the organization's founding. Qatar also conducts limited joint naval exercises with Iran in the Gulf.[26] Also, in 2010 the two countries signed a comprehensive memorandum of understanding that includes an expansion of cooperation in the war on terror.[27]

In this sense, for Qatar its policy of hedging with Iran needs to be seen as a logical counterbalance against Saudi Arabia. Iran, for its part, views normalized relations with Qatar as a convenient bridge to the other Gulf States; and as an elegant means for shrinking America's sphere of influence while at the same time projecting Teheran's own resolve and commitment.

This solo balancing act comes with a price tag, however. Qatar's ambitious external policy in the Persian Gulf arena has upset and even alarmed adversaries and allies alike. Particularly when differences over the role of political Islam and divergent attitudes toward the "Muslim Brotherhood" present yet another serious stumbling block in relations among the GCC states. For instance, on 5 March 2014 Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the UAE took the unusual step of recalling their ambassadors from Qatar in protest over the latter's support for the "Muslim Brotherhood" organization and for the ousted regime in Egypt, seen by them as jeopardizing their security and political stability. In a joint statement, the three States insisted GCC members had signed an agreement back in November 2013 not to back "anyone threatening the security and stability of the GCC whether as groups or individuals—via direct security work or through political influence, and not to support hostile media".[28] Interestingly, Kuwait, practicing its own form of hedging, did not join the earlier symbolic move, ostensibly in order to be able to offer itself as a go-between. At the end of 2014 the sides reached an acceptable Saudi-brokered *modus vivendi*, allowing them to get past the most recent crisis through an agreement not to interfere in "each other's internal affairs and not to undermine one other's interests, security, or stability".[29]

While Qatar is still careful to pay lip service to the Gulf consensus (for example, on the issue of the three UAE islands occupied by Iran, and the need to strengthen

[26] 'Iran, Qatar Discuss Implementation of Security Pact', *Fars News*, April 15, 2014. http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn = 13930126000748

[27] The demonstration of this independent policy is not proportional to the geographic size of Qatar, but stems from, at its very basic, a strategy for survival per se, as alluded to by the Emir of Qatar in a 60 Minutes interview in January 2012. When it was pointed out that it appears as if "the basis of [Qatar's] foreign policy is to be friends with everyone," the Emir responded fairly succinctly: "Don't you think that this is a good policy for a small country?" See interview with Qatar's Amir regarding 'staying friendly to everyone': 'Qatar: A tiny country asserts powerful influence', *CBS News*, 15 Jan. 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = b_ZuXbOtBbo.

[28] **'KSA, Bahrain, UAE recall ambassadors from Qatar', *Arab News*, 5 March, 2014. http://www.arabnews.com/news/535101**

[29] Fiona MacDonald and Dana El Baltaji, 'Qatar Says Spat with Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain resolved', *Bloomberg*, April 23, 2014. http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-04-23/qatar-says-dispute-with-saudi-arabia-u-a-e-bahrain-resolved.html

the joint military force), in point of actual practice its policy on various issues, first and foremost concerning Iran, is not in full compliance with the stand of its fellow GCC states. One notes that this stubbornly independent policy is inversely proportional to Qatar's geographic size, and can only be explained as stemming from the desire to enhance its regional importance while protecting the natural energy resources with which it is blessed.[30]

Left unmentioned as yet in the Gulf equation and in Qatar's distinctive "balancing-by-hedging" policy is the American connection, particularly in the security field. Arguably, it is the sizeable U.S. military presence in Qatar which enables this decidedly local non-Great Power to embrace and pursue an active, even assertive independent foreign policy in the confidence that, whatever else, its core national security is safeguarded.

- The position of the *United Arab Emirates* toward Iran, in turn, has been dictated over the years by its geographic proximity and extensive bilateral commercial ties. Two additional considerations are the domestic Iranian population resident in the 7-member UAE federation; but, above all, Iran's violation of the UAE's claim to sovereignty over three strategic islands in the Gulf.

The UAE's population, mostly comprised of foreign workers, is exposed to external subversion by Iranian agents and agitators. Nor is concern in Dubai at possible Iranian expansionism unwarranted in the face of escalating Iranian rhetoric calling for regime change combined, on the one hand, with Teheran's accelerated militarization program and enhanced capabilities and, on the other hand, kidnappings and assassinations of political dissidents on UAE soil.[31]

Not surprising, therefore to find that among GCC members, the federative UAE has taken the lead in voicing anti-Iranian sentiment, while also demonstratively assisting the United States militarily and through intelligence cooperation. The UAE has openly participated in several military exercises with American forces, with Iran as the perceived antagonist.

Like Kuwait, the UAE's balancing strategy is to draw closer to one of the less-threatening regional powers. Thus, during the 1980–1988 Iran-Iraq War, for example, it, too, supported Baghdad only to then shift course, prompted by a new balance of threat posed by Iraqi aggression, which led, in turn, to pursuing a measured rapprochement with Teheran subsequent to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

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[30] The demonstration of this independent policy is no way commensurate with the geographic size of Qatar, but stems from, at its very basic, a strategy for survival per se, as alluded to by the Emir of Qatar in a 60 Minutes interview in January 2012. When it was pointed out that it appears as if "the basis of [Qatar's] foreign policy is to be friends with everyone," the Emir responded fairly succinctly: "Don't you think that this is a good policy for a small country?" See interview with Qatar's Amir regarding 'staying friendly to everyone': 'Qatar: A tiny country asserts powerful influence', *CBS News*, 15 Jan. 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = b_ZuXbOtBbo. See also: Steven Wright, 'Qatar' in Christopher Davidson (ed.), *Power and Politics in the Middle East Monarchies* (New York: Colombia University Press 2011), 127-131 and Allen Fromherz, *Qatar*: *A Modern History* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press 2012), 96-100.

[31] Willian A. Rugh, 'The Foreign Policy of the United Arab Emirates', *Middle East Journal* 50/1 (1996), 58–59.

In the turbulent era of Middle East, inter-Arab and Persian Gulf affairs since the early 1990s, in dealing with Iran the UAE has consistently favored a diplomatic approach, founded on the shared interest of both sides in containing latent tensions between them. Iran's calculus includes the wish not to attract undue further attention or censure because of the international pressure it is already under; whereas from its perspective the UAE, aware of its power limitations, prefers to disentangle and isolate the impasse on the disputed islands from other bilateral agenda items, mainly economic, between it and Teheran. Clearly, being Iran's largest trading partner along with China, the UAE sees maintaining open commercial ties with Iran as its main insurance policy.

It is necessary to mention here the particular interest of Dubai, which hosts an estimated 400,000 Iranian nationals, and also Abu Dhabi. Both members of the federation have long insisted that this large Iranian community constitutes a "fifth column" and presents a very real potential threat to UAE stability.[32] Abu Dhabi, the strongest and the wealthiest of the seven emirates, has taken an even harder line toward Iran than Dubai. Nevertheless, indicative of their careful, balanced practice of hedging, the UAE's desire to prevent an outright falling-out or open confrontation with Iran is also expressed in its periodic outreach to Teheran, one of the precedents being hosting President Ahmadinejad in Dubai in 2007—the first visit of its kind by an Iranian president since the Islamic revolution.

- *Bahrain*, for its part, has been worried ever since the 1979 overthrow of the Shah about the Islamic Republic's intentions toward it. This concern is warranted by Bahrain's close proximity to Iran; by the ongoing Iranian claim to sovereignty over Bahrain as rightfully one of its districts; and by the fact that a Sunni minority tightly rules over a Shi'ite majority. Taken together, were it not for careful and prudent hedging these three basic geopolitical constants would otherwise make Bahrain a singularly appealing target for Iranian intervention.

As a result, there have been difficult periods of tension between the two, especially over Tehran's support for Shiite opposition organizations in Bahrain and other Iranian attempts at subversion since the Islamic revolution. For each of these reasons, Bahrain perceives of Iran as a genuine threat to its national security, and treats any domestic or Iraqi Shi'ite agitation as subversive acts inspired by Teheran and proof of Iran's strategy of indirectly extending its influence and control throughout the Persian Gulf region.[33]

Bahrain is therefore making conscious, determined efforts at strengthening its alliance networks with the West: serving as headquarters for the American Fifth Fleet and encouraging a united front by the GCC members vis-à-vis Iran.

[32] This large population of Iranian expatriates is a product of long-standing UAE-Iran commercial ties; many Iranian firms and individuals—primarily in the import-export business—operate from the UAE, taking advantage of the UAE's drive to position itself as a global trading and financial hub. See more: Kenneth Katzman, *The United Arab Emirates (UAE): Issues for U.S. Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2014), 19.

[33] Bruce Hoffman, 'Terrorism trends and prospects', *Countering the New Terrorism* 7/13 (1999) 15—see also footnote 21.

Contributing to Bahrain's prominence in supporting increased cooperation and integration within the GCC are its size, geographic location and delicate sectarian balance. Its neighbors, fearing similar problems among their own Shi'ite populations, have been favorably inclined toward Bahrain. Respecting its cause and concerns as their own, over the years they have provided both tangible assistance and welcome political backing.[34]

This is especially true of Saudi Arabia, with whom Bahrain's House of Khalifa is geographically and historically close, reinforced by ties of intermarriage. While catching Western observers by surprise, it was therefore not at all shocking in March 2011 to see the Saudis dispatch units of the so-called "joint Peninsula Shield"[35] to protect Bahrain during its encounter with manifestations at home of the Arab Spring uprisings sparked by Tunisia and Egypt. These troops were meant to serve two ends: to prevent the Shi'ite majority in Bahrain from overthrowing the rule of the House of Khalifa; but also to send an unambiguous signal to Teheran that Bahrain falls within Saudi Arabia's immediate sphere of influence.

Bahrain, for its part, recognizes Saudi protection and respects the fact that, its own domestic resources of oil seriously depleted, Saudi Arabia now serves as its primary source of supply. Bahrain's behavior, however, more closely conforms to a policy of balancing against Iran or, alternatively, bandwagoning with Saudi Arabia; as such, it is not a faithful representation of hedging. Still, while following a distinctly pro-Saudi foreign policy, in order to avoid Iranian aggression Bahrain does simultaneously allow Iranian businesses to operate on its territory. So, too, does it avoid criticizing Iran publicly or unduly. Of note, Bahrain frequently declares it will not permit its sovereign territory to be used for an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. Similarly, Bahrain has signed a substantial gas deal with the Iranians, investing approximately four billion dollars over the course of the next 25 years in hopes of solidifying and normalizing its relations with Iran.[36]

- *Oman*, under Sultan Qaboos, has skillfully managed to maintain cordial and fruitful relations with seemingly all parties in the regional arena. The sultanate generally maintains a policy that stands outside the GCC consensus; for example, it was one of the first GCC members to establish commercial ties with Israel.[37] It was the first to accept an American military presence in 1980, and continues to rely on the acquisition of American military hardware and technology. On the other hand, it steadfastly refuses to ostracize Iran, claiming that 'a

[34] Mehran Kamrava, 'The Arab Spring and the Saudi-led counterrevolution,' *Orbis* 56/1 (2012), 101–103.

[35] The joint force's poor record over the years has led the GCC countries to conclude their annual conference in December 2006 with the dissolution of its military branch in its current form. This was, in effect, the cornerstone for a force based on a different format, although here, too, discussions were prolonged and it was unclear when, if at all, the force would begin to function, let alone have an effect on the members' security.

[36] Kenneth Katzman, *Bahrain*: *Reform*, *Security*, *and US Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service 2012) 9.

[37] Uzi Rabi, 'Oman and the Arab–Israeli Conflict: The Reflection of a Pragmatic Foreign Policy', *Israel Affairs*, 11/3 (2005), 538–541.

nation of 65 million cannot be isolated.'[38] Unsurprisingly, Oman's relations with Iran are relatively close, with extensive commercial ties and even security connections that have only grown in recent years.

As a rule, it has been Sultan Qaboos's marked preference to 'sit on the fence' while displaying a strong sense of cautious pragmatism.[39] This personalized foreign policy faithfully represents not only Oman's strategic geographic location, sharing as it does the Straits of Hormuz with Iran, and its relatively modest economic and military capabilities, but is also partly explained by the Ibadi—who identify as Muslims but are neither Sunni nor Shi'a—and their culture of "conservatism and tolerance".[40] Yet arguably it is Oman's relative weakness and geographic location that leads it to adopt a more conciliatory stance toward Iran than even the other Persian Gulf states.

In this context, Sultan Qaboos undertook an official visit to Iran in August 2009 after President Ahmadinejad was sworn in for his second term, just as in August 2013 he was the first leader to visit Iran when President Hassan Rouhani took office.[41] That 2009 visit was the first by the Omani sultan since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, and on that occasion the two parties signed a number of agreements, including on security cooperation, with a further supplemental agreement signed in August 2010. In addition, the sultanate has held joint maneuvers and exercises with Iran, and Iranian ships occasionally dock in the sultanate's ports.[42]

In recent years, this pattern of pursuing normalization between Oman and Iran has become still more pronounced as Iran increasingly projects an image of strength in the Gulf and bids to become the regional Great Power. In which case Oman hints at the conciliatory behavior we can expect from other states in the Gulf should Iran indeed obtain a nuclear weapons capability.

Oman, like Qatar, believes that its ability to maneuver diplomatically, its maintenance of open channels of communication with all parties, and its close ties with the countries posing a possible threat, have led to recognizing its regional and international status, thereby reducing any genuine risk to its survival and national security. It is further convinced that what aids the cause is studied opposition to aggressive measures against Iran and consistent diplomatic and persuasive efforts at toning down GCC decisions against the Islamic Republic.

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[38] Majid Al-Khalili, *Oman's Foreign Policy*: *Foundation and Practice* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International 2009), 101.

[39] Author's interview with a senior official in the Omani foreign ministry, Masqat, April 2011.

[40] Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, 'Oman's Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century', *Middle East Policy*, 17/1, (2010), 110. Oman's unusual position within the Arab World has been partly explained by the Ibadi tolerance toward Jews: Uzi Rabi, Oman and the Arab–Israeli Conflict: The Reflection of a Pragmatic Foreign Policy', 550.

[41] 'Oman's Qaboos on Tehran visit, U.S.-Iran mediation in focus', *Reuters*, 25 Aug. 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/25/us-iran-oman-idUSBRE97O06820130825.

[42] Al-Khalili, *Oman's Foreign Policy: Foundation and Practice*, 107–108.

Oman's outsized role as a discreet mediator in negotiations between Iran and the West derives from its approach to conflict avoidance. The ostensibly neutral posture adopted by Qaboos reinforces the importance of the sultanate as a unique geopolitical actor and a bridge between the different aspirations of regional and global powers.[43] The trust imparted to it by both sides allows it, perhaps more than any other actor in the arena, to play a key facilitating role, such as in passing messages between the estranged parties. However, if and when the other GCC states take serious issue with Qaboos's line of reasoning in searching for compromise formulas with the Iranians, the likely result is going to be growing friction between Oman and the rest of the GCC.[44]

That the potential exists for serious discord among Iran's closest Persian Gulf neighbors is evidenced by Saudi initiatives directed toward converting the GCC from a loose federation into a union, which has met resistance, principally from Oman: "We are against a union," the Omani foreign minister, Yusuf bin Alawi, said on the eve of the 34th GCC summit in 2013. "We will not prevent a union, but if it happens we will not be part of it," bin Alawi added.[45] This rare public refusal, as well as the fact that, to date, the Saudi initiatives at greater consolidation, centralization and coordination have not gotten off the ground, indicates how deep the divisions among the seven really are, 34 years after the GCC's formal establishment. It bears adding that already at the opening of the 2013 GCC summit the Saudis were put out with Oman because of its role behind-the-scenes in mediating between the United States and Iran, and in jump-starting negotiations with Iran.[46]

4 External and Internal Calculations

Both the necessity and the opportunity to pursue hedging derive from strategic interdependence. GCC security depends in one direction upon outside protection, and in the opposite direction on outside countries in Africa, Asia and Europe being dependent, in turn, upon uninterrupted access to the Persian Gulf's boundless energy resources and financial sources.

[43] Shashank Bengali, 'U.S. Iran thaw began with months of secret meetings', *LA Times*, 24 Nov. 2013, http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-1125-iran-tic-toc-20131125,0,2689052.story#axzz2leZ1wZy0

[44] Dahlia Kholaif, 'Oman: No Gulf-wide union for us', *Al Jazeera*, 15 Dec. 2013, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/12/oman-no-gulf-wide-union-us-2013121571431541941.html.

[45] "Oman will withdraw from GCC if a union is formed: foreign minister", *The National*, December 7, 2013. http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/oman-will-withdraw-from-gcc-if-a-union-is-formed-foreign-minister

[46] 'Secret US-Iran talks cleared way for historic nuclear deal, *The Telegraph*, 24 November, 2013. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/10471030/Secret-US-Iran-talks-cleared-way-for-historic-nuclear-deal.html

Whether individually or collectively, the Gulf states have always been consumers rather than suppliers of security. Lacking strategic depth, their indigenous military weakness in the face of hostile neighbors has led them to rely increasingly for deterrence and defense on a British and then an American military presence. U.S. involvement in securing the Gulf has included major arms sales, prepositioning of equipment, ongoing training and preparation, establishment of central air and naval bases and even direct military intervention. 'Passing the buck' to the United States, thus makes it easier for the Gulf monarchies to entertain a policy of hedging toward Iran.

What about domestic considerations? Besides Iranian strategies designed to drive a wedge between the Gulf monarchies (especially between the Saudis and the smaller sheikdoms) the crux of any alliance politics, as Timothy Crawford points out, is the interaction of internal and external threats.[47] Indeed the states hedge against a more complex security environment than just Iran. Steven David's concept of *omnibalancing* adds domestic political considerations to realism's state-centric perspective, with these considerations affecting patterns of alignment. Like Michael Barnett and Jack Levy,[48] Crawford suggests that States are often found aligning themselves in order to balance against all threats, including domestic ones.[49] This might explain why Sunni lead-Bahrain, in governing a Sh'ia majority, is aligned with the GCC—and with Saudi Arabia—but does not satisfactorily account for why states like Qatar or Oman believe they are better off inside the GCC, or why they also choose to hedge. Added reinforcement comes from both Oman and Qatar wanting to preserve their autonomy and believing this loose alliance continues to serve a useful purpose.

More than four years into the "Arab Spring" these self-interested elite groups are therefore willing to support each other in the hope that doing so will in fact preserve both their monarchies and their Sunni domination. As Gregory Gause confirms, the competition between Shi'ite Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia essentially frames the Gulf's security agenda, with the smaller Gulf monarchies forced to maneuver between them.[50] In other words, these permeable states need to balance avoiding direct confrontation with Iran against their fear of Saudi dominance.

Expanding on this latter point, the Gulf sheikdoms are concerned—each in their own way—lest Saudi Arabia make an attempt at compelling them to fall into line and to comply with Saudi foreign policy. Here, Bahrain poses an exceptional case since it consistently tends to side openly with Saudi Arabia. Why? In the first instance, because of Iran's mischievous interference in purposely fomenting tension between Bahrain's Shi'ite majority and the Sunni royal house; secondly, because of geographic, historical, and familial ties with Saudi Arabia.

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[47] Crawford, 'The Strategic Consequences of Alliance Politics', 153.

[48] Michael N. Barnett and Jack S. Levy, 'domestic sources of alliances and alignment: the case of Egypt, 1962-73', International Organization 45/3 (1991), 370.

[49] Steven R. David, 'Explaining Third World Alignment', World Politics 43/2 (1991), 235-238.

[50] Gregory Gause, 'The International Relations of the Persian Gulf', 7 and Joseph Kostiner, 'Conflict and Cooperation in the Gulf Region' (VS Verlag Wiesbaden, 2009), 244-245.

As a result, despite its comparatively strong position in Gulf affairs, Saudi Arabia has been singularly unsuccessful as yet in promoting initiatives aimed at uniting the small, vulnerable and defensive Persian Gulf monarchies. The Saudis have succeeded neither in converting the GCC from a loose federative confederation into a "single entity",[51] nor in bringing Jordan and Morocco into the GCC.[52] Among the political and psychological barriers often cited for Gulf disunity under Saudi leadership are: resistance from other members to dictates or pressure politics by Riyadh, the economic costs involved in unification, or the possible damage to their inflated status and cherished autonomy within the existing decentralized organization. The less-cited explanation or barrier is that under the existing scheme of things each of the constituent GCC members is at liberty to pursue its own special tailor-made version of strategic hedging, and in its own best lights.

5 Pros and Cons of Hedging

As opposed to the clear advantages in practicing self-help strategic hedging, there are also considerable disadvantages and risks. For one thing, hedging one's bets by increasing one's flexibility and options rather than making an early, irreversible one-sided commitment is liable to impair the effectiveness of the balancing process and, subsequently, alliance management. To illustrate the point: in the early 1980s the Gulf states had the intention, although undeclared as such, to enter into a joint pact, made necessary once the security of the region and the stability of the monarchies were endangered by Iraqi adventurism and Iranian revolutionary fervor. In the face of perceived shared threats, for more than 33 years the GCC organization has succeeded in maintaining acceptable levels of coordination and cooperation. Yet this period has also been marked by an almost built-in lack of agreement among the members, with each working to maximize its individual security in ways that precluded establishing a far more effective united front on the western side of the Persian Gulf opposite Iran under the auspices of a central collective security institution.

An important question needing to be addressed in this context is: What enables the general notion of hedging to be a viable strategy, and to be sustainable over time? Were the country discomfited by such a strategy to be a Great Power or a dominant regional player, it might very well "up the ante" so to speak, compelling its weaker but hesitant, hedging ally to reveal its intentions and to commit unequivocally: one way or the other. Then proceeding either to reward or penalize for the

[51] 'Saudi King Abdullah calls for formation of Gulf union', *Asharq al-Awsat*, 19 December 2011. http://www.aawsat.net/2011/12/article55243928

[52] Sara Hadman, 'Gulf Council Reaches out to Morocco and Jordan', *New York Times*, May 25, Hadman 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/26/world/middleeast/26iht-M26-GCC.html?pagewanted = all&_r = 0

whichever choice had been made, as confirmed in the pattern of relations between Saudi Arabia and Qatar and Saudi Arabia and Oman. Nevertheless, even when hedging comes at a high price and when it might impair the effectiveness of a pre-existing bilateral or multilateral alliance, in situations of high uncertainty and with narrow margins for error, attempting to avoid harm and to survive becomes primary, and may fully warrant recourse to hedging, the disincentives notwithstanding.

The smaller Gulf states, each to a varying extent, do hedge in dealing with Iran, sometimes even when the level of external pressure to discourage it is high and where the conventional wisdom on alliance politics prescribes firm commitment and unconditional, non-hedging cooperation.[53] Their justification being that hedging contributes to their overall existential security as individual units, even at the expense of weakening the GCC's effectiveness due to its ambiguous nature. Similarly, the monarchies must surely be aware that despite the advantages accruing from this strategy, their desire to maintain as many options as possible means the economic as well as political costs are bound to be that much greater simply because hedging, like venture capital, mandates resources be directed at both bandwagoning *with* Iran and balancing *against* it. Furthermore, the net gain may be small; if the efforts are not effective in assuring independence and security in the end their huge investment in hedging could conceivably go down the drain.

In addition to which, alliance and coalition theories teach that the value of a collective security pact is measured on the likelihood one of the partners might withdraw, defect or "pass the buck" by letting other members bear the major burden. Hedging does in fact pose a problem of trust and credibility. Alliance partners can never be sure whether colleagues claiming the right to sovereign action will indeed honor their commitments or not, thereby weakening in this instance the GCC's cohesiveness and hence its contribution to regional security. As a result this strategy of hedging requires frequent maintenance and adjustment as part of the precarious balancing act; or else it will not be hedging, and certainly not successful hedging. Conversely, hedging, even when signaling weakness by including appeasement toward the threatening or ascendant power, can extend the life of an alliance by reducing the chances of counterbalancing. In short: individual freedom of action is preserved through hedging, while collective security is weakened.

Again, with specific reference to the Persian Gulf arena, survival statecraft by the local non-Great Powers in situations of political uncertainty offers important insight into (a) the rationale and (b) the efficacy of hedging.

First, hedging enables weaker states and entities like the GCC 7 to survive in the face of greater powers. Second, and related, hedging makes it possible for the Gulf emirates to maintain their overall relationship with Iran, the actor presently with the greatest potential for directly menacing them. In this way they are prudently reducing the danger in the short term while still being able to make contingency plans concerning longer term relations and the prospect—despite all their efforts—

[53] Stephen M. Walt, 'Why alliances endure or collapse' Survival 39/1 (1997), 158.

of ultimately having to directly confront Iran's drive for hegemony over the Persian Gulf and its strategic waterways.

Third, given the GCC's understandable reluctance to use force in confronting or countering Iran militarily, this prized security, however tenuous and conditional, is only made possible by reliance upon other, non-coercive means of influencing revolutionary Iran, primarily diplomatic, economic and commercial. Fourth, reliance on outside actors, whenever and wherever possible, may serve as a "force multiplier" on behalf of hedging. Thus for GCC members enhancing hedging's appeal as well as its practicability is the auxiliary security blanket supplied from outside the region, expressed by America's direct on-site physical presence in and around the Persian Gulf. Fifth, while independent hedging is likely to weaken alliance cohesion and hence its effectiveness, by the same reasoning the said alliance may endure rather than break apart precisely because hedging allows members to retain a certain and even substantial degree of flexibility of action in a way that does not present a threat to the external regional environment.

Analysis shows that when faced with a direct and imminent threat non-Great Powers can find considerable latitude and freedom of maneuver between the two apposite poles of balancing and bandwagoning. Meaning: foreign policy and strategy are not binary; states need not be faced with the necessity of only choosing either balancing or bandwagoning.

Our Persian Gulf case study reconfirms that states are anything but equal in their ability to employ hedging as a third, intermediate strategy, and that it largely depends on their subjective threat perception and on their ability to attract alternative, even multiple allies. For example, Oman and Qatar maintain meaningful security ties with Iran parallel with membership in the GCC. Bahrain, for its part, avoids comparable ties with Iran, frequently criticizes its Gulf and Middle East activities, and even hazards urging its fellow GCC partners, in vain, to be less forthcoming in their respective relations with Iran. This, even while laboring on its own to open commercial-economic and diplomatic-political channels with Iran, thereby avoiding estrangement as an insurance policy against endangering its fundamental interests.

It must be emphasized that *strategic* hedging is not be mistaken for a tactical ploy of "sitting on the fence"—as feigned neutrality—merely in order to extract momentary concessions from other bidders, allies or suitors. Nor is it simply a convenient way to have ambassadors resident in each other's respective capitals for purposes of routine communication. With respect to Oman and Qatar, it must weigh heavily with them that considerable economic and security cooperation with Iran is seen in the eyes of their allies—Saudi Arabia immediately comes to mind—as no less than collusion with the enemy; as undermining a GCC ally's position, strength and even security.

In sum, *strategic* hedging involves taking active measures, and is therefore qualitatively different from a policy of mere neutrality, which implies a commitment *not* to be involved; *not* to aid nor to side, whether directly or indirectly, with

your alliance partner's adversary; and certainly not in the event of a conflict breaking out between them.[54] Similarly, strategic hedging is altogether unassociated with opportunism, pure and simple.[55] Rather, it is a systematic, coherent and purposive *strategy*; a strategy which prioritizes, above all else, state survival. Accordingly, for a weak state that carefully considers and then opts for a policy of hedging the implications for its senior partners takes second place to the security increment gained against an adversary who has pressing claims against it.

6 Refining the Concept

Although the logic behind strategic hedging might appear straightforward and almost intuitive, its underlying rationale needs to be further refined. Both the concept and the practice lend themselves to more rigorous theorizing, just as they warrant greater empirical evidence and in-depth as well as comparative case studies.[56] Sorely lacking in this regard is open political and historical data on the range of options, however limited, presently available to the overwhelming majority of international actors perhaps best classified as the non-Great Powers.

This essay has posited that on balance hedging is an attractive policy for small powers, while also outlining some possible direct- and side-effects hedging might have on alliance cohesiveness and concerted action. Smaller powers, as represented here by the GCC, are faced with a constant dilemma: on the one hand, tying themselves too closely to a specific ally invites subservience, whereas, on the other hand, if only loosely connected to a said ally, and left without an iron-clad guarantee of security, they expose themselves to the very real possibility of being cast adrift and left to fend for themselves. Herein resides the supreme challenge for small yet independent-minded and security-minded actors inherent in hedging strategies: precisely how to succeed in avoiding the two fatal extremes of world politics—isolation and entrapment.

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[55] Robert Keohane, 'The Big Influence of Small Allies', *Foreign Policy* 2 (1971), 181.

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Conclusions: Towards a New Equilibrium

Aharon Klieman

What are policymaking and statecraft and geopolitics if not an ongoing series of balancing acts? Absent infinite capabilities on the part of political actors, even recognized Great Powers, and acting prudently means putting the highest premium on striking a balance. On deciding when to trade off one set of interests or values for another. On knowing how to choose between two incompatible outcomes or, alternatively, two goals which realistically cannot be achieved at the same time. On maneuvering between two feuding neighbors, two rival powers, two competing coalitions, two ideological camps. Seen in this light, all politics are balancing politics.

1 Order, Disorder and Balancing

Turning to world politics, arguably the greatest challenge of our times lies in striking a proper balance between extremes: between order and disorder, between hegemony and anarchy, between collective norms and individual freedoms, between the international and the national, between permanency and change. Is it any surprise, therefore, that conservative and liberal philosophers, historians and theorists from Thucydides, Machiavelli and Kant to Morgenthau, Waltz and Kissinger have long grappled with the question of order versus disorder, and what might possibly occupy the middle ground between these two poles? Just as in their writing and thought they confront the separate yet related question of what prerogatives but also obligations the established great powers possess relative to smaller, weaker and especially ascendant ones. And, conversely, what options, what survival tactics, the non-great powers have in also steering a middle course.

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The respective arguments are well known. For and against: a serene, disciplined "system-dominant" global society, deriving from a single and therefore possibly stifling central authority. For and against: a non-hierarchical, undisciplined, and hence unruly "sub-system dominant" collection of nonetheless independent, sovereign state actors. To be sure, both extreme models are summarily dismissed by their critics as objectionable and unsustainable in equal measure although for quite different reasons: the former, as unduly oppressive, providing security in the sense of surety, albeit paid for in a kind of permanent servitude; the latter, as unrestricted free will obtained at the price of heightened insecurities bordering on the chaotic.

Adding to the frustration, so, too, is the third or compromise formula of an *equilibrium* of power positioned somewhere between *imperium* and *pandemonium* found wanting and roundly criticized. This notion of a stable equilibrium—of a *status quo*—lies at the heart of the balance of power concept which so thoroughly dominated European thought and international diplomacy for 300 years, from the mid-seventeenth- through the mid-twentieth century, only to be written off as unreal, imprecise, destabilizing and, for Wilsonians, the primary cause of interstate rivalry, conflict and war.

All of which makes for an unsatisfactory state of affairs when contemplating the current and likely future course of world politics. If world order—hegemony—is oppressive, world disorder—anarchy—unlivable, and balance of power—equilibrium—ephemeral, what is the best of all possible worlds? And what is a statesman to do? These most basic of questions, relevant at all times, assume far greater importance, and immediacy, at the present moment, when global politics are being transformed from decidedly hierarchical to less hierarchical, and when global power is markedly shifting, making future international relations the work of many more hands.

While addressing a number of different power players, power rivalries and geographic regions, the essays in this collection tend to fall broadly within the realist school of thought in the sense of sharply distinguishing "what is" from "what ought"—the real world of power and politics as distinct from normative or idealized world futures. Whether explicitly or implicitly our authors take as "givens", and as axiomatic: that international relations continue to be stratified rather than egalitarian, with different levels of privilege and status; that power is distributed and influence exerted unevenly; that greater powers will still lord it over lesser powers. And that, confronted with the necessity for choosing from the three less-than-ideal world order models cited above, the least unsatisfactory method for preserving a reasonable degree of stability and order in the midst of systemic change has to be the constant balancing and rebalancing of power and of threats, even if this does not yield the perfect balance.

Once having stated this set of underlying assumptions, two principal themes emerge from the preceding chapters over and above each author's individual conclusions. The first observation points to an unprecedented enlargement in the ranks of current great- and middle-range powers. Whereas the second theme posits as the supreme test for any international order, and for its leading actors, whether it can be flexible enough, and they receptive enough, to acknowledge the emerging

constellation of power and influence by voluntarily welcoming and incorporating these new, rising powers into the established order as responsible, contributing members.

Unlike respected media commentator Thomas Friedman and others who might view sustainable order as deriving from shared values, stable institutions and consensual politics (Friedman 2014), emphasis throughout this book is on the conscious application by actors large and small, powerful and weak, of a wide range of counterbalancing tactics aimed at blocking, offsetting and checking one another's ambitions. In the long tradition of the classical balance of power, Henry Kissinger[1] and fellow realists may divide over whether this drive to power by states originates in the justifiable quest for minimal security or stems, conversely, from the urge to find maximum security through a monopoly of power. Nevertheless, until such time as a universally accepted code of ethics, effective world bodies and the power of international opinion come into being and take effect, mechanisms for balancing the competing desires, interests and visions of over 200 states and nations are, for better or worse, the most realistic hope we have in wavering precariously between utopian order and dystopian disorder.

Some may find a bit too histrionic a description of the world as poised "on the edge of a blade. Without balance, it will fall".[2] A more temperate representation of the Balance of Power is Reinhold Niebuhr's defense of Democracy in that both offer "a method of finding proximate solutions to insoluble problems" (Niehbuhr 1944). However, in order for any equilibrium—regional or systemic—to endure over an extended period of time, thereby conferring a reassuring sense of stability, the system itself must be able to accept change, to adapt and to evolve. Just as its constituent unit actors, and especially its leading powers, for their part, must act responsibly as vital components of the delicate pivoting and balancing process.

Balancing is, after all, a human act of will, which is to say a political form of action. It is neither automatic nor foreordained, neither mechanical nor self-implementing but requires alertness, adeptness, prudence and commitment. To quote Nicholas Spykman: "Political equilibrium is neither a gift of the gods nor an inherently stable condition. It results from the active intervention of man, from the operation of political forces. States cannot afford to wait passively for the happy time when a miraculously achieved balance of power will bring peace and security".[3] This, too, is a powerful message which we hope the reader will apply after reading this volume.

[1] For a summation of Kissinger's insights and career experience, see: Henry Kissinger (2014).

[2] Attributed to Victoria Aveyard, authoress of *Red Queen*. http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/1322975-i-see-a-world-on-the-edge-of-a-blade.

[3] Quoted (pp. 183–184) in Schweller (2004).

2 Multiple Balancing Acts

Moreover, as evidenced in the analyses and findings of our authors, the never-ending play of the balance scales need not be taken solely as an article of faith. By the same token, the balance and the balancing of power are neither an abstraction nor a mathematical equation. Rather, they are an indisputable fact of present-day international life. Indeed, balancing behavior and the actual practice of balancing are omnipresent and, if anything, increasingly democratic in the sense of unrestricted and performed not only by an unprecedented number of actors but by state and non-state actors of disparate size, power and influence: open and closed societies, Western and non-Western, post-industrial and agrarian.

On the one hand, this enriches our data base for conducting specific as well as comparative studies of balancing. On the other hand, it complicates the life of practitioners and policymakers in making accurate strategic assessments as well as when taking tactical decisions.

Confronting IR scholars, geo-strategists, think tank specialists and national leaders alike are an intimidating number of tricky yet shared critical questions and variables, such as who in fact are the real "great" powers, who no-longer great powers and who the up-and-coming powers to watch for? Are they better to be trusted, feared, deferred to, cultivated, kept at arm's distance, or opposed? Which of them are already now—or have good prospects of becoming—pivotal actors in either a global or in a regional context? Conversely, which of the claimants is, so to speak, "punching above its weight"—an over-achiever promising more than it can deliver? By their policy statements, actions or possibly even studied indifference, are they, the great powers and pivotal actors acting in time, and by appropriate and effective means, either to preserve a stable balance or to correct a growing imbalance? Are any willing to step forward and undertake the high-risk, high-gain role of third-party broker and balancer in the many extant regional disputes, working to avert, to terminate or perhaps simply to prolong the intractable ones short of resolution, and in this latter instance, thereby ensuring a kind of ongoing dependency by both sides?

In which case, the foremost question needing to be asked becomes whether balancing is found to be (a) more common and (b) more effective in dyadic (two-player), or triangular or multiple power equations of progressively greater complexity? As the list of theoretical great power-related and balancing-related issues grows this should hopefully serve to stimulate further healthy debate as well as help to frame future research modeled on the nine case studies offered here.

Moving from general conclusions to more specific findings in *Great Powers and Geopolitics*, several stand out. In particular, the sheer number and identity of great power contestants and pretenders with the greatest impact on world affairs, and, in the second instance, the most probable zones of contention from a geopolitical, regional perspective.

3 Greater and Lesser Powers

It is the political impact factor which ultimately determines greatness. Not quantitative power statistics (population, natural resources, GNP, etc.), not potential heft nor longer-term aspirations to greatness, but a country's immediate and actual bearing upon the course of local or international events. Judged by this criterion the list of countries and agents to watch by all rights must properly begin with the United States of America.

Critics have been unsparing in their disapproval of U.S. overseas diplomacy under the last two Bush and Obama Administrations, mirrored in Leon Wieseltier's capsule comment on Syria but by inference on foreign policy in general as expressing a "preference for inconsequential action, or tardy action, or grudging action, or no action at all" (Wieseltier 2014). Yet for all its foreign policy shortcomings, both alleged and documented, it is the U.S. alone that continues to possess the two prerequisites for Great Power status: international stature and a truly global reach.

In this sense, references to "The U.S. and the Rest" still retain some validity, while rushing in the next breath to add that consistent with the dynamic nature of the balancing, dancing "mobile" the once-enormous power disparity gives indication of narrowing, just as the phantasm of an American "*hyperpuissant*" striding the globe recedes into faint memory as a Franco-Russian figment of imagination. In all the annals of American and modern world history the U.S. has never pretended to the role of world policeman let alone *arbiter mundi* save for mercifully bringing an end to the First and Second World Wars and, less satisfactorily, in President Woodrow Wilson's messianic 1919 blueprint for a New World Order.

If anything the existing global order needs to be more concerned at the consequences of a shrinking of America's pretensions to greatness. The American people may no longer feel self-confident or capable of acting alone; official Washington may be unable to halt its loss of influence and control worldwide; multilateralism may be back in vogue as a doctrine. All three explanations are plausible. Equally credible, from the other side of the balance-of-power equation, is that some of "the Rest" may be contributing in their own right to the global shift of power—and perhaps an overall global leveling effect—by thrusting themselves onto the regional and global scene through openings left by America's slow recessional.

Sorely challenged in the Arab Middle East and on other fronts from the Baltic to the Pacific, assailed and openly defied by Islamic militants, frustrated by insolvable global problems and confused by the complexities of foreign affairs while struggling to redefine its own role, nonetheless the United States will remain the force to be reckoned with. You would not wish, for example, to have the U.S. censure the United Nations as a singularly dangerous place and unilaterally withdraw American financial and diplomatic support from the organization and its specialized agencies. Nor to see a neo-isolationist U.S. remove its backing for Asian nations fearful of Chinese maritime expansion. Therefore, utmost caution is advised where the U.S. is concerned. Any prognosis of global trends and the search for the real locus of

power, influence and prestige in the world starts with the United States. How America sees itself, the posture it adopts in world affairs—global leader, offshore balancer, auxiliary or distant, disinterested bystander—and the image it transmits worldwide still largely shapes the international order of things, all other actors taking their cue from the basic U.S. posture of either boldness or abnegation. Should it be the latter, then any resultant power vacuum will be filled by others.

In shifting attention from the United States to other centers of power and influence, two distinctions need to be made. The first: that one should not equate American primacy with world order; the two are not necessarily synonymous. While the U.S. recalibrates and seeks to redefine its domestic and foreign policy priorities, even while being pushed and pulled into entanglements over Syria and in Iraq, "the Rest" are definitely on the move. They, in turn, prompt the corollary distinction between certified Great Powers and speculative or presumptive great powers. Those who may or may not enjoy their moment in the sun, and who may or may not thereafter justify their claim to elevated status.

Those countries definitely to watch include Russia and China. As elucidated throughout the book, Russia resurgent is a world power whose position on every major international issue from economic sanctions and global energy policy through international interventions under UN fiat to conventional and nuclear arms control will need to be carefully considered, and its endorsement secured. Similarly, Moscow's expansive "near abroad" doctrine guarantees its close involvement in an extended orbit of ethnic and security sensitivities and sphere of political and commercial interests stretching from central and eastern Europe, the former Soviet Baltic republics through the Caucasus and central Asia, the long shared border with China to the Far East. As manifested in the 2014 seizure or "restitution" of the Crimea and in the subsequent Ukraine crisis Russia's impact factor has increased dramatically; and for many worriedly, leading to calls once again for its renewed containment.

Experts on Russia will continue to argue over what motivates increasing signs of belligerent foreign policy behavior by Moscow. Whether it is prompted by historical and geographical insecurities, by cultural xenophobia and suspicion, by nationalistic chauvinism, by the balance-of-power logic of competing with the U.S. and exploiting American hesitancy, or simply traces more directly to the idiosyncratic or leadership variable, namely Vladimir Putin's authoritative command of policymaking in the Kremlin. Again, this much is debatable; so too, possible internal and external constraints, such as the diminution of Moscow's clout as a major energy supplier or a more credible NATO riposte on Russia's western perimeter, which might serve to countermand any aggressive tendencies in the near future. The incontestable fact remains, however, that a muscular Russia holds one of the keys to how the major global shift of power plays out by the end of the decade.

The same observation as well as the very same argument about possible deeper motivating factors and constraints carries over to China in mid-decade. Whether operating out of an offensive or defensive posture (surely a critical question in its own right), China's mix of geopolitical attributes, including but not limited to

population, land mass, economic and industrial growth plus land, nuclear and expanding naval military capabilities assures it a major voice in the international arena.

4 Other Candidates

Once the United States, Russia and China have been mentioned as certified Great Powers the ranking veers more toward the speculative. Thus one is seriously inclined to insert Germany confidently in the select list of "greats" in the sense of influential and pivotal global actors. What puts Germany in a category of its own is that its shadow looms large irrespective of whether Berlin acts alone, as an independent agent, or within the larger European Union. In either instance the stance it adopts will impact heavily on the global economy and the prospects for European as well as international security.

To illustrate the highly subjective nature of assigning status to particular countries and of who qualify as prospective pivotal powers, an early pioneering study in 1996 identified nine candidates: Algeria, Brazil, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, South Africa and Turkey (Chase et al. 1996), whereas by 2012 another authoritative source in a follow-up survey of those "destined to shape the contours of geopolitics in key regions of the world as well as constitute important nodes of global economic growth" restricted the list to six, inserting Iran and Nigeria while retaining only Egypt, India, Mexico and Turkey (Oxford Analytica 2012).

The source for these not insignificant discrepancies has to lie in at least perceptual and/or methodological problems, each of them worthy of note as the reader proceeds from here to confront the swinging pendulums of power and balance-imbalance. First, national power not only resists precise measurement, with experts still unable to pinpoint which sinew of power is determinant, but changes with time. Imperialism and direct colonial rule, once prized as power multipliers, are no longer regarded as assets. Second, a country may conceivably be a niche pivotal power on one specific issue-area—Qatar in the petroleum field, for instance; France in policing strife-torn former African possessions—but not really a great power in terms of all outstanding global issues or in the ability to affect them. Third, similarly, there is a fine line between an actor who carries considerable proven weight in the affairs of its immediate region while lacking truly international stature or has yet to prove itself on an extra-regional scale. Here, Israel, previously unmentioned, Egypt, Turkey and even more so Iran come to mind in terms of the Middle East; and Vietnam in terms of southeast Asia.

Included in the category of those countries or groupings of still unconfirmed status are the so-called BRIC or BRICS states. Do Brazil, Russia, India and China in any way constitute a united bloc? Does adding South Africa necessarily strengthen the claim? What were to happen if Russia, China or both—each an already accepted Great Power peer competitor with the United States in its own right and, indeed, on the threshold of superpower parity with America—should strike out on their own on

a host of issues, breaking ranks with the nebulous BRIC(S) imagined community of interests rather than acting in concert? Clearly, the prospects for these disparate four or five nations to constitute themselves as a solidified "great power" in international affairs are subject to the crosscurrents of each one's domestic politics as well as those external forces beyond their direct control, the divisive politics of the Middle East certainly being one potential breaking point.

A fourth explanation for why no two rosters of the great and near-great powers are identical is that by definition time studies aim at photographing configurations of power at a given moment in time. Yet as we know from history and have emphasized in these pages, influence and power are transitory, configurations are subject to change, and global power shifts. Fifth, and last, that the lineup of great powers and pivotal actors may experience frequent and perhaps sudden deletions and substitutions—Algeria and Brazil demoted, Iran and Nigeria moving up a rung—offers unimpeachable testimony for the abiding process and relentless politics of balancing.

5 Regional Contests and Configurations

One further guideline for tracking the changing international landscape owes to the devolution of power downward. Since the threat to peace and stability was perceived in the West as *international* communism, the Cold War caused the previous generation to view the bipolar Soviet-American struggle between two superpower "peer competitors" in planetary terms by focusing on the entire system as a single arena of competition between the two leading nuclear superpowers. Berlin–Cuba–Korea–Hungary-Suez-Vietnam–Quemoy and Matsu: each crisis and every confrontation were automatically linked together. However, the contemporary pattern is radically different, with rebalancing taking place not throughout the system as a single unit but in separate theaters, sometimes linked, sometimes overlapping and sometimes not.

The one plausible forecast that might force a return to the systemic or global level-of-analysis is, of course, the one form of re-polarization most to be avoided. Namely: were supporters of movements like the *dawla Islamiyya* or Islamic State (IS), to close ranks with their vow to restore the caliphate, wage *jihad* (literally: struggle) in its most violent form, liberate Jerusalem and erase the Zionist entity, and ultimately establish a universal community of faith (*dar al-Islam*) by overwhelming and converting all non-believers, thereby forcing a confrontation with the West—and the Rest—on a global scale.

Otherwise, barring this Armageddon-like scenario, international politics, and with it the balancing dynamic, henceforth can best be understood by disassembling them into component, regional sectors. Which is another way of noting: given the decentralization of power, the study of world politics—and with it, monitoring the *balancing* of power—is becoming infinitely more complex and challenging. More like a three-ring circus than a featured main performance on a single stage; or,

switching metaphors, akin to watching several chess matches simultaneously taking place on a row of chessboards.

Not only will this generation be called upon to keep an eye on multiple balancing acts, but these acts will themselves become increasingly complicated depending upon whether or not conventional two-party local contests—China and Japan, for instance—are intruded upon by yet another player. A third participant (Great Power or not) who may choose to enter the contest in either of two capacities: that of a neutral intermediary; or as the biased, partisan supporter of one side in an alliance relationship.

In either case, entry of this third party—the U.S. in the instance of China and Japan—alters the basic equation from two-sided to triangular while also changing the rules of the game, such as opening the possibility for a coalition of two against one. Middle Eastern affairs provide one of the most enlightening illustrations, where the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (hardly a candidate for great power status), its comparative weaknesses notwithstanding, has long possessed an inordinately high impact factor by virtue of its being uniquely positioned to tilt the balance between war and peace. Extending back in time, a succession of Jordanian monarchs have insinuated themselves as a regional balancer, artfully and sometimes perilously pivoting between accommodation with Israel in a joint, discreet attempt at conflict avoidance or allying themselves with Palestinian and Arab intransigents in enmity toward the Jewish state.

Yet even Israeli–Jordanian–Palestinian triangulation pales by comparison with the other, wider Middle East struggle being waged over the fate of the neighboring Fertile Crescent, centering on Iraq and Syria. Regionalization finds a bewildering array (or disarray) of shifting, cross-cutting alliances and conflicting allegiances—now converging, now diverging—between Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims, Iran, Turkey, the U.S. and an American-orchestrated coalition of over 20 disparate western and Middle Eastern countries, Kurds, ethnic tribes and non-state actors. If for this reason alone the Middle East region as a whole, together with its eastern Mediterranean, Maghreb, Fertile Crescent, Arabian peninsula and Persian Gulf subzones, will command our attention and demand full alertness. Here as elsewhere we shall need to chart the balancing behavior not only of the Great Powers and pivotal actors but of the non-Great Powers who, like the GCC federation members, represent the largest grouping of international players. For it is they who are the real balancers; the fulcrum by which the balance of power really moves either towards or away from center-point. They who must tread carefully in the long shadow of the better-endowed, more assertive and therefore attention-grabbing geopolitical system-shapers. Currently, the Middle East country definitely to watch is Turkey. How Ankara goes—in defining its national interests and regional role, in sparring rather than coordinating with the U.S., in snubbing Israel, in cold-shouldering Sunni Egypt, in fence-straddling on Syria and the Kurdish question, but especially in hedging on Shi'ite Iran's creeping expansionism and on Islamic political extremism while renouncing its own Kemalist legacy—will largely determine how the Middle East goes.

Vying for our attention to Middle East affairs will be the no less contentious, bewildering and polycentric rebalancing of power taking shape half way around the

world, in the contested east Asia-Pacific basin. Here, too, regional balancing politics highlight (a) the sheer number of directly and indirectly concerned parties, resulting in (b) multiple centers of power, overlapping interests, shifting constellations and possible outcomes.

One analytical focus is to concentrate solely on enigmatic China: how its form of government evolves, what direction its military buildup and emergence as an Asian giant and budding superpower will take, whether or not its foreign policy objectives and claims to maritime territory in the South China Sea are promoted by wielding a big stick or by subtle, persuasive diplomacy and economic statecraft. This prompts a second, interactive approach, focusing largely on the extent to which mainland China is determined to coexist with its immediate and more distant regional neighbors—and their options, in turn, of either individually appeasing or collectively opposing and countervailing Beijing. Thus the balancing equation enlarges exponentially to account for the input of Japan most directly, followed in concentric circles by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea and Vietnam, and, somewhat further removed by Australia, India and New Zealand. Ratcheting up, next to be inserted is the U.S. factor.

The mixed adversarial U.S.–China relationship, combining elements of mutual dependency and reciprocated coolness, will revolve in large part governed by how Americans come to perceive of Chinese intentions. Also, upon whether Washington opts to invite China in under existing norms and as part of the international order. Or aims instead at excluding and there by alienating it, with membership in the Trans-Pacific Partnership providing an important test case. Finally, as more than one of our authors point out, and adding further to the complexity, we cannot exclude Russia from this increasingly intricate—and precarious—Asian balancing equation. An equation with great bearing on prospects for world order, and which has yet to work itself out.

6 Great Powers, Balancing and Geopolitics

Today's world presents a picture of regional disorder, with the Middle East and the Pacific Ocean merely serving as representative examples. Consequently, offsetting *equilibria*, encouraging regional standoffs until confidence-building makes disputes ripe for resolution, may not be necessarily the best but at least the most realistic hope for controlling these local tensions and preventing their escalation into all-out violence as well as indeed dissuading outside Great Powers in some instances from intervening irresponsibly. Therefore, the balance and balancing of power presents itself as a useful compass and fairly reliable guide by which to navigate the twists and turns of the contemporary global power transition as it recalibrates from what was relatively tight Cold War bipolarity to loose, decentralized multipolarity.

Exactly how these corrections and realignments take shape, and for how long or how short the resulting configuration lasts is anyone's educated guess. As the

skilled late Chinese statesman Zhou En-lai is famously reported to have remarked about the French Revolution, it is too early to say; certainly not authoritatively. When so much of international affairs are contingent, and when prudence argues on the side of caution, this collection of analytical essays make no pretense at being conclusive. But what can be said, and with a reasonable degree of confidence, is whereas it would be wrong to surrender to the notion that "a single overarching framework may be inappropriate for understanding today's disorderly and decentralized world",[4] so is the quest for new and original guiding principles of geopolitics not only futile but unnecessary. Not when the general theory of the balance of power is that indispensable prism through which to filter and understand events; especially not when the theory finds such daily practical expression in the balancing actions and reactions of so many geopolitical actors, rising and receding powers, the great and not-so-great.

Thus, by way of a concluding conclusion, returning to the logic and to the prism of balancing power can only contribute to our understanding of how on an ongoing, day-to-day basis the Game of Nations is played. How the metaphorical pieces on the multiple chessboards of twenty-first-century world politics position themselves and fall into place in the unending endgame of war or peace, sustainable or unsustainable regional and global order, balance or imbalance.

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[4] Chase, Hill and Kennedy, p. 33.

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