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Aiming to provide research-based knowledge through scholarly papers written by national and international authors, NJIPS is committed to publishing original and timely research from around the world. It aims to provide a platform for academic discussion and debate over multifaceted issues and topics and encourages contributions from multi-disciplinary backgrounds. The journal is particularly committed to advancing scholarship oriented towards both scholarly and practitioner audiences to emerge with pragmatic perspectives and policy recommendations.

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At the Centre for International Peace and Stability (CIPS), the Department of UN Peacekeeping Training (PKT) and the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS) have been collaborating for their mission of global peace and stability. The NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability (NJIPS) is one of the milestones in this regard, aiming to provide research-based knowledge through the scholarly papers written by national and international authors. CIPS proudly released the first Volume of NJIPS in November 2017. Ever since, the defining aim of the journal has been to revivify the understanding of contemporary peace and conflict dynamics in order to address the most ruinous predicaments to international development and peace.

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Evaluating Pakistani Media's Perception of Chinese Military Development: A Content Analysis of Pakistani Newspaper

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Muhammad Ahsan Jamal¹, *Syed Bahadur Abbas² & Asad Ullah³

Abstract

China's military modernization has led to many concerns among regional and international stakeholders. Many countries see Beijing's intentions to become a military superpower as threatening regional peace and stability. On the other hand, being China's strategic ally, Pakistan considers its military expansion a positive change, driving it to become a regional military power. This research aims to analyze the perception of Pakistani media about the Chinese military by conducting an extensive content analysis of the Pakistani newspaper 'Pakistan Today'. The data helped highlight the Pakistani media's attitude toward China's military ambitions. The analysis suggests that Pakistani newspaper projects China's military might as the balance of power, particularly against its regional rival, i.e. India. The research elucidates that while most Western media coverage portrays Chinese military activities as a challenge to the regional status quo, Pakistani media exhibits it as important for peace and stability in the region.

Keywords

Chinese Military, South China Sea, Pakistani media, military modernization

Introduction

China has the world's largest standing army, with over 2 million active soldiers (International Institute for Strategic Studies [IISS], 2021). As the Chinese economy expands, the country has also started modernizing its armed forces. Over the past decade, Chinese military development has reached an unprecedented level; the country continues to flex its military muscles by revolutionizing its weapons, aircraft,

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and naval capabilities and increasing its sphere of influence worldwide. These developments have caused apprehensions not only in the West but also among China's neighboring countries (Pachankis, 2022; Yingshi, 2022).

Although Chinese military efforts are mainly focused on the Eastern and Southern sectors (Mastro, 2017), China's growing involvement in the East and the South China Sea, territorial disputes with regional countries, conflicts with India, and position over Taiwan are some of the major concerns for the international community. Moreover, Chinese military expansion and assertive stance over territorial disputes have also triggered serious concerns among the regional countries (Grace, 2017).

Similarly, China's engagement in cyberspace, advancement of the space program, quest for fifth-generation aircraft, development of aircraft carriers, and expansion of military footprints in the South China Sea continues to make international headlines. Western media often portrays China's military modernization as threatening its neighbors and Western regional interests. In response to Chinese military advancement, the US and European nations are also increasing their defense capabilities (Cossa, 2017) and deepening their cooperation with other regional countries surrounding China. Nonetheless, Chinese leaders have affirmed their commitment to building a community of shared destiny (Rizvi, 2017) and assert that the country has always been and will continue to be a proponent of world peace and common development (Lostumbo, 2009). However, more recently, both Western-centric scholarship and media outlets continue to portray the increase in China's military spending, its involvement in the East and the South China Sea, its relations with North Korea and Russia, and China's growing nuclear and missile capabilities as a threat to international peace and security (Maizland, 2020; Bommakanti & Shivamurthy, 2021; Cordesman & Hwang, 2021).

Despite holding an Islamic-Democratic system of governance and political values that are far different from China, Pakistan is China's long-standing partner and one of its closest allies among all its neighboring countries (Small, 2015). Undoubtedly, Pakistan's rivalry and China's wariness with India make the two countries traditional allies and act as one of the major factors behind Pakistan's appreciation of China's military transformation (Wang, 2018). However, much literature also looks beyond the 'India factor' to define Pakistan-China defense cooperation (Boon & Ong, 2021). Keeping this in view, this paper aims to analyze the Pakistani media's perspective of Chinese military power and examines how a prominent Pakistani newspaper projects China's military ambitions and expansion. This research would also help understand Pakistan's ambition to become a strong regional military power and how it shapes the narrative about China's increasing military power in the region.

International media coverage of China's military development and its impact on regional stability has significantly increased in recent years, which plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions about China. Since China began modernizing its military, media coverage of China is apparently dominated by a mindset that considers China a threat to the international community (Hewitt, 2011). With increasing coverage of the negative aspects of Chinese military modernization, foreign media and opinion makers have started to term China as a revisionist power (Panda, 2020) that is changing the regional status quo (TRT World, 2022). On the other hand, the Pakistani government and military leadership view China's military modernization as a significant development toward stabilizing the regional balance of power. Therefore,

this research analyzes the Pakistani newspaper coverage of China's military and explores the agenda-setting theory to comprehend the trends in Pakistani media.

Literature Review

Since the emergence of China as a major power in the region, many countries and scholars have pointed out China's 'hidden' quest to become a superpower (Tkacik, 2007). Despite the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership's continuous promotion of China's 'peaceful rise', the country's military expansion, development of modern aircraft, building of its own aircraft carriers, testing new Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), and increasing activities in the disputed areas has already altered the regional geo-political and geo-strategic balance. China has one of the most advanced military and air forces, the world's second most capable navy, and has emerged as a world leader in shipbuilding (McDevitt, 2016). Beijing's move to construct artificial islands, military bases, and deep-sea labs in disputed areas of East China and the South China Sea has raised concerns in the US as well as in neighboring Korean Peninsula, Japan, and ASEAN countries (International Relations Insights & Analysis [IRIA], 2015).

The Chinese army has also unveiled a change in its military strategy to boost its naval capabilities and a shift from 'territorial air defense to both 'defense and offense' (Xinhua, 2015). Although the Chinese leadership has announced to reduce of the overall size of armed forces to below 1,000,000 personnel (Boyd, 2019), China's decision to increase military spending by about 6.2%, reaching a level of US\$174 billion, makes the country second in the world with most military spending after the US (US Department of Defense, 2020). In 2017, Chinese President Xi Jinping, while addressing the 19th Chinese Communist Party (CCP) National Congress, outlined the midterm and long-term goals for the Chinese military to accomplish national defense modernization and advance strategic capabilities by 2035 and transform the People's Liberation Army (PLA) into a world-class military by 2050 (Gao, 2017). These facts incited negative coverage of China, and most foreign media reports started to criticize Chinese military development, question China's ambitions (Shambaugh, 2009), and blame China for undermining regional peace and provoking tensions. Numerous studies have pointed out the causal link between a state's foreign policy and media coverage of a specific issue (Rawan et al., 2018). The government's public relations offices often practice the agenda-setting of mass media to promote internal and foreign policy interests and political agendas (Zain, 2014). Based on the trends in media coverage of China, it is apparent that several regional and international stakeholders view China as a threat (Hewitt, 2011); therefore, it is worth analyzing the Pakistani media perception of the Chinese military and the trends in the Pakistani newspaper on China's regional engagements.

Media framing plays an important role in perception building (Happer & Philo, 2013). Media coverage of certain events also affects foreign relations and evinces the foreign policy-building process (Baker, 2010; Richardson, 2017; Van Dijk, 1998). Media coverage of China's increasing economic influence and military might have been a recent topic of interest for many researchers (Rawan et al., 2018). Studies have revealed that Pakistani media has an overall positive perception of the rise of China, which helps to construct a positive and friendly discourse about China (Afzaal et al., 2019). The constitution of social reality and perception building largely depends upon news media coverage (Park, 2003). Pakistan is China's prominent strategic ally, and both countries cooperate in almost every sector (Pakistan Today, 2015), ranging from space and technology, transportation, and infrastructure, to

military and defense. Hence, it is crucial to examine Pakistan's perception of neighboring China's military expansion and how the Pakistani media view Chinese military development.

Methodology

To analyze Pakistani media's perception of the Chinese military, one of the most prominent Pakistani newspapers, 'Pakistan Today'⁴, was selected on the Nexis system. Nexis is a media monitoring and analytics platform covering print and digital media. The terms *Chinese military* and *China's military* were searched on the Nexis database, while Pakistan was selected as a source country to acquire relevant news articles on the assigned subject. The newspaper was mainly chosen based on extensive coverage of China's military development. The study was narrowed by searching the relevant keywords regarding China's military appearing in newspaper articles and further constricted by the timeline from 01 January 2013 to 31 August 2020.

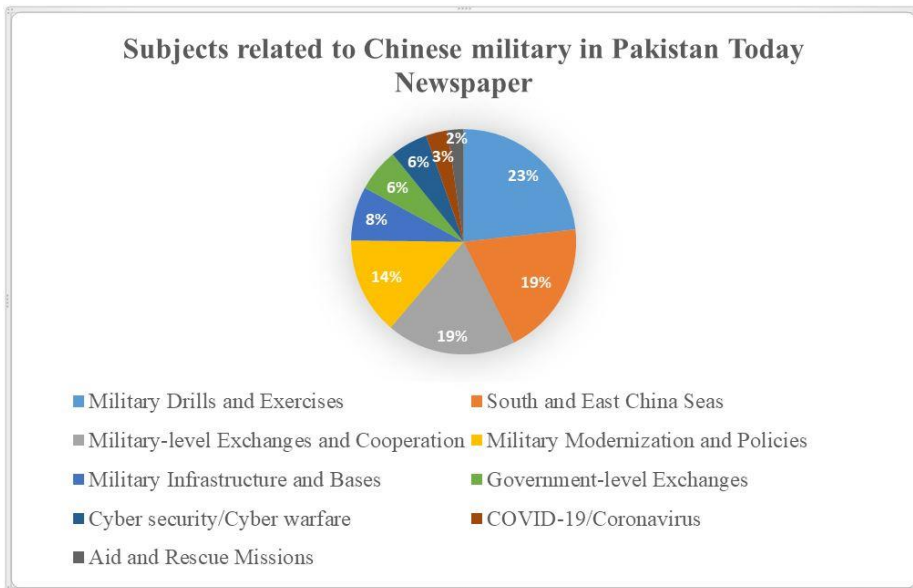
Since the research was being conducted in China, the lack of access to compatible data and content analysis tools restricted this study from focusing on the Nexis system, the best available content analysis software in China. Pakistan Today's compatibility with the proposed research methodology and analytical model was the main reason behind selecting it as the data source for this research. Although there are other major Pakistani newspapers, data collection remained one of the main challenges since other newspapers' coverage data on China's military development was neither relevant to the core theme of this research nor sufficient in numbers to generate a conclusive narrative.

Pakistan Today is a Lahore-based English-language daily newspaper published by Nawa Media Corporation in three major Pakistani cities, namely Lahore, Karachi, and the capital city of Islamabad (Pakistan Today, 2019). The selected newspaper is primarily a print media, and the content is also available on digital platforms. The timeline from 2013 to 2020 was chosen for analyzing the articles primarily because 2013 marked the agreement on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. In the same year, China-Pakistan Strategic Cooperative Partnership was proposed by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang (Xuequan, 2013), which further led to increased news coverage of China and its political, military and economic engagements with other regional countries.

More than 90 articles were analyzed in the Pakistan Today daily newspaper, and some irrelevant and repetitive articles were omitted during the analysis. The content analysis method was used to study the trends and coverage of the Chinese military. The news coverage was divided into nine sections based on the subjects and highlighted issues in the reviewed articles. The collected data from the articles were then categorized into themes based on the relevant subjects related to China's military, its engagements, and developments. The codes and themes pertinent to this research were extracted to analyze the media trend and scope of coverage. Based on data collected from the Pakistan Today newspaper, relevant themes helped identify the frequency of the coverage of different subjects regarding the Chinese military. The allocated subjects and focus of media reporting on China's military can be comprehended from the following chart:

⁴ Pakistan Today website: <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/>

Chart 1: Frequency of different subjects related to the Chinese military that appeared in Pakistan Today Newspaper



The collected news articles show that the subjects related to military drills and exercises are the most reported issue in 30 articles. The second most reported subject was the Chinese presence and concerns of regional countries regarding China’s assertive actions in the South China and East China Seas — appearing 21 and 4 times, respectively. It is also worth mentioning that the keywords related to the South China Sea and the East China Sea appeared 84 times during the last seven years in the Pakistan Today newspaper.

Another subject that received significant coverage was China’s defense and security cooperation with Pakistan and China’s military-level engagements with other regional countries, reported in at least 24 different articles. Even though the Pakistani newspaper mainly focused on the military-level visits between China and Pakistan, appearing 18 times in various articles, the newspaper published at least six articles on Chinese military officials visiting other countries. China’s military modernization and policies also received considerable coverage in the Pakistani newspaper, and the subject appeared in 18 articles. The articles related to border disputes with China’s neighbors, particularly India, were also published. The collected data also showed that the newspaper published 10 articles focusing on Chinese expansion policy with the development of military infrastructures and bases. As China and Pakistan enjoy a close partnership in almost all aspects, the visits of the political leadership of both countries also made several headlines, and the subject of China’s high-level exchanges with Pakistan and other countries was highlighted in 8 articles.

Cyber security and/or cyber warfare was a less-reported subject, appearing only seven times in the Pakistan Today newspaper. Another less-reported subject was China’s aid and rescue missions, appearing four times in the past seven years. While three articles documented China’s military efforts to fight COVID-19 or Coronavirus.

However, as the COVID-19 pandemic is a relatively new and ongoing issue, and this paper focuses on the articles published before September 01, 2020, the issue is not highlighted in many articles. The following section examines the collected data in more detail by exploring some critical subjects and examining the media coverage of Chinese military engagements.

Findings

The analyzed documents have been categorized, based on subjects and the number of articles published related to the relevant areas (see Chart 1). Following is the list of subjects that appeared in Pakistan Today newspaper regarding China's military, arranged in descending order.

Military Drills and Exercises

As China is focused on modernizing its armed forces, military drills and training exercises have become a common subject of discussion and international headlines. Similarly, Pakistani media also gave extensive coverage to Chinese military drills, and the subject was the most reported issue during the study. A large number of analyzed articles reported on joint Pakistan-China military exercises to promote military-level relations. The newspaper also reported multilateral military drills between China and its neighboring countries, including Cambodia, Nepal, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan. Similarly, the Pakistani newspaper also published the institutionalization of armed forces of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states and highlighted military-level exchanges, including armed forces training and drills among the member states. The articles on bilateral or multilateral military drills projected a positive image of China and emphasized military exercises as necessary for regional security from a broader perspective.

Another aspect that Pakistani newspapers frequently reported was Chinese naval exercises in international waters near the Sea of Japan, the Korean peninsula, Taiwan, and the South China Sea, which raises concerns among the regional countries. However, the newspaper not only reported on China's concerns over the US provocative actions in China's neighborhood that serve as a justification for increasing its military engagements but also stressed the concerns of the US as well as China's neighbors, such as Taiwan's criticism, the Philippines government's concern over increasing Chinese presence in the sea, and Vietnam's repeated condemnation of Chinese military drills in the disputed sea.

In conclusion, the Pakistani newspaper holds a favorable attitude towards the Chinese military in terms of military exercises with neighboring countries and which, according to the newspaper, promotes regional security cooperation and builds confidence among the states. The collected data also reveals that articles regarding the Chinese army's involvement in military drills and operations in the South China Sea repeatedly alerted the US and China's neighbors and resulted in tensions; however, such conflicts did not directly concern Pakistan or its regional interests, and therefore, the media coverage was somewhat neutral concerning other states. Some articles praise China's efforts to promote regional security through collective measures and term China's military drills as constructive. Others have highlighted, while others highlight the apprehensions of the regional states and recognize the rise in Chinese military posture by regularly sending military aircraft and ships to the South China Sea.

South and East China Seas

South and East China seas hold important geographical significance because most regional countries depend on the flow of oil and commerce through these shipping routes (Roy, 1994). China's claim over the South and East China seas, as well as territorial and water disputes with regional countries are some of the main concerns of the regional and international community. Similarly, Pakistani media's reporting on the Chinese military's development in the South China Sea has increased significantly over the past years. The published articles related to the South and East China seas mainly focus on Chinese military expansion in seas and the concerns of regional actors. The term 'South China' and 'East China' seas appeared 84 times in the Pakistan Today newspaper since 2013, while the newspaper published 21 articles related to the South China Sea and four articles on the East China Sea. The studied articles suggest that Chinese military engagements in the South and East China seas have caused serious concerns among the regional countries, while the Chinese side claims to be responding to the US military presence in the region.

It was observed that most newspaper articles included Chinese viewpoints and present statements of Chinese military officials, who frequently stress that Chinese military advancement is aimed at guaranteeing the country's peaceful development. Moreover, the fact that Pakistan Today presents a detailed background of China's Nansha Islands and a comprehensive overview of China's territorial disputes with other regional countries (Abrar, 2016) suggests that Pakistani media attaches great importance to the South and East China seas and the stance of China on the issue. Although most articles published in Pakistan Today on the issue pertaining to the South and East China seas repeatedly highlight China's concerns regarding continuous provocations by the US along China's periphery, the newspaper also reports regional countries' criticism over Chinese man-made island in the South China Sea and militarization of the region.

The articles highlighted the concerns of Japan over Chinese fighter jets challenging the country in the East China Sea; the US criticism over the construction of artificial islands; Taiwan, Vietnam, and the Philippines' concerns over China's aggressive actions over the South China Sea. Such a scope clearly indicates that Pakistani media investigates the issues objectively and offers balanced reports on South China Sea issue. The data analysis further suggests that China has ambitious plans to increase military deployments in disputed seas, particularly around Taiwan, and the presence of Chinese bombers in the South China Sea causes apprehension among the regional countries. However, it is arguable that Chinese actions focus on countering the US military dominance in the region (Abrar, 2016). Furthermore, China continues to clarify its position on the South China Sea by claiming that the US has created hype about the issue and ignored all Chinese efforts to maintain peace in the region.

In conclusion, the analysis of articles suggests that although Pakistan supports China's position on the South China Sea (Dawn, 2020), Pakistani media particularly the Pakistan Today newspaper reports extensively on the controversial issues related to the South and East China seas and increasing Chinese military activities in the region.

Military-level Exchanges and Cooperation

The defense cooperation and military-level exchanges between China and Pakistan often make headlines in Pakistani media. Similarly, the cordial exchanges between the military leaders of both countries have significantly increased during the past few

years. Pakistan Today reported on almost all military-level visits and interactions between the two countries. The analysis reveals that Pakistan Today highlighted military-level exchanges and defense cooperation between China and Pakistan in 18 articles. The coverage of military cooperation included articles on bilateral exercises, counter-terrorism collaboration, and joint production of fighter jets, helicopters, naval frigates, tanks, cruise missiles, and missile systems. In addition, to military-level exchanges with Pakistan, the newspaper published at least 6 articles on Chinese military-level exchanges and cooperation with other countries, including Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Cambodia, Nepal, India, Syria, and Djibouti. The articles on China's cooperation with the countries mentioned above primarily focus on military infrastructures, defense dialogues, border law enforcement cooperation, counter-terrorism, cross-border crimes, joint military drills, and training missions. It was also observed that the Pakistani newspaper mainly focused on the bilateral visits between the military leadership of China and Pakistan. Most of the time, news content highlighted the Chinese military leadership appreciating Pakistan's efforts and sacrifices in combatting terrorism and vice versa. The articles demonstrate that the top military leadership of both countries frequently hold meetings and have complete consensus on bilateral and regional issues.

The analysis suggests that the Pakistani newspaper favors China concerning the articles on military-level visits and frequently highlights the Chinese initiative to strengthen defense and security cooperation among the SCO member states and the Chinese military's positive efforts toward regional peace and stability. However, it was observed that while China maintains military engagements with regional countries, it discourages other states from conducting any official contact and military exchanges with Taiwan, which China considers its own territory.

Military Modernization and Related Policies

Since China announced its ambitions to modernize its military, it has increased its naval activities in the South China Sea. Similarly, the Chinese navy has been actively increasing its role by focusing on building more warships and aircraft carriers to challenge the US military's presence in the region. However, Pakistan Today reported on different aspects of China's military policies ranging from historical perspective to modernization and contemporary military strategies. One of the articles published in Pakistan Today describes how the ancient Chinese military treatise 'The Art of War' written by Sun Tzu (544-496 BC) and other different tactics of ancient warfare continue to influence the military, business, and legal strategies all over the world. The articles that appeared in the newspaper before 2016 mainly praised the Chinese way of dealing with border disputes, as China conducted peaceful dialogues and reduced troops to focus more on trade and economy with its neighboring countries. However, the articles published in 2017 focused on the military standoff along the Doklam sector in Sikkim (the Indo-China border region), where the Chinese blamed Indians for their provocative actions. It was also noticed that issues related to Chinese military development and border disputes were more frequently reported in recent years, as the US accuses Chinese armed forces of their growing activities near Hong Kong and Taiwan. At the same time, the border clashes between China and India in the Galwan valley of Ladakh were also reported in the Pakistani newspaper. Pakistan Today also frequently reported on the issue from the Chinese perspective, as China accuses the Indian army of violating military agreements and attacking Chinese troops in the Ladakh region.

With regard to Chinese military development, it was observed that Pakistani newspaper highlighted the US concerns over China's modernization goals. One of the articles stated that the Chinese military advanced technologies (including facial recognition technology) as part of their modernization. The US also remains concerned that Chinese interests and influence will continue to grow as the country increasingly focuses on military capabilities to achieve long-term goals beyond Taiwan and its immediate territorial concerns. The analysis suggests that Chinese President Xi Jinping attaches great importance to upgrading military technologies and hopes to turn the Chinese military into a world-class force. At the same time, Chinese leadership continues to assert that China supports world peace and prosperity, poses no threat to any country, and has no intentions to challenge the international order. Such an approach sends mixed signals to China's competitors and causes misperceptions among the regional countries.

Some news reports published in Pakistan Today also included China's clarifications and military modernization and pointed out that the country's national defense policy is focused on maintaining security and peaceful development. However, most articles assert that China's quest to modernize its armed forces has alerted regional neighbors and questioned Chinese intentions behind building military alliances and enhancing regional assets. One of the articles also criticized China for being transparent on its military modernization and expansion objectives as the Chinese defense ministry failed to provide details on the national defense budget or how China would fund its military operations.

Military Infrastructure and Bases

As China establishes a logistics network in Asia and Africa, many countries question its military's power projection ambitions (Fang, 2020). Similarly, Pakistani media has extensively reported on the development of Chinese military infrastructure and foreign bases. Pakistani newspaper mainly focused on the Chinese military's engagements in Djibouti, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Vanuatu and raised concerns about China's regional ambitions.

In conclusion, the newspaper offers relatively balanced reporting on the issue by including viewpoints of all stakeholders, for example, the US criticism of Chinese military modernization and increasing military cooperation between China and its neighboring countries, particularly Pakistan. Moreover, the newspaper also highlights the Russian news agency's claims that the Chinese military was seen inside Afghanistan, as China aims to build a military base in the war-torn country.

The data analysis indicates that Pakistani media remain somewhat concerned about the US claims that China may seek to establish additional naval logistics overseas and that the Chinese military may try to gain access to Pakistani ports. However, it was observed that most articles focus on the Chinese claims and assert that China has no intention of expanding its infrastructures in other countries apart from the base in Djibouti. Similarly, most articles regarding China's engagements in Pakistan focus on the economic aspect of China-Pakistan cooperation and dismiss the Chinese military motives.

Government-level Exchanges

The articles published in Pakistan Today on government-level exchanges reveal that China and Pakistan have mutual strategic trust and state-level cooperation as leaders from both countries have applauded the partnership and repeatedly praised the military collaborations. Moreover, it was observed that the leaders of the two

countries have common approaches and discuss the issues and threats related to regional affairs.

The news articles published in Pakistan Today demonstrate positive aspects of Chinese military support to Pakistan, bilateral deals between the two countries, as well as Chinese investment in Pakistan. The articles also indicate that bilateral cooperation between China and Pakistan is a significant feature of international military cooperation between the two countries. Moreover, the Pakistani newspaper reports extensively on China's bilateral cooperation with neighboring countries and the trilateral dialogue between China, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The data analysis further indicates that Pakistani media holds a favorable position toward China regarding government-level exchanges, and China's involvement in Pakistan was portrayed positively. Nevertheless, one of the articles criticized Chinese involvement in Afghanistan, as China is striving to secure its energy and trade routes in the region. This indicates that Pakistani media not only praises Chinese involvement in the region but also remains concerned about China's motives and expansion policies.

Cyber Security

Although the issue of cyber security and cyber warfare in the context of the Chinese military is not a major concern for Pakistani media, Pakistan Today reported several articles highlighting the US claims that the Chinese government is engaged in cyber espionage and hackers are trying to steal the trade secrets from the US companies for providing them to local competitors. China has also been accused by the US of cyber espionage. It was observed that Pakistani media closely follows Chinese military activities and highlights concerns of international and regional actors. As one of the articles indicates that Taiwan is developing an asymmetric warfare strategy to deter the Chinese military and counter China's electronic warfare activities. Similarly, the news articles in Pakistan Today frequently contain US experts' comments and hold a critical view of China by stating that the country has modernized its weapons industry by copying foreign technology and suggesting that China has been exploiting the markets in Iran and North Korea by providing them with cyber warfare capabilities and spying technologies (Easton & Schriver, 2013).

However, the Pakistani newspaper also included China's viewpoint by stating that the US blames China for cyber theft due to a sense of competition. China considers cybersecurity a common threat and urges that the issue must not be exploited to damage other nations' interests. The articles on the subject of cyber security suggest that both the US and China accuse each other of carrying out extensive cyber espionage and that the tensions over cyber security could lead to further hostilities between both countries. It was also observed that Pakistan Today's articles deliver balanced reporting on cyber security issues. On the one hand, the newspaper echoes Chinese concerns that the US policies towards Asia are primarily focused on containing China's rise in the region and highlights China's frustration with the accusations of cyber theft by the US agencies. On the other hand, it points out the US and Taiwan's concerns over the increasing cyber warfare activities of China.

Aid and Rescue Missions

Chinese military's participation in peacekeeping and rescue missions is part of China's national security goals, which aim to protect the country's more distant economic and strategic interests (Heath et al., 2016). China's rescue and aid missions not only improve its image but also prove to be an effective approach for increasing

its sphere of influence. This has also played an important role in portraying the country's soft image and peace efforts, which was also one of the focuses of the Pakistani newspaper. The collected data reveals that articles on the Chinese military's rescue mission mainly include China's endeavors to search for the missing Malaysian Airline M70 plane in 2014, the Chinese military's efforts to evacuate 800 foreign nationals stuck in the war zone in Yemen in 2015, Chinese military's engagements in Africa during 2017 and Chinese military aid to Cambodia in 2018.

The analysis of documents suggests that although the Pakistani newspaper gave limited coverage to the Chinese military's rescue missions, the studied articles also point out that China often extends humanitarian support to regional countries and engages in search and rescue missions to improve its relations and image at the global level. Similarly, the Pakistan Today newspaper boldly praised Chinese frigates that saved 200 Pakistanis trapped in the war zone during the 2015 Yemen crisis. The newspaper article published on 6 April 2015, quoted Pakistani officials who applauded Chinese efforts by stating that no such evacuation operation could be carried out by air or road from Aden after the city fell to the Houthi forces. Pakistani media commended Chinese efforts by emphasizing that it was the first time for the Chinese military to take part in evacuating foreign nationals under an international humanitarian aid mission.

Moreover, the collected data reveals that Pakistani newspaper also follows Chinese engagements in Djibouti and Cambodia. As China announced that its military base in Djibouti would be used for peacekeeping and humanitarian missions, the article speculates that China might seek similar engagement in Pakistan, even though the governments of China and Pakistan have dismissed such claims (Pakistan Today, 2017). Similarly, when China pledged more than a \$100 million grant to Cambodia, the Pakistani newspaper remained critical of China's support to the Cambodian government by highlighting the Cambodian regime's actions of destroying democracy (Pakistan Today, 2018). The newspaper reported four articles regarding aid and rescue missions conducted by Chinese military vessels and planes and the possible use of overseas Chinese bases for humanitarian missions. The data shows that Pakistan Today follows a somewhat balanced approach towards China, as most articles portray the soft side of the Chinese military for humanitarian missions. However, it also reported concerns of different stakeholders and questioned the Chinese military objectives and real intentions behind Chinese aid missions.

COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese military active engagement in medical relief efforts made frequent headlines and provided China with an opportunity to expand its reach and promotes its soft image. Although only three relevant articles on COVID-19 were analyzed, the term related to Coronavirus appeared 16 times in the data. The subject is closely associated with the Chinese military which is directly involved in vaccine research and distribution, and its medical teams have been dispatched to regional countries to support pandemic prevention measures.

The articles related to the news surrounding the developments on COVID-19 show that the Pakistani newspaper remains somewhat critical of China's engagements, as one of the articles highlights the US government agencies' concerns regarding the protection of COVID-19 vaccine research from China and blames Chinese companies for stealing data. The articles related to the issue of COVID-19 suggest an ongoing international competition for coronavirus vaccines, as the Chinese military has approved CanSino COVID-19 vaccines even before the completion of

Phase 3 trials. Pakistan Today's article on COVID-19 further emphasizes that it is risky for any country to authorize the emergency use of a vaccine before it completes Phase 3 trials (Pakistan Today, 2021).

The analysis of the documents indicates that although Pakistan Today newspaper praised the Chinese military medical team's effort to share their expertise on Coronavirus with Pakistan, at the same time, other articles questioned the Chinese military's decision to permit the vaccine that was still under trial while reporting concerns over authorizing the use of those vaccines in Pakistan.

Concluding Remarks

Although China's increasing military power is often considered a threat to many nations. For instance, the US, Vietnam, and the Philippines repeatedly termed the Chinese military posture as highly provocative (Pham, 2020). However, Pakistan is considered a traditional ally of China, as most Pakistanis (78 percent) have favorable views of China, and 57 percent of the population considers China as Pakistan's most significant ally (Global Attitudes & Trends, 2014). Earlier polls also indicated that Pakistan is one of the few countries with a positive opinion of the Chinese military. Most Pakistanis (57 percent) view China's growing military power as a positive development (Kohut, 2007) since the two countries have close defense relations.

Similarly, Pakistani media often portrays the soft side of the Chinese military and focuses on the constructive nature of the military relations between the two countries. The collected data analysis indicates that most Western media mainly projects negative features of China's growing military might. Pakistani media not only questions Chinese military development but also reports China's viewpoints, and the news coverage in the Pakistani newspaper is slightly favorable towards China.

It was also observed that, unlike other foreign media, Pakistani newspaper covers regional concerns and opinions on different international issues and highlight the Chinese military's aid and rescue missions as positive changes in the country's military policies. The data also reveals that Pakistani newspaper frequently reports on regional countries' concerns over Chinese military development while also highlighting different aspects of the Chinese military's positive steps, such as the reduction of troops and arms, facilitation of military dialogues and exercises between the SCO member states and most importantly Chinese military leadership's supportive stance towards Pakistan.

Agenda-setting theory suggests that mass media coverage of a specific subject is essential in building perception about that matter (McCombs, 2005). Pakistan holds the closest bilateral defense and economic partnership with China among its geographical neighbours and regional powers. The reflection of this relationship is clearly indicated in the media coverage and perception building about the Chinese military through Pakistani media outlets.

Moreover, Pakistan is the only neighbor of China to have less than 50 percent of the population concerned about border disputes (of other countries) with China; whereas the majority of the population of other neighboring countries of China is concerned that territorial disputes with China could lead to a military conflict (Global Attitudes & Trends, 2014). Therefore, Pakistani media is also on a similar course to most of the population as it depicts Chinese territorial disputes from a somewhat neutral to favorable perspective, and Chinese military engagements are not highlighted as a threat in Pakistani media. Although the data analysis reveals that Pakistani media raises concerns over China's growing activities in the South and East China seas and its implication for the region, the Pakistani newspaper does not

portray Beijing's ambitious military expansion in the seas as a security challenge for Islamabad.

Unlike the US and India, which consider China's military activities on its Western and Eastern fronts a direct threat to their own regional interests, Pakistan is less concerned about China's growing regional influence. This notion demonstrates that media coverage is somewhat related to agenda-setting based on a certain state's policies and relations with another state. Most of the coverage of China's military developments in Western media is consistent with governments' hostile attitudes toward China and PLA.

In conclusion, most Pakistani media coverage is based on balanced and objective reporting, including comments and perspectives of different regional and international forces. Nevertheless, the articles analyzed for this research observed a positive trend regarding China. Similarly, the Pakistani newspaper praises the Chinese moves by describing its efforts for a cooperative stance in the region and military development as a peaceful rise.

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China's Strategic Involvement in Africa and its Regional Implications (1949-2022)

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Abstract

China's strategic involvement in the African region is multi-faceted as it seeks to bolster economic, political, and security ties. Chinese security and political engagement with African countries are driven by its interest in stimulating its economic rise. This research is qualitative and exploratory in nature and utilizes the concept of strategic culture to analyze the motivations behind Beijing's interests and behavior in the African continent. Confucian-Mencian and Parabellum form two major strands of Chinese Strategic Culture, making it a unique *Cult of Defense*. Three important case studies have been analyzed through the prism of the country's strategic culture, i.e. Chinese economic engagement with one of its largest trading partners—South Africa—, Chinese political engagement in the conflicts of Sudan and South Sudan, and lastly, its security engagement in Djibouti where it established its first foreign military base. Chinese three-dimensional engagements in Africa have had both positive and negative implications for the region. This research concludes that Chinese strategic culture is not static and likely to adapt itself in accordance with the opportunities available for Beijing and its goals in Africa.

Keywords

Strategic culture, Sino-African relations, China's foreign policy, peaceful coexistence

Introduction

China's pursuit of natural resources and expansion of its markets overseas have strengthened its ties with Africa. Although China's association with Africa is not new, it has considerably expanded and evolved. During the Maoist period, it was limited to geopolitical and ideological gains, but in recent times, Beijing's engagement has

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expanded to include security, economic and political ties (Hartmann & Noesselt, 2019; Korvig, 2018).

Africa holds immense economic, political, and security significance for China. The economic interest of Beijing includes; African natural resources, access to markets for investment and exports, and global expansion of Chinese businesses. In this context, its relationship with South Africa is significant as it is one of China's largest economic partners in Africa (Usman & Lyu, 2021). China also has four main political interests in the continent, i.e. to improve its image and enhance the influence of China, isolate Taiwan to promote its 'One China' policy, assure its economic partners' stability, and counter international norms that China deems problematic. Particularly China's controversial political involvement in Sudan and South Sudan is crucial. Lastly, China's political and economic interests define its security interests as "to safeguard developments made in the economic domain and growing political influence." China has, multilaterally and bilaterally, expanded its security and defense relationship with many states, such as Djibouti (Saleh, 2021). Establishing the country's first overseas naval base in Djibouti represents Chinese willingness to enhance its regional power projection capabilities (Chaziza, 2018).

Chinese presence in Africa has varying implications for the region. Its strategic engagement presents certain opportunities and challenges to the continent. While flexible Chinese loans, trade finance, and low-priced industrial products are of great importance for African countries, local labor and factories are suffering at the hand of Chinese commercial expansion. China's support for African regimes violating human rights has also received criticism from the west. Furthermore, countries are also skeptical about the nature of Chinese unconditional loans to African Countries (Thrall, 2015).

China is also enhancing its security footprint and involvement in African conflicts, raising speculations about its non-interference approach. There is a lack of transparency in Chinese development cooperation with African states, which does not always result in a win-win situation. This research analyzes Chinese engagement in the African region through the prism of its strategic culture. Chinese strategic culture provides an alternative lens to assess how Chinese norms, history, identity, culture, and traditions are reflected in its engagement with other actors. According to Beijing, its strategic culture is embedded in five principles of peaceful coexistence (Lei & Sui, 2022). However, Chinese strategic culture is not static and continues to evolve due to its widening interests and growing international power and influence. The article addresses the following research questions:

- How have Sino-African relations evolved since the Maoist regime?
- How is the strategic culture of China reflected in its engagement with the African region?
- What are the security, economic, and political interests and behavior of China in Africa?
- What are the regional implications of Chinese strategic involvement in Africa?

Historical Evolution of Sino-African Relations (1950s-Present)

Early Years (1955-1977)

The development of Sino-African relations was a gradual process that took place over a long period of time. The official diplomatic ties between Africa and Beijing began with the culmination of the Bandung Conference, organized by Mao Zedong, which took place from 18-24 April 1955, the first-ever meeting of African states and Asian

Nations. The primary objective was to promote economic and cultural relations between Asia and Africa and to resist western imperialism and decolonization (Dirlik, 2015). With the rise of African nationalist movements in the 1960s and 1970s, China took advantage by stressing its anti-imperialist stance and supporting these movements morally and materially. As a result of such assistance, the newly independent countries began establishing diplomatic relations with China. For example, Mao provided aid to the Algerian nationalist rebels who recognised mainland China upon attaining independence in 1962. By the decade of 1960s, more than 10 African countries, including Algeria, Sudan, and Morocco, had established diplomatic ties with China. In the 1970s, among the 50 newly independent African nations, 44 extended diplomatic recognition of mainland China (Hanauer & Morris, 2014).

After the Sino-Soviet split in 1960, the main aim of China was to counter not just the USA but the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) as well and to isolate Taiwan in Africa. But from 1965, African countries began resenting for being used as mere political weapons in the squabble between the Soviet Union and China. As a result, China's progress in the region deteriorated. The African states also grew suspicious of China's support of revolutionary movements. Another major setback in Sino-African relations was caused by the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) in China, further halting the expansion of new economic aid and augmentation of the country's diplomatic relations. After Mauritania recognized mainland China in 1965, no other country established diplomatic relations with China for the next five years (Zabella, 2020). In 1969, as China's domestic order was restored, China's policy was focused on cultivating good bilateral relations with any state that extended recognition to communist China. Due to Chinese engagement in Africa, it was able to secure a permanent seat in the United Nations with the support of 26 African states. Sino-African relations further improved as Beijing halted its support for revolutionary movements in Africa, allowing it to cultivate relations with more conservative governments (Shinn, 2019).

Sino-African Relations in Post-Economic Reforms Era (1978-1990's)

In the post-economic reforms era, Chinese foreign policy towards Africa was transformed from solely based on ideological alliances to a more diversified and pragmatic approach towards the region. As a result of economic uncertainty, internal development, and modern political orientation in China, the early 1980s saw a temporary downgrade in Sino-African relations. China was mainly concerned about fostering economic ties with USA and Japan. Resultantly, Chinese economic aid and assistance towards Africa were reoriented as China devoted more resources to its economic development (Rugumamu, 2014). Chinese engagement in the region in that time period was more commercialized. In 1982, during the 12th National Congress of CPC, China officially announced a shift from a policy that stressed 'war and revolution' to one stressing 'peace and development.' (Shinn, 2019). In 1989, the Tiananmen protests led to the international isolation of China due to widespread condemnation from the Western world. It rejuvenated Chinese political interests in Africa and paved the way for proactive diplomacy (Tisdell, 2009).

Post-1990 Reforms in Africa

Under the supervision of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the African states' economies and political systems underwent significant changes. Since Pan-Africanism, the region has always wanted to manage its own affairs. In the post-

1990s, Africans had no choice but to comply with the Bretton Woods institutions through structural adjustment programs. Nevertheless, the system of multiparty democracy was introduced, and their economies were liberalized (Gwekwerere, 2020). As China witnessed these trends in the region, it decided to direct its developmental assistance to the growth of the African private sectors and concentrate on how Chinese businesses can participate in the continent's markets. Thus, the State Council of China introduced new policies regarding foreign aid at the Working Conference in October 1995 (Kobayashi, 2008). The purpose was to encourage qualified corporations in China to invest and partake in foreign technical assistance and economic cooperation projects.

Developments in the 21st Century

In 2000, China and the African countries held their First Ministerial Conference to conduct mutual consultations, deepen understanding, broaden consensus, strengthen friendly ties, and promote cooperation. The outcomes of the Conference were the adoption of the Program for China-Africa Cooperation in Economic and Social Development and the Beijing Declaration. The creation of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000 was one of the greatest successes of the First Ministerial Conference as it established a new platform to increase dialogue and cooperation between China and the African continent. Since the creation of FOCAC, eight ministerial conferences have been held to strengthen Sino-African ties in various domains. In 2021, the eighth Ministerial Conference of FOCAC was held with the theme of "Deepen China-Africa Partnership and Promote Sustainable Development to Build a China-Africa Community with a Shared Future in the New Era" (Pairault, 2021). The discussion in FOCAC 8 revolved around bolstering health cooperation, post-pandemic economic recovery, and developmental assistance.

The strategic vision of China in its relationship with the African continent was further strengthened and enhanced in January 2006, when the country published its first white paper on Africa named 'China's African Policy' (Meidan, 2006). The four crucial principles of this paper were; equality, sincerity, and friendship; collective advantages, mutual prosperity and reciprocity; coordination and support; and mutual development. In August 2013, the Chinese government issued a White Paper on China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation, highlighting the progress between China and Africa in terms of economy and bilateral trade through mutually beneficial cooperation. Chinese investment extended to different fields, including mining, agriculture, manufacturing, construction, real estate, finance, etc. The Chinese government published China's second Africa Policy Paper in 2015. In this White Paper, China set forth a new approach and vision toward Africa, coinciding with China's 'Two Centennial Goals' and Africa's 'Agenda 2063' (Bearak, 2019). The White Paper clarified further regarding Chinese goodwill to strengthen Sino-African relations to guide multidimensional exchanges and collaboration.

Recent Developments

Africa holds immense diplomatic significance for China on the international front and vice versa. Both support each other on controversial human rights issues. In 2019, African countries supported the Chinese treatment of Uyghur people in the Xinjiang province (Olewe, 2021). Under Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a global development strategy adopted by President Xi Jinping in 2013, China has made significant advancements in the African region. This includes Chinese investments in developing

critical infrastructure in Africa and connectivity for growth in exchange for raw materials and resources. This is enhancing China's political prestige among the African states. As of June 2020, 43 of 54 African countries have already signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China for cooperation under the BRI (Venkateswaran, 2020).

Africa is central to China's project primarily due to its potential for energy, roads, and railways. On average, Chinese annual investment in African infrastructure projects amounts to nearly \$10 billion (Risberg, 2019). FOCAC and BRI constitute the largest platforms for Beijing's engagement with Africa. While FOCAC forms the foundations of China's Africa policy, BRI is a multilateral platform emphasizing connectivity. Compared to FOCAC, BRI can potentially incorporate Africa into the global market. Such a relationship would prove fruitful for many African countries, though integrating into the two mechanisms would be time-taking.

Conceptual Framework

Strategic culture is not a new concept. Scholars have used it to examine the primary aspects of the security policies of countries, security institutions, and regions in different ways. The framework helps to explain why actors continue with or change their respective national security policies. Strategic culture aims to understand why states pursue certain policy options as opposed to others. However, the failure of the US scientists to accurately predict the reaction of the USSR in the 1970s shifted the focus of scholars in determining the role of the national culture of a state in motivating its actions and decisions, thus, developing the concept of strategic culture. Alastair Iain Johnston distinguished strategic culture scholars into three generations. He defined strategic culture as an amalgamation of ideas shaped by emotional responses and habitual behavioral patterns shared by a national strategic community and its members regarding nuclear strategy (Johnston, 1995). Strategic culture rejects the universal model of rationality, highlighting that a decision considered rational by one state may be thought of as irrational by another state based on its respective histories and experiences (Snyder, 1977).

In the 1980s and 1990s, the concept of strategic culture expanded beyond the nuclear debate to focus on other security issues. The second-generation scholars exploited crucial ideational independent variables and widened the concept by introducing new elements to the discourse. According to Kerry Longhurst, strategic culture refers to a distinct system of attitudes, practices, and beliefs related to using force, which are collectively held and arise slowly over time through a unique prolonged historical process. Therefore, strategic culture is persistent but neither permanent nor static (2000).

Elizabeth Kier is one of the prominent third-generation strategic culture scholars. She saw political-military culture as a result of varying domestic political situations, changing with a country's domestic politics (Bloomfield, 2012). The third generation of strategic culture scholars focused on competitive theory testing and left room for other supplementary factors to be considered that impact state behavior (Lantis, 2002).

China's Strategic Culture

Various cultural, historical, religious, and philosophical factors affected China's strategic culture during the course of its evolution. As termed by China, the 'century of humiliation' (1839-1949) was marked by external interventions and subjugation of the Chinese Empire by the West, Russia and Japan (Kaufman, 2010). China faced

fragmentation in its domestic policies, lost several wars, including the First and Second Opium Wars, and was forced to offer a major concession to the western powers after the treaties such as those of Nanking, Peaking, Aigun, Shimonoseki (Kaufman, 2010). Western interference during the 19th century had a considerable impact on China's foreign policy initiatives, which are visible even in the present times (Farwa, 2018). The identity of a country is greatly influenced by how it perceives and conceives itself. Confucian philosophy had a considerable impact on the cultural values of Chinese society, which in turn influenced Chinese thinking and conduct. Three major factors have led to the evolution of Chinese strategic culture in a particular manner giving it a distinct identity, namely its traditions and culture, Chinese ideology, i.e. communism, and Western liberal values (Farwa, 2018). Alastair Iain Johnston (1995) highlighted that two major attributes of Chinese strategic culture (Confucian-Mencian and Parabellum) exist simultaneously.

Confucian-Mencian

According to this notion, conflicts can be handled through or avoided with good governance as well as through co-opting with foreign threats. This outlook prescribes using force as a last resort and should only be used when it could be justified on moral grounds (Feng, 2007). Thus, Chinese strategic preferences are accommodation, use of defensive force, and lastly, offensive policies.

Parabellum

It is a Latin word that literally means 'prepare for war.' This notion suggests the use of coercion against the opponent. As the wave of globalization swept, China amalgamated modern western values into its strategic culture (Zhang, 2002). Certain strategic factors directly counteract the Confucius elements of the Chinese strategic culture. These elements justify the external use of military force, negating the passive impact of the former elements. This includes China's just war theory and the concept of Active Defense. Chinese strategic culture illustrates its evolving nature, suggesting that passive defense is no longer effective for China in safeguarding its global interests (Gady, 2015).

China's unique Cult of Defense: Contemporary Strategic Culture

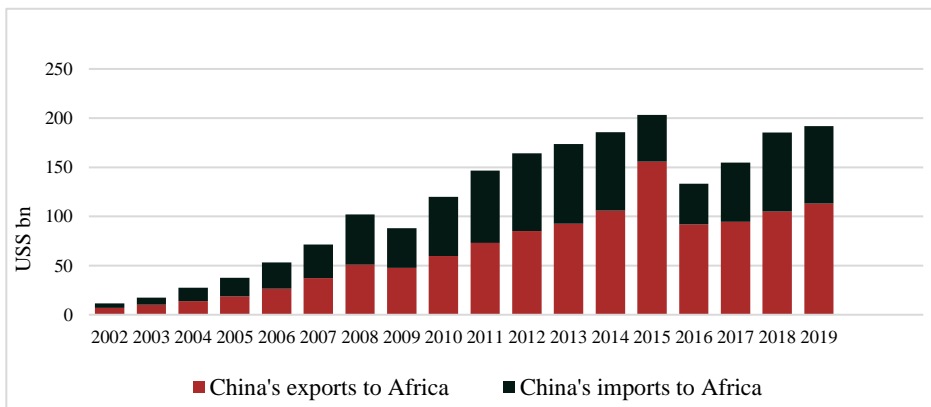
Andrew Scobell highlights that both elements, Confucian-Mencian and Parabellum, are functional, and the interplay between the two strands leads to the culmination of 'China's Cult of Defense' (Scobell, 2002). The predisposition of this cult is that China might paradoxically involve itself in offensive military conduct to pursue its national interests while rationalizing its conduct to be entirely defensive in nature and the only viable option. This highlights that China possesses a dualistic strategic culture: assertive protection and aggressive promotion of its national objective under its rhetoric of self-defense and just war.

China's Economic Interests in Africa

The commercial and government actors of China view the African continent as a source of natural resources, possessing a vast yet underutilized market for investments and exports. This provides an opportunity for Chinese firms to gain experience and increase domestic employment. The investments of China in Africa also take place under the broad framework of Beijing's "Go Global" commercial strategy, which aims to expand China's commercial presence globally (Thrall, 2015).

There are three main economic actors of China in Africa: big State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), large to medium-sized private enterprises, and small enterprises. More than 90 percent of Chinese Foreign direct investment (FDI) flows through SOEs, half of which accounts for oil projects. Since 2000, the Sino-African trade volume has experienced enormous growth at about 16 percent per year. In 2019, Angola became the largest exporter to China, followed by South Africa and the Republic of Congo. Africa’s largest trading partner is China, and in the opening months of 2020, exports bound for China from Africa also decreased by 17.5 percent (Nyabiage, 2020). Figure 1 illustrates the growing Sino-African trade since 2002. However, African exports experienced a temporary downturn owing to the weakening of commodity prices since 2014. It is critical to note the apparent imbalance in China’s favor as its exports to Africa are greater than imports.

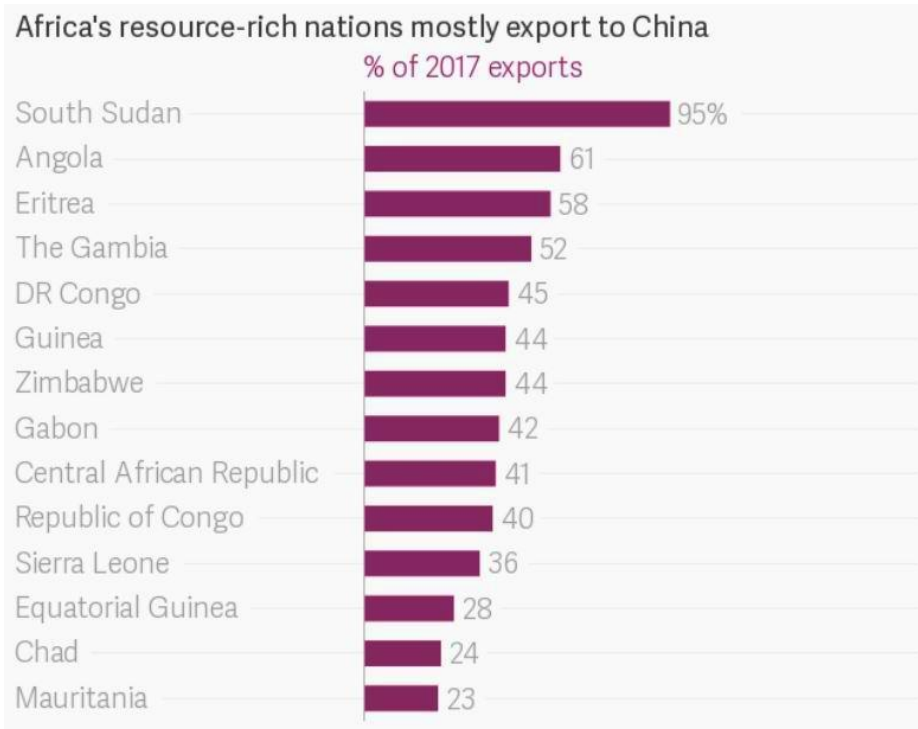
Figure 1. China-Africa Trade (2002-2019)



Source: (China Africa Research Initiative, 2021)

The African continent is crucial in China’s search to diversify the supply of natural resources to ensure an uninterrupted flow. Notable African mineral exports to China include Angola and South Sudan’s crude petroleum export, Eritrea’s zinc and copper export, DR Congo’s cobalt, Zimbabwe’s export of raw tobacco, and Sierra Leone’s export of iron and titanium. South Sudan also exports 95 percent of its crude petroleum to China (Dahir, 2019). Figure 2 depicts the percentage of exports to China by different African Nations in 2017.

Figure 2. Africa’s resource-rich nations’ exports to China (2017)



Source: Dahir (2019)

Sino-South African Economic Relations

On 01st January 1998, China and South Africa formally established diplomatic relations, and in 2000, South Africa-China Bi-National Commission was established. Since then, the two countries have enhanced economic cooperation on multiple levels and in various domains. In 2010, the bilateral cooperation between China and South Africa was elevated to a ‘Comprehensive Strategic Partnership’. This was a significant step in their economic relationship and outlined three crucial pillars of cooperation: strategic, mutually beneficial, and multidimensional. Four main cooperation platforms underpin the constructive Sino-South African relationship: (i) FOCAC, (ii) Brazil-Russia-India-China and South Africa (BRICS), (iii) BRI, (iv) and South-South Cooperation (SSC) (Grobler, 2020).

Sino-South African Trade

After the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1998, economic relations between both states have continued to grow at unprecedented rates. Through the FOCAC Business Forum held in 2015, twenty-five economic agreements were concluded between China and South Africa valued at up to US \$16.5 billion (Breitenbach & Ryno, 2015). Over the last 25 years, Chinese exports to South Africa have witnessed

an annual increase of 13.4 percent, amounting to 14.7 billion dollars in 2020 from 640 million dollars in 1995 (OEC, 2022). While during the same period, South African exports to China have increased at an annual rate of 14.4 percent, totaling 11.9 billion dollars in 2020 from 408 million dollars in 1995 (OEC, 2022).

Finance and Development Cooperation between China and South Africa

In December 2015, during a Chinese state officials' visit to South Africa, 26 bilateral agreements worth \$94 billion were agreed upon between President Xi Jinping and President Zuma (Mills & Merew, 2020). By 2016, nearly 150 medium-sized Chinese firms were operational in South Africa with an actual investment of US\$ 13 billion, providing employment to about 30,000 people. In 2020, South Africa owed China the equivalent of its 4% annual GDP. The two countries have also signed MoU for cooperation under BRI, and South Africa has also remained the vanguard of Sino-South Africa cooperation on renewable energy (Baker & Shen, 2017).

China's Strategic Culture and Economic Behavior in South Africa

China's economic approach to Africa is inspired by the Confucian principles inherent in the state's strategic culture. All these principles can be witnessed in China's economic relationship with South Africa. Their bilateral trade patterns highlight that China is fulfilling its need for natural resources while South Africa is acquiring needed manufactured goods; mutually benefitting both countries. Moreover, South Africa is also investing in China, signifying their two-way balanced relationship. China has highlighted this approach in Africa through FOCAC, i.e. to promote partnership rather than just investing in African economies.

The country provides 'no strings attached' financing for sustainable infrastructure development. Its economic interests have no underlying political motives or interests; instead, it focuses on the continent's long-term development and economic progress (Li, 2018). After the opening of China, the only political conditions relevant for Chinese economic aid and investment are not to recognize Taiwan and uphold the principle of non-interference. China has often faced international backlash for adopting such a policy.

China's Political Interests and Behavior in Africa

Although less significant than economic interests, Chinese political interests in Africa includes; reputation building; promotion of the 'One China' policy; gathering support for Chinese norms, and ensuring the stability of its key economic partners. China emphasizes a commitment to a peaceful rise to gain tangible diplomatic advantages through African support (Muekalia, 2004). One of the ways to characterize Sino-African political interaction is high-level visits, which constitute an important part of China's international diplomacy. China's increased economic interaction with Africa, beginning in the 1990s, was supplemented by a rise in diplomatic initiatives.

Regarding soft power projection, China has also pursued various projects in Africa. One of the many notable projects is the inauguration of the new headquarters of the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa in 2012, which was a facility jointly constructed and donated by China, costing about 200 million dollars (BBC News, 2012). Furthermore, China has also funded various engagement programs that include foreign assistance programs such as the Peace Corps, youth leadership exchanges, providing Chinese doctors, developing centers of cultural outreach in twenty-two states and initiation of television and radio broadcasting (Yinan, 2011).

China's Involvement in African Conflicts: A Case Study of South Sudan

Sudan and China established diplomatic ties in 1959. Initially, political engagement between the two countries was limited, but in 1995, Sino-Sudanese political relations experienced a critical shift as Sino-Sudanese oil cooperation was initiated. Consequently, Sudan became an oil exporter. Oil became a crucial medium in promoting further economic and trade cooperation. Bilateral trade between the two countries increased to \$3.35 billion in 2006 from \$ 350 million in 1998 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, n.d.).

South Sudan acquired independence in 2011 and was immediately recognized by China. Both countries established diplomatic relations, and China indicated that it pursues a balanced strategy in its diplomatic dealings with Sudan and South Sudan (Johanson, 2016). However, unfortunately, South Sudan went into a state of chaos as a civil war broke out in 2013. From then onwards, China adjusted its development-oriented business policy toward South Sudan and focused on conflict mediation.

China's Involvement in South Sudan Civil War

Chinese involvement in the South Sudan civil war is guided by three major components, i.e. oil resources, business, and political advantages. Immediately after the escalation of hostilities due to war, China's vice Foreign Minister conducted a meeting with diplomatic envoys to China from countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in order to exchange perspectives on recent happenings. Moreover, Zhong Jianhua conducted shuttle diplomacy between the AU, Sudan, South Sudan, USA, Ethiopia, UK, Uganda, and IGDA to resolve the conflict peacefully. In continuation of its efforts, China did not halt developmental projects and even initiated a series of new projects in South Sudan to lay down a premise for post-war restoration (Abdulmelik, 2015).

However, military support ignited widespread criticism of China's intentions regarding Sudan's peace process. In September 2014, the Chinese embassy in South Sudan declared that it would halt remaining arms transactions and announced the dispatching of an infantry battalion to the UN peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan (Elmahly & Sun, 2018).

China's Strategic Culture and Political Behavior in South Sudan

China's economic ambitions have forced it to revisit its policy of non-interference. For this purpose, the case study of Sino-Sudan political relations is important in understanding the critical shift in China's strategic culture as it commits itself to conflict resolution in conflict-ridden states. There were mainly three reasons why China was receiving criticism from the global community, the UN, and regional African bodies such as the AU. Firstly, developing Sudan's oil resources provided it with ample financial capital to prolong the civil war and commit human rights violations in the Darfur crisis.

Secondly, the country had been supplying arms and weapons to the Sudanese government, and lastly, it had been blocking international sanctions against the government of Sudan to ensure its uninterrupted access to the country's oil reserves (Thrall, 2015). Since China wanted to promote its image as a responsible global power, the role of China evolved from a 'reluctant bystander' to a 'responsible mediator'. China has openly announced that it is willing to play a constructive role in the peace and security of the African continent and has included this in the China-Africa policy paper of 2006 as well. This change in China's political engagement in

Africa is not divorced from its economic and security interests but rather aimed at ensuring the protection of its trade and investment in the region (Brosig, 2020).

While Beijing is actively involved in the South Sudan conflict, its approach to conflict resolution greatly differs from its Western counterparts. Beijing does not believe in forcing its desired outcomes, rather utilizes its political and economic influence to bring the conflicting parties to the negotiating table and reach a mutually beneficial solution. China promotes the narrative that African problems require African solutions, claiming that the region needs to be in charge of its own fate. China's flexibility towards its non-interference policy would allow it to efficiently pursue its national and international ambitions by devoting more significant resources and efforts towards meeting its growth, foreign policy objectives, and resource security. As China's economic interests continue to grow, it may experience difficulty managing a positive balance with its non-interference policy.

China's Security Interests and Behavior in Africa

The growing political and economic footprint of China in Africa defines its emerging security interests within the continent. According to the McKinsey & Company report, Chinese construction enterprises won almost half of all engineering, procurement, and construction contracts throughout the continent, including those funded by international organizations like the World Bank (2017). Therefore, there are mainly three security interests confronting China in Africa, i.e. protection of citizens and assets, bolstering its 'responsible power' image internationally, and enhancing the experience of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

Although PLA has played little role in Sino-African relations, several security interests are at stake for China in Africa, generating various potential missions for PLA in the region. These include peacekeeping missions, preservation of assets, Non-combatant Evacuation Operations (NEOs), and protection of expatriates and personnel (Heath et al., 2016). Beijing has promoted assistance and training programs to benefit the African militaries. These programs include military training exercises, donation of training equipment and vehicles, and sending maintenance teams etc.; with time, China's security footprint in Africa is expanding. As of May 2022, two thousand Chinese troops are permanently stationed at the base in Djibouti. Beijing has also constructed a pier at the base with the capacity to hold an aircraft carrier, enabling China to project its power beyond the coast of the Western Pacific. Moreover, concerns over a potential second Chinese military base on the Atlantic Coast have stroked fears among African nations pertaining to their sovereignty (Nantulya, 2022).

China's Military Diplomacy: A Case of Djibouti

In 1979, two years after Djibouti gained independence from France, China recognized the country, and diplomatic relations were formally established. China's security relationship with Djibouti is guided by its heightening economic and political stakes. As a result, China constructed its first overseas military base in Djibouti, signaling a drastic shift from its previous defense and military doctrine (Downs et al., 2020). China has recently completed work on the first of its kind large pier at Djibouti. The pier is contemplated to be used for berthing aircraft carriers. The second aircraft carrier of PLA is already commissioned, while a third is under rapid construction. Carriers are perfect instruments for 'sea control and 'power projection' (Hadano, 2021).

China's Geo-Strategic Motivations behind Military Base

Djibouti is strategically located on the world's busiest trade routes and shipping lanes, linking East Africa and the Middle East. Bab el-Mandeb strait, a critical maritime chokepoint, serves as a crucial trade link between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea via the Red sea, the Suez Canal, and the Gulf of Aden. Therefore, the establishment of a naval base in Djibouti could bring several strategic benefits to China (Chaziza, 2021), such as:

- Enhancement of power projection capabilities of PLA in the Indian Ocean and even beyond, giving it a global reach
- Conducting anti-piracy missions in the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea, and the Gulf of Aden
- Challenging USA's geopolitical ambitions in the MENA region and Africa
- Adopting a more proactive role in regional and international conflicts

China's Geo-Economic Motivations

The strategic location of Djibouti serves as a significant asset for China's growing economic interests. China's trade with the EU, amounting to over \$1 billion, passes through the Gulf of Aden daily, and 40% of Chinese oil imports pass via the Indian Ocean (Alden & Mendez, 2021). Djibouti's location at the mouth of the Red sea makes it an epicenter for transporting cargo in and out of the MENA region. Moreover, since the initiation of BRI in 2013, Djibouti has been a crucial logistical and trading hub in China's Maritime Silk Road, extending from Beijing to the Indian Ocean region, to the Gulf of Aden, and via the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean (Perlez & Buckley, 2015).

Moreover, securing access to vital energy resources could be another reason for installing the military base in Djibouti, as 4% of China's natural gas and 3% of crude oil imports pass through the strait of Bab-el-Mandeb (US Energy Information Agency, 2014). A Naval base would therefore assist the transportation of China's oil from the strait and safeguard its oil imports from the Middle East, traversing the Indian Ocean region on their journey back.

China's Strategic Culture with Its Security Behavior in Djibouti

Chinese security posture, which includes strong adherence to the principle of sovereignty and non-interference, has been greatly influenced by its historical defeats and humiliation at the hands of imperialist power in the 19th century. Therefore, embedded in the Five Principles of Coexistence, China's foreign policy agenda towards Africa in the 20th century has been largely guided by a non-interference approach. Throughout Deng Xiaoping's tenure, China adopted a low profile towards the defense and security of African states and endorsed an opposing stance towards UNPKO. However, beginning in the 21st Century, China's strategic thought has evolved, leading to the developing of a maritime strategy based on 'preemption' and 'active defense' (Jenner, 2019). However, this change has been gradual, starting with PLA's involvement in UN peacekeeping missions, counter-piracy, and non-combat evacuation operations, to the development of a logistical support base in Djibouti which has now become a full-blown military and naval base (Cabestan, 2020).

However, it is important to highlight the historical context of China's formative conduct. China's aspiration to embark on military modernization and enhancement of power projection capabilities has mainly been influenced by the revelation of PLA's deficiency and losses in both the Vietnam and Third Indo-China

war. Therefore, historical lessons constitute an important component of China's security culture (Mayer, 2018).

Moreover, the decision to set up a logistical support base is directly linked with the developing international political situations. In the current era, 'pragmatism' has been a dominant component in China's strategic thought, which means nationalist sentiment should not come in the way of Chinese political stability and economic modernization. Therefore, China's military modernization has been driven by its expanding economic interests overseas and the need to safeguard the Chinese workforce and protect and preserve vital sea lines of communication (Alden & Yixiao, 2018). Thus, China's military posture in Africa represents a response to the growing Chinese role in the international system and ever-changing global environment.

Regional Implications of Chinese Strategic Involvement in Africa

Economic Implications

The implications of Chinese economic engagement with Africa have garnered mixed results for the countries of the continent. Due to Chinese inward investment, the African countries recovered from the global financial crisis of 2008 as their GDP experienced a growth of 0.5 percent each year (Whalley & Weisbrod, 2012). Moreover, the Chinese Foreign Ministry noted that from 2000 to 2013, China's investments increased the continent's economic growth rate by more than 20 percent (Hanauer & Morris, 2014). On the other hand, the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) built by China have, as of yet, not yielded the anticipated benefits and will be draining the future income of the African nations to repay Beijing for its construction services.

However, SEZs in Mauritius and Ethiopia have proved to be relatively successful. But overall, the SEZs in the African continent have been performing weakly due to a poor investment environment, lack of infrastructure, inept trade facilitation systems, inadequate institutional, legal, and regulatory frameworks, and lack of strategic planning and skilled labor. The Belt and Road Initiative is critical to Chinese economic engagement with Africa. It possesses the capacity to contribute to the infrastructural development of Africa and promote connectivity. But over the years, African countries are becoming apprehensive of BRI and China's actions and motives in the region. In April 2017, protests erupted in Nigeria against Chinese companies that failed to compensate for the buildings they demolished for the Lagos-Ibadan Railway Line's construction (Venkateswaran, 2020). Similar protests have broken out in other African countries as well. African Nations are also concerned about a Chinese debt trap; for example, Kenya's external debt to China now amounts to 74 percent of its GDP (Dahir, 2018). In recent years, many African countries have canceled or postponed major projects in China, claiming that Beijing is not abiding by environmental standards, has irregular paperwork, and has poor safety measures for local workers.

Political Implications

The implication of Chinese engagement in Africa's political and governance process is highly varied and context-specific. There are three categories of African states in which China's behavior has influenced the process of democratization: states undergoing democratic transition benefit via joint ventures and technical grants and, at the same time, serve as useful markets and geopolitical allies such as Ghana. Chinese involvement with states that possess vital strategic resources, such as Angola,

has resulted in neo-patrimonialism and the legitimization of autocratic governments. Chinese involvement in conflict-driven states such as Liberia has resulted in the consolidation of peace and stability, positively impacting democratic governance. Secondly, Beijing has received a positive response from African Governments over its diplomatic initiatives. Party-to-party training programs constitute a significant part of China's diplomatic engagement in Africa. This initiative has led various African states to acknowledge the success of the Chinese model, and they have become insistent on gaining insight through the Chinese experience and merging them with domestic conditions.

Moreover, China has formulated its media strategy as a part of its broader soft power push in the African continent. But African governments perceive little benefit from such outlets for their local audiences (Wasserman, 2018). The state control over Chinese media, along with its officials and positive orientation, has raised concerns that Chinese media would influence African journalism to be uncritical of its politics and governments; hence, curtailing freedom of speech.

Security Implications

While China benefits from stable and peaceful Africa, the continent aims to eliminate insecurity for increased growth and development. Security relations with China allow African states to enhance their capacity-building efforts, including the construction of infrastructure, logistical assistance, healthcare, training of local police, etc.; this has proved beneficial for many African states (Benabdallah, 2016). However, the negative orientation of China's security role in Africa includes its role in arms deals that African regimes use either to fuel conflicts or for self-preservation. Secondly, the Chinese military base in Djibouti has reaped many benefits for the African state and has great potential for enhancing the country's and, subsequently, the region's economic prosperity and political stability. Djibouti has also become an active participant in BRI as the East African country is a crucial trading hub and logistics base. With the help of China, Djibouti is pursuing its 'Vision Djibouti 2035' which aims to turn the country into a regional and international commercial trading hub (Debelo, 2017). Djibouti's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Ali Youssef, stated that though the country's debt to China is 71 percent of its GDP, they were in dire need of the infrastructure Beijing provided (Ahmed, 2021). But China's ambiguous security policy may create challenges if China seeks to expand its military presence in the region.

Conclusion

Chinese involvement in the African region is not new, but it has grown substantially and evolved with the changes in the international political arena. This research paper assesses the political, economic, and security interests and behavior of China in Africa through the prism of its evolving strategic culture. With regard to its economic engagement, the country's pacifist strategic culture showcases itself in China's 'no strings attached' financing for the development of sustainable infrastructure and its focus on the long-term development and prosperity of Africa. The only political condition of China in its economic dealings is the recognition of its 'One China' policy and principle of non-interference. On the other hand, Chinese political engagement can be witnessed in its role in the South Sudan conflict. China's economic ambitions have forced it to revisit its policy of non-interference, representing a critical shift in its strategic culture as it commits itself to conflict resolution in conflict-ridden states. However, the trends dictate that China favors a

multilateral approach to conflict resolution. Chinese security interests are tied to its political and economic interests. The most remarkable security engagement of China in Africa is undoubtedly the establishment of its first foreign military base in the African state of Djibouti. China has also developed a maritime strategy based on preemption and active defense. Pragmatism has become a dominant component of contemporary Chinese strategic culture.

Chinese economic, political, and security engagement has had significant implications for the African continent. Chinese aid, investment, and infrastructural development have played a positive role in increasing the economic growth rate of the continent. However, in terms of job creation and the labor market, Chinese companies favor their own people. Furthermore, Chinese investments and businesses have undercut Africa's local businesses and manufacturers. African countries have reaped little trade and employment benefits from the SEZs. Though some SEZs are doing well, most have been performing weakly. BRI could bring about many benefits for Africa but many countries have grown apprehensive of China's projects due to potential debt traps, violation of environmental standards, irregularities in paperwork, and poor safety measures for local workers. China's political role varies in different states of Africa, and its engagement greatly impacts the process of democratization. China's party-to-party training programs have been received well by African countries.

Moreover, diplomatic initiative such as high-level state visits has played an important role in supplementing economic interaction and enhancing political relations. China has been exceptionally successful in its security engagement as Africa has appreciated and supported its UN peacekeeping missions and its military base in Djibouti. However, Africa must remain watchful of the country's evolving security foreign policy towards the region.

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Foreign Policy of Bangladesh towards India-China Tussle: A Neoclassical Realist Analysis

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Abstract

The security of South Asia often remains in turmoil because of the rivalry between the neighboring countries. South Asian countries, particularly developing states, adhere to the principles of strategic hedging for security and economic development. Bangladesh, as an ambitious and developing state, is no exception. Aiming for economic prosperity, Bangladesh maintains a balanced relationship with its bordering states. The evolving regional economic and political dynamics are becoming more competitive and challenging than ever before. This competitive environment can enable Bangladesh to pursue economic and political advantages, reflecting neoclassical realism. Considering the South Asian political developments, the India-China relationship is the foundation of regional balance. This research utilizes a qualitative methodology based on neo-classical realism to assess previous data and forecast potential intervening variables that drive Bangladesh to achieve strategic balance in its bilateral relationship with India and China. In this context, the study uses the neoclassical realist model to explain the structural and national interests of Bangladesh and the influence of the strategic environment of the region on its foreign policies.

Keywords

Bangladesh, neoclassical realism, foreign policy, India, China

Introduction

The 'State' as an entity relies on rational calculation and concentrates on alignment and balance to function appropriately in the junctures of an insecure environment. In solemnizing reality, the weak states perpetuate a margin of safety through their foreign policy (David, 1991, p. 245). Bangladesh, an important country in South Asia and the Indian Ocean, expects to pursue its foreign policy course based on possible

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national interests and the regional structure that has a benchmarking effect (Yasmin, 2019). Therefore, Bangladesh's foreign policy reflects domestic political urges and external influence.

In the last ten years, the government of Bangladesh has prioritized long-term projects as part of the national interest. However, on the other hand, Bangladesh as a state is highly lucrative for foreign investments due to its resources, geopolitical location, and investment-friendly economy. Likewise, Bangladesh is also in search of opportunities to engage with neighbors. The assertive foreign policy of Bangladesh is made possible by the tense relations between the country's close ally India and its new strategic partner China. As a sovereign state sharing borders with regional powers, Bangladesh is always dialectically grateful to the hedging strategy to maintain the strategic balance between the powerful states (Siddiquee, 2022).

Nevertheless, regional tensions have become somewhat increasingly visible vis-à-vis national interest. As a result, Bangladesh is progressively looking for security through a realpolitik lens. In this respect, the *behavioral* source of the foreign policy of the subject state includes various national determinants. The primary focus of this paper is to discover these interfering factors in the foreign policy of Bangladesh. The article analyses two major regional countries, India and China, considering their geostrategic and geopolitical importance.

In view of the above, the paper elucidates several factors that play a crucial role in determining foreign policy choices concerning the quandary associated with India and China. In doing so, the discourse is framed by the neoclassical realism theory, accompanied by the foreign policy choices of Bangladesh from 2009 to 2022. Furthermore, the study aims to understand the intervening elements influencing the behavioral source behind Bangladesh's foreign policy outcomes. The proceeding part presents the main arguments, which view Bangladesh as the pivot of South Asia and highlights several different modes of its engagement with India and China. The paper concludes with some potential challenges Bangladesh may face in pursuing its interests and related strategic policies.

Theoretical Framework

Realists define themselves as practitioners of the 'science of power politics' (Sutch & Elias, 2007). Classical realists assert that a state's outward behaviour is dictated by its domestic politics and preferences. They stress that a state's foreign policy must be conducted under domestically controlled conditions. Political and economic ideology, national character, partisan politics and socio-economic variables, regarded as domestic factors, are also considered to influence any state's foreign policy (Rose, 1998; Morgenthau et al., 1985). Although there are differences in the configurations and interests of domestic political actors, the influence of domestic politics in establishing foreign policy patterns cannot be undermined (Fearon, 1998). The structural realists, in contrast, argue that states' foreign policy behaviour is determined by the international system's structural contours (Waltz, 1979, p. 49).

Power distribution in the international system unambiguously defines a state's foreign policy decisions (Dunne & Schmidt, 2011). The proponent of *neorealism*, Kenneth Waltz, argues for defensive realism, particularly believing domestic political factors are causal variables for international outcomes (see also Williams, 2008). As two variants of structural realism, offensive realism stresses that systemic pressure influences state behaviour in an anarchic system, while defensive

realism asserts that systemic factors drive state behaviour to some extent but are not wholly responsible (Rose, 1998).

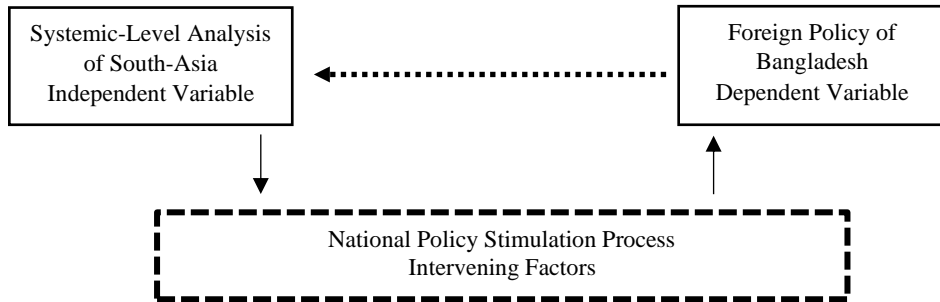
Though classical and neo-realism use different lenses to understand a state's external behavior, both have limited relevance. The first theory contends that only domestic variables influence international policy, whereas the latter points to the systemic factors that influence external behavior. Even though both are important in explaining external behavior, a state's foreign policy results from a *rational* calculation. Neo-classical realism is a convergence between classical and neorealism which considers that international systemic competition alone cannot explain states' actions (Dunne & Schmidt, 2011). It can also be connected with the Inclusivist school of thought, which bridges the *Innepolitik* and *Aussenpolitik* schools (Chakma, 2015). *Innepolitik* school explains that domestic or internal politics spur foreign policy behavior; meanwhile, the *Aussenpolitik* school affirms that international or external politics shape a state's foreign policy. By combining external and internal variables, neoclassical realism presents a framework to evaluate the factors for studying foreign policy.

Neo-classical realism views domestic political dynamics as interfering variables between systemic restrictions (independent variables) and foreign policy behavior (dependent variables) (Dunne & Schmidt, 2011). But, several domestic-level variables have a significant impact on a state's ambition as well as its foreign policy. The masterpiece 'From Wealth to Power' by Fareed Zakaria (1998) identified four critical domestic variables that affect a government's ability to take vital foreign policy decisions; centralization of government's power; relative autonomy from the society; degree of elite cohesion; and, mobilization and extraction capacity. In practical terms, foreign policy decisions are made by the government's political pillars, and thus it is crucial to consider the leader's policy priorities while evaluating foreign policy. In line with Zakaria, other scholars have also argued that domestic groups motivated by commercial interests might oppose foreign policy with negative economic implications (Ripsman et al., 2016). In the domestic purview, the public and media might also play a role in foreign policy decision-making. All these variables make the domestic process of making foreign policy decisions complex. That is why states often react differently to similar systemic pressures and possibilities (Williams, 2012).

Adapting to realism, Bangladesh has always tried to balance India and China with bilateral relations. The manner Bangladesh shields its foreign policy fits very well with a neoclassical realist framework which is to maximize gains and minimize risks. However, as India-China relations have pushed regional tensions towards conflict, Bangladesh has repeatedly altered its approach according to the situation.

Regarding the independent variables, Bangladesh has no control or predictability over the international or regional environment where players like China and India put their behavioral impulses toward the system and their power projection sophistication. Like the nature of foreign policy, India and China's bilateral relationship can influence the regional structure, and Bangladesh must adapt to the system. Bangladesh's foreign policy, which will be examined throughout the article, is the dependent variable. However, domestic issues influence the foreign policy outcome and can change the structure's appearance between these dependent and independent variables (See figure 1).

Figure 1: Neoclassical Realist Model applied to the foreign policy of Bangladesh



Scholars of international relations have frequently resorted to neoclassical realism to investigate the behavior of a state. Though neoclassical realism is one of the embodiments of realism, most scholars have always judged state behaviors using the mass branches of realism, especially classical realism. Realism propagates power as the driving force of politics; the focal point of modern politics is the balance of power. Danilovic (2002) agreed that the style of the balance of power is embedded in the pattern of regional power exercises. When defining South Asia's political climate, a major role is played in the tense relationship between India and China (Zhang, 2020).

Bhumitra presented that the Innenpolitik School criticizes realism because of its immense focus on external factors in analyzing foreign policy. And Aussenpolitik School's argument mirrors the neo-realist theoretical approach, where the international system is the primary determinant of state behavior in the international system. However, the Inclusivist or Integrative school of thought interlinks the influence of domestic politics and the international system, thus, echoes neo-classical realism (Chakma, 2014). Nonetheless, Majumdar takes a different lens in line with neo-classical realism, and she puts that Bangladesh-India relations can be explained as fear complex from the Bangladesh side. She covers structural factors of neo-classical realism with geopolitical security concerns and domestic factors with the migration and resource-sharing disputes, which shape the bilateral relationship between India and Bangladesh (Majmudar, 2014). On the other hand, Yasmin (2019) contemplates India and China's rise in Asia and, thus, projects Bangladesh's ability to alter the zero-sum expectation in the regional power struggle into an even-score game.

Strategic Position of Bangladesh in South Asia

Bangladesh's strategic importance in South Asia has to be analyzed in the context of its closest neighbor India's aspiration to be a regional power and China's rise in the international economic and political arena (Yasmin, 2019). Encircled by powerful political and economic elites in global affairs, Bangladesh is perplexed by a security dilemma from the small country syndrome (Majmudar, 2014). Bangladesh has made reasonable efforts to improve its financial capacity and pragmatic investment environment for the past few years. For instance, the annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of Bangladesh in the fiscal year 2021 was 6.9 percent (The World Bank, n.d.), reflecting sustainable economic growth. Bangladesh seeks to strengthen

ties with India and China to maintain economic growth. Thus, the study focuses on Bangladesh's structural and foreign policy considerations vis-à-vis India and China.

A Cause-and-Effect Relationship: Bangladesh and India

The cultural, linguistic, and historical ties and close physical proximity to India have made Bangladesh politically and economically rely on India, which are considered structural elements (Ali, 2018). From a neoclassical perspective, India is a systemic reality directly influencing Bangladesh's international relations. Before the partition of 1947, Bangladesh was part of United India, despite the verisimilitude of political and territorial division, the geographical attachment of 54 common rivers and 90% of the common border, the cultural and linguistic closeness with Eastern India and some states of North-Eastern-India illuminate Bangladesh emotional kinship with the country regarding its foreign policy and decision making in international relations.

Bangladesh uses its linguistic and cultural ties with West Bengal (The eastern part of India) as a tool for foreign policy, which can be characterized as 'soft power' (Kumar, 2014). The application of soft power using linguistic and cultural affinity was seen in the first 'pink-ball-test' between Bangladesh and India in Kolkata. In November 2019, Indian Premier Narendra Modi invited Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to watch the day and night test match between India and Bangladesh cricket team. In light of that event, Sheikh Hasina discussed bilateral issues (Teesta Water Sharing Agreement and India-Bangladesh's historical relationship) with West Bengal's Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on her visit to India ("Prime Minister to Visit Kolkata Friday", 2019).

Even though there is a massive trade deficit, India imposes non-trade barriers to Bangladesh, such as lab tests, requirements in packaging, border customs, and limited facilities for storing and packing goods. Moreover, the informal trade between India and Bangladesh also rallies with existent trade deficits (Sidel, 2007). Accepting the reality of the geographical surrounding of India, Sheikh Hasina signed the transit deal with the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi by opening the Ashuganj port for the trans-shipment of goods to Agartala. However, signing the transit deal may strengthen the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal Motor Vehicle Agreement (BBIN-MVA). The focus on the BBIN-MVA agreement would be a pragmatic alternative for Bangladesh to establish trade relations with Bhutan and Nepal to achieve its economic security from India (Kumar, 2016).

Bangladeshi pressure groups' interest in India-Bangladesh relations lies in the economic calculations and trade facilities within India. The geographical proximity to India has created investment opportunities in hydroelectric energy for Bangladesh (Pulla et al., 2020). Moreover, Bangladesh's largest agribusiness industry, PRAN-RFL group, and cement company Lafarge have lucrative opportunities regarding their cement, plastic products, processed foods, and beverages supply capabilities. Here, business relations with Tripura must be emphasized because of Bangladesh's high export of fish, soap, cotton, cement, and ready-made-garments. Additionally, India has extended its loan system to Bangladesh through Exim Bank India for several infrastructural development projects such as energy, railways, transportation, ICT (Information and Communication Technology), and education sectors (Muni, 2021). Therefore, the government's main development agenda and public-private business interests tactfully influence determining the foreign of Bangladesh towards India.

A Cause-and-effect relationship: Bangladesh and China

The formal relationship between China and Bangladesh was established in 1975, but this relationship's roots can be traced back to ancient times. Though it's a much-debated issue, that's precisely when the relationship started, presumably, and it was twenty-five hundred years ago when the relationship got moving. But the historical analysis suggests the relationship between the two countries began with trade through the ancient Silk Route; traces have also been found that the Chinese visited Chittagong port during Han Dynasty for the same purpose (Kamruzzaman, 2021). China-Bangladesh relations have evolved from time to time based on the nature of the South Asian politics

Bangladesh-China relations have shown coalescence based on development projects. Like China, Bangladesh has also become an advocate for development through investment. Bangladesh is preparing to develop itself without giving a threat perception to its neighboring countries. Bangladesh has repeatedly desired to pursue up-to-scratch relations with China (Sarker, 2014). This section focuses on the effect-and-causal argument on China-Bangladesh relations.

Geographically Bangladesh is located at the border of South and Southeast Asia and is also a pivot point of the Indian Ocean. South Asian neighborhood, on the other hand, carries substantial geopolitical value for China's regional ambitions. Therefore, structural-level concoctions of South Asia are closely linked to China-Bangladesh relations. China's South Asian policy is more or less directed towards marine objectives, and for several years now, China has been investing in ports around South Asia (Yu et al., 2019; for more details, see Table 1). Linked to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Project, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has started the use of submarines in full swing at the Indian Ocean to protect their geopolitical aspiration (Barnes and Baldino, 2018).

Table 1: China's investment in Seaports in South Asia

Year	Region	Investor	Name of the port	Host state
2003	South Asia	China Overseas Port Holding	Gwadar	Pakistan
2008	Bay of Bengal	China Merchants Port Holdings Co. Ltd.	Hambantota	Sri Lanka
2014	Bay of Bengal	China Harbor Engineering Company Ltd.	Port Colombo	Sri Lanka
2014	Bay of Bengal	China Harbor Engineering Company Ltd.	Kyaukpyu	Myanmar
2015	Bay of Bengal	China Communications Construction Company Ltd.	Chittagong	Bangladesh

Source: (Compiled by the authors)

China also intends to get access to Bangladesh's port because it would allow China to come very close to India and challenge India in the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, Bangladesh signed an MoU with a Dutch company (as a strategic maneuver) regarding Patuakhali port. Likewise, Bangladesh has also initiated the Matarbari Deep Sea Port project with the assistance of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which will be completed by 2025 (Shawon, 2020; Khan, 2016). Despite these developments, China has a keen eye for the seaport of Bangladesh to compete with India. Similarly, Bangladesh is also looking for rapid development, which necessitates significant foreign investments. Given the dilemma of the situation,

Bangladesh having close ties with China might impact its economic-based relationship with India. Nevertheless, Bangladesh still allowed China to invest US\$9 billion to modernize Chittagong Oort (Chung, 2018). Therefore, Bangladesh strategically kept its future relationship with China secured.

The development of common interest is integral to Bangladesh's foreign policy discourse, and China also shares this idea of peaceful development with Bangladesh (Mannan, 2019). The Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow of Bangladesh has expanded over the years; China has become the most significant FDI source of Bangladesh in terms of the gross flow of \$940 million for the fiscal year 2022 ("China's biggest source of FDI", 2022). With a profound desire to become a middle-income country by 2021 and a high-income nation by 2041, Bangladesh seeks significant investments and grants with comfortable conditions (Hossain, 2017). Simultaneously China goes well with an economic partner of developing states, and for Bangladesh, China appears to be a suitable partner (Hassan, 2018). With the landmark visit of Chinese leader President Xi Jinping to Bangladesh in 2016, 27 MoUs and agreements were endorsed, costing around 13.6 billion USD. China has expressed keen interest in investing in infrastructure, IT, roads, highway and maritime infrastructure, energy and agriculture, and sustainable development projects (Chung, 2018).

Apart from that FDI, the Chinese government has loaded an eye-catching amount on various development projects in Bangladesh. China's exports to Bangladesh, which was 1.90 billion USD in 2004, after a gap of 10 years, increased to 10.10 billion in 2015, which can be said to have increased almost ten times. But in that sense, the growth of imports compared to exports was much lower. But the expectation remains as China committed to considering 97% of Bangladesh's imported goods duty-free (Sakib, 2020). However, the export-import ratio indicated colossal trade deficits, and it continues.

For Bangladesh, acquiring economic development is the government's highest priority, which demands amplified connectivity with neighbors with enhanced FDI. Moreover, it also brings secured external sovereignty and domestic stability. To realize such a vision, Bangladesh has set up Forces Goal 2030, a comprehensive plan to upgrade its armed forces, and vision 41 for economic opulence, which targets GDP of FY31 and FY41, 9.0 and 9.9, respectively (Hussain, 2020).

The ruling power of Bangladesh under Sheikh Hasina has articulated its policy so that both Dhaka and Beijing can work together for enhanced economic development. And such a hint was available from the Bangladesh Awami League Election Manifesto of 2018, wherein it was stressed multiple times to strengthen Sino-Bangladesh relations (Election Manifesto of Bangladesh Awami League, 2018). Besides the government loan, Bangladesh has also approached major banks in China for financial assistance. Table 2 shows some loans granted by the Chinese government to Bangladesh in development sectors.

Table 2: Some notable loans granted by China to Bangladesh from 2015-2020

Year	Loan for	Amount of Loan (USD)
2020	1. Electricity grid	\$970 million
	2. Dhaka-Ashulia elevated Expressway	\$1155.18 million
	3. Digital connectivity	\$837 million
	4. Water plant in Rajshahi	\$276.25 million
	5. 6 TV stations for BTV	\$9125.12 million
2019	1. Karnaphuli River Tunnel	\$689.35 million
	2. Info-Sarkar	\$151.64 million
	3. Single-point mooring in Maheskhali	\$550.67 million
	4. Telecom Network upgrade	\$224.96 million
	5. Rail project in Padma Bridge	\$2667.94 million
	6. Upgrading the power network over Dhaka	\$1402.93 million
2018	1. Padma Bridge rail links project	\$2.76 billion
	2. Digital Connectivity	\$837 million
	3. Padma rail link project	\$3.14 billion
2017	1. Padma Bridge Rail Link (Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga)	\$2.18 billion
	2. Padma Bridge Rail Link (Bhanga-Jessore)	\$1.14 billion
	3. Dual Track (Dohazai-Cox's-Bazar)	\$1.18 billion
	4. Dual Track (Dhaka-Chittagong)	\$3.97 billion
	5. Double line (Joydevpur-Ishwardi)	\$897 million
	6. Railway workshop in Rajbari	\$200 million
2016	To invest in power plants, a seaport, and railways	\$24 billion
2015	Nine projects suggested by Bangladesh	\$7.48 billion

Source: Compiled by the authors from different newspapers

In addition to the government’s loan, Bangladesh is also a member of the Asian Infrastructural Investment Bank (AIIB), a reliable partner for Bangladesh in infrastructure development projects. Table 3 indicates some projects that the bank has already approved, and according to AIIB, five more projects have been proposed by the Bangladesh government, but they are under inspection. Bangladesh aims to connect with South Asia, and for that purpose, they have joined the BCIM-EC project (see Figure 2), which promotes 3-Ts: Trade, Transport, Tourism (Uberoi, 2016) and BRI.

Table 3: Projects approved by AIIB

Year	Project Name	Amount (USD)
2016	• Distribution System Upgrade and Expansion	185 million
2017	• Natural Gas Infrastructure and Efficiency Improvement	60 million
2018	• Bangladesh Bhola EPP	60 million
	• Power system upgrade and expansion	1 million
2019	• Municipal Water Supply and Sanitation Project	100 million
	• Transmission Grid Expansion Project in Dhaka & West Zone	200 million
	• Dhaka Sanitation Improvement	160 million
	• COVID-19 Active Response and Expenditure Support (CARES) Program	250 million
2020	• Rural Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Human Capital Development Project	200 million
	• COVID-19 Emergency and Crisis Response Facility	300 million

Source: (Asian Infrastructural Investment Bank)

Figure 2: Connectivity Map of BCIM-EC project



Source: (Rahman, 2014)

Security is another highly prioritized policy area for Bangladesh. The security of Bangladesh is prioritized in three layers: first, to modernize its armed forces with advanced training and equipment to maintain sovereignty; second, to fight terrorism and use the military to maintain an independent, peaceful foreign policy. Its implementation can be seen with ‘Forces Goal 2030’ (Mushtaq, 2018). This goal aspires to transform Bangladesh’s military into a three-dimensional force capable of conducting multi-platform warfare. As this target needed a proper backup, China again supported Bangladesh (currently, Bangladesh is the second-ranked state to buy weapons from China). From 2008 to 2018, Bangladesh secured its military modernization with 1.93 billion USD provided by China. Bangladesh has already

purchased submarines, helicopters, tanks, and multiple rocket launcher systems, including 2 Ming-class submarines from China (Barua, 2018).

Behavioral Source of Foreign Policy of Bangladesh

Prudent policies and the vision of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, also widely known as Bangabandhu, have made Bangladesh one of Asia's fastest-growing economies. Bangabandhu had two goals: first, to become self-sufficient, and second, to transition from a heavily reliant foreign aid economy to one more competitive global marketplace. Bangabandhu's foreign narratives of 'coexistence' and 'friendship to all' have left a lasting legacy of strong trading relations with other countries. Bangabandhu's equitable torch lighting of Bangladesh's economy appears to be a major strategy for guiding the country to its current affluent state. According to these premises, Bangladesh owns several considerations that behave as an interfering factor in the formulation of foreign policy, which is referred to as a behavioral source of foreign policy in this article.

Considering the exploration of Bangladesh's overall relations with India and China, it is evident that the country possesses particular structural and state-level influence when formulating foreign policy. The situation in Bangladesh demonstrates an extraordinary democratic zeal for growth, which is unquestionably a solid indicator when attempting to determine the cause of the behavior. Through a well-balanced foreign policy, these interfering behavioral sources have played a valuable role in accomplishing long-term goals. This section aims to highlight behavioral authorities that intervene in the process of making foreign policy decisions.

Priorities in Policy Implementation

The implementation approach of a country shows its political values and represents the actual agenda of foreign policy. The problem and the policy implementation process offer the overall ambition of the state's foreign policy. Bangladesh's state-level policy implementation describes the existing social problems in the perception of political leadership. Most of the issues identified are addressed by using development as a mantra.

The 'Vision 2021' of 'Digital Bangladesh' reflects the aspiration of the ruling party Awami League (AL) Bangladesh, through two perspectives; the solution to every public problem is development; and winning the trust of foreign investors for development (Mazumdar & Alharahsheh, 2020). It can be seen that, more or less, all policy outcomes exhibit developmental aspects. This rhetoric has given the international government legitimacy based on development-supportive government and the confidence to win the elections (Mazumdar & Alharahsheh, 2020). Furthermore, the government has connected *Digital Bangladesh* with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina received the ICT Sustainable Development Award in 2015 from International Telecommunication Union ("Sheikh Hasina receives ITU Award", 2015).

Furthermore, in the case of security policies, the government has also adopted various development techniques to make them more easily implementable. Development reforms came through the transformation of Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) (earlier known as Bangladesh Rifles [BDR]) for combating the rebels. In the year 2019, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina endorsed a project under the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council that will upgrade BGB into a three-dimensional force. Earlier, the Bangladesh government announced BGB Vision 2041,

which indicated the development of BGB and borderline security as this project would bring the 442-km border with Myanmar and India under the surveillance of BGB (Abdullah, 2020).

The Leadership

According to the Forbes report of 2020, Sheikh Hasina ranked 39th out of 100 in the world ranking of the world's most powerful women (Forbes, 2020). As the daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, she has earned respect from both the conscious nationalist citizens of Bangladesh and the party. When considering Sheikh Hasina's political perception from various perspectives, it has been highlighted that her personality positively reflects her actions.

Firstly, her thoughts on power elements are apparent and balanced by projecting soft power through specific goals. She has utilized international platforms to create the perceptions she has been promoting. At the 66th session of UNGA, she proposed a model called "People's Empowerment and Development" ("PM's 'peace' model accepted in UN", 2012), which was very appreciated and adopted by the UN as a resolution. Her strategy is to maintain cooperation just as much as needed to execute Vision 2021 and Vision 2041; for that, she holds hope in India and China (Khondker, 2017). Secondly, she has effectively balanced the national economic interests vis-à-vis regional powers. It is encouraging to observe that Bangladesh avoided engaging in international conflict while retaining its focus on economic growth and development (Ruhullah & Qodir, 2020). For instance, while the recent confrontation between India and China at LAC occurred, Bangladesh kept itself from engaging with it.

Third, Sheikh Hasina has shown commitment to regional economic growth. Under her administration, Bangladesh has warm-heartedly accepted initiatives like Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC), Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Myanmar (BBIN), South Asian Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation, and Asian Highway. In addition, she has partnered with China, India, and Russia to build several power plants in the country. In 2017, she brought two Chinese Ming Class submarines costing 203\$ million under Goal 2030 to modernize Bangladesh Armed Forces (Ashraf & Rana, 2017). On the other hand, Bangladesh kept Teesta water-sharing deal unremarked. It also followed the long-term 'Comprehensive Defense Pact' with India proposed in the same year (Rezaul, 2017).

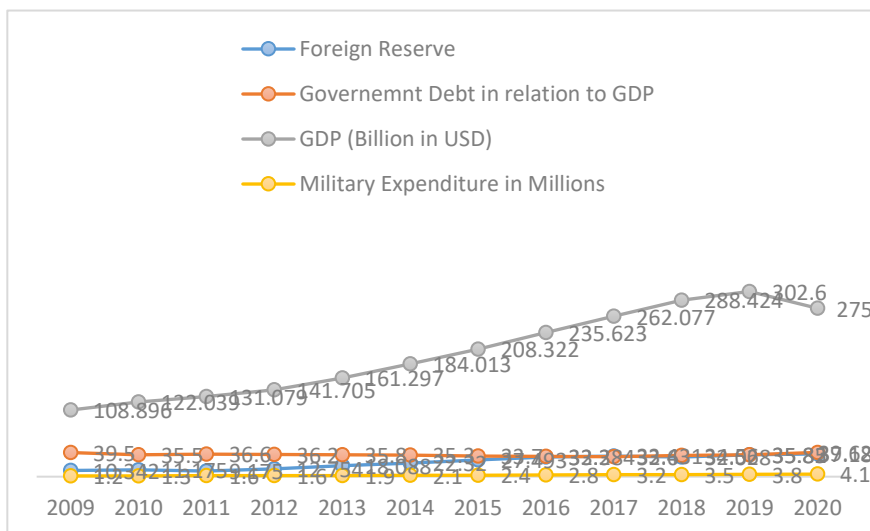
It is observed that Sheikh Hasina has followed the development-based peace approach during her 12 years of administration. Not only has she achieved foreign policy objectives, but she has also retained a successful image in the international arena. She was awarded United Nations Champions of the Year 2015 under the UN Environment Program (UNEP) ("Hasina receives Champions of the Earth award", 2015). She recently received the Vaccine Hero Award, WITSA Global ICT Excellence, DCD APAC Award, and GovInsider Innovation Award in 2019 ("Sheikh Hasina so far receives 37 int'l accolades", 2019).

Culture of Strategic Planning

Strategic hedging has been one of the strategic cults of Bangladesh for the last 12 years. Hedging is a strategic concept that intentionally provides Bangladesh with a way to seek economic and political benefits and opportunities to achieve protection for its further development (Karim, 2022). In a neo-classical realistic view, it might not be incorrect to posit that, just as India has a preface in Bangladesh's development,

so has China. Considering the South Asian political arena, the India-China relationship is the basis of regional balance. That is why regional tension plays a significant role in Bangladesh’s foreign policy. In such a conflicting situation, the pre-eminent measure to take for navigating forward for Bangladesh is strategic hedging. Bangladesh has shown significant economic growth in addition to enhancing its military strength. Figure 3 shows Bangladesh’s economic development in the past few years.

Figure 3: Bangladesh – Foreign reserve, GDP, military expenditure, and government debt of (Million USD)



Source: World Economic Outlook (2022).

In addition to economic affluence, the Bangladesh military is developing. According to the latest 2020 military raking by Global Firepower, Bangladesh grasps the position 46th position out of 137 countries. However, compared to its neighbors (Table 4), Bangladesh’s military power remains modest to ensure security and balance.

Table 4: Comparing the Military Capability with neighboring states

Military: Sector-wise	India	Myanmar	Bangladesh
GFP Ranking	4	35	46
Submarines	16	1	2
Defense Budget	61,000,000,000 USD	2,650,000,000 USD	3,800.00.00 USD
Active Personnel	1,444,000	406,000	160,000
PPP	10,065,500,000,000 USD	348,000,000,000 USD	700,000,000,000 USD
Air Power total strength	2123	276	177

Source: (Gourtsilidou, 2020)

Most of the military spending in Bangladesh is due to this security dilemma, as India and Myanmar both are aware of their security and military strength, which alarms Bangladesh. Bangladesh relied heavily on China for military reform notably; between 2009 to 2015, six surface ships enhanced Bangladesh Navy, and in 2018, 23 K-8W trainer jets. In 2014, nine K-8W made Bangladesh Air Force a sophisticated security force. However, Bangladesh has not taken part in any confrontation but kept it limited inside security purposes (Choudhry, 2022). The contemporary Bangladesh-Myanmar relationship, owing to the Rohingya issue, became very tense as Myanmar violated the airspace of Bangladesh in mid-September of 2017 three times and again in mid-July 2018. Bangladesh did not take any military action but rather used international platforms to counter Myanmar (Islam and Wara, 2022).

Conclusion

The political structure of South Asia magnifies the significance of Bangladesh progressively. China and India's competition/rivalry seem to expand the scope of Bangladesh's foreign policy. Capitalizing on this competition, Bangladesh has also utilized the issue in its domestic political culture, which is visible through its foreign policy. Due to this strategic orientation, Bangladesh has effectively maintained its relationships with China and India. The country's foreign policy is development driven. Furthermore, under the administration of Prime Minister Hasina, Bangladesh has advanced economic integration to a more practical level by promoting regional development and connectivity.

Finally, the strategic thinking culture that safeguards Bangladesh also serves as an intervening influence in international affairs. The balance between hard and soft power is what Bangladesh intends to achieve to prevent any regional and/or international confrontation, hence, enhancing the country's military and economic capabilities. After presenting and evaluating foreign policy actions from the perspective of neoclassical theory, it can be argued that Bangladesh, through the practice of adjustment, has developed a relatively strong position in the international paradigm.

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Russian Arms Deals: Implications for Regional Politics and Economy

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Abstract

This article analyses the role of Russia's arms deals in international politics and its insinuations for the domestic economy. Arms trading has been well recognized as a tool for executing a nation's foreign strategy. Therefore, exploring the drivers behind arms exports uncovers a nation's priorities. Even though the relationship between the US and Russia relationship has worsened since Putin took power, Moscow has steadily increased its weapons sales in a few other geographic territories. This article examines Russian military exports to China and India to understand Russia's thought process behind its export policy. The article further contends that international politics has presented itself as a key factor in devising the policies and procedures associated with Russia's arms deals. Although Russian military exports have benefited the domestic economy in various ways, particularly in the early years of Putin's administration, to create a polycentric world and strengthen Russia's status as a regional power, Russia also utilized arms exports to preserve leverage and influence on its allies.

Keywords

Russia, arms deal, international politics, China, domestic economics

Introduction

The leaders of different nations set policy plans for explicit reasons. The causes wherein they connect with have desired 'impacts' that they wish to accomplish (Cerny, 1980; Hermann, 1990; Palmer & Morgan, 2011). This paper examines the connections between two principal hypotheses, i.e. 'elements of global politics' and 'domestic economic components'. Initially considering the domestic features, this paper emphasizes that domestic economic difficulties are the major factors that impact Russia's economy. In explicit terms, the paper attempts to understand how the

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significance and volume of weapons exports contribute to or subtract from the country's general commerce.

Furthermore, the impact of the arms trade on Russia's defense industry and the capability for innovative work (necessary to develop future weapon frameworks) is also considered. Although the stability of the military sector and the economic benefits of the weapons trade are interwoven, the centralization of command over arms trade under the government over the trade has shown Russian defense institutions' propensity for biased decision-making (Mitchell, 2007). In this regard, due to the defense industry's reduced autonomy, it can be inferred that Kremlin policy is responsible for Russia's economic success rather than the actions taken by the military industry. In this vein, the paper argues that global political elements influence Russia's capacity to exercise impact and influence to achieve Putin's foreign strategy goals. According to Professor Bobo Lo of Chatham House, these goals include strengthening what is known as polycentrism, balancing the US in a geopolitical framework, and elevating Russia's status as a tremendous force (Lo, 2004).

This article's foundation lies in the contextual analysis of different geopolitical areas, namely India and China, to further expand the understanding of the role of Russia's arms deals in the international system. Russia shares a large outskirt with China. The 6th longest border in the entire world lies between these two countries. China, as a significant regional power, legitimately underpins Putin's desire to counter the West and ensure expansion to the rest of the world (Lo, 2015). Given the ongoing political issues and barriers between the West and Russia, China is a logical geopolitical partner and economic opening for Russian financial and political capital. Russia hopes to act in this capacity as a link between the West and the East. In this situation, the trade in arms in the area may entice China to support the achievement of that objective. Another contributing factor towards the arms deal between China and Russia is the rising regional tensions and the escalating North Korean threats that are driving up militarism and thus creating a substantial market for buying weapons.

In addition, South Asia is a significant region to test assumptions behind foreign military deals with Russia. In South Asia, India is Russia's principal trading partner. India has been the largest exporter of Russian armaments since the fall of the USSR (Arms Trade Database, 2017). Thus, in consideration, this article employs the *realist* theoretical construct while focusing on power. *Realists* have claimed for years that the US-ruled post-Cold War monopolar world and the bipolar post-Cold War world were both relatively simple systems resistant to 'wars of mistake'. They also believed that nuclear weapons made fighting more expensive and impossible for countries to go to war.

A historical timeline is the most logical and straightforward way to understand weapons sales to and from the Soviet Union and Russia. With the help of this in-depth analysis, this paper aims to answer the question: How does Russia maintain its weapon sales across the globe, and what are the political and economic costs and benefits of its broader arms sale program?

Henceforth, the paper unveils the investigation of Russian military-technical cooperation during the Soviet period, which was maintained by the early post-Soviet era into the 1990s. Further, it is vital to establish a comprehensive conceptual foundation for the scholarly study of weapons sales. The paper then delves into the arms deal and weaponry sale with China and India, respectively. After understanding the weapon trade between the respective countries, the paper focuses on understanding and exploring the role of Russia in the Indian and Chinese markets in

the foreseeable future to devise a game plan for Russia to sustain its geopolitical might in the region.

Methodology

This article uses the descriptive analytical methodology, a qualitative approach, to conduct analysis. Both primary and secondary sources are utilized, including various academic papers, periodicals, and pre-existing literature focused on the subject of direct arms transfers between Russia and buying countries. To understand the domestic elements, this paper uses local Russian media outlets and organizations such as Sputnik, the Moscow Times Newspaper, and the Eurasian Daily Monitor, which elaborate on Russia's military and economy.

Russian Military-Technical Cooperation

In 1982, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace senior associate Andrew Pierre released his landmark paper, the Politics of Arms Sales Worldwide. The many justifications for governmental sales of military equipment to other countries were fully summarized. Specifically, Pierre argued that economic, security and political concerns all had a role in weapons exports. Overall, Pierre's work offered a robust platform around which other experts have constructed their arguments about weapons sales until the present day.

Pierre (1982) was at the forefront of theorists who hypothesized that foreign policy was the causative process underlying international armaments transfers. He said it in the best way he could have: "The sale of weapons is a huge global industry that should be seen mainly from a political standpoint. They are more than just a military alliance, a political or economic trend, or an issue with weapons control" (p.23). According to Pierre, the sale of weapons involves several policy issues that need various analyses, trade-offs, and balancing of long-term hazards and short-term profits, which might sometimes be at odds.

Pierre looked at the benefits and drawbacks of each transaction based on the unique motivation driving the sale to determine if a given trade in weapons is constructive or harmful. His original justifications were based on 'influence and leverage'. Pierre (1982) asserts that influencing essential decisions affecting other countries' foreign policy is the main benefit of selling armaments. In addition to providing leverage, weapons transfers may produce influence by serving as a significant symbol of cooperation, amicable ties, and a manifestation of academic support or sympathy. In addition, armaments provide access to military and political leaders, creating influence. Governments utilize the preemptive sale strategy to prevent other countries from getting equivalent advantages by purchasing foreign military gear. Therefore, the benefits of arms deals might either strengthen one state's power and influence over another or prevent a rival state from obtaining similar benefits (Pierre, 1982).

Pierre was not the only one who assessed Soviet objectives. According to Ian B. Anthony, the transfer of weapons is essential to military aid intended to achieve strategic objectives in crucial regions like the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, according to German specialists on war and peace, Herbert Wulf stated that the Soviet Union had two main objectives when selling armaments. First, it was thought that arming communist and non-aligned nations would increase worldwide support for the Soviet Union while lowering support for Western allies, turning the provision of weapons into a tool for foreign policy in the conflict between the two main alliances. Aiding

Third World anti-imperialist and anti-colonial organizations served as the second goal to deepen the ideological divide between the West and the Third World (Wulf, 1993).

These objectives intended to disentangle the prevailing capitalism model from emerging countries' political and economic growth. Like Pierre, Wulf dismissed any justification for selling weapons since no evidence had benefitted the Russian economy. Since some primary recipients could not afford the purchases, sales of Soviet armaments sometimes brought more issues than benefits. In the 1980s, as the Soviet Union's economy crumbled, Russia was compelled to reduce its weapons shipments significantly. Because of this, even though a state's economic collapse may be the primary reason for stopping such sales, profit may only be a correlative motivation for selling weapons if the gross margin is insufficient.

The Russian government deliberately got into sporadic agreements with unrelated enterprises to sell military goods. According to Blank, Moscow's involvement in selling weapons was primarily motivated by political considerations rather than commercial ones (Blank & Levitzky, 2015). However, Blank also argued that Russia's aggressive pursuit of weapons importers was irrational since they sold guns to absolutely everyone at fire sale rates, including Russia's geopolitical friends and these partners' direct security adversaries. According to Blank, such action would jeopardize Russia's security and exacerbate regional instability. Thus, despite early attempts by Blank to assert that political motives for weapons sales took primacy, he could not downplay the substantial influence that economic factors had on Russian supplies of military equipment throughout the 1990s.

Recent analyses of Russia's weapons trade remain unclear about the Kremlin's possible objectives for using military cooperation. According to Blank and Levitsky (2015), it is incorrect that economic motivations dominate Russia's arms trade since they accept that economic factors, including generating money and strengthening scale advantages in the defense industry, may be cited as reasons for purchasing weapons. Blank and Levitsky bolster their argument by claiming that Moscow sells armaments in an attempt to influence friends in addition to generating money. In addition to enhancing Moscow's standing as a significant power, the writers also highlight access to natural resources, maintaining defensive connections with possible future allies in commerce and defense, and getting access to overseas bases (Blank & Levitzky, 2015).

Despite the length of this list, Blank and Levitsky continue to support the theory advanced by prior academics. They insist that the bulk of foreign military sales are motivated by Russia's ambition to govern and wield influence over other countries. Connolly and Sendstad used case studies from different regions, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and Asia, in their investigation into Russian weapon sales from 2000 to 2016 to ascertain the effects of Russia's exports of military hardware on those regions' overall trade balances and fiscal health. They caution that Russia's success as a weapons exporter may have severe effects since Russian businesses increase their weapons sales to countries outside their traditional clientele, thus hurting ties with those countries and their import. The report's authors contend that Russian weapons exports have greatly enhanced manufactured product exports and are essential to supporting the nation's military complex (Richard & Cecilie, 2017).

Russia's Arms deals with China (2011-2017)

Military aviation is Russia's essential export to China from 2011-2017. After extensive haggling over specifics and shifting requirements, Russia decided to sell China the Su-35S Flanker-E in 2015 for \$2 billion, making China the only country to own the aircraft (Arms trade database, 2017). The agreement was a compromise between both countries, as Russia had the option to abstain from permitting the production of aeroplanes in China, thus forcing China to purchase the aircraft at a relatively high price (Blank, 2016). Numerous other factors contribute towards the formulation of this agreement, particularly both countries being political friends and foreign funding is required in Russia due to the current economic sanctions imposed by the West attributing to Russia's annexation of Crimea and interference in Ukraine. The 'Achilles heel' produces the engine to improve the current aeroplane (Cao & Feng, 2013).

The Chinese were still assembling their homemade fifth-era fighter, the J-20 when they realized the existing engine was inadequate. Although it was a part of the Su-35S, Moscow had been hesitant to sell the AL-41 engine without a significant aircraft purchase (Sloman et al., 2015). Since the Chinese had bought Su-35s, Moscow was ready to provide Beijing with an extra engine, especially an order for AL-41 turbofans (Arms trade database, 2017). China also bought a few sets of various-engine aircraft while its firms attempted to create capable indigenous replacements.

Beijing purchased an Al-31 engine for its J-15 aircraft in 2011. The Chinese also bought D-30 engines for their armada of aircraft and vehicles that year (Arms Trade Database, 2017). Moreover, China purchased transport aircraft and helicopters during this stage. As these sales illustrate, Beijing, despite everything, relied upon Russia for aircraft engines; but since MIC (Military-Industrial Complex) capabilities have grown at home, China no longer purchases the enormous quantities of aerial weapons it did in the 2000s. Russian shipments of marine and land frameworks to China were modest compared to exports of diverse platforms and aerial weaponry.

During this time, China refused to agree to a purchase agreement with Russia for any ships or other naval equipment. While the Russians and Chinese frequently discussed purchasing Lada-class submarines during dealings, a deal was still being determined (Schwartz, Paul, 2017). China's local capacity to deliver modern submarines and ships had eliminated Beijing's interest in Russian maritime systems. Following quite a while of discussion, Moscow and Beijing settled a \$3 billion agreement in 2015 for China to purchase S-400/SA-21 Growler systems (SIPRI, 2017). However, Moscow sales to Beijing regularly included authorized production deals and innovation transfers, and the purchase of the S-400 had no such choices for the agreement (Kelly & Fergus, 2018).

Chinese imports of Russian weapons were substantial in the middle of the 2000s. However, they fell between 2005 and 2010 before mostly stabilizing until 2017. Despite a decline in overall sales, Russia was nevertheless able to maintain its position in the Chinese market because of its ability to equip cutting-edge military equipment with advanced technology (Blank et al., 2015). Due to China's MICs' opposition to modernizing aircraft engines and its insatiable need for new armament systems like the S-400, Moscow had possibilities to capitalize on. Along these lines, despite Moscow's decrease in general imports to China, Russia still kept up a decent foothold in the arms market of China.

China: Economic and Political Benefits

The arms sales of Russia to China have yielded a few political and economic advantages. Regarding local financial additions, Chinese agreements have given massive money inundations to the defense industry of Russia. These monetary advantages were particularly significant during Putin's government when the MIC of Russia was bouncing back from the financial mess of the 1990s. The fate of numerous Russian military enterprises "may rely significantly on their potential to create fortunes overseas," the Jamestown Foundation said in 2001. Beijing replaced the US as Russia's primary customer by purchasing \$15.4 billion worth of weapons from Moscow between 2000 and 2005, or almost 48% of all Russian exports (Arms Trade Database, 2017, n.d.).

Weapons sales to Beijing also benefited the local economy. Due to China's acquisitions, Putin has to transform the Russian MIC into an authoritarian, centralized organization. As a result of this process, a few smaller companies were merged into larger ones that resembled the Soviet MIC, the South Korean chaebol, the Japanese keiretsu, or the South Korean chaebol (Blank, 2007). For instance, Putin gave Decree No. 140, which solidified each significant aeroplane maker in Russia, for example, Yakovlev, Tupolev, Sukhoi, Mikoyan, Irkut, and Ilyushin, every single privately owned business under one administratively controlled power (United Aircraft Corporation). Additionally, Putin established Rosoboroneskспорт, a single Russian weapon export control agency, to help lessen conflict inside the organization (Blank, 2007). Spanish academic Antonio Sánchez-Andrés asserts that "the military industry has been revived via the sale of weapons as a tool of the economy (Sánchez-Andrés, Antonio, 2004, p. 689)". Such revamping streamlined Russia's capacity to control the industry of defense. Therefore, arms sales of Russia to China had different constructive outcomes, in any event, in the Kremlin's eyes, more than economic increases.

In addition to boosting domestic economic gains, the arms sales to China had several positive effects on international politics, including the expansion of military-to-military cooperation, the balancing of American dominance in Asia, and the reduction of Russian strategic security risks in Central Asia. Support for the current strategic alliance between China and Russia has shown these benefits. Russia's efforts to create a multipolar order to counter American global dominance and restrict American influence in Asia have been greatly aided by this friendly relationship, which is documented in official documents like the Treaty of Friendly Cooperation and Good-Neighborliness between Russia and China (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2001).

Shared viewpoints on a range of pro- and anti-Western geopolitical issues, including Russian activities in Chechnya, American withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, NATO expansion, the American-led attack on Iraq, Russia's support for the Al-Assad regime in Syria, and Russian meddling in Ukraine, have been used to compare China-Russian relations. Concerning China's backing of Russian activities in Chechnya, "Beijing not just stayed quiet, it supported the Kremlin" in its actions against Chechen protestors (Lo, Bobo, 2004, p. 307). The West denounced all Russian policies, whether they promoted immigration, violated human rights, or violently evicted populations. Despite President Jiang Zemin's assertion that "the Chinese side feels that the Chechen crisis is exclusively a domestic concern of Russia and supported the Kremlin's operations to strike against separatist and terrorist

elements” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2001, n.d.) in the middle of the 2000s, China maintained its position on Chechnya. George W. Hedge received criticism from both Beijing and Moscow for concurrently supporting the termination of the ABM Treaty. The states emphasized in a joint statement that the ‘ABM Treaty’ should be upheld since it currently serves as the cornerstone for strategic stability and the framework for the abolition of strategic weapons (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2001). Therefore, through a positive connection with China, strengthened through arms deals, Moscow obtained a vital accomplice against the US and regularized Western forces.

Beijing's inferred endorsement of Russia's attack on Ukraine is another sign of the Russia and China association. Even though Moscow's actions were directly at odds with China's fundamental international strategies, particularly its unwavering support for the principles of non-interference, territorial integrity, and national sovereignty, Beijing did not denounce Moscow's actions in Crimea and has maintained its composure in public discussions of the matter. China “regards Ukraine's regional sovereignty and integrity, but says Western nations should ponder Russia's serious security concerns,” according to the Reuters newswire (Reuters, 2017, p. 5). However, this tactical balancing effort showed that China would refrain from absolutely condemning Russia's participation. China could not help but disagree with Russia's justifications for its actions in Ukraine. The cooperation between Russia and China on arms agreements enhances each nation's stance on crucial international strategic concerns.

Beyond these converging geopolitical circumstances, Russia sold armaments to China to oppose American supremacy. Because of his rising anti-Western feeling, Putin needs partners to help him in his attempts to promote ‘polycentrism’ and erode American unipolarity. Moscow lacks the means to confront the US on its own. Despite not being the most significant ally owing to its financial clout and participation in organizations like the BRICS and UNSC, Beijing remains Russia's most crucial partner. The Kremlin believes that China is essential to reorienting the world's gravity toward the Asia-Pacific, according to Bobo Lo (2015). Putin has attempted to amplify China and Russia's ideological conflict with the West to counter ‘US unilateralism’ (Nalbandov & Robert, 2016). The involvement of China in BRICS has played a significant role in making this feasible.

Furthermore, China's participation in BRICS is a critical factor in Putin's support for polycentrism. China's membership in BRICS puts into question Western perceptions that Moscow lacks allies in the wake of its invasion of Ukraine. Beyond cooperation in different organizations, the Putin government is also essential to China to confront American power in Asia.

Future Role in the Chinese Market

Putin's current colossal agreements of Russia's modern platforms would seem to show an uplifting point of view towards a fruitful and beneficial Russia-China military cooperation. Nonetheless, selling weapons to China might bring much-needed finances for Russia's economy and give the Kremlin an undue amount of trust in Chinese political backing. In any case, the motivating dialogue concerning these weapons' sales obscures significant negative patterns currently being ignored by Russia (Sukhankin & Sergey, 2017). In particular, China's current advancement of its MIC, increasing Chinese arms exports, Moscow's arms sales to geopolitical rivals of China, and fundamental Russia and China strategic inconsistencies add to the decrease of the arms sales of Russia to China.

Because of the expanded abilities of the Chinese MIC, China no longer engages in Moscow's proposals to import older weapons. However, it requests the most current platforms. Although China may still be Moscow's go-to source for specialized technology like propelled air defense systems and engines, its stock of Russian weaponry is dwindling fast. Beijing's imports of Russian hardware have changed to specific hardware, and such changes have likewise diminished a lot of Chinese imports from Russia. At last, as Matthew Bodner stated that "Russia has a minimal list of weapons equipment that it can offer to China at this point" (Bodner & Matthew, 2016, p. 6). Therefore, Russian arms shipments to China will continue to decline if China's military sector is not modernized and its weapon systems are not improved to be more technologically sophisticated.

China's developing portion of worldwide arms exports is another upsetting element for future Russia and China relations. China has progressively developed its independent arms sector, undercutting Russia in international markets by learning about Russian objectives and putting certain unique concepts into practice. China wanted to rule the world in the middle of the 2000s, and Russia had no problems with its exports. However, in 2002, Pakistan thought Chinese weapons were inferior (Hagelin, 2002). However, late changes are all the more disturbing for Russia. In particular, China's exports from 2012 to 2016 rose by 74% (Matthews et al., 2017). The exports of China from 2013 to 2017 position it fifth on the international weapons market. Such a quick rise in the worldwide market share of China is disturbing for Russia.

The rising influence of China in the Central Asian nations will also be a problem for the Putin administration. Despite Beijing's lack of financial incentives for Moscow, the CSTO, which consists of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, is an essential member of the SCO. Beijing is building several significant infrastructure projects in Central Asian nations as part of the OBOR Initiative, some of which will include gas and oil pipelines that circumvent Russia and restrict Russia's capacity to carry out comparable projects.

Despite Beijing's efforts to lessen Moscow's influence in the region, Moscow has the most to gain by keeping its economic relations with the Central Asian nations. The CSTO is a useless organization that only exists to support Russia's decision to set up a military base in a former Soviet republic. In his explanation of Russia's primary goal for the organization, Robert Nalbandov claims that the CSTO has developed into a tool for global strategy as a consequence of Russian dominance in the military and political spheres (Nalbandov & Robert, 2016). The geopolitical position of China is less instrumental, and it is additionally attractive to the nations of Central Asia. Subsequently, China's endeavors along the southern border of Russia are much the same as NATO expansion on the western border of Russia. While Moscow, despite everything, keeps up a dependable balance in the nations of Central Asia, China's monetary invasions and 'chequebook diplomacy' show a solid capability of pulling those nations from Russia's circle and towards China. If Putin's administration is unwilling to acknowledge China's increasing regional influence in the countries of Central Asia, geopolitical shifts will worsen ties between Russia and China.

The expansion of China's MIC, its worldwide influence, the export of more weapons, and other geopolitical objectives adversely impact Russia's potential future arms sales to China. Therefore, Putin's capability to generally influence Russia-China relations and leverage weapons agreements with China to get any financial or political gains is waning. According to Nicole Ng, Beijing often decides how ties between

Russia and China will develop while Moscow is still in a position to reply (Stronski & Paul, 2018). Beijing maintains a more robust state structure, which gives Beijing a more powerful position and a more amiable demeanor when dealing with Moscow.

Russia Arms Manages India (2014-2017)

India did not agree to any binding arms agreement with Russia in recent years. Although the demand for arms from India was enormous before that decade, India's restraint from new agreements does not come as a surprise. Numerous other factors contribute towards the decline in demand from India, such as the 'Made in India' initiative to develop regional manufacturing and industry. Prime Minister Modi specifically envisioned the MIC of India expanding its capabilities: "Rather than bringing in every defense equipment, we need India to turn into an exporter of this hardware throughout the following years". Additionally, Indian secretary of defense Amitabh Kant stated, "We need the worldwide defense organizations should come to India not simply to offer us yet, in addition, to manufacture here and export to different nations" (Lakshmi, 2015, p. 9). Such an adjustment in Indian policy made erosion points in weapons deals as foreign sellers had to agree to internal production in India and transfer technology.

Delhi's Western relations development resulted from Modi's 'Made in India' programs. India was no longer a 'rogue state' for US Therefore, caution and deliberate distancing relationships were required. US gradually merged with the Indian weapons sector under the Obama administration to offset Russia's influence as the nation's leading weapon supplier. The US monopoly in the Indian market, however, was short-lived.

After a short hiatus, Delhi started negotiating new military agreements with Moscow in 2016. During a conference in Goa, India announced a \$5 billion purchase of S-400 Triumf/SA-21 air defense systems. This purchase arrangement still causes friction between the two nations since they have yet to agree on a few parameters. India continues to haggle with Russia over the purchase price while also asking manufacturers based on 'Made in India' programs (Economic Times, 2018). Delhi established a \$2 billion proposal in 2016 to provide T-90S MBTs under a license. Similarly, India purchased BMP-2 IFVs for \$141 million in 2017 after a series of postponed conversations in 2015 (Arms trade database, 2017).

Regarding aerial platforms, Russia and India settled a few helicopter deals. India eventually started doing business with the two countries in 2014 when it purchased Ka-226T Hoodlum light helicopters. Delhi was granted permission to produce 140 locally and import the remaining 60 from Russia, similar to past big requests for Russian weapons. To purchase Mi-17V-5 Hip vehicle helicopters, Delhi has agreed to spend \$1.1 billion (Arms trade database, 2017).

Additionally, India decided to purchase two Talwar-class frigates from Russia, one of which would be built in India for use as an air defense platform. Finally, Russia agreed to modernize the Akula-class nuclear submarine in line with the information supplied by India, and India agreed to buy one. Likewise, with most ongoing arms deals, this agreement is still in the last discussions as Russia and India work out the remaining details. Altogether, Moscow's arms deal with Delhi from 2000 to 2017 shows a persistent linkage between the two nations. While deals changed yearly, the Indians' negotiating power commonly increased in the government of Putin. Russia attempted to take advantage of as many lucky breaks as possible in its request to keep up its general market share.

Economic and Political Benefits (India)

Putin's arms deal with India have benefited Russia in several ways. Firstly, considering the local economic advantages, Delhi's purchases have provided enough money for the arms industry of Russia to guarantee its solvency and extra innovative work and have made up for the general decrease in arms exports due to the declined demand from China. Secondly, regarding the money flow for the MIC of Russia, India has offered the best financial contributions in 2017 compared to all the other importers of Russian weapons. Chronologically speaking, between 2000 and 2004, India was the second-largest supplier of MIC transactions in Russia, accounting for nearly 17% of all military-industrial complex (MIC) deals (Arms trade database, 2017). The arms agreement with India instantly benefited Russia's MICs in that respect and was generally successful in boosting the nation's economy. Besides this, Putin has also gained politically from Russian military shipments to India along with its regional economic gains. The most notable improvement in ties between India and Russia is the ongoing flow of military exports. Through this continuous relationship, Putin has earned India's backing in international organizations, evidenced by India's support in the two nations' ongoing military cooperation and involvement in strategic issues. Finally, by using his connections with India, Putin has made progress in creating a polycentric system that would challenge the global control of the US.

A free trade pact between Delhi and the EEU (Eurasian Economic Union) has also come under pressure from Moscow. By managing a group like the EU, Putin's administration tried to unite the former Soviet states. In 2013, India expressed a strong desire to begin FTA discussions, immensely frightening the United States. Both India and Russia started conducting a joint report to decide the attainability of FTA in 2016. Since 2018, negotiations between New Delhi and Moscow have been ongoing without producing a formal agreement. Despite the sluggish progress in this area, such institutional strategies could strengthen trade ties between Russia and India. Furthermore, India's involvement in the financial association managed by Russia would assist Russia's profile in solidifying its reputation as a formidable force, given that it is not a former Soviet republic like the other EEU countries.

On the one hand, India has profited financially and politically from Russian arms supplies. On the other hand, Putin has benefited politically from India's continued backing of various stances of Russia on specific international issues, consequently opposing the West and US. Putin has also used his relationships with Delhi to advance multilateral organizations like the BRICS and the EEU to improve his reputation and preserve Russia's status as a superpower. Further, Russia has utilized its relationship with India to ensure its influence in Central Asia. Altogether, these benefits incentivize Russia to continue its weapons trade with India.

Future Role in the Indian Market

Both Russia and India have mutually benefited from the trade in weapons. Putin can maintain his influence in South Asia by contributing to the sale of weaponry. He utilized it to challenge US dominance and support the BRICS countries in establishing his ideal multipolar system. Due to Moscow's rapidly increasing and strengthening contacts with Delhi, a territorial force agent in South Asia could respond to threats to Russia's southern border, including Islamic foes in Central Asia. India, amid industrial upgrading, particularly in the military sector, has attained cutting-edge propelled weapons from Moscow. However, a few obstacles are in the

way of strengthening the India-Russia relationship. While the facts confirm that Delhi frequently agreed with Russia's stance on geopolitical matters, Delhi has routinely sustained close links with the West, particularly the US. Alongside this duality, with technical inadequacies with arms exports with Russia, the development of India's MIC can be considered as an escalation in external rivalry and thus could present itself in the future as a major strategic issue, thus justifying worry in the Kremlin.

After an extensive stretch of negligible arms exchanges between Pakistan-Russia in 2015, Pakistan officially announced a deal to purchase Mi-35M Hind-E helicopters. With this regard, India presented its distaste towards Moscow as Putin attempted to explain this trade as an attempt to bolster Pakistani anti-drug activities. On the other hand, Moscow's current connections with Beijing present additional challenges for Putin to oversee. China's associations with Pakistan and the currently suffering India-China conflict over Arunachal Pradesh make participation between New Delhi and Beijing dubious. Any signs of Moscow enhancing its relationship with Beijing devoid of reciprocation of the same actions with India can potentially drive Delhi away from Russia into the arms of US. Bobo Lo expressed, "Historical doubt among New Delhi and Beijing tests Moscow's ability to seek after a different policy in Asia without preference to individual connections" (Lo & Bobo, 2015, p. 178). In these circumstances, the Putin government attempts to utilize India and China as accomplices in Putin's polycentric order to maintain a balance between the two states and thus provide Russia with authority. Therefore, Russia needs to take each step cautiously not to estrange one of its central Asian associates, India.

Conclusion

Even while Putin's government first wanted financial advantage from his arms transactions with China, the gathered data on military sales to China indicate that the primary motivation behind these sales was political gain. During the middle of the 2000s, with low domestic military expenditure, the MIC of Russia received critical funding from Beijing's sizable import market. However, as China's defense industry developed, Beijing's demand for weapons decreased, serving as a significant problem for Russia as its weapon sales would not yield the desired financial capital. Despite these issues, Russia is currently concentrating on offering China some of its most outstanding equipment. Given Russia's estrangement from the West due to its participation in Ukraine, Putin needs geopolitical friends to balance out his actions. In this case, Beijing was an excellent choice because of its expanding economic and military might. However, if Russian military aid to China continues, renewed military cooperation between the two nations is possible. In this case, Beijing has a more decisive influence on the relationship as its markets and economic progress while Moscow declines.

The Russian arms sales to India have continuously expanded during Putin's government. In contrast to Beijing, Delhi has been unable to develop its MIC quickly, due to which its interest in foreign weapons is consistently rising. Although purchases of some of Russia's military hardware have benefited India financially, Putin has undoubtedly put Delhi's political benefits above India's financial gain as his top priority. These political benefits are sourced from strengthening strategic ties between Delhi and Moscow due to weapon supply from Russia to India. Capitalizing on this Indo-Russia relationship, Putin's administration has gained another essential non-Western ally, one that can offer him political support on geopolitical issues and a

democratic state that can aid Russian-driven geopolitical establishments by giving them a stronger sense of authenticity.

According to Russia, India's participation in this scope has expanded Moscow's worldwide impact and image as an extraordinary force. Despite current sales to India, new changes in the Indian approach, like the 'Mad in India' movement, point to a presumable future decrease in importing of the weapons of Russia. Besides rivalry from different arms, western merchants like US and France compromised Russian strength in the Indian market. In this manner, while exports of Russian weapons to India may keep up at their present level, Russia's long-period capacity to continue such sales is potentially unsustainable.

Moreover, considering the driving factors of arms sales and the long-term sustainability of Putin's arms export strategy, for Beijing, Moscow's capacity to apply leverage over China through arms sales has drastically decreased under Putin's government as Russia is coming up short on military hardware that is alluring to China. On the other hand, although the MIC of India's advancement follows China's model at a different speed; however, India has decided to purchase vast military equipment from Russia. In the long run, for Russia to hold influence and control over Beijing and Delhi, Putin should utilize various techniques, such as exploring other markets that demand weapons. Suppose Russia's weapons market shrinks in the foreseeable future, and its potential partners (India and China) lose their interest in Russian arms. In that case, it is optimal for Russia to move to different markets where the possibility of pulling conceivable geopolitical accomplices is possible. The Middle East is one model in this regard. Considering this, if foreign armies enhance their equipment in the future to respond to the escalating security concerns, Putin may be able to subject Russia to political gains.

Although it is highly unlikely for Moscow to stop providing armaments in the near future, even though their strategic allure is devastating, Putin has expertly incorporated the sale of weaponry into his strategies that are intended to advance polycentrism, counter American hegemony, and reestablish Russia's position as a significant world power. According to Lo, the over-personalization of transitory and fluid political and economic problems often hinders Putin's goals. Due to Russia's aggressive weaponry dispersing, other countries may be better equipped to balance the region or minimize the harshness of the West. However, the overall impact of Moscow on the global dynamics cannot be minimized. Even though governments will continue to exert pressure on Moscow, Putin's strategy is untethered as it is mainly limited to enhancing global influence.

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Ethnic Conflict and UN Peacekeeping Operations in Cote d'Ivoire

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Abstract

The article critically examines the effectiveness of the UN (peacekeeping) Operation Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). In doing so, it elucidates the challenges associated with employing Chapter VI and Chapter VII (i.e., non-military coercion [Article 41] and forcible military action [Article 42]) to resolve the ethnic conflict amongst the disputed parties. In particular, it considers the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) as 'forcible military action' and argues that the implication of the framework has resulted in effective peace enforcement (i.e., UNOCI completed its mandate in June 2017). The article also illuminates several underlying factors that led to the eruption of violent conflict in Côte d'Ivoire. The analysis has been presented through the hourglass model and conflict triangle to realize the engagement of R2P encompassing relevant stakeholders for sustained peace in a conflict-ridden country.

Keywords

Côte d'Ivoire, United Nations, Peacekeeping, UNOCI, Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

Introduction

The agenda of the UN faced a drastic change, duly vetted by its member states, towards the closure of the Cold War. The changed agenda focused on redefining the contours of the ideological thought process of state sovereignty and how it could be intervened in under an internationally sanctioned legal framework. By 1993, this debate had led to the adoption of an extraordinary UN Charter Chapter VII interpretation. The adopted provisions focused primarily on the legal framework for enforcing international peace and ensuring civilian protection (Doyle, 2006). Alongside this, three additional clauses in different chapters of the UN Charter gained substantial importance, as elaborated below.

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The first clause is Article 2(4) of Chapter I of the UN Charter. This clause binds the member states to abstain from conveying a threat to another state while conducting their international dealings and using physical force (armed action) against any other country in the international community, thereby undermining the state boundaries or political independence of any state (U.N. Charter art. 2, para. 1). Whereas the second clause in Article 39 of Chapter VII of the UN Charter establishes the Security Council as the only authority to determine the presence of a threat or peace endangered by physical armed action and recommend corresponding action required to restore peace in the affected region (U.N. Charter art. 39, para. 1). Finally, the third clause, Article 43 of Chapter VII, puts an obligation on all member states of the UN to provide resources required by the Security Council for maintaining or restoring international peace. These resources may include the availability of armed forces, logistical support needed for the sustenance of troops, including the right of passage, and any other necessary assistance. (U.N. Charter art. 43, para. 1)

The clauses mentioned above in the UN Charter provide the legal framework for using force internationally and further specify that the UN is an organization committed to maintaining global peace and security. An aspect to note here is that the UN also responds to humanitarian crises, including climate change-related disasters (Leandrit, 2021; Sommaruga, 2004). Therefore, Articles 41 and 42 of Chapter VII call for necessary action to counter the violence and maintain peace. (Ford, 2012).

To further understand the implications of the mentioned UN charters, this paper explores the ethnic conflict in Côte d'Ivoire. It identifies the underlying causes that led to the eruption of conflict, the practice adopted by the UN for enforcing peace, the role of regional players (in addition to the UN), and the effectiveness of R2P vis-à-vis conflict in Côte d'Ivoire. The utility of Johan Galtung's Hourglass Model has also been discussed to comprehend its utility in similar conflict-ridden contexts (Galtung, 2013; Ramsbotham et al., 2017).

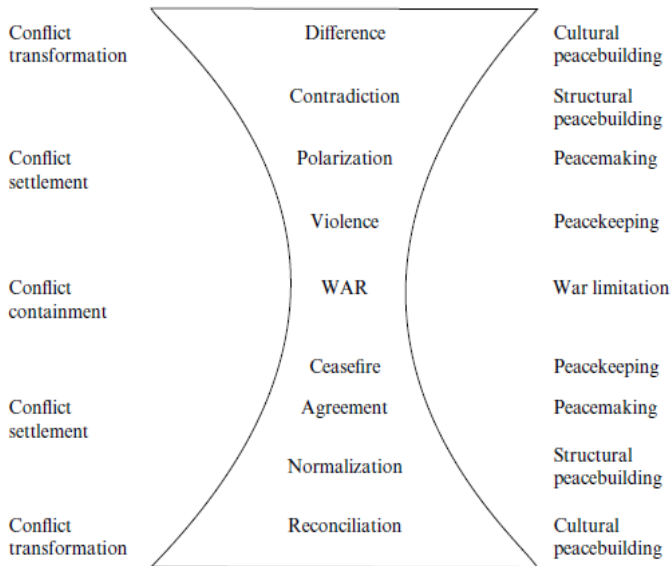
Theoretical Framework

Though the UN Charter does provide the legal framework to employ force for the peaceful settlement of conflicts, it is imperative that an in-depth understanding of the issue at hand be taken into account before the induction of troops in the conflict-ridden country. In this vein, the Conflict Triangle (attitude, behavior, and contradiction) (Galtung, 2013) and the Hourglass Model (Ramsbotham et al., 2017) provide an ideal framework for analyzing conflicts in different contexts.

The hourglass model provides an ideal theoretical framework for studying the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire across different stages. The model elaborates on the nine different stages of conflict with the widening and narrowing of the hourglass. These stages correspondingly describe the conflict resolution methods that can minimize the escalation factor in the conflict. In addition, the mentioned stages also refer to the combination of appropriate responses that need to be worked on together to attain peace (see Figure 1).

The application of the hourglass model further ascertains the efficacy of the framework in explaining the dynamics of the ethnic conflict in Côte d'Ivoire. It also represents different approaches to conflict and violence with respect to the escalation or de-escalation phases of conflict (Ramsbotham et al., 2017).

Figure 1: Hourglass Model



Brief History: Côte d'Ivoire Conflict

Since 1843, Côte d'Ivoire has remained a French colony. Later in 1960, it received the status of an independent country. Soon after its independence, Côte d'Ivoire was recognized as one of the wealthiest countries in West Africa, owing to the establishment of cordial diplomatic ties with France and the production of cocoa, which included exports to international trade markets. As a leading country in the production and exports of cocoa, Côte d'Ivoire attracted significant foreign investment and accounted for substantial national GDP (Amoro & Shen, 2013; Eberhardt & Teal, 2010).

Though the nascent leadership laid the foundation for the state to prosper, the country plunged into political chaos after the death of its first leader, Félix Houphout-Boigny (who served from 1960 until 1993). The political unrest in the country led to a military coup d'état in December 1999. Later in January 2000, the military commander, General Robert Gué, became the country's leader. However, the people of Cote d'Ivoire opposed the military takeover through widespread protests, forcing him to resign from office in October 2000 (Sidibe, 2013).

Another election brought Mr. Laurent Gbagbo as the next president of Cote d'Ivoire. However, the Presidency witnessed a failed military coup in September 2002, which paved the way for a civil war. Once the peacekeeping forces established a buffer zone after the ceasefire in 2003, the country seemed to be divided into two parts: the rebels in the north of Cote d'Ivoire and pro-government forces in the south (Sidibe, 2013). In March 2007, President Gbagbo and the former rebel leader, Mr. Guillaume Soro, agreed to a power-sharing agreement between the two parties. Most notably, as per the agreement, Mr. Soro would join the government as prime minister. Other provisions of the agreement included accepting general elections in the nation and reunifying the country by removing the UN peacekeeping forces' buffer zone. The fate of the rebel forces on both sides was also decided with the aim of integration

into the national mainstream through a well-developed disarmament, demobilization, and rehabilitation program. However, the general election in Côte d'Ivoire took three years (from 2007 to 2010) owing to the required electoral preparation and related formalities. Nevertheless, the elections were successfully held in 2010, resulting in the victory of Mr. Alassane Ouattara. But Mr. Gbagbo refused to accept the election outcome, resulting in another spell of chaos and violence in the entire country for the next five months (Sidibe, 2013).

Only armed supporters of Mr. Ouattara were able to remove Mr. Gbagbo from power in 2011, though the UN and French peacekeeping forces gave their approval in secret. Mr. Ouattara remained in power from 2011–2015 and also retained his second and (present) third terms, i.e., from 2015–2020 and 2020–2025. The constitutional court's decision allowing President Ouattara to continue in office made the third term possible.

Political unrest and the consequent civil war in Côte d'Ivoire (1999–2006 and 2010–2011) led to serious consequences for efforts to maintain peace and stability in Sub-Saharan Africa. The case of Côte d'Ivoire tragically demonstrated how quickly unresolved underlying issues and/or structural determinants could lead to a downward spiral of violence (Background: United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire, 2003).

Côte d'Ivoire: Stages of Conflict

The conflict resolution strategy for Côte d'Ivoire has progressively incorporated national, regional, and international actors and thus provides one of the most recent examples of 'hybrid' UN peacekeeping operations in Africa (Bovcon, 2009). The undermentioned paragraphs discuss each stage of the Côte d'Ivoire conflict, as per the hourglass model. With regard, an attempt has been made to ascertain how successfully the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire justifies the model.

Difference

The first stage of the Hourglass Model (Ramsbotham et al., 2017) deals with identifying the differences that create a sense of animosity, or 'us' vs. 'them' between or among the states or groups. As mentioned earlier, Côte d'Ivoire gained independence from France in 1960, and Mr. Félix Houphouët-Boigny remained president until he died in 1990. With his death, the country's political and economic conditions started deteriorating. More importantly, several studies have viewed the violent conflict in Côte d'Ivoire a religious lens between the Muslim-dominated region of the north and the Christian-led south (Langer, 2008; Nordås, 2014).

The conflict in Cote d'Ivoire has also been recognized as an ethnic struggle between the farmers holding agrarian lands in the Savannah (northern) region and those with almost no lands in the forest of the southern region (Chauveau & Richards, 2008; Colin, Kouamé, & Soro, 2007). Here it is important to mention the label 'Ivoirité' coined by President Bédié, which presented a blemished and stigmatized image of other ethnic identities living in Cote d'Ivoire (Background: United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire, 2003).

Nevertheless, the Cote d'Ivoire conflict is incredibly multifaceted; hence, it must not be overly simplified through a mere religious and/or ethnic lens. Therefore, understanding the structural determinants (socio-economic and political) and issues related to land, migration, and succession struggle is important (Bah, 2012; Sidibe, 2013; Kirwin, 2006).

Tracing the history of the economic crisis in the country takes us back to the 1980s, when the world market was flooded with products made of cocoa and coffee.

Consequently, the market hegemony of Côte d'Ivoire and its international competitiveness were challenged. Accordingly, Côte d'Ivoire began producing cocoa-related products. This resulted in the collapse of world price markets, and thus a downward trend in export-based revenues was witnessed. By 1987, the worsening economic situation had seemingly hurt Ivorian society, and structural stresses became more visible at the community level (Kirwin, 2006).

The passing of Mr. Félix Houphouët-Boigny (in 1993) and the subsequent succession and political instability had further effects on socioeconomic development. The Ivorian law made the Speaker of the National Assembly in charge of county affairs in the event of the in-office death of the serving President of the country until the end of a presidential term. However, there was a visible change in the country's domestic politics, whereby the presence of other democratic actors challenged the one-party system. The important ones included Mr. Laurent Gbagbo (leader of the opposition), representing Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI), and Mr. Alassane Ouattara, representing Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI). A reformist agenda drove PDCI's political struggle (Bovcon, 2009).

Mr. Bédié further fueled the economic differences in Ivorian society and the domestic political instability. In order to win popular support and legitimize his tenure, Mr. Bédié coined the infamous yet contentious ideological term 'Ivoirite'. This term underpins the concept of 'true Ivorians', implying that only those living in Côte d'Ivoire at its creation have the right to rule the country and are the actual contenders for power. The term referred to the Akan ethnic group (more precisely, the Baoulé), and not surprisingly, the ruling President, Mr. Bédié, and his party identified themselves with the same ethnic group (Bovcon, 2009). The military coup by General Gueï during the year 1999 ousted Mr. Bédié from power. The concept of 'Ivoirite' was further changed by General Robert Guéi. As a non-Baoulé leader, Guéi 'crystallized' the concept by introducing the clause of differentiating southern non-Dyula people from northern Dyula people. This further transformed the ethnic divide between the people living in the north and south of Côte d'Ivoire (Sidibe, 2013; Tompihe, 2007).

Polarization

The political marginalization in the country resulted in one-party rule while exploiting the issue of being 'non-Ivoirite'. According to the hourglass model, at this stage of the conflict, opposing parties attempt to damage each other in every possible way, but without any violence. The political leadership of the North was polarized in the same context by the ethnic divide propagated officially at the state level. To further compound the problem, the land rights of the 'non-Ivoirite' were also questioned by the original owner of the lands. Hence, this resulted in violence, making people in the North even more aggravated (Kirwin, 2006).

Furthermore, as mentioned above, the national integration of the Ivorian people was severely affected owing to the country's worsening economic conditions, primarily caused by the increasing fluctuation in market prices of cocoa-related commodities. This looming economic crisis was further exacerbated owing to the corruption of the ruling political elite (Special Report of the Secretary-General on Côte d'Ivoire, 2018).

Violence

The Hourglass model explains that 'violence' erupts with the intent of physically hurting or damaging each other (Ramsbotham et al., 2017). The beginning of violence

in the Côte d'Ivoire ethnic conflict started with the decision of Junta leader General Robert Guéi to go for a military coup against the ruling government. This forced then-President Bédié's exile in France; however, the same period witnessed the return of Mr. Ouattara to Côte d'Ivoire. There was another irony in the matter: the military coup was initially planned by the lower commanders of the Ivorian Junta, but they had no share in the newly formed government. The top military brass ran the affairs of the state, while the junior officers were allegedly found to be involved in 'managing' the criminal gangs. This led to further chaos in the country; hence, the law and order situation worsened with a direct impact on the local and national economies (Kirwin, 2006).

General Robert Guéi did announce the general elections; however, he effectively kept Mr. Ouattara (the leader of the northern Muslim-dominated region) out of elections in the year 2000 based on 'non-Ivoirite'. It is pertinent to highlight that Mr. Ouattara, from northern Côte d'Ivoire, received full support from the Savannas region. Being the agrarian basket of the country, the farmers in the north showed reluctance towards filling the national exchequer and anger over their branding as 'non-Ivoirite' (Cook, 2011).

The period between the military coup and the conduct of the election for the new government was extremely violent throughout the country, including in Abidjan (the capital city of Côte d'Ivoire) (Zounmenou & Lamin, 2011; Banégas, 2011). The increasing violence during this period killed over fifty young men in the suburbs of Abidjan. The investigation revealed this to be an outcome of the political rivalry, as these young people mostly supported RDR. There were other cases where killings of RDR supporters took place owing to their alleged involvement in the abduction and killing of Gendarmerie individuals (Cook, 2011). The violence also included the politically motivated killing of eighteen FPI supporters by Ébrié Lagoon, and another six became targets near the Blocosso suburb. A surge in violence was observed during October and December 2020, as 140 people were reportedly killed during October 2020 and 42 during December 2020 (Kirwin, 2006).

War

This phase is the most critical stage of the conflict, as violence turns into an open war between the involved groups and/or states (Ramsbotham et al., 2017). Analyzing the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire through the hourglass model reveals that it was in the month of September 2002 that the tension between the opposition parties intensified. The beginning of the military coup on September 18, 2020, started with pro-Guéi soldiers going on a mutiny once they were expelled from the National Army by the government of Gbagbo. However, the exact figures regarding the strength, military capacity, and network are still hard to quantify due to the lack of data. Another important aspect to consider is that, in the beginning, they demanded to be reinstated in the armed forces along with financial compensation. However, later, their demands shifted to a more politically motivated agenda. The rebels branded themselves as the 'Forces Nouvelles' (a political coalition) while demanding the resignation of President Gbagbo, new elections, and the reversal of only the 'Ivoirite' political scheme. As mentioned previously, Mr. Ouattara could not participate in the election owing to the 'Ivoirite' slogan. This was the beginning of the first Ivorian civil war, and correspondingly, the situation necessitated the international community's intervention to restore peace in the conflict-ridden Côte d'Ivoire (Special Report of the Secretary-General on Côte d'Ivoire, 2018).

The overall security situation and crime rate in the capital of Côte d'Ivoire worsened greatly; however, the resultant curfew imposed in the aftermath of the military coup did bring some normalcy to the security situation. After 2003, organized crime again started rising due to easy access and an increase in the number of weapons in Abidjan. During this time, Abidjan was regarded as the second most dangerous city owing to the threats to expatriates, followed by Baghdad (Iraq). The region became highly militarized and securitized, marked by several security checkpoints, impacting local mobility and the standard of living for the people of Abidjan (McGovern, 2011).

Hybrid employment of all law enforcement agencies (police, gendarmes [a paramilitary force], and soldiers) was deployed at the checkpoints. However, the local communities perceived that the 'strict security' checks were functionalized only to target Mandé and Gour ethnic identities. The labor class of the northern region was more vulnerable during these security checks owing to its frequent passage on a daily basis (Starus, 2011; McGovern, 2011; Zounmenou & Lamin, 2011; Banégas, 2011).

Ceasefire

According to the hourglass model, conflict containment is needed to make talks and peace possible at this stage (Ramsbotham et al., 2017). In the same context, the country saw the arrival of the French Licorne forces just three days after the attempted military coup. In the beginning, the French forces were mandated to evacuate French nationals and other foreigners interested in moving out of the ongoing civil war. The action of French forces was dubbed a legitimized one, as the aim was to save the French nationals in Côte d'Ivoire once the government could not provide security owing to the worsening law and order situation. The US Special Forces came to the rescue of the Americans on Ivorian soil, but other foreigners were helped evacuate by the French forces as per the demand of the other countries. (Bovcon, 2009).

As the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire was limited to rebel groups in the north and south of the country and was termed a localized problem, the French forces did not help one party particularly. Instead, French forces formed a buffer zone by positioning themselves between the two halves of the country, i.e., the north and the south. The mandate of French troops was thus the Protection of Civilians (PoC) as a peacekeeping force, and this neutral stance did make both parties in the conflict angry.

Besides France, another actor entered the conflict zone and tried to ease the situation. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) had organized the mission back then. The response by ECOWAS was regarded as quick and prompt in the international community with diplomatic engagements. The community group conducted an extraordinary summit on the prevailing situation in Côte d'Ivoire. The summit was held in Accra on September 29, 2002. This resulted in the formation of a contact group tasked with paving the way for a peace dialogue between the warring parties (Peacekeeping: United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire, n.d.).

Agreement

The hourglass model highlights that the agreement reached should be able to address the grievances of both parties. The efforts were made in the same context and yielded positive results. The cease-fire agreement of October 17, 2002, was reached between

the warring factions of the North and the South with the help of France and ECOWAS (Bovcon, 2009).

The next step towards peace was the organization of roundtable talks between the conflicting parties to reach an agreement on peace. These roundtable talks were successful and saw the signing of the Linas-Marcoussis accords. The main cardinals included the preservation of the territorial integrity of Côte d'Ivoire and the formation of a transitional government with representatives of all parties. The transitional government was tasked with holding a free and fair election; however, binding conditions were put on all warring factions to let go of their arms and complete the combatants' disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program (Kirwin, 2006).

The noteworthy removal of the clause of 'Ivoirite' (Article 35), which led to the ethnic divide of the country as part of the agreement, made Mr. Outtara (barred in two previous elections) eligible to contest the next elections. (Adebayo, 2012).

Normalization

The hourglass model explains the calming down of violent relations between adversaries in this stage of the model. Different stakeholders made an effort to improve the country's security situation and restore peace to Côte d'Ivoire, which is currently in a state of conflict. In the same context, a third actor entered the scene of conflict, i.e., the UN. Based on the security assessments and realizing the potential threat to the people of Côte d'Ivoire, a political mission named MINUCI was formed on May 13, 2003. The mandate of MINUCI was to create favorable conditions that would urge the warring factions to work towards implementing the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. The peacekeepers of MINUCI were also to complement the already working peacekeepers of ECOWAS and the French troops (Peacekeeping: United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire, n.d.).

In April 2004, UN Operations in Cote d'Ivoire (ONUCI) was established on the recommendations of the UN Secretary-General. The resolution passed by the Security Council was named Resolution 1528 (2004). The mandate of the MINUCI was terminated with the formation of the ONUCI. To bring unity of command and effort, the MINUCO and ECOWAS forces came under ONUCI. The UN noted the resistance as a coordinated and dedicated effort towards bringing peace and normalcy to Côte d'Ivoire while ensuring the POC (Resolution 1528: United Nations Security Council, 2004).

Like MINUCI, implementing the agreed-upon points between the warring factions became UNOCI's leading objective, thus working towards peace and ending the civil war in Cote d'Ivoire. Besides, other cardinals of the ONUCI's mandate include the implementation of the agreements between the conflict parties, the pre-election enforcement of DDR programs, and supporting the conduct of free and fair elections in the country. The Security Council gave ONUCI permission to use all necessary means to carry out its mandate throughout the deployment area, unlike other actors. The mandate of the mission was initially stipulated by Resolution 1528 and subsequently further developed and modified by the Security Council on several occasions to reflect on the evolving situation on the ground and the needs of the mission (UNOCI Mandate: United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, 2015).

Another important step towards normalizing the security situation in Côte d'Ivoire was the 2005 summit in Addis Ababa. During this summit, an International Working Group (GTI) was formed. The representation in GTI included several African countries, including France, the US, and Britain. The assigned mandate to the

group included assessing, monitoring, and facilitating the peace processes between the conflict parties in the country. The participation and contribution of France in this process as an independent party through the UN and ECOWAS were noteworthy (Bovcon, 2009).

Reconciliation

Owing to the slow progress of the DDR program, elections could not be held in the country until 2006. The mandate of ONUCI and LICORNE (French UN Operation) was prolonged by adopting Resolution 1739. The power invested in the transition government was enhanced by the smooth conduct of the agreed-upon pre-election formalities. The diplomatic situation worsened once Mr. Laurent Gbagbo declined to accept the provisions in the resolution, as he saw these provisions as attacking Ivorian sovereignty (Security Council Resolution 1739, UN Security Council, 2007).

Nevertheless, again thanks to the efforts of regional and international players in the shape of ECOWAS, LICORNE forces, ex-France, and UNOCI, general elections were conducted in 2010. Mr. Alissane Outtara, leader of the North, won the election. However, Mr. Laurent Gbagbo refused to step down from power. With the alleged assistance of ONUCI and LICORNE forces, Alissane Ouattara's supporters violently removed him from power (Post-Election Crisis: United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, n.d.).

The efforts of regional and international players have been critical in bringing sustained peace to Côte d'Ivoire. Mr. Alissane Outtara once again won the second political election in Cote d'Ivoire in 2015. The conflict in Côte d'Ivoire has reached its post-conflict structural and cultural peace-building efforts. The democratic process is well on its way, and the rule of law has been established throughout Côte d'Ivoire. The UN has played a progressive role in bringing back normalcy in Cote d'Ivoire. The R2P (though in a nascent stage at the beginning of the conflict) has performed well under the auspices of UN Peacekeeping Operations in Cote d'Ivoire.

Responsibility to Protect (R2P), UN Charter, and Cote d'Ivoire Conflict

Considering the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations in Cote d'Ivoire under the overall framework of the UN Charter and, in particular, R2P, if peaceful means are not yielding the desired results, then as per UN Chapter VII, the use of non-military coercion (Article 41) and forcible military action (Article 42) can be employed. The R2P has forcible military action as a last resort (Ramsbotham et al., 2017). The theoretical discussion on R2P brings out the need for states and the international community to protect populations at risk and take collective action to protect people under threat of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity (Orford, 2011).

The prevailing situation in Côte d'Ivoire was perfectly ripe for the international community to protect the population of the country, which was at risk of major violence being divided into ethnic lines by the adopted 'Ivorite' at the state level. Further considering the notion of R2P, on September 14, 2009, the General Assembly passed its first resolution on R2P, and most members widely accepted it. Due to this, the work in the conceptual domain shifted towards the operationalization of R2P. According to the Secretary-General, implementing the R2P now 'demands a system-wide UN effort', including efforts in human rights, humanitarian affairs, peacekeeping, and political affairs. (Orford, 2011).

The R2P today boasts widespread state support and has become firmly embedded at the highest levels of international political discourse. Fifty-nine states

have appointed an 'R2P Focal Point', and forty-nine states and the European Union have joined the 'Group of Friends of the Responsibility to Protect'. More significantly, R2P has been invoked by the Security Council in 67 resolutions, by the Human Rights Council in over 30 resolutions, and affirmed by many inter-state regional bodies (Hehir, 2018).

The aforementioned highlights that R2P is widely accepted amongst many UN General Assembly member states, and the international community must act to protect the populations of those countries under threat of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. The African regional countries, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), played a significant role in identifying and recommending the need for PoC under the UN Charter (Peacekeeping: United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire, n.d.).

The United Nations Mission in Cote d'Ivoire could be seen as the manifestation and operationalization of the concept of R2P, even though it was not widely discussed in 2003. Although R2P was nascent, different regional and international actors visualized and implemented its contours. The hybrid employment of French forces (ex-colonial power in Côte d'Ivoire, ECOWAS), the regional actor, and UNOCI sanctioned under the auspices of the Security Council all point towards operationalizing the R2P in the country. At the time, R2P was evolving in nature, and intelligentsia and peace experts were working around the globe to lift the fog and crystallize such hybrid peace efforts under a term, i.e., coined in the future as R2P.

Conclusion

The hourglass model ideally covers all the stages of the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire. The model highlights the political struggle fueled by an ethnic divide lasting over a decade. Although the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire is multi-layered, the origin of the ethnic divide could be traced back to the introduction of the contentious concept of Ivoirite. President Bédié introduced this for the persistence of his regime, which further laid the foundation of the worst political, economic, ethnic, and social implications for the Ivorian society. Not only this, but it also secluded almost half of the country's population from the national mainstream. The underlying social discontent of the masses came to the surface with the failed military coup in 2002. The ideological underpinnings behind the coup were the disreputable Ivoirite concept and Mr. Laurent Gbagbo's illegitimate government. (Bovcon. 2009).

The operationalization of the concept of R2P in Côte d'Ivoire is hybrid in nature. Firstly, France, one of the past colonial powers controlling Côte d'Ivoire, took the initiative to resolve the ethnic conflict. Though there were reservations expressed by the international players regarding the chances of a Rwandan genocide getting repeated in Côte d'Ivoire and an increase in the worsening security situation in West Africa, it was France that reluctantly came forward and placed its forces for the establishment of a buffer zone between the warring North and South. The action taken by France to establish the buffer zone and not be a party in the conflict assisted in putting a halt to the worsening security situation, and the resultant stalemate brought the warring factions to the desired peace talks (Hehir, 2018).

After France, the peace initiative to settle the violence in Côte d'Ivoire was also led by regional (ECOWAS) and international (UN) actors. ECOWAS and the UN played a positive role in the R2P in the case of Côte d'Ivoire. This implies that if the efforts towards peace attainment are carefully employed with regional actors and organizations on board, these efforts will yield fruitful results. The peace in Côte d'Ivoire was only possible after adopting a multi-pronged strategy (the French Force,

ECOWAS, and the UN Peacekeepers) as part of the more prominent conception of R2P. All actors played their roles in conflict resolution. However, it is also important to consider the nature and background of the conflict during peace attainment, as it is equally important, and, if carried out objectively under a comprehensive theoretical framework, would yield rich dividends. It would pave the way for smooth conflict resolution (Bovcon, 2009).

The ethnic conflict in Cote d'Ivoire resulted in chaos in the country, which lasted for over a decade; however, peace and normalcy in the land returned owing to the application of the UN Peacekeeping Operations at the required time, i.e., once the conflict was ripe. Furthermore, the hybrid approach also led to the success of the peacekeeping operations and the successful resolution of the ethnic conflict in the country (Zartman, 2008). In conclusion, Johan Galtung's Hourglass model is useful for studying a violent ethnic conflict in its entirety and has allowed the consideration of a multidimensional approach to be used for conflict resolution. Thus, this model is recommended as a theoretical lens for studying other ethnic conflicts across the globe.

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