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In This Issue

We are excited to introduce to our readers the Summer 2024 issue of All Azimuth, featuring a fine selection of research articles hailing from a variety of research traditions, perspectives, and themes.

The first of these concerns the management of relations with great-power states, and particularly the ever-important topic of balancing and hedging behavior. Our first article titled “Malaysia’s ‘Triadic Maritime Diplomacy’ Strategy in the South China Sea” by Bama Andika Putra, therefore, qualitatively inquires in to two key questions: How has Malaysia balanced safeguarding its maritime sovereignty with maintaining close economic ties with China that increasingly infringes on coasts? What explains Malaysia’s persistent downplaying of escalating intrusions around the Luconia Shoals, particularly concerning the Kasawari gas field in the South China Sea? Putra, firstly, argues that Malaysia’s focus on developing the Kasawari gas field has led to seemingly contradictory policies, using coercive maritime measures with its naval assets while downplaying crises rhetorically. Second, Malaysia’s maritime diplomacy can be described as “triadic,” incorporating coercive, persuasive, and cooperative strategies. Third, these seemingly inconsistent policies are strategically designed to accommodate both immediate and future economic opportunities involving China, while signaling a non-aligned stance to major global powers.

Our second article, meanwhile, by Ivan Gonzales Pujol, titled “Theorising the Hedging Strategy: National Interests, Objectives, and Mixed Foreign Policy Instruments” offers a comprehensive theoretical discussion on “hedging” as a multifaceted foreign policy strategy. Hedging combines competitive and cooperative approaches to manage competing national interests amid uncertainty about the future distribution of power. Pujol, however, argues that the literature lacks consensus on the core features of hedging, resulting in inconsistencies in its application. This paper first evaluates the definition of the concept by identifying three competing approaches and connects the risks and opportunities of hedging with uncertainty over the future international power distribution. Second, it examines how different interpretations of hedging have led to the development of various analytical models. Lastly, it presents hedging as a theoretically intermediate and analytically mixed strategy. These arguments are supported by a study of the Asia-Pacific region, where hedging has become the prevalent strategy to address the uncertainty arising from China's rise.

Our next theme is primarily concerned with quantitative and empirical approaches to world politics. To this end, our third article titled “Contractual Origins of Anti-Americanism: Pew 2013 Results” by Cem Birol examines the relationship between contract enforcement and anti-Americanism, a core yet statistically under-evaluated implication of Economic Norms Theory (ENT). The theory suggests that anti-modernist and anti-market values thrive in countries where central authorities fail to effectively monitor contracts governing economic transactions. Extensive research over decades demonstrates that ENT accurately predicts incidents of civil and interstate wars, support for war, and suicide bombings in defense of Islam. In countries with poor economic contract monitoring, power-contending elites can blame the resulting economic decline on the USA, thereby fostering anti-American sentiments among citizens. The urban poor, who are most adversely affected by unfulfilled market contracts, are particularly susceptible to adopting such elite-driven anti-Americanism. To explore this argument, Birol statistically estimates random intercept models using data from the Pew Global Attitudes Project’s 2013 survey. The analysis reveals that a three-

way interaction between individuals' urbanity, poverty, and their nation's poor contract enforcement significantly increases anti-Americanism.

Zuhâl Çalık Topuz and Jonathan Michael Spector provided our fourth article titled "Examining Relationships Among Turkey, Israel, and the United States in Terms of Interest Similarity." They conceptualize interest similarity as the alignment of national interests in global affairs and, accordingly, examine the interest similarities of Turkey, Israel, and the US' by way of considering three factors: (a) alliance portfolios, (b) Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) data, and (c) United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voting records. Çalık Topuz and Spector employ series of statistical analyses to assess the correlations and find evidence of interest similarities among these three countries by relying on statistically significant results in their models. Additionally, the research explores the relationships between Turkey, Israel, and the US to identify the factors influencing their interest similarity.

We turn our attention, at last, to our final narratives, which is the role of narratives about world politics in shaping foreign policy and shoring up domestic support, as explored respectively in the cases of Turkey and Iran. Our penultimate article "Searching for a Place in Global IR Through Exceptionalism: Turkey and the Mediation for Peace Initiative" by Radiye Funda Karadeniz and Gonca Oğuz Gök reconceptualizes the concept of exceptionalism in both Turkish foreign policy and Global International Relations (IR). Karadeniz and Gök critically examine Turkey's contribution to the Global IR debate through the lens of exceptionalism in its Mediation for Peace Initiative (MPI). Following Nymalm and Plagemann (2019), the study rethinks the use of exceptionalism in Global IR by analyzing Turkey's role in the MPI within the context of internationalist exceptionalism. The authors express their goal as deconstructing exceptionalism in Global IR and understand how exceptional foreign policy discourses from non-Western states can contribute to the interconnectedness of regional worlds and the exchange of ideas and norms between the global and local levels.

Our last article is by Andrew Thomas titled "Sanctions and Postcolonial Statecraft in Iran: Resisting the Iran Libya Sanctions Act and Beyond." Thomas argues that economic sanctions aim to weaken and isolate their targets to enforce policy changes. However, in Iran's case, they have often bolstered their resolve in resisting Western coercion and domination. Since the Islamic revolution, this defiance has led to multiple political standoffs, notably during Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's administration and the post-nuclear deal standoff with the United States (US). The West, through sanctions, has frequently demanded significant concessions on Iranian foreign policy, reinforcing a postcolonial narrative of resistance within Iran. This narrative has become a crucial tool for the Iranian leadership to enhance its legitimacy. By examining elite discourse and government responses to the Iran Libya Sanctions Act during Ahmadinejad's tenure and the Trump Administration's Maximum Pressure campaign, this article highlights how Iran's postcolonial resistance narrative shapes its reaction to US sanctions. It explains why sanctions often push Iran further away from conforming to international norms.

The All Azimuth Team

Malaysia's "Triadic Maritime Diplomacy" Strategy in the South China Sea

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Abstract

The importance of safeguarding Malaysia's Kasawari gas field in the South China Sea has reoriented Malaysia's maritime diplomatic strategies vis-à-vis China's growing assertiveness in this semi-enclosed sea. China's increased sea infringements through its coast guards and maritime constabulary forces have led Malaysia to adopt what this article coins as "triadic maritime diplomacy," a combination of coercive, persuasive, and co-operative maritime diplomacy. Malaysia's maritime diplomatic strategies thus act more as a set of contradictory policies rather than a decisive attempt to defend Malaysia's sovereignty at sea. This article engages in qualitative inquiry to address two central empirical questions: Firstly, how has Malaysia managed the delicate balance between safeguarding its sovereignty at sea and maintaining close economic ties with China? Secondly, what accounts for Malaysia's persistent "downplaying" stance despite the escalating intrusions around the Luconia Shoals, particularly concerning the Kasawari gas field? The findings of this study reveal three key aspects: Firstly, Malaysia's prioritization of developing the Kasawari gas field has necessitated the adoption of seemingly contradictory policies, employing coercive maritime measures utilizing its naval assets while simultaneously adopting rhetoric that downplays crises. Secondly, Malaysia's maritime diplomacy can be aptly characterized as "triadic" strategies, encompassing the adoption of coercive, persuasive, and co-operative approaches. Lastly, these seemingly inconsistent policies are a strategic response aimed at accommodating both immediate and prospective economic opportunities involving China, all while signaling its non-aligned stance to major global powers.

Keywords: Maritime diplomacy, South China Sea, Luconia Shoals, Kasawari gas field, Malaysia

1. Introduction

The South China Sea disputes remain a flash point with the possibility of escalating into bloody armed conflict, a dire situation that could undermine not only regional security and stability but also the national security interests of claimant states. Malaysia's sovereign rights and territorial claims in this semi-enclosed sea have become increasingly threatened in recent years. Such threats predominantly stem from the persistent and increasing encroachment and harassment of Chinese maritime constabulary forces in the vicinity of the disputed maritime features, i.e., submerged reefs, atolls, and shoals within Malaysia's Exclusive Economic Zone

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(EEZ).¹ Malaysia's concerns and apprehension regarding China's growing assertive actions in these offshore contested waters are warranted, particularly within the latter's declared U-shaped nine-dash line. These vast and yet remote maritime areas are home to abundant untapped oil and gas reserves with the potential to support Malaysia's economic growth for decades² (see Figure 1).

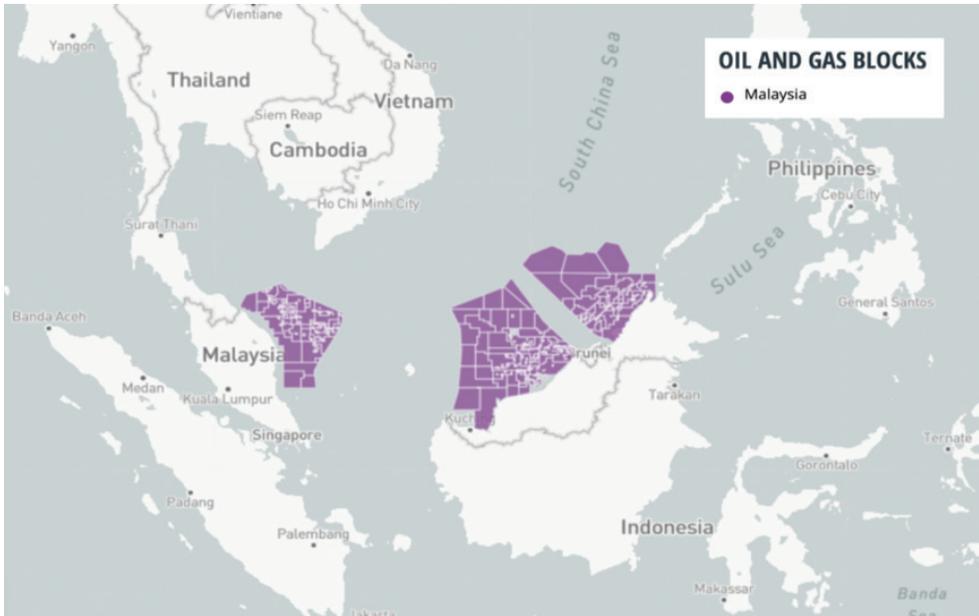


Figure 1. Malaysia's Hydrocarbon Energy Exploration and Development in the South China Sea

Source: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative³

Over the past 20 years, China has consistently exhibited belligerent behaviour in defending its South China Sea claims. Clear evidence of this behaviour can be seen in its unilateral large-scale land reclamation activities, including transforming previously submerged reefs, atolls, and shoals in the Spratly Islands into fortified artificial island outposts.⁴ Beijing's strategy for boosting China's territorial claims also involves militarizing these reclaimed maritime features. This includes the establishment of military garrisons, the installation of missile defence and advanced radar systems, as well as the construction of extended airstrips and sheltered ports.⁵ Initially, most of these assertive actions, as reported in mainstream media,

¹ Parameswaran Prashanth, *Playing It Safe: Malaysia's Approach to the South China Sea and Implications for the United States*, (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2015), accessed March 23, 2023. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/189746/CNAS%20Maritime%206_Pameswaran_Final.pdf

² Data from the U.S. Energy Information Agency (updated in 2019) concludes that the South China Sea consists of 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and a potential of 11 billion barrels of oil.

³ "Rocks, Reefs, Submerged Shoals – Who Claims or Occupies Them?" *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, accessed March 25, 2023. <https://amti.csis.org/scs-features-map/>

⁴ Ketian Zhang, "Explaining China's large-scale land reclamation in the South China Sea: Timing and Rationale," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 46, no. 6-7 (2023): 1-6; Hoo Tiang Boon, "Hardening the Hard, Softening the Soft: Assertiveness and China's Regional Strategy," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 40, no. 5 (2016): 639-662.

⁵ James R. Holmes, "Strategic Features of the South China Sea: A Tough Neighborhood for Hegemons," *Naval War College Review* 67, no. 2 (2014): 1-23; Bama Andika Putra, "Gauging Contemporary Maritime Tensions in the North Natuna Seas: Deciphering China's Maritime Diplomatic Strategies," *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Civic and Political Studies* 17, no. 2 (2022): 85-99.

focused on the EEZ waters claimed by the Philippines and Vietnam. For the Philippines, decades-long intrusions and confrontations with the Chinese Coast Guard have escalated with the use of military-grade lasers in the past year.⁶ Meanwhile, Vietnam is struggling to respond to China's continuous assertiveness at sea, which has escalated since the May 2014 drilling rig crisis, which occurred close to the Paracel Islands.⁷

Nevertheless, China's belligerent behaviours have visibly expanded to other contested areas within its nine-dash line, including a vast tract of Malaysia's claimed EEZ.⁸ This development has gained traction in the last decade, as demonstrated by recurrent intrusions of Chinese maritime militia and Coast Guard vessels in the vicinity of Malaysia's claimed James Shoal and Luconia Shoals off the Sarawak coast of Borneo.⁹ China regards James Shoal as its southernmost territory, prompting Beijing to project its maritime power just off the coast of Sarawak. Consequently, China has been persistent in its claims on the Luconia Shoals, seizing the shoal in 2013 and anchoring its ships consistently between 2013 and 2015.¹⁰ Furthermore, tensions heightened in 2014 when Chinese officials decided to conduct a sovereignty oath-swearing ceremony with the presence of its three warships in Malaysia's James Shoal.¹¹

A particular maritime area in the South China Sea that has recently seen a troubling surge of China's aggressive activities and posed an alarming concern for Malaysia is the Kasawari Gas Development Project (see Figure 2). This remote offshore gas field, situated adjacent to the disputed Luconia Shoals,¹² was discovered in November 2011 by PETRONAS and has currently undergone extensive development.¹³

⁶ Neil Jerome Morales, "Philippines rebukes Beijing for 'dangerous manoeuvres' in South China Sea," *Reuters*, April 28, 2023, accessed November 20, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-reports-confrontation-with-chinese-vessels-south-china-sea-2023-04-28/>

⁷ James Pearson and Khanh Vu, "Vietnam mulls legal action over South China Sea dispute," *Reuters*, November 6, 2019, accessed November 20, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-vietnam-southchinasea-idUSKBN1XG1D6/>

⁸ Mohammad Zaki Ahmad and Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, "China's Assertiveness Posture in Reinforcing its Territorial and Sovereignty Claims in the South China Sea: An Insight into Malaysia's Stance," *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 18, no. 1 (2017): 67-105.

⁹ James Shoal (*Gugusan Beting Serupai*) is located 45 nautical miles off the coast of Sarawak, and the Luconia Shoals (*Gugusan Beting Patinggi Ali*), positioned 62 nautical miles from Sarawak. See, Ahmad and Sani, "China Assertiveness Posture," 67-69.

¹⁰ Vivian Louis Forbes, "Navigating Malaysia-China geopolitical relations," *Australian Naval Institute*, September 10, 2017, accessed November 25, 2023. <https://navalinstitute.com.au/navigating-malaysia-china-geopolitical-relations/>

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Luconia Shoals is one of the largest reef complexes in the South China Sea. It is situated 62 miles off the Sarawak coast, and located in the farthest southwestern end of Spratly Islands. See, J. Ashley Roach, *Malaysia and Brunei: An Analysis of their Claims in the South China Sea* (Virginia: CAN, 2014), accessed November 21, 2023. <https://www.cna.org/reports/2014/malaysia-and-brunei-claims-in-scs>

¹³ The Malaysian oil and gas company, PETRONAS, estimates that the Luconia Shoals consist of 3.2 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves. The Kasawari gas field will start its production phase in 2023. See, "Kasawari Gas Development Project, Sarawak, Malaysia," *Offshore Technology*, February 10, 2023, accessed November 19, 2023. <https://www.offshore-technology.com/projects/kasawari-gas-development-project-sarawak/?cf-view>

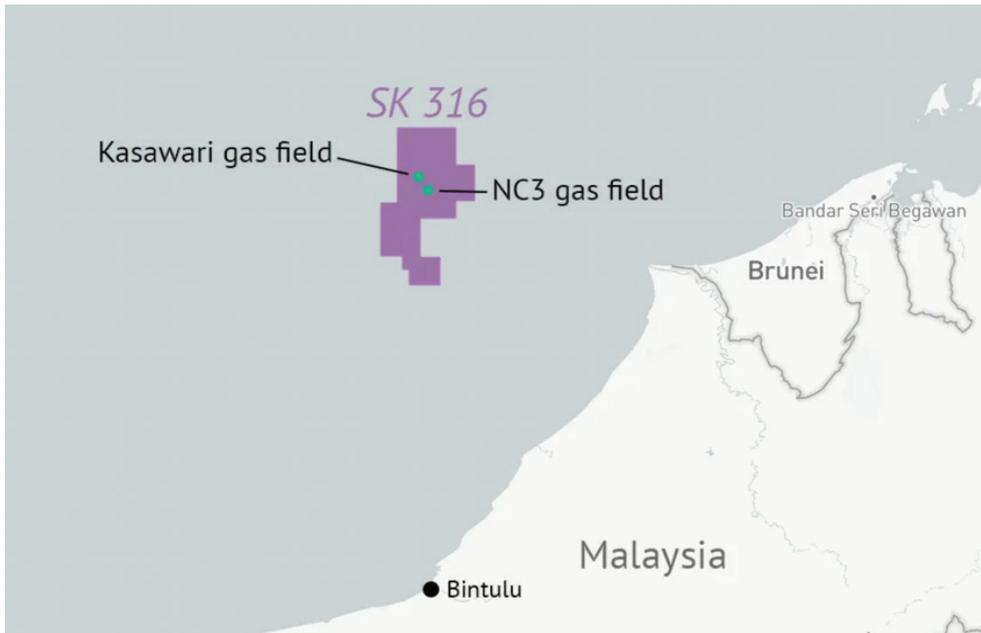


Figure 2. Location of the Kasawari and NC3 Gas Fields

Source: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative¹⁴

In response to these activities, Beijing began to resort to direct and sizable use of non-military force by dispatching its Chinese Coast Guard (CCG), civilian, and maritime militia vessels to operate in the vicinity of the contested area and to deliberately harass Malaysian gas drilling operations.¹⁵ The regular presence and harassment by these non-military assets indicate Malaysia is now non-immune from the brunt of Beijing's grey zone tactics,¹⁶ which had been widely observed in the waters around the disputed maritime features in the EEZ of the Philippines and Vietnam. Beijing's preference for conducting grey zone operations in the vicinity of the Kasawari gas field demonstrates the adoption of a new doctrine of maritime coercion characterized by ambiguity and deception while avoiding the risk and cost of full-blown military conflict when pursuing the objectives.¹⁷ This tactic shows China's willingness to engage in aggression against Malaysia, even if such actions may lead to diplomatic frictions and territorial standoffs.

Evidence of China's grey zone tactics is fully displayed in the disputed waters, including

¹⁴ "Contest at Kasawari: Another Malaysian Gas Project Faces Pressure," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, July 7, 2021, accessed November 23, 2023. <https://amti.csis.org/contest-at-kasawari-another-malaysian-gas-project-faces-pressure/>

¹⁵ Ani, "Chinese coast guard vessels harass Malaysian oil, gas development work off Sarawak: US think tank," *Economic Times*, July 11, 2021, accessed November 21, 2023. <https://energy.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/chinese-coast-guard-vessels-harass-malaysian-oil-gas-development-work-off-sarawak-us-think-tank/84309999>; Amanda Battersby, "Chinese 'harassment' around Malaysian offshore assets stirs tensions," *Up Stream Online*, July 15, 2021, accessed November 21, 2023. <https://www.upstreamonline.com/politics/chinese-harassment-around-malaysian-offshore-assets-stirs-tensions/2-1-1039115>

¹⁶ Bonny Lion, et al., described China's grey zone tactics as "...measures that powerful countries have employed both historically and in recent decades that are beyond normal diplomacy and other traditional approaches to statecraft but short of direct use of military force for escalation or a conflict." For details, see Bonny Lion, et al., *A New Framework for Understanding and Countering Gray Zone Tactics* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporations, 2022), accessed November 12, 2023. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RBA594-1.html

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

the deployment of the CCG and Chinese-flagged government vessels and their engagement in dangerous navigational maneuvers. In employing its grey zone tactics, Beijing takes a number of approaches. It relies on a certain escalation of tensions at sea and resorts to military tactics aimed at compelling adversaries in the maritime domain.¹⁸ Unauthorized marine scientific surveys were also visibly conducted by the Chinese-registered research vessels in the area. This was encountered by Vietnam in the Vanguard Bank in late 2019, in which the Haiyang Dizhi 8, a Chinese Geological Survey Ship, was accompanied by a number of CCG vessels to conduct seismic surveying.¹⁹ The following year, China's grey zone tactics also led to a standoff between Malaysian and Chinese officials due to a confrontation faced by a PETRONAS-contacted exploration vessel, the West Capella.²⁰ Overall, the underlying objectives behind China's grey zone tactics are intended to disrupt Malaysia's Gas Development Project around the Kasawari gas field²¹ and deny the country's entitlement to continue exploring hydrocarbon resources in the area.²²

One can argue that these two-pronged strategies are intended to deny Malaysia its rights to access and develop hydrocarbon resources and safeguard China's claims and interests within the nine-dash line. Beijing steadfastly declared that these offshore areas historically belong to the country and constitute an integral component of the country's "indisputable sovereignty."²³

In addition to the at-sea confrontations, China's utilization of the grey zone tactics extended to activities beyond the sea, including encounters with the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF). Tensions above the Malaysian airspace of the Luconia Shoals area escalated in 2021 when RMAF detected and intercepted 16 Chinese military aircraft flying in a tactical formation near the disputed waters of the shoals.²⁴ This instance alone does not match Malaysia's assertiveness in the maritime domain. After the crisis, Chinese officials clarified that it only maintained the rights of overflight within its airspace.²⁵ However, Malaysia's responses were justified, as the accumulation of assertiveness it faced in both the maritime and airspace domains led to a conclusion of China's growing assertiveness vis-à-vis China's claims in the South China Sea.

In the face of escalating Chinese aggression and harassment in Malaysia's Kasawari gas field, it is perplexing that the Malaysian government appears to downplay its response

¹⁸ Rob McLaughlin, "The Law of the Sea and PRC Gray-Zone Operations in the South China Sea," *American Journal of International Law* 116, no. 4 (2022): 821-835.

¹⁹ Carl Thayer, "Chinese coercive activities persist in one of Asia's hottest flashpoints," *The Diplomat*, November 1, 2019, accessed November 27, 2023. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/10/a-difficult-summer-in-the-south-china-sea/>

²⁰ Rozanna Latiff and A. Ananthalakshmi, "Malaysian oil exploration vessel leaves South China Sea waters after standoff," *Reuters*, May 12, 2020, accessed November 27, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-security-malaysia/malaysian-oil-exploration-vessel-leaves-south-china-sea-waters-after-standoff-idUSKBN22O1M9/>

²¹ Ian Storey, "Malaysia and the South China Sea Dispute: Policy Continuity amid Domestic Political Change," *Singapore: ISEAS Perspective*, March 20, 2020, accessed March 31, 2023. https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ISEAS_Perspective_2020_18.pdf

²² China has been persistent to defend its stance of claiming the nine-dash line, including rights over exploring oil and gas reserves within those waters. Instances of Malaysia's intentions to explore and extract those reserves have been met with fury. See, Amy Chew, "Malaysia's energy needs face Chinese pushback in South China Sea," *Al Jazeera*, April 25, 2023, accessed November 20, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2023/4/25/malaysian-energy-needs-clash-with-china-claims-in-south-china-sea>

²³ Leszek Buszynski, "Introduction: The Development of South China Sea Dispute," in *The South China Sea Maritime Dispute: Political, Legal and Regional Perspectives*, eds. Leszek Buszynski and Do Thanh Hai (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1-10.

²⁴ Joseph Sipalan, "Malaysia to summon Chinese envoy over 'suspicious' air force activity," *Reuters*, June 2, 2021, accessed November 11, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/malaysia-says-chinese-military-planes-came-close-violating-airpace-2021-06-01/>

²⁵ Sulhi Khalid, "China denies Malaysia's intrusion charge, says military aircraft were engaged in routine training," *The Edge Malaysia*, June 2, 2021, accessed November 11, 2023. <https://theedgemaalaysia.com/article/china-denies-malaysias-intrusion-charge-says-military-aircraft-were-engaged-routine-training>

to Beijing's maritime power projections at sea. Instead of deploying its naval warships, Malaysia has preferred using its coast guard, the Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA), to respond to the aggressions committed by Chinese civilian maritime vessels. As with any other Southeast Asian claimant state, the rationale behind Malaysia's choice to rely on maritime constabulary forces when dealing with CCG intrusions is rooted in strategic considerations.²⁶ Maritime constabulary forces are civilian fleets, and thus, the likelihood of escalation to a full-blown crisis from their deployment is arguably lower than the use of military forces.²⁷

Malaysia's maritime diplomatic strategies are arguably a contradictory policy rather than displaying a firm commitment to assert and defend its sovereignty in the maritime domain at any cost. Despite China's increased sea intrusions through its coast guards and maritime constabulary forces, Malaysia has adopted what this article terms "triadic maritime diplomacy," involving a combination of coercive, persuasive, and co-operative maritime strategies. This qualitative inquiry addresses two central empirical questions: How has Malaysia managed the delicate balance between safeguarding its sovereignty at sea and maintaining close economic ties with China? Second, what explains Malaysia's persistent "downplaying" stance despite the escalating intrusions around the Luconia Shoals, particularly concerning the Kasawari gas field?

In answering both those inquiries, this research adopts qualitative research utilizing primary data obtained from government reports, documents, and official speeches issued by relevant Malaysian ministries and bodies between 2011 and 2023. In an attempt to triangulate the findings, this study further utilizes secondary data from the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI), media publications, and research reports related to Malaysia's policies vis-à-vis the South China Sea between 2011 and 2023. This article specifically utilizes data from AMTI as the initiative's access to automatic identification systems (AIS) allows this study to capture instances of Chinese intrusions into Malaysia's waters, including the responses made by Malaysia vis-à-vis those acts of belligerence. This research is an interpretive attempt to better decipher Malaysia's South China Sea strategies against China's growing aggressions in its EEZ areas, with its analytical framework informed by Le Mière's conception of maritime diplomacy. According to Le Mière, policymakers and academics can better understand the maritime diplomatic intentions of states by categorizing their policies into three parts: coercive, co-operative, and persuasive maritime diplomacy. Through this categorization, this study can provide an alternative interpretation of contemporary Malaysian diplomatic actions in the maritime domain.

2. Maritime Diplomatic Strategies in Grey-Zone Jurisdictions: A Literature Review

Extensive literature exists on understanding Malaysia's South China Sea policy and strategy. An opinion that unites the different traits in comprehending Malaysia's responses to the disputes within its sovereign waters is that Malaysia is, without a doubt, attempting to secure

²⁶ Prashanth, *Managing the Rise of Southeast Asia's Coast Guards* (Washington, DC: Wilson Center, 2019), accessed 21 February 2023. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/managing-the-rise-southeast-asias-coast-guards>

²⁷ There is a growing number of studies focusing on the maritime diplomatic use of maritime constabulary forces in grey zone areas. The scope of analysis is currently focused within the context of Southeast Asian states. See, Putra, "The Golden Age of White Hulls: Deciphering the Philippines' Maritime Diplomatic Strategies in the South China Sea," *Social Sciences* 12, no. 6 (2023): 1-14; Putra "The rise of paragonboat diplomacy as a maritime diplomatic instrument: Indonesia's constabulary forces and tensions in the North Natuna Seas," *Asian Journal of Political Sciences* 31, no. 2 (2023): 106-124; Putra, "Rise of Constabulary Maritime Agencies in Southeast Asia: Vietnam's Paragonboat Diplomacy in the North Natuna Seas," *Social Sciences* 12, no. 4 (2023): 1-15.

its rightful resources within its borders. Nevertheless, the distinction among studies relates to what driving factors influence Malaysia's South China Sea policies and how Malaysia has responded to the emerging crisis.

Part of the literature discusses systemic and domestic factors influencing Malaysia's foreign policy decisions in the South China Sea. Lai and Kuik, for example, contend that Malaysia's hedging policies, which show a certain level of defiance and open accommodation, could be understood by structural factors underpinning their decision.²⁸ Similar to the conclusions reached by Lai and Kuik, Noor and Qistina further inquired into the role of structural factors and found that Malaysia's traditional independent stance in response to the great power rivalries in the Asia-Pacific is a primary contributor to Malaysia's mixed engagement with the U.S. and China.²⁹ Contrary to most studies evaluating structural factors, Ngeow argues that Malaysia's South China Sea policy could be better comprehended by understanding the domestic policy decision-making process and examining the dynamics at play.³⁰

An equally important inquiry into Malaysia's South China Sea policies is how Malaysia responds to any crises within its maritime domain. Generally, there is a consensus that Malaysia adopts a conservative stance in its sea confrontations.³¹ However, some have argued that Malaysia has gradually signaled assertiveness toward China's aggressions.³² Noor concluded that the Malaysian government is beginning to respond strongly to China's claims within Malaysia's EEZ, primarily due to the untapped energy resources falling under Malaysia's maritime jurisdictions.³³ Despite the tensions Malaysian policymakers face vis-à-vis China's uncertain rise in the region, studies have not been able to conclude that Malaysia perceives China as a source of threat. Syailendra's recent article argues that Malaysia does not adopt a threat perception towards itself, with the intention of deterring possibilities of a crisis.³⁴ In making sense of this, consultation with Milner's studies on Malaysian foreign policy indicates that Malaysian foreign policymakers perceive the world from a non-Western international relations perspective, which leads it to not take decisive action in the face of what may be a clear threat for Western policymakers.³⁵

Existing studies suggest Malaysia takes its South China Sea claims seriously. Despite taking a relatively reserved approach compared to other claimant states, such as the Philippines and Vietnam, Malaysia is wary about the untapped gas resources below the

²⁸ Yew Meng Lai and Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "Structural sources of Malaysia's South China Sea policy: power uncertainties and small-state hedging," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 75, no. 3 (2020): 672-693.

²⁹ Elina Noor and T. N. Qistina, "Great Power Rivalries, Domestic Politics and Malaysian Foreign Policy," *Asian Security* 13, no. 3 (2017): 200-219.

³⁰ Chow-Bing Ngeow, "Malaysia's China Policy and the South China Sea Dispute Under the Najib Administration (2009-2018): A Domestic Policy Process Approach," *Asian Politics & Policy* 11, no. 4 (2019): 586-605.

³¹ Storey, "Malaysia and the South China Sea Dispute"; Chew, "Malaysia's energy needs face Chinese pushback"; Emirza Adi Syailendra, "The Sense and Sensibility of Malaysia's Approach to its Maritime Boundary Disputes," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, November 21, 2022. <https://amti.csis.org/the-sense-and-sensibility-of-malaysias-approach-to-its-maritime-boundary-disputes/>

³² Ahmad and Sani, "China's Assertiveness Posture"; Parameswaran, *Playing It Safe*; Adam Leong Kok Wey, "A small state's foreign affairs strategy: Making sense of Malaysia's strategic response to the South China Sea debacle," *Comparative Strategy* 36, no. 5 (2017): 392-399.

³³ Elina Noor, "The South China Sea Dispute: Options for Malaysia," in *The South China Sea Dispute: Navigating Diplomatic and Strategic Tensions*, ed., Ian Storey and Cheng-Yi Lin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 205-227.

³⁴ Syailendra, "Why Don't Malaysian Policymakers View China as a Threat?" *The Diplomat*, February 24, 2023, accessed November 29, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/02/why-dont-malaysian-policymakers-view-china-as-a-threat/>

³⁵ Anthony Milner and Siti Munirah Kasim, "Beyond Sovereignty: Non-Western International Relations in Malaysia's Foreign Relations," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 40, no. 3 (2018): 371-396; Anthony Milner, "'Sovereignty' and Normative Integration in the South China Sea: Some Malaysian and Malay Perspectives," in *Southeast Asia and China*, eds. Lowell Dittmer and Ngeow Chow Bing (Singapore: World Scientific, 2017): 229-246.

disputed waters. Nevertheless, three significant gaps exist in the discourse of Malaysia's policies in the South China Sea. Firstly, there is currently no study that evaluates Malaysia's diplomatic strategies vis-à-vis the growing assertive maneuvers of China in the overlapping EEZ between Malaysia and China, particularly in the Kasawari gas field. Secondly, existing studies have overlooked the possible nexus between the vast gas reserves that Malaysia could exploit and the changes in its approach to maritime diplomatic strategies. Thirdly, there is a lack of empirical studies that examine how tensions in grey jurisdictional zones are addressed through maritime diplomatic strategies.

This article argues that the deficiencies in the existing literature can be covered by an inquiry into Malaysia's maritime diplomatic strategies in the South China Sea disputes. By adopting Le Mière's conception of maritime diplomacy, this article will classify maritime diplomatic actions into coercive, persuasive, and co-operative maritime diplomacy. Through this classification, we can better understand Malaysia's implemented maritime diplomatic strategies and why the country adopts contradictory policies to manage tensions arising from the South China Sea crisis, particularly in response to China's aggressive behaviour in the Kasawari gas field. In simple terms, maritime diplomacy involves managing international relations through the maritime domain.³⁶

Traditionally, the dominant discourse of maritime diplomacy focused on the use of hard power assets, primary state navies, to compel and deter adversaries.³⁷ While the literature has evolved to include maritime constabulary forces such as coast guards and maritime security agencies, navies remain paramount stakeholders when compared to other maritime agencies. As argued by past scholars such as Mahan and Cable, navies have the capacity to conduct gunboat diplomacy,³⁸ enabling them to exert influence and uphold a state's sovereignty at sea.

Navies indeed have well-defined diplomatic roles that can help their own state achieve various goals. Luttwak, for example, argues that navies could serve crucial maritime diplomatic functions, particularly for executing operations related to political goals.³⁹ The idea forms the basis of Le Mière's approach in 2014, conceptualizing maritime diplomacy into three distinct categories: coercive, persuasive, and co-operative.⁴⁰ The discussions of employing hard power assets for diplomatic purposes fall under Le Mière's categorization of "coercive maritime diplomacy." He argues that states choose different maritime diplomatic strategies based on their specific diplomatic objectives.⁴¹

In the following sections, this article argues that Malaysia employs a combination of Le Mière's maritime diplomacy categories. In the context of Malaysia's claims in the South China Sea, this blend of coercive, persuasive, and co-operative maritime diplomacy is termed "triadic maritime diplomacy" in this article. This study is the first to propose the existence of this trilateral form of maritime diplomacy, and it will provide explanations for why states employ diplomatic strategies and, hence, their adoption of contradictory policies. Moreover, this article explores how these diplomatic approaches are implemented in grey-zone jurisdictional areas, such as the waters surrounding the Luconia Shoals.

³⁶ Christian Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy in the 21st Century: Drivers and Challenges* (New York: Routledge, 2014): 7.

³⁷ Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Bob Davidson, "Modern Naval Diplomacy: A Practitioner's View," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 11, no. 1-2 (2009): 1-47.

³⁸ James Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy 1919-1991: Political Applications of Limited Naval Force* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994); Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1898).

³⁹ Edward Luttwak, *The Political Uses of Sea Power* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974).

⁴⁰ Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy*.

⁴¹ Le Mière, "The Return of Gunboat Diplomacy," *Survival* 53, no. 5 (2011): 53-68.

3. Kasawari Gas Explorations and the Amplification of Malaysia's South China Sea Dilemma

The focal point of contention between Malaysia and China in the South China Sea in recent years undeniably revolves around Malaysia's controlled Kasawari gas field near the Luconia Shoals. It was not until 2014 that diplomatic tensions and at-sea standoffs between the two countries escalated significantly in that area. This coincides with the intensification of PETRONAS-operated exploration and drilling activities for natural gas.⁴² For Malaysia and China, the South China Sea consists of abundant natural gas reserves, which are critical in a time of energy scarcity. AMTI estimates that the South China Sea consists of 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and 10-11 billion gas reserves.⁴³ Consequently, for Malaysia, as reported by the Malaysian Foreign Minister in 2021, the three trillion cubic feet of natural gas are within Malaysia's sea borders and have resulted in exploration by Malaysia's state-owned company, PETRONAS, since 2011.⁴⁴

As claimed by PETRONAS, the Kasawari Gas Development Project is one of the world's largest offshore carbon capture and storage (CCS) projects.⁴⁵ Through the exploration of the wells of Kasawari-1 and NC8SW-1, PETRONAS discovered gas reserves offshore of Sarawak in 2011.⁴⁶ The following year, PETRONAS was determined to further the exploration by drilling an additional 30 exploration wells, with prospects of finding oil and gas reserves that the Malaysian people well needed.⁴⁷ A decade later, the Kasawari gas field has secured the interest of Malaysian policymakers, as it is currently in the construction stage. In January 2020, PETRONAS conducted its first steel cut ceremony, marking the start of its construction.⁴⁸ It is expected to start commercially producing in 2023, reaching its peak production in 2026, which is forecasted to continue until the fields reach their economic limit in 2052.⁴⁹

The development of Malaysia's Kasawari gas field fulfills a domestic demand for gas and oil scarcity. As seen in the past two years and reported by the Malaysian Institute of Economic Research, fuel prices have not been manageable domestically due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.⁵⁰ With Malaysia's economy continually rising each year, demand for energy will rise, and the Kasawari gas field will help alleviate the energy crisis. However, this does go against Malaysia's intentions to transition to cleaner energy. As Malaysia's Ministry of Economy has stated, "Malaysia is committed to low carbon development aimed at restructuring the economic landscape to a more sustainable one."⁵¹ This is expected through

⁴² Bing, "Malaysia-China Defence Ties: Managing Feud in the South China Sea," *RSIS Commentary*, May 26, 2022. https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/malaysia-china-defence-ties-managing-feud-in-the-south-china-sea/?doing_wp_cron=1701167417.2169001102447509765625

⁴³ "Rocks, Reefs, Submerged Shoals."

⁴⁴ Chew, "Malaysia's energy needs."

⁴⁵ Amanda Battersby, Nishant Ugal, and Russell Searancke, "Petronas awards dual FEED contracts for world's largest offshore CCS project," *Upstream*, February 16, 2022. <https://www.upstreamonline.com/exclusive/petronas-awards-dual-feed-contracts-for-worlds-largest-offshore-ccs-project/2-1-1167988>

⁴⁶ Alex Procyk, "Petronas discovers gas offshore Sarawak," *The Borneo Post*, December 7, 2023, accessed November 28, 2023. <https://www.theborneopost.com/2012/02/14/petronas-discovers-gas-offshore-sarawak-2/>

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ "Kasawari Gas Development Project."

⁴⁹ "Oil & gas field profile: Kasawari Conventional Gas Field, Malaysia," *Offshore Technology*, updated February 17, 2024, accessed 28 November 2023, <https://www.offshore-technology.com/data-insights/oil-gas-field-profile-kasawari-conventional-gas-field-malaysia/?cf-view>

⁵⁰ "Analyst Cautions Malaysians to Brace Against Energy Crisis," *Malaysian Institute of Economic Research*, June 13, 2022, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://mier.org.my/analyst-cautions-malaysians-to-brace-against-energy-crisis-energy-watch/>

⁵¹ Malaysian Ministry of Economy, *National Energy Transition Roadmap: Energising the Nation, Powering Our Future*

an energy transition to renewable energy, bioenergy, hydrogen, and other forms supporting Malaysia's energy transition intentions. Nevertheless, Malaysia is seen to defend the current construction taking place in the Luconia Shoals, indicating the importance of conventional energy sources.

As mentioned earlier, the intensification of oil and gas explorations within Malaysia's Kasawari gas field has triggered aggressive responses from China. Beijing perceives this gas field as an integral part of its southernmost territory within the nine-dash line.⁵² Hence, it was inevitable that the rapid development of this gas field prompted Beijing to dispatch its coast guard and maritime militia vessels to the vicinity to harass and interrupt the operations there. Table 1 shows the activities and years of incidents related to China's assertive actions around the vicinity of the Kasawari gas field, which comprises the China Coast Guard patrols around the Luconia Shoals.

Table 1: China Coast Guard Patrols in the Luconia Shoals, the South China Sea (2022)

China Coast Guard Ship	Patrol Dates and Duration
CCG 5102	02 January 2022 - 09 January 2022 (7 days)
CCG 5305	20 January 2022 - 27 January 2022 (7 days)
CCG 5101	22 February 2022 - 02 March 2022 (8 days)
CCG 5302	15 March 2022 - 25 April 2022 (1 month, 10 days)
CCG 5403	25 April 2022 - 07 June 2022 (1 month, 13 days)
CCG 5402	06 June 2022 - 08 July 2022 (1 month, 2 days)
CCG 5102	08 July 2022 - 15 July 2022 (7 days)
CCG 5103	08 July 2022 - 20 September 2022 (2 months, 14 days)
CCG 5302	20 September 2022 - 05 November 2022 (1 month, 16 days)
CCG 5403	06 November 2022 - 08 December 2022 (1 month, 2 days)
CCG 5305	09 December - 31 December 2022 (22 days)

Source: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative 2022⁵³

(Putrajaya: Ministry of Economy, 2023), accessed 26 November 2023. https://www.ekonomi.gov.my/sites/default/files/202309/National%20Energy%20Transition%20Roadmap_0.pdf

⁵² Chew, "Malaysia energy needs."

⁵³ "Flooding the Zone: China Coast Guard Patrols in 2022," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, January 30, 2023, accessed November 27, 2023, <https://amti.csis.org/flooding-the-zone-china-coast-guard-patrols-in-2022/>

An alarming trend that demands attention by the Malaysian authorities pertains to China's increased adoption of a grey zone strategy, including the deployment of maritime constabulary forces encroaching into Malaysia's EEZ areas in the South China Sea. The Malaysian authorities reported 89 instances of Chinese intrusions into Malaysian waters between 2016 and 2019, all of which involved naval and coast guard vessels.⁵⁴ These strategic moves have raised concerns among Malaysian officials, as these Chinese vessels would prolong their operation within Malaysia's EEZ waters until Malaysian navy vessels arrived at the scene.⁵⁵ It is imperative to recognize that China's assertive actions should not be regarded as an isolated incident. Numerous Southeast Asian countries, whether claimants or not, have encountered a similar surge of incidents involving Chinese naval and coast guard vessels operating in the disputed waters without authorization.⁵⁶ As China intensified its assertive activities involving large-scale land reclamation and militarization on its occupied maritime features in the South China Sea, instances of Chinese vessels establishing a presence using both civilian and military maritime constabulary forces witnessed a notable increase, particularly within its declared nine-dash line.⁵⁷

Since the beginning of Malaysia's Kasawari gas exploration and development, CCG and maritime militia vessels were ordered by Beijing to navigate around Malaysia's gas exploration and drilling site, deliberately choosing sea routes to emphasize China's active presence and provoke Malaysian officials.⁵⁸ As shown in Figure 3 below, in July 2021, CCG vessel 5403 traveled in close proximity to Malaysia's Sapura 2000 and Sapura 3000 dredgers in the Kasawari gas field. An interesting observation during this crisis was the presence of Malaysia's navy vessel, Bunga Mas Lima, near these maneuvers.

⁵⁴ Imam Muttaqin Yusof and Nisha David, "Malaysian, Japanese coast guard hold South China Sea security drill," *Radio Free Asia*, January 13, 2023, accessed November 10, 2023. <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/southchinasea/malaysiajapandrills-01132023133204.html>

⁵⁵ In multiple cases of China Coast Guard patrols in the Luconia Shoals between 2019 and 2023, the CCG would maintain a prolonged position in Malaysian waters. Due to its close proximity to Malaysia's territorial sea, the RMN has been deployed to tail CCGs in those instances, as China's operations have disrupted the work taking place in the Kasawari gas field. See, "Still on the Beat: China Coast Guard Patrols in 2020," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, December 4, 2020, accessed November 10, 2023. <https://amti.csis.org/still-on-the-beat-china-coast-guard-patrols-in-2020/>; "Flooding the Zone."

⁵⁶ See Putra, "The Golden Age of White Hulls," 1-14; Putra, "The rise of paragonboat diplomacy" 106-124; Putra, "Rise of Constabulary Maritime Agencies," 1-15.

⁵⁷ Yang Fang, "Coast guard competition could cause conflict in the South China Sea," *East Asia Forum*, October 27, 2018, accessed November 28, 2023. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/10/27/coast-guard-competition-could-cause-conflict-in-the-south-china-sea/>

⁵⁸ See, "Contest at Kasawari"; "Perilous Prospects: Tensions Flare at Malaysian, Vietnamese Oil and Gas Fields," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, March 30, 2023, accessed March 30 2023. <https://amti.csis.org/perilous-prospects-tensions-flare-at-malaysian-vietnamese-oil-and-gas-fields/>; "China and Malaysia in Another Staredown Over Offshore Drilling," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, November 25, 2020, accessed March 30, 2023. <https://amti.csis.org/china-and-malaysia-in-another-staredown-over-offshore-drilling/>



Figure 3. CCG 5303 Maneuvers July 5, 2021

Source: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative⁵⁹

It is noteworthy that both Malaysia and China have occasionally found themselves in maritime standoffs, albeit short of direct military skirmishes. These at-sea confrontations have frequently involved the CCG and the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) as both parties vie to exercise control over the disputed areas. Take, for example, a year prior to the crisis involving the Sapura 2000 and Sapura 3000 Malaysian dredgers, which was the standoff between Malaysian and Chinese vessels involving the West Capella, a drillship contracted by PETRONAS. The West Capella, having operated in the ND4 (see Figure 4), faced high-risk intimidation due to the near-constant presence of the CCG 5203 and 5305, which aimed to disrupt the oil and gas operations in the Luconia Shoals.⁶⁰ Consequently, similar to Malaysia's past stance in responding to crises at sea, Malaysian officials deployed the KD Jebat to guard the West Capella and other supply ships at sea.

⁵⁹ See, "Contest at Kasawari."

⁶⁰ "Malaysia Picks a Three-Way Fight in the South China Sea." *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, February 21, 2020, accessed November 29, 2023. <https://amti.csis.org/malaysia-picks-a-three-way-fight-in-the-south-china-sea/>

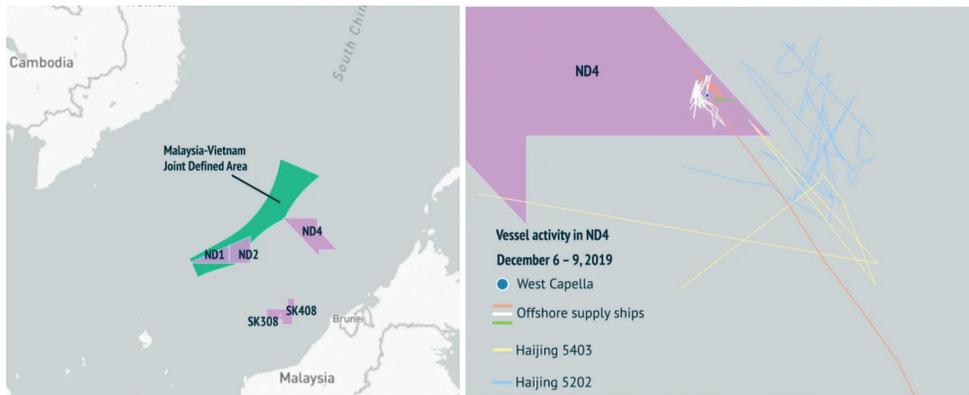


Figure 4. Tensions involving the West Capella in 2020

Source: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative⁶¹

More recently, AIS data in 2023 revealed that China assigned its CCG 5901 vessel to operate closer to Kasawari, starting from a distance of 7 nautical miles in the second week of February and decreasing to 1.5 nautical miles the following week.⁶² (AMTI 2023c). Because CCG 5901 had been operating in the vicinity of Malaysia's Kasawari Gas Development Project for an extended period, the RMN once again had to intervene until the CCG abandoned its position.⁶³

Malaysia's responses have been consistent in the face of the crisis caused by China's assertive maneuvers at sea. Through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Malaysian government publicly and consistently emphasizes its commitment to defending the nation's sovereignty in the South China Sea, even amidst the evolving tensions with China.⁶⁴ The defence of the country's sovereign rights in these disputed waters has been entrusted to its primary forces, which include the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF), the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN), and the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA). Collectively, these entities play a pivotal role in the conduct of surveillance and patrols within Malaysia's vast EEZ areas. This includes tailing and responding to CCG patrols that have oftentimes included the deliberate positioning of vessels within Malaysia's sovereign borders.

Although both Chinese coast guards and maritime militia vessels, in addition to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy, have increasingly encroached upon Malaysia's EEZ in recent years, the Malaysian government is more inclined to mitigate any arising tensions, restraining itself from openly condemning China's actions. As observed by Storey, Malaysia's deliberate diplomatic approach was particularly evident during Najib Razak's tenure from 2009 to 2018, when Malaysia's participation in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) led to the tendency to downplay Chinese intrusions into Malaysian waters.⁶⁵ During this time, Malaysia also adopted the position that intrusions by CCG vessels were not a serious concern as long

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² See, "Perilous Prospects."

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia, "Malaysia's Position on the South China Sea," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia*, April 8, 2023, accessed March 30, 2023. <https://www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/-/malaysia-s-position-on-the-south-china-sea>

⁶⁵ Storey, "Malaysia and the South China Sea."

as they did not involve the PLA Navy.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, the prevailing perception of Malaysia's seemingly measured and subdued position in response to China's assertiveness in the South China Sea disputes can be challenged. A notable transformation in Malaysia's foreign policy orientation has taken shape in recent years, driven by the substantial socio-economic significance of the Kasawari Gas Development Project to Malaysia and the escalating aggression of China in the vicinity. Recent tensions in these areas have intensified Malaysia's dilemma in the South China Sea.

Traditionally, the country has been willing to defend its sovereignty at sea but has refrained from taking decisive action due to the importance of China as Malaysia's leading trading partner.⁶⁷ Malaysia's active development over Kasawari and its determination to safeguard development projects through its naval forces present an empirical puzzle. As Malaysia naturally downplays the South China Sea issue and avoids coercive measures to defend its claims, the significance of gas explorations for the country's socio-economic growth has shifted its South China Sea stance.

A surprising development transpired during Anwar Ibrahim's first official visit to China in March 2023. Notwithstanding the strong economic relations between Malaysia and China, Chinese officials expressed their concerns about PETRONAS' gas development operations within China's alleged nine-dash line.⁶⁸ Anwar Ibrahim had to reassure China that the operations were conducted well within Malaysia's EEZ⁶⁹ but still expressed a willingness to negotiate with China.⁷⁰ From the outset, Malaysia's current position is that while it is willing to downplay its claims in the South China Sea, the country is unwilling to downplay the importance of the Kasawari gas field for Malaysia. The oil and gas industry contributes significantly, accounting for 20% of Malaysia's GDP.⁷¹

The following section will further attempt to expound on this emerging empirical puzzle in Malaysia's contemporary South China Sea claims and postures. It employs Le Mièrè's conception of coercive, persuasive, and co-operative maritime diplomacy and the emergence of paragonboat diplomacy to better understand Malaysia's maritime diplomatic strategies. As stated earlier, this strategy is termed "triadic maritime diplomacy."

4. Malaysia's Practices of "Triadic Maritime Diplomacy"

Malaysia's distinctive approach to maritime diplomacy engagements in addressing China's growing assertiveness within its maritime jurisdictional waters, the South China Sea, is termed

⁶⁶ A. Ananthalakshmi, "Malaysia says it will protect its rights in the South China Sea," *Reuters*, April 8, 2023, accessed March 10, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/malaysia-says-it-will-protect-its-rights-south-china-sea-2023-04-08/>

⁶⁷ The Chinese Ambassador to Malaysia, Ouyang Yujing, stated that China has been Malaysia's largest trading partner for 14 consecutive years. See, "Malaysia-China bilateral trade hit record US\$203.6b in 2022, says Chinese ambassador," *Malaysian Investment Development Authority*, February 17, 2023, accessed November 30, 2023, <https://www.mida.gov.my/mida-news/malaysia-china-bilateral-trade-hit-record-us203-6b-in-2022-says-chinese-ambassador/>

⁶⁸ Chew, "Malaysia's energy needs."

⁶⁹ Rao Aimin, "Malaysia ready to negotiate with China on South China Sea: Anwar," *The Jakarta Post*, April 3, 2023, accessed November 30, 2023. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/world/2023/04/03/malaysia-ready-to-negotiate-with-china-on-south-china-sea-anwar.html>

⁷⁰ Anwar's statement was interpreted by Malaysia's main opposition party as recognizing the presence of China's sovereignty in the South China Sea. The Bersatu Party, which head the Perikatan coalition, expressed their concerns, claiming that Anwar's statement was irresponsible and undermines Malaysia's sovereignty. See, Ili Shazwani, "Malaysian opposition slams PM for 'reckless' South China Sea statement to Beijing," *Benar News*, April 7, 2023, accessed November 28, 2023. <https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/malaysian/muhyiddin-slams-anwar-south-china-sea-04072023133207.html>

⁷¹ Amy Chew, "Malaysia must shift from 'jungle warfare' to keep eye on Chinese boats in South China Sea, militants, as maritime threats rise," *South China Morning Post*, January 24, 2022, accessed February 12, 2023. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3164457/malaysia-must-shift-jungle-warfare-keep-eye-chinese-boats>

in this article as “triadic maritime diplomacy.” Le Mière argued that maritime diplomacy is defined simply as the utilization of the maritime domain to manage international relations, which can take the three following distinct forms: coercive maritime diplomacy entails the use of force or threat to compel adversaries; persuasive maritime diplomacy includes an act of “showing the flag,” an attempt to showcase a state’s maritime power and capability;⁷² and lastly, co-operative maritime diplomacy employs maritime assets as a form of soft power to manage international relations peacefully. This article argues that Malaysia’s maritime diplomatic strategy combines elements of coercion, persuasion, and cooperation.

Within Malaysia’s maritime diplomacy framework, the paramount emphasis is directed to the multiple facets of maritime affairs, intertwining elements of commerce and the military within Malaysia’s territorial waters.⁷³ Particularly relevant to the South China Sea disputes is the expanding spectre of state-driven threats embraced by the claimants and non-claimants, exerting influence that could destabilize Malaysia’s maritime initiatives and practices of security at sea. In operationalizing this maritime security framework, the main entity responsible is the RMN, one of the military branches tasked to safeguard Malaysia’s sovereignty in the South China Sea. Meanwhile, since 2004, the MMEA has been legislatively designated as the principal federal agency responsible for ensuring the safety and security of the country’s maritime jurisdictional zones.⁷⁴

Consequently, delving into the nuances of Malaysia’s international interactions in the context of the maritime domain necessitates a rigorous examination of the actions and policies practiced by the RMN and MMEA. Both of these law enforcement organizations, in conjunction with state-owned vessels, collectively play a pivotal role in ensuring the uninterrupted progress of the Kasawari gas development initiatives. The deployment and operation of state navies, recognized as an essential component of a state’s diplomatic arsenal in maritime affairs, constitute fundamental aspects of Malaysia’s maritime diplomacy. Moreover, it is worthwhile to recognize the importance of the paramilitary functions of MMEA, with its civilian orientation and its primary focus as a maritime constabulary force in this semi-enclosed sea.

The Malaysian navy has consistently played a paramount role in Malaysia’s responses to Chinese intrusions. Previous literature has referred to the use of navies to coerce and compel adversaries as “gunboat diplomacy,” which is now more commonly termed “coercive diplomacy” to encompass non-state actors within the scope of analysis.⁷⁵ Malaysia’s coercive diplomacy is predominantly driven by political objectives. Instead of manifesting into actual statements, this diplomacy is generally assessed through actions at sea. As evidenced by the cases observed in Figures 2, 3, and 4, Malaysian naval forces have emerged as the primary tool for showcasing Malaysia’s unwavering commitment to the non-negotiable sovereignty of its territory.⁷⁶ Moreover, the navy serves as a means to compel CCG vessels to vacate the

⁷² Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy*.

⁷³ Tharishini Krishnan, “Malaysia’s Conceptualization of Maritime Security,” *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, November 22, 2021, accessed January 21, 2023. <https://amti.csis.org/malysias-conceptualization-of-maritime-security/>

⁷⁴ The MMEA was established in 2004 under the Maritime Enforcement Agency Act of 2004 (Act 663), initially placed under the Prime Minister’s Department. The MMEA is mandated with contemporary coast guarding roles, which include maintaining law and order at sea, marine border protection, and the conduct of search and rescue functions. See, Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency, “Latar Belakang,” *Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency*, February 1, 2021, accessed November 28, 2023. <https://www.mmea.gov.my/eng/index.php/en/mengenai-kami-2/latar-belakang>

⁷⁵ Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy*.

⁷⁶ S. Adie Zul, Nisha David, Dizhwar Bukhari, and Muzliza Mustafa, “Analysts: Malaysia’s Navy Drill Sends Strong Message to South China Sea Claimants,” *Radio Free Asia*, August 20, 2021, accessed January 30, 2023. <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/>

surrounding waters of both the Luconia Shoals and the Kasawari Gas Development Project. Le Mière argues that maritime diplomacy aims to convey messages and signals to opponents. The Malaysian navy has been deliberately deployed to convey signals of the country's discontent with China's assertive actions. Scholarly works suggest that both gunboat diplomacy and coercive maritime diplomacy serve as foreign policy doctrines, deliberately employing assertiveness at sea as a constructed strategy with specific political goals.⁷⁷ As demonstrated in a naval exercise in 2021,⁷⁸ Malaysia signaled its assertive intent in the South China Sea by conducting a naval drill to showcase its capabilities, particularly in response to escalating tensions within Malaysia's EEZ.⁷⁹ The utilization of Malaysian naval forces in response to incidents involving CCG intrusions may seem coincidental at first glance. It is essential, however, to avoid prematurely concluding that Malaysia is pursuing a coercive shift in its South China Sea strategies. Determining the coerciveness of maritime diplomatic strategies is inherently linked to the geographical context in which they unfold.

These dynamics suggest that the use of Malaysian naval forces may not necessarily imply a deliberate strategy of coercive maritime diplomacy. Instead, it could be a result of the close proximity of the locations of James Shoal and the Luconia Shoals to the mainland of Sarawak, necessitating the operation of naval vessels by Malaysian authorities.⁸⁰ In addition, the patrolling and surveillance capabilities of the MMEA are still limited, possibly due to its lack of facilities, human resources, and assets.⁸¹ In essence, while it is evident that Malaysia employs elements of coercive maritime diplomacy, deciphering the precise nature of its political intentions is a complex challenge.

Other Southeast Asian countries tend to deploy their maritime constabulary forces rather than navies in response to CCG intrusions and harassment in their territorial waters. Notable instances of this approach can be observed in the context of Indonesia, which typically relies on the Indonesian Maritime Security Agency (BAKAMLA),⁸² and Vietnam, which conducts its maritime power projections through its Vietnam Fisheries Resources Surveillance (VFRS) fleets.⁸³ In contrast, the Philippines has a distinct pattern of employing its coast guard to achieve maritime diplomatic objectives, as its leadership refrains from adopting a coercive maritime diplomatic strategy in order to secure economic benefits from submitting to China's lucrative economic opportunities.⁸⁴

Malaysia's persuasive maritime diplomatic efforts in the South China Sea complement its triadic maritime diplomacy. Unlike coercive diplomacy, persuasive diplomacy's primary aim is to demonstrate the presence and effectiveness of its maritime capabilities—a form of the “showing the flag” policy.⁸⁵ Consequently, its implementation does not intend to coerce or deter adversaries. The jurisdictional areas where Malaysia's navy operates cover all of

china/malaysia-drill-08202021155721.html

⁷⁷ See, Till, *Seapower*; Davidson, “Modern Naval Diplomacy”; Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy*.

⁷⁸ The naval exercise “Taming Sari” lasted six days, consisted of a live launch of an anti-ship missile (through Malaysia's navy submarine *KD Tun Razak*), and the launch of guided missiles by the RMN's *KD Lekiu* and *KD Lekir*.

⁷⁹ “Analysts: Malaysia's Navy Drill.”

⁸⁰ The closest RMN port is the Kuching patrol vessel base located in Sarawak.

⁸¹ Parameswaran, “Assessing Malaysia's Coast Guard in ASEAN Perspective,” *The Diplomat*, May 2, 2017, accessed February 29, 2023. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/05/assessing-malysias-coast-guard-in-asean-perspective/>; Jim Dolbow, “Malaysia Coast Guard Is One to Watch,” *U.S. Naval Institute*, April 2018, <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2018/april/malaysia-coast-guard-one-watch>

⁸² Putra, “The rise of paragonboat diplomacy,” 106-124.

⁸³ Putra, “Rise of Constabulary Maritime Agencies,” 1-15.

⁸⁴ Putra, “The Golden Age of White Hulls,” 1-14.

⁸⁵ Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy*.

Malaysia's maritime zones, including the territorial sea, EEZ, and the continental shelf.⁸⁶ Therefore, given that most of the tensions that ensued from the CCG intrusions have occurred in the Luconia Shoals, which is within 100 nautical miles of Malaysia's baseline, it is expected that Malaysia's navy will operate and assert its presence in those surrounding waters.

Great powers frequently employ persuasive diplomacy to assert their ongoing maritime dominance.⁸⁷ However, for secondary states such as Malaysia, the strong presence of naval forces in Malaysia's EEZ waters poses a challenge when considering it as a mere display of maritime capabilities. This challenge becomes particularly apparent in the context of Malaysia's stance towards the South China Sea, where it has embraced the tendency to downplay many past crises and shunned interpretations of CCG intrusions as threats.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, as persuasive maritime diplomacy does not require explicit deterring and compelling intentions, Malaysia's maritime diplomatic strategy incorporates elements of persuasive maritime diplomacy, albeit with unique considerations in the context of the South China Sea.

In an effort to balance the perceived assertive gestures at sea, Malaysia also employs co-operative maritime diplomacy. Events falling under this category involve states sharing political goals to achieve common goals.⁸⁹ Co-operative diplomacy harnesses soft power by utilizing hard power assets such as navies or maritime constabulary forces, taking the form of goodwill visits, humanitarian assistance, training and joint exercises, and joint maritime security operations.⁹⁰ In the case of Malaysia's maritime diplomatic strategy, a key element has been the cultivation of influence and coalitions through joint navy exercises and drills, a role primarily managed by the RMN and supported by the MMEA.

In 2017 and 2021, Malaysia held the Malaysia-Thailand-Indonesia (MTA) joint naval exercise with the U.S., aiming to foster a conducive maritime diplomatic environment in the Indo-Pacific region.⁹¹ Malaysia's navy also collaborated with the U.S. in the ASEAN-U.S. Maritime Exercise in 2019, which consisted of maritime drills in the South China Sea flashpoints.⁹² Additionally, Malaysia sought partnerships with neighboring nations, including Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore, conducting joint naval exercises on three occasions in 2022.⁹³ Through these joint exercises, Malaysia's co-operative maritime diplomacy signifies its willingness to cooperate with other stakeholders in managing international relations at sea. However, the ongoing regional engagement that the Malaysian navy maintains with its

⁸⁶ See, Krishnan, "Malaysia's Conceptualization."

⁸⁷ In the past, Theodore Roosevelt's "Great White Fleet" that navigated globally between 1907 and 1909 is a clear of example of a state's intent in showcasing a state's maritime-based hard power assets.

⁸⁸ Storey, "Malaysia and the South China Sea Dispute."

⁸⁹ Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy*.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ "US and RMN navies conduct bilateral exercise MTA Malaysia 2017," *Naval Technology*, September 20, 2017, accessed March 30, 2023. <https://www.naval-technology.com/news/newsus-and-malaysian-navies-begin-bilateral-mta-exercise-this-year-5929965/>; "US and Malaysian navies conduct bilateral exercise 'MTA Malaysia 2021'," *Naval Technology*, November 24, 2021, accessed March 30, 2023. <https://www.naval-technology.com/news/us-malaysia-exercise-mta-malaysia-2021/?cf-view>

⁹² "First ASEAN-US Maritime Exercise Successfully Concludes," *Commander U.S. 7th Fleet*, September 6, 2019, accessed February 25, 2023. <https://www.c7f.navy.mil/Media/News/Display/Article/1954403/first-asean-us-maritime-exercise-successfully-concludes/>

⁹³ "Singapore and Malaysia Navies Conclude 30th Edition of Bilateral Naval Exercise Malapura," *MINDEF Singapore*, November 14, 2022, accessed March 30, 2023. https://www.mindef.gov.sg/web/portal/mindef/news-and-events/latest-releases/article-detail/2022/November/14nov22_nr; Kukuh S. Wibowo, "Indonesia, Malaysia Conduct Joint Military Exercise in Java Sea," *Tempo*, August 29, 2022, accessed March 30, 2023. <https://en.tempo.co/read/1628179/indonesia-malaysia-conduct-joint-military-exercise-in-java-sea>; Durie Rainer Fong, "Bintulu naval base a must for Malaysia's security in South China Sea, says Bongowan rep.," *The Star*, March 21, 2023, accessed March 30, 2023. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2023/03/21/bintulu-naval-base-a-must-for-malaysia039s-security-in-south-china-sea-says-bongowan-rep>

Southeast Asian counterparts and with the U.S. underscores Malaysia's strong preferences for co-operative maritime diplomatic strategies in addressing tensions in the South China Sea.

Nonetheless, the MMEA has also actively engaged in co-operative maritime diplomatic activities. In 2013, the Japan Coast Guard conducted maritime security drills in collaboration with the MMEA. The joint drills held significant importance for Malaysia's coast guard, as it marked their first time training with long-range acoustic devices as part of a drill scenario designed to respond to intrusion in the South China Sea.⁹⁴ The MMEA serves as Malaysia's principal maritime law enforcer.⁹⁵ However, it faces significant resource constraints,⁹⁶ particularly when compared to the fleets of CCG. Consequently, Malaysia's navy has assumed the frontline responsibility for asserting sovereign dominance. These resource shortages are surprising, considering that the MMEA's vision is "to be among the best maritime law enforcement agencies in the world."⁹⁷

There are high expectations that the MMEA will step up its role in Malaysia's maritime diplomacy. As seen in the case of Indonesia, maritime security agencies are taking on more active roles in both coercive and co-operative maritime diplomacy. Indonesia's BAKAMLA, for instance, serves as Indonesia's primary agency with the assigned role of deterring CCG intrusions, offering a less escalatory alternative to using naval forces.⁹⁸ The MMEA can contribute strategically to Malaysia's overall maritime diplomatic strategy. Maritime constabulary forces possess greater flexibility and, being civilian and non-military in nature, can undertake limited coercive actions to deter and compel adversaries at sea.⁹⁹ Unlike navies, whose operations can easily be perceived as escalating conflicts, maritime security agencies are often considered acceptable actors for peacefully managing tensions.

Recent developments in Malaysia's maritime diplomatic strategies reflect a preference for a triadic approach to counter China's assertiveness at sea, particularly in the vicinity of the Kasawari gas field and the Luconia Shoals. Malaysia's traditional stance in the South China Sea involves balancing domestic demand to protect its sovereign waters while maintaining a measured response to crises due to the importance of China in Malaysia's development. The seemingly contradictory stance is achieved by employing a combination of coercive, persuasive, and co-operative maritime diplomacy to yield maximal benefits.

5. Making Sense of Malaysia's Triadic Maritime Diplomacy Strategy in the South China Sea

Malaysia's approach to South China Sea-related crises differs from that of its ASEAN counterparts. There has been a clear pattern since 2015 showing that Southeast Asian states have increasingly invested in and emphasized the role of maritime constabulary forces and coast guards in defending their sovereignty at sea.¹⁰⁰ All claimant states of the South China

⁹⁴ Yusof and David, "Malaysian, Japanese coast guard."

⁹⁵ Dolbow, "Malaysia Coast Guard."

⁹⁶ Chew, "Malaysia must shift."

⁹⁷ Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency, "Visi dan Misi," *Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency*, accessed February 20, 2023. <https://www.mmea.gov.my/eng/index.php/ms/mengenai-kami-2/visi-misi>

⁹⁸ Putra, "Rise of Constabulary Maritime Agencies," 1-15.

⁹⁹ Le Mière, *Maritime Diplomacy*.

¹⁰⁰ Darwis and Bama Andika Putra, "Construing Indonesia's Maritime Diplomatic Strategies against Vietnam's Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing in the North Natuna Sea," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 49, no. 4 (2022): 172-192.

Sea disputes have expressed their unwavering commitment to defending their respective claims in the disputed waters. The Philippines has taken a distinctly legal stance to its claims.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, Vietnam has adopted a strategy similar to China's, utilizing maritime constabulary forces to assert effective control at sea.¹⁰² In contrast, Malaysia's maritime diplomatic strategies aim to demonstrate moderate decisiveness while retaining the flexibility to negotiate terms for a peaceful resolution. Nevertheless, it has been pivotal for Malaysia to stay consistent towards its issued Defence White Paper 2019, categorizing the uncertainties of the great power rivalry of the U.S. and China in the region and the intrusions into Malaysia's territory in the South China Sea as a major concern for the administration.¹⁰³

To understand the trends displayed by Malaysian policymakers, we first examine China's economic significance as Malaysia's leading trading partner. In this context, it is important to consider Malaysia's deep economic connections with the world's most robust economy. Statistics reveal China has remained Malaysia's major trading partner for 14 consecutive years, with the two-way trade reaching 203.6 billion USD in 2022.¹⁰⁴ Chew (2021) provides an intriguing perspective, suggesting that Malaysia views its relationship with China as multifaceted due to its importance for Malaysia's future socio-economic development.¹⁰⁵ This stance challenges the notion that the South China Sea conflict solely determines Malaysia-China bilateral relations. For instance, the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA), signed in 2002, played a major role in establishing stronger trade ties due to eliminating tariffs on goods and service trades.¹⁰⁶

In the context of investment, a similar trend is observed in China's economic importance to Malaysia. China has held the position of Malaysia's leading investor since 2016. This aligns with Malaysia's goal of advancing infrastructural development, complemented by opportunities generated from BRI investments. Notable Chinese investments in Malaysia include projects like the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL), connecting the East and West Coasts of Peninsular Malaysia,¹⁰⁷ and the 2021 construction of the Batang Saribas Bridge.¹⁰⁸ Prominent Chinese companies, including LONGi Solar Technology, Huawei Technologies, and Alibaba Group Holding, have chosen to invest in Malaysia, attracted by favorable service tariffs facilitated by the ACFTA. There is a distinct connection between Malaysia's understated approach to the South China Sea crisis and the investment and trade opportunities generated by China.¹⁰⁹

Malaysia's adoption of triadic maritime diplomacy in the South China Sea stems from the necessity to secure and bolster economic ties with China. Malaysia's primary political interest focuses on ensuring China's continued role as Malaysia's top trading and investment

¹⁰¹ Jay Batongbacal, "The Philippines' Conceptualization of Maritime Security," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, November 4, 2021, accessed January 10, 2023. <https://amti.csis.org/philippine-conceptualization-of-maritime-security/>

¹⁰² "Flooding the Zone."

¹⁰³ Malaysia Ministry of Defence, "Defence White Paper 2019," *Malaysia Ministry of Defence*, December 2, 2019, accessed November 29, 2019. <https://www.mod.gov.my/images/mindef/article/kpp/DWP-3rd-Edition-02112020.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ Ananthakshmi, "Malaysia says it will protect its rights."

¹⁰⁵ Amy Chew, "South China Sea: why Malaysia and Indonesia differ in countering Beijing's maritime claims," *South China Morning Post*, October 28, 2021, accessed March 30, 2023. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3153932/south-china-sea-why-malaysia-and-indonesia-differ-countering>

¹⁰⁶ "ASEAN, China announce ACFTA upgrade," *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, November 13, 2022, accessed November 29, 2023. <https://asean.org/asean-china-announce-acfta-upgrade/>

¹⁰⁷ The East Coast Rail Link commenced its construction in 2017 and is predicted to be completed in 2026. It is part of China's Belt Road Initiative-related funding, which would connect the West and East Coast peninsulas of Malaysia.

¹⁰⁸ Chris Devonshire-Ellis, "2023 Investment Opportunities in Malaysia," *ASEAN Briefing*, August 1, 2022, accessed January 10, 2023. <https://www.aseanbriefing.com/news/2023-investment-opportunities-in-malaysia/>

¹⁰⁹ Syailendra, "The Sense and Sensibility of Malaysia's Approach."

partner, especially amidst ongoing security concerns in the South China Sea.¹¹⁰ Malaysia recognizes that the crisis unfolding in the South China Sea remains under the grey zone area, making it challenging to address it through a legal or international law-based approach. Given the situation's complexity, Malaysia is taking a cautious stance, avoiding action that could provoke China.¹¹¹ Instead, it adopts a minimalist approach to demonstrate flexibility in open negotiation and capacity-building measures. By adopting coercive maritime diplomatic tactics, Malaysia accentuates the significance of the South China Sea claims to domestic constituencies and assures the public of its steadfastness in safeguarding the country's sovereignty at sea.¹¹² Through persuasive and co-operative maritime diplomacy, Malaysia aligns its policies with regional allies, seeking sustainable maritime security. It also signals its commitment to defend its maritime jurisdictional waters in accordance with established international laws. As stated by Anwar Ibrahim during a keynote address at the 36th Asia-Pacific Roundtable in 2023, "...Malaysia has always advocated for peaceful and constructive settlement of all disputes, in line with international laws' recognized norms and principles, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea."¹¹³ Through these seemingly contradictory stances, Malaysia both advances its Kasawari Gas Development Project and conveys its friendly intentions to Beijing.

Malaysia's maritime diplomatic strategies in the South China Sea can also be understood through the lens of its hedging policies in its foreign policy alignment. Scholars have extensively discussed the foreign policy alignment strategies of Malaysia and other Southeast Asian states, commonly identifying hedging as a prevalent approach.¹¹⁴ Hedging involves pursuing a non-aligned stance while exhibiting alignment-ambiguous policies to offset the risks associated with great power alignment and maximize the potential benefits.¹¹⁵ In Malaysia's case, the U.S. has consistently held a pivotal role as its primary defence partner, even in light of Malaysia's robust trade and investment relations with China. For instance, Malaysia maintains a close defence partnership with these nations despite initial concerns about the trilateral security pact between the US, Australia, and the UK (AUKUS). This is exemplified in the joint exercises conducted between Malaysia and the U.S., highlighting the potential for stronger cooperation between Malaysia and the U.S. and its allies. Simultaneously, Malaysia's defensive bilateral relations with China have remained steadfast since 2014. Despite differences at sea, China's and Malaysia's armed forces have consistently engaged in annual bilateral exercises from 2014 to 2018.¹¹⁶

The foundations of this hedging policy by Malaysia are illustrated by the country's refusal to acknowledge the existence of a dispute with China, as evidenced by Malaysia's

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "Shades of grey: riskification and hedging in the Indo-Pacific," *The Pacific Review* 36, no. 6 (2022): 1181-1214.

¹¹² Ananthakakshmi, "Malaysia says it will protect its rights."

¹¹³ Qistina Sallehuddin and Nuqman Adam, "PM: Malaysia stays firm in protecting sovereignty in South China Sea," *New Strait Times*, August 10, 2023, accessed November 29, 2023. <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2023/08/941086/pm-malaysia-stays-firm-protecting-sovereignty-south-china-sea>

¹¹⁴ David Martin Jones and Nicole Jenne, "Hedging and grand strategy in Southeast Asian foreign policy," *International Relations of the Asia Pacific* 22, no. 2 (2022): 205-235; Evelyn Goh, "Southeast Asian Strategies toward the Great Powers: Still Hedging after All These Years?" *The ASAN Forum*, February 22, 2016, accessed March 30, 2023. <https://theasanforum.org/southeast-asian-strategies-toward-the-great-powers-still-hedging-after-all-these-years/>; Kuik, "Shades of grey," 1181-1214.

¹¹⁵ Jurgen Haacke, "The concept of hedging and its application to Southeast Asia: a critique for a modified conceptual and methodological framework," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 19, no. 3 (2019): 375-417.

¹¹⁶ Bing, "Malaysia-China Defence Ties."

note verbale exchanges between 2019 and 2020.¹¹⁷ This position provides Malaysia with the flexibility it needs, as it refrains from adopting a decisive South China Sea policy that would bind its action. Malaysia's triadic maritime diplomacy, coupled with the non-confrontational signals, projects an image of non-opposition to China, thereby paving the way for continued productive bilateral relations within their multifaceted bilateral relationship.

Malaysia can push forward conflict resolution mechanisms and tension management under ASEAN by downplaying the South China Sea disputes. Part of Malaysia's strategy involves maintaining a non-decisive and flexible stance for Malaysia. This can be achieved by echoing the crucial role of ASEAN in managing tensions and potentially assisting in conflict resolution in the South China Sea. As outlined by the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia is committed to peaceful measures to resolve the tensions, with reference to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).¹¹⁸ By advocating for an ASEAN-based resolution, Malaysia could achieve its goal of avoiding a decisive and assertive maritime diplomatic strategy regarding the South China Sea. ASEAN-based solutions prioritize amity, cooperation, consensus, and co-operative values, all of which align with Malaysia's interests in maintaining cordial relations with China while maintaining distinct boundaries.

Malaysia has repeatedly referred to the ASEAN's long-negotiated Code of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (COC).¹¹⁹ Malaysia still believes there is potential to finalize the COC as the principal legal instrument for managing tensions in the disputed waters. Its commitment to concluding a COC and temporarily adhering to the existing Code of Conduct Declaration showcases Malaysia's genuine intent to downplay the South China Sea issue. This is because the COC negotiations have remained in stalemate for two decades, making it unlikely for a resolution to be reached in the coming years.¹²⁰ By consistently endorsing the COC and ASEAN-based resolution approaches to address the crisis, Malaysia actively promotes diplomatic efforts to resolve tensions that threaten its sovereignty while also recognizing that there may be no need to adopt a decisive South China Sea policy for several years to come.

6. Conclusion

What arguably sets Malaysia apart from its Southeast Asian claimants is its distinctive foreign policy approach when countering China's aggression within its national jurisdictional waters. Malaysia has chosen a strategy that aims to de-escalate emerging crises by avoiding tensions and confrontations at sea. Even in the face of frequent intrusions by the CCG and maritime militia vessels, Malaysia has generally downplayed the incidents. It does not perceive them as overt provocations as long as they do not disrupt the country's ongoing exploration and drilling operations of hydrocarbon resources.

Nonetheless, this foreign policy orientation has shifted in recent years due to Malaysia's Kasawari Gas Development Project. It appears that securing hydrocarbon resources in the oil and gas fields in the South China Sea holds paramount importance for Malaysia, regardless of its potential to cause irritants in the country's relations with China. This foreign policy

¹¹⁷ Syailendra, "The Sense and Sensibility of Malaysia's Approach."

¹¹⁸ "Malaysia's Position on the South China Sea."

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Rahul Mishra, "Code of Conduct in the South China Sea: More Discord than Accord," *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 13, no. 2 (2017): 62-75.

priority has garnered strong support from local political elites and government officials, with many of them perceiving this as the way forward for ensuring the country's energy security for decades ahead.

Despite the fact that the Malaysian government has often maintained a low-key rhetoric in dealing with China's aggressions, incidents of intrusions and assertive actions in Malaysia's EEZ areas by China's coast guard, government agencies, and maritime militia ships have increasingly become the norm. These situations have compelled Malaysian policymakers to adopt an assertive stance in response to these incidents. Consequently, Malaysia has introduced a more proactive naval presence within its EEZ waters to safeguard its sovereign rights while still pursuing a diplomatic path, seeking negotiation, and refraining from escalating tensions. This article investigates this intriguing development by probing how Malaysia manages these seemingly contradictory policies, thereby shedding light on the country's current stance regarding the South China Sea, especially after the first discovery of the lucrative gas reserves in the Kasawari gas field in 2011.

First, this article contends that the dynamics of Malaysia's response to the South China Sea conflict have undergone a significant transformation. This shift is primarily attributed to Malaysia's accelerated efforts in advancing the Kasawari Gas Development Project, which has drawn Beijing's attention and retaliation. Consequently, China's assertive responses via CCG and maritime militia vessels have escalated in recent years. Several cases reported by the AMTI provide evidence of a steady rise of Chinese aggression at sea, particularly near the contested Luconia Shoals. China's confrontational approach has also influenced Malaysia's perspective on geopolitical tensions, leading to a modified approach and strategy for adapting to emerging crises.

Consequently, this article identifies a contradictory policy in Malaysia's response to the South China Sea crisis. On the one hand, it seeks to appease its domestic constituents and uphold traditional maritime security principles in its South China Sea claims by deploying hard-power maritime assets, like the navy, for patrolling functions. On the other hand, Malaysia continues to downplay the crisis, demonstrating a willingness to engage in negotiations and deny the existence of a territorial dispute between Malaysia and China.

Second, this study draws on Le Mièrè's concept of maritime diplomacy to argue that Malaysia employs a combination of coercive, persuasive, and co-operative maritime diplomatic strategies, which are collectively termed "triadic maritime diplomacy." Coercive maritime diplomatic strategies are exemplified by Malaysia's ongoing use of its hard-power assets, such as the navy, to compel and deter adversaries at sea. Malaysia's persuasive maritime diplomatic strategy is evident through its naval forces' active and compelling presence in the contiguous zones. Lastly, its co-operative maritime diplomacy signals Malaysia's willingness to collaborate and align interests to enhance maritime security, as demonstrated through joint naval exercises and maritime security agency drills with partner nations. Malaysia's maritime diplomatic strategies empowered them to selectively downplay the South China Sea dispute in certain scenarios while adopting a resolute posture in others.

Thirdly, this article posits that this seemingly contradictory policy serves a dual purpose of accommodating future economic opportunities involving China and signalling non-alignment with major global powers. China stands as Malaysia's foremost trading partner and leading investor. By employing diverse maritime diplomatic strategies, Malaysia avoids the need for hasty conflict resolution, thereby enabling the continuation of trade relations between

the two countries. Additionally, Malaysia's non-aligned stance is maintained when engaging with Western nations in most of its defence relations, while also balancing its economic and relatively limited defence relations with China. Ultimately, Malaysia's consistent rhetoric in support of ASEAN-based mechanisms, i.e. the Code of Conduct, allows it to sustain a contradictory policy vis-à-vis China in the South China Sea dispute.

This article supports those assumptions in connection to existing studies that interpret Malaysia's foreign policies vis-à-vis China as hedging. Hedging can take many different forms, and this article shows that certain maritime diplomatic policies, such as those engaged by Malaysia in the Kasawari gas fields, are also forms of hedging. The main argument held by hedging scholars is that states adopt contradictory policies to offset the risks of alignment. The triadic maritime diplomacy of Malaysia also consists of a decisive policy to counter sea-based intrusions into Malaysian territory, coupled with actions and rhetoric that downplay the crisis due to the need of Kuala Lumpur to secure China's lucrative economic opportunities.

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Theorising the Hedging Strategy: National Interests, Objectives, and Mixed Foreign Policy Instruments

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Abstract

Hedging is a comprehensive foreign policy strategy that mixes competitive and cooperative approaches and is used to manage competing national interests during conditions of uncertainty over the future distribution of power. However, the literature is characterised by a lack of consensus on the central features of hedging, which leads to contradictions in how the concept of hedging is applied. First, this paper assesses the definition of hedging, identifies three rival approaches, and links the risks and opportunities of hedging with uncertainty over the future international distribution of power. Second, it discusses how the various interpretations of hedging have inspired different analytical models. Finally, it explains hedging as a theoretically intermediate and analytically mixed strategy. These claims are supported by studying the Asia-Pacific region, where hedging has become the dominant strategy for coping with the uncertainty surrounding the future distribution of power stemming from the rise of China.

Keywords: Hedging, Asia-Pacific, uncertainty, competition, China

1. Introduction

The rationalist ideal posits that states should find an optimal equilibrium between benefits and costs. This best-case scenario assumes that states are completely informed about the intentions and interests of other states. Should this be the case, the most rational strategic choice would be to either balance or bandwagon. However, constraints, such as uncertainty about the future intentions of rising powers, render scenarios of complete awareness virtually impossible. Currently, the rise of China poses threats as well as opportunities, creating uncertainty over the future international distribution of power. Disagreement about whether China will attempt to change the status quo aggressively or peacefully has sown seeds of doubt in the international system. Due to this uncertainty, few states have opted for either a pure balancing or bandwagoning strategy, with most preferring a mix of competition and cooperation. Accordingly, hedging (a mixed strategy) has emerged as a promising approach for analysis of foreign policy in times of uncertainty over the future distribution of power.

Theorising on hedging is far from complete. Academics continue to disagree, with a majority basing their ideas on the Asia-Pacific region's response to China's rise. The only point of agreement is the need to study both the material capabilities and the interdependencies of states. The term 'hedging' has been used to describe divergent strategies, whether competitive or mixed. Contrasting assumptions about what hedging is and how it can be integrated into

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foreign policy analysis have prevented a standardisation of the term, frustrating attempts to build sophisticated theoretical and analytical frameworks.

This paper responds to those scholars who have lamented the scarce theoretical conceptualisation of the hedging strategy.¹ I seek to fill this research gap by applying a novel approach that links hedging with soft strategies and states' competing interests and adjusts the analytical framework to these new theoretical ideas. The research was conducted based on two assumptions. First, that hedging theorisation is grounded in the balancing-bandwagoning strategic continuum embedded within the balance of power theory; however, the objectives of hedger states differ from balancers and bandwagoners. Second, that hedging relates to a state's *interests* in the three major fields of foreign policy: economy, diplomacy, and security. Ultimately, hedging capitalises on contradictory behaviour *between* and/or *within* the fields of foreign policy, stemming from a mix of *soft* balancing and *soft* bandwagoning approaches to foreign policy.

Following this logic, hedger states mix foreign policy signals depending on which national interests they intend to promote. In this context, I propose a shift in emphasis toward national interests, diverging from the prevailing literature that centres on what a country aims to avoid—whether it be managing risks or navigating uncertainty. National interests can vary, ranging from national security and political stability to economic prosperity, all converging toward the fundamental goal of ensuring the survival of the nation. It is noteworthy that the weight a nation assigns to each of these interests evolves over time. This variability underscores the reason why hedging strategies can manifest in diverse forms, a point that will be explored later in this paper. Accordingly, I describe hedging as a strategy for managing competing national interests during conditions of uncertainty regarding the future distribution of power. To properly manage these competing interests, states employ a mix of competitive and cooperative behaviours towards the source of unease. Considering the heterogeneity of these behaviours, I affirm that while hedging is a rational strategy (assuming that states maximise their benefits), the means of pursuing hedging are incoherent, pointing to distinct and usually contradictory interests.

To address the aforementioned sources of ambiguity regarding the study of hedging (theoretical and analytical), the following section will assess the definition of hedging, identify three rival approaches, and link the risks and opportunities of hedging with the uncertainty over the future distribution of power. This is followed by a discussion of the basic features of hedging by focusing on its contradictions, as well as its mixed and intermediate nature. As for the ambiguity in hedging analysis, I discuss the different analytical models that have been proposed. Scholars who place hedging along the balancing-bandwagoning continuum have offered the most sophisticated analytical models. In this regard, soft balancing and soft bandwagoning are key to comprehensively understanding hedging within the balance of power theory. Furthermore, building upon Kuik's analytical model,² I discuss the trade-offs

¹ Hoo Tiang Boon, "The Hedging Prong in India's Evolving China Strategy," *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, no. 101 (2016): 792–804; Lluc López i Vidal, "Cambio y Continuidad En La Política Exterior y de Seguridad de Japón (1989-2009): La Transformación de La Doctrina Yoshida y La Adopción de Una Estrategia Hedging Ante El Ascenso de China" (PhD diss., Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2011); Lluc López i Vidal and Àngels Pelegrín, "Hedging against China: Japanese Strategy towards a Rising Power," *Asian Security* 14, no. 2 (2018): 193–211; Evan S. Medeiros, "Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2005): 145–167; Jae Jeok Park, "The US-Led Alliances in the Asia-Pacific: Hedge against Potential Threats or an Undesirable Multilateral Security Order?" *The Pacific Review* 24, no. 2 (2011): 137–158.

² Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "The Essence of Hedging: Malaysia and Singapore's Response to a Rising China," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 30, no. 2 (2008): 159–185; Kuik, "Smaller States' Alignment Choices: A Comparative Study of Malaysia and Singapore's Hedging Behavior in the Face of a Rising China" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2010); Kuik, "How Do Weaker

between national interests and the inconsistencies that are inherent to hedging.

The Asia-Pacific region is used to support and contextualise these claims, as hedging has been regarded as the region's dominant strategy for coping with the uncertainty caused by the rise of China. While I do not aim to offer a concrete account of countries' hedging strategies, I will provide an analysis of the behaviours exhibited by several Asia-Pacific countries that can be identified as hedging. By choosing the broad scope of the Asia-Pacific, I intend to provide a wider range of behaviours and examples of the incoherence that stems from hedging. Finally, I conclude by identifying the key ideas that make the theoretical and analytical frameworks of hedging a useful tool for studying the foreign policy choices of states.

2. Defining Hedging

The conceptual ambiguity of hedging has led to excessively broad interpretations that have trivialised the underlying theory and hindered further foreign policy analysis.³ Among the attempts to characterise hedging is its definition as a risk management strategy, applied in anticipation of a worsening international environment.⁴ However, a more accurate description should also consider the key role of hedging in managing competing national interests.⁵ In this vein, Kuik⁶ argued that states balance the interests of benefit maximising and risk contingency through behaviours that produce contradictory effects. Thus, behaviours of hedger states may be competitive (e.g. investing in military capabilities) or cooperative (e.g. promoting economic engagement). Put simply, hedging refers to the particular actions undertaken by a state to find a satisfactory balance between its competing interests while accepting that none will be achieved entirely.

The literature contains three approaches on how scholars understand hedging, which I term *securitist*, *integrative*, and *relationist*. Securitists assert that security should be the primary focus when studying hedging. For Lim and Cooper,⁷ hedger states send ambiguous signals for alignment in order to maintain some autonomy while mitigating disapproval from greater powers. For these authors, hedging is a security strategy designed to counter the disadvantages that are embedded in the alignment-autonomy dilemma. However, conceiving hedging as a strategy that seeks ambiguous or limited alignments contains a major inconsistency: alignment studies focus mainly on security, not on foreign policy as a whole. Consequently, securitists fall into what I call the 'securitist trap', as they do not consider hedging a comprehensive foreign policy strategy, but rather a limited version of external balancing. This line of thought is prevalent in the literature on hedging, particularly

States Hedge? Unpacking ASEAN States' Alignment Behavior towards China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 25, no. 100 (2016): 500–514.

³ John David Ciorciari, "The Balance of Great-Power Influence in Contemporary Southeast Asia," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 9, no. 1 (2009): 157–196; Björn Jerdén and Linus Hagström, "Rethinking Japan's China Policy: Japan as an Accommodator in the Rise of China, 1978–2011," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 12, no. 2 (2012): 215–250; Alexander Korolev, "Systemic Balancing and Regional Hedging: China–Russia Relations," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 9, no. 4 (2016): 375–397; López i Vidal and Pelegrín, "Hedging against China," 193–211.

⁴ Jürgen Haacke, "The Concept of Hedging and Its Application to Southeast Asia: A Critique and a Proposal for a Modified Conceptual and Methodological Framework," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 19, no. 3 (2019): 375–417; Yasuhiro Matsuda, "Engagement and Hedging: Japan's Strategy toward China," *The SAIS Review of International Affairs* 32, no. 2 (2012): 109–119.

⁵ Ivan Gonzalez Pujol, "Teoría y Práctica de La Estrategia Hedging: Descifrando La Política Exterior Japonesa Ante La Incertidumbre Del Ascenso de China" (PhD. diss., Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, 2019).

⁶ Kuik, "The Essence of Hedging," 159–185.

⁷ Darren J. Lim and Zack Cooper, "Reassessing Hedging: The Logic of Alignment in East Asia," *Security Studies* 24, no. 4 (2015): 696–727.

influenced by Haacke,⁸ which advocates for a shift in focus towards strategic goals. Haacke distinguishes responding to threats (balancing) from managing risks (hedging). However, authors within this group often face the challenge of differentiating between the instruments and behaviours associated with hedging and those of balancing, as both strategies hinge on security considerations to assert opposition to the hegemony of a great power.⁹

The securitist approach is grounded in the literal meaning of the verb ‘hedge’, emphasising the countermeasures a state deploys against a potentially aggressive rising power. As a result, securitists tend to distinguish between hedging and engagement behaviours when describing a state’s strategy. However, this fails to recognise how international relations (IR) literature has broadened the meaning of hedging to include foreign policy strategy as a whole, not just security. Hedging has the potential to comprehensively explain foreign policy, which is why it makes little sense to limit explanations to security dynamics.

The second group, the integrativists, understand hedging as a multidimensional strategy that encapsulates the major fields of foreign policy: economics, diplomacy, and security. The inclusion of these different fields has led integrativists to acknowledge hedging as a strategy comprised of contradictory behaviours, creating a much more comprehensive approach. A key figure advocating for an integrative analytical framework is Kuik.¹⁰ Recent works have built on Kuik’s ideas to add more specificity to his analytical framework.¹¹ Furthermore, others have deviated from structuralist perspectives by incorporating domestic variables, examining hedging through the lens of Neoclassical Realism.¹² As I also understand hedging as a comprehensive foreign policy strategy, I will further discuss the debates within the integrative group in the following sections.

Last, but by no means least, are the relationists. Relationists also consider hedging a comprehensive strategy but explain it based on the multiple relationships between international actors. In this regard, Jackson¹³ studied the complex networks that exist between states based on the ideas of sensitivity, fluidity, and heterarchy—all of which are relevant for understanding why hedging is a rational strategy. Despite its significant potential for explaining reality, there has been limited progress in advancing explanations of hedging through the lens of complex networks. Nevertheless, with a focus on relationships, efforts have been made linking the hedging strategy and trust dynamics among international agents.¹⁴ In essence, the relationist approach can be used to bridge different levels of analysis when studying foreign policy strategies and to provide a solid foundation for understanding how the theorisation of hedging is integrated with the relationship between foreign policy decision-making (at the domestic level of analysis) and uncertainty over the future structure of the international system (at the systemic level).

This diversity of views has produced divergent ideas around the basic understanding of hedging. First, Ciorciari discounted comprehensive approaches to hedging by stating that

⁸ Haacke, “The Concept of Hedging,” 375–417.

⁹ Denny Roy, “Southeast Asia and China: Balancing or Bandwagoning?” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 27, no. 2 (2005): 305–322.

¹⁰ Kuik, “‘Smaller States’ Alignment Choices.”

¹¹ López i Vidal and Pelegrín, “Hedging against China,” 193–211.

¹² Gonzalez Pujol, “Teoría y Práctica de La Estrategia Hedging.”

¹³ Van Jackson, “Power, Trust, and Network Complexity: Three Logics of Hedging in Asian Security,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 14, no. 3 (2014): 331–356.

¹⁴ Vincent Charles Keating and Jan Ruzicka, “Trusting Relationships in International Politics: No Need to Hedge,” *Review of International Studies* 40, no. 4 (October 2014): 753–770; Kendall W. Stiles, *Trust and Hedging in International Relations* (University of Michigan Press, 2018).

‘defined this broadly, hedging is ubiquitous in the contemporary order.’¹⁵ However, this is nothing new in IR. For much of the twentieth century, most of the great powers seemed to practise balancing. Similarly, hedging theorisation has become sophisticated enough to accommodate the world’s complexity. In this regard, integrativists and relationists (albeit each with their own distinct features) deny the primacy of security in favour of analysing all of the diverse fields of foreign policy (Figure 1). Based on the views of these two groups, I assert that hedging is a comprehensive foreign policy strategy with the primary goal of managing competing national interests. However, the specific composition of hedging will depend on how states weigh and pursue such interests as part of national security, political stability, and economic development.

Table 1: Approaches to Hedging

Securitist	Security prevails over other fields of foreign policy. Hedging is similar to a balancing strategy but is combined with strategies that promote cooperation.
Integrative	Hedging is a comprehensive foreign policy strategy. It combines instruments from other strategies and/or has distinct objectives.
Relativist	Hedging is a comprehensive foreign policy strategy. Complex network environments (sensitive, heterarchical, and fluid international systems) and dynamics of trust result in hedging strategies.

Like every strategy, hedging contains both opportunities and risks that states must consider when deciding on a foreign policy. Hedging offers mechanisms to avoid some of the negative effects of systemic uncertainty and to benefit from changes in the distribution of power. Such a strategy may also allow states to avert the negative outcomes of over-dependence, such as the loss of autonomy, the weakening of a state’s international role, or becoming embroiled in the rivalries of other states. On the other hand, the risks of hedging emerge from the contradiction of simultaneously engaging in cooperative and competitive behaviours. Indeed, hedging may incite conflict and increase the security concerns of actors who wrongly interpret hedging behaviour as a contingency strategy.¹⁶

This emphasizes the need to introduce a fundamental concept for this paper—the ‘fields’ of foreign policies. I use the term ‘field’ to designate the pivotal domains within foreign policy. While security has commonly been the most extensively studied field, diplomacy and economic relations have also emerged as core considerations for any grand or quasi-grand strategy. As the hedging strategy, by definition, inherently involves some degree of contradiction, it manifests through varying behaviours across these fields. For instance, hedging is often associated with signalling competition in the security sphere while concurrently strengthening economic ties.¹⁷ Distinguishing between security, diplomacy, and economic fields will be a central idea for further theoretical and analytical development in the subsequent sections of this paper.

Second, the literature is divided on whether trade-offs *between* fields of foreign policy are an essential feature of hedging. Securitists minimise the role of trade-offs. After redefining

¹⁵ John David Ciorciari, *The Limits of Alignment: Southeast Asia and the Great Powers since 1975* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 7.

¹⁶ Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross, eds., *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999).

¹⁷ Evelyn Goh, *Policy Studies 16: Meeting the China Challenge: The U.S. in Southeast Asian Regional Security Strategies* (Washington: East-West Center Washington, 2005); Ian Tsung-Yen Chen and Alan Hao Yang, “A Harmonized Southeast Asia? Explanatory Typologies of ASEAN Countries’ Strategies to the Rise of China,” *The Pacific Review* 26, no. 3 (July 1, 2013): 265–288; Jae Ho Chung, “East Asia Responds to the Rise of China: Patterns and Variations,” *Pacific Affairs* 82, no. 4 (2009): 657–675.

hedging as an alignment choice, Lim and Cooper¹⁸ expressed this idea by affirming that what is ‘important is what is excluded from our spectrum of alignment behaviours: policies of economic and political engagement. We argue these are poor signals of security alignment because they involve minimal trade-offs’. However, to assume that economic and political considerations are insignificant to national security is, at best, misleading. In contrast, Tessman and Wolfe¹⁹ considered bearing costs inherent to hedging, such as accepting economic inefficiencies or adverse diplomatic reactions. Again, this could be criticised, as hedging has been implemented regardless of whether trade-offs *between* fields of foreign policy exist. Defining hedging on the basis of whether there are trade-offs *between* fields of foreign policy leads to a debate between two antagonistic standpoints. It also leads to a dead end; trade-offs *between* fields of foreign policy are not a distinctive condition of hedging, as they can be extrapolated to various other foreign policy strategies. The uniqueness of hedging lies in the incoherencies and contradictions between a state’s cooperative and competitive behaviours. In short, instead of focusing on foreign policy trade-offs, hedging can be identified by examining the mixed nature of a state’s behaviours, not merely the cooperation and competition *between* fields (e.g., behaviours signalling contradictory interests from field to field), but also those in the same field (e.g., contradictory signalling *within* a field).

3. Hedging as a Mixed and Intermediate Strategy

Hedging theorisation is rooted in the balance of power theory, resulting in a debate regarding how hedging relates to other strategies. Bloomfield²⁰ and Lee²¹ argued that hedging is a distinct, intermediate strategy on a continuum between the two extremes of balancing and bandwagoning. Alternatively, Kuik,²² Medeiros,²³ Hornung,²⁴ Tunsjø,²⁵ and Lim and Mukherjee²⁶ categorised hedging as a mixed strategy built on the common behaviours of other strategies, thereby declaring the instruments of hedging as unoriginal. However, the debate between these two understandings is not necessarily insurmountable: a mixed strategy may (or may not) pursue unique goals. Thus, when scholars define hedging as an intermediate strategy, they stress the state’s goal of not favouring only one power. This can be achieved by combining behaviours from other strategies, thus also rendering hedging a mixed strategy.

Mixed strategies are rational responses to the uncertainty over the changing distribution of international power and the future intentions of a rising power. States tend to distrust the ability of other states to self-contain but simultaneously wish to avoid any escalation in tensions.²⁷ Consequently, hedger states seek to enhance economic, political, diplomatic, and institutional relations through engagement, accommodation, and binding. Hedger states also

¹⁸ Lim and Cooper, “Reassessing Hedging,” 707–708.

¹⁹ Brock F. Tessman and Wojtek Wolfe, “Great Powers and Strategic Hedging: The Case of Chinese Energy Security Strategy,” *International Studies Review* 13, no. 2 (2011): 214–240.

²⁰ Alan Bloomfield, “To Balance or to Bandwagon? Adjusting to China’s Rise during Australia’s Rudd–Gillard Era,” *The Pacific Review* 29, no. 2 (2016): 259–282.

²¹ Ji Yun Lee, “Hedging Strategies of the Middle Powers in East Asian Security: The Cases of South Korea and Malaysia,” *East Asia* 34, no. 1 (2017): 23–37.

²² Kuik, “The Essence of Hedging,” 159–185.

²³ Evan S. Medeiros, *China’s International Behavior: Activism, Opportunism, and Diversification* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2009).

²⁴ Jeffrey W. Hornung, “Japan’s Growing Hard Hedge against China,” *Asian Security* 10, no. 2 (2014): 97–122.

²⁵ Øystein Tunsjø, “China’s Rise: Towards a Division of Labor in Transatlantic Relations,” in *Responding to China’s Rise: US and EU Strategies*, ed. Vinod K. Aggarwal and Sara A. Newland (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2015), 151–174.

²⁶ Darren J. Lim and Rohan Mukherjee, “Hedging in South Asia: Balancing Economic and Security Interests amid Sino-Indian Competition,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 19, no. 3 (2019): 493–522.

²⁷ Denny Roy, “The ‘China Threat’ Issue: Major Arguments,” *Asian Survey* 36, no. 8 (1996): 758–771.

compete through complex, soft, or low-intensity balancing.²⁸ Following this line of thought, Goh²⁹ asserted that the eventual (predicted) peaceful power transition in Asia will result from two complementary strategies: the creation of regional, multilateral institutions and the use of indirect balancing towards China. Similarly, Roy³⁰ stated that the optimal strategy is a mix of engagement and low-intensity balancing: the former to reduce tensions and promote China's peaceful rise, and the latter to preserve future alliance-building opportunities to defend against (or oppose) China, if necessary. In essence, systemic incentives push states to combine cooperative and competitive actions. Kuik and Rozman³¹ highlighted the opposite behaviours of cooperation (benefit maximisation) and competition (risk contingency) as key features of hedging. These behaviours nullify each other, preserving strategic ambiguity and avoiding the need to fully support any great power.

In sum, despite hedging strategy being grounded in the balance of power theory, it is crucial to stress conceptual differences. Considering hedging as an intermediate strategy emphasizes its distinct objectives in comparison to balancing and bandwagoning, necessitating its classification as a separate strategy. Conversely, regarding hedging as a mixed strategy directs attention to its implementation, encompassing the instruments and behaviours employed by countries. Notably, these instruments are often (though not always) linked to those associated with balancing and bandwagoning. Only after accepting that hedging is also a mixed strategy can we expand the analysis into each field of foreign policy and the relationships between those fields.

4. Solving the Analytical Trilemma

The insufficient theoretical development of hedging has been encouraged by an existing analytical ambiguity—the result of both the complexity of disentangling the analytical content of hedging from empirical reality and the conceptual overlap with other foreign policy strategies.³² The literature has tried to clarify this ambiguity using three approaches.³³

The first approach is understanding hedging as an intermediate strategy comprised of unique features and goals. For Weitz,³⁴ balancing and engagement strategies are not always adequate, requiring states to occasionally turn to shaping and hedging to alter the intentions of a rising power. In this approach, hedger states promote contingency initiatives in preparation for failing to shape the behaviours of a rising power. Similarly, Michishita and Samuels³⁵ argued that Japan has been employing a 'double hedge' strategy in order to profit from the economic opportunities offered by China while concurrently seeking security from its support for the United States. Regrettably, these authors provided insufficient detail on how to analyse the 'double hedge'. In essence, adherents to this approach have identified some

²⁸ Lim and Cooper, "Reassessing Hedging," 696–727.

²⁹ Evelyn Goh, "Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies," *International Security* 32, no. 3 (2008): 113–157.

³⁰ Roy, "The 'China Threat' Issue," 758–771; Roy, "Southeast Asia and China," 305–322.

³¹ Cheng-Chwee Kuik and Gilbert Rozman, "Introduction," in *Light or Heavy Hedging: Positioning between China and the United States*, ed. Gilbert Rozman (Washington: Korea Economic Institute of America, 2015), 1–9.

³² Korolev, "Systemic Balancing and Regional Hedging," 375–397.

³³ There is no exact equivalence between how scholars understand hedging (securitist, integrative, or relationist) and the types of analytical models discussed in this section.

³⁴ Richard Weitz, "Meeting the China Challenge: Some Insights from Scenario-Based Planning," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 24, no. 3 (2001): 19–48.

³⁵ Narushige Michishita and Richard J. Samuels, "Hugging and Hedging: Japanese Grand Strategy in the Twenty-First Century," in *Worldviews of Aspiring Powers: Domestic Foreign Policy Debates in China, India, Iran, Japan and Russia*, eds. Henry R. Nau and Deepa M. Ollapally (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 167–203.

features of hedging, but overlook the details of its mixed nature and relationship with other foreign policy strategies.

The second approach claims that hedging occupies a middle ground between the two opposite (and extreme) options of balancing and engagement. Here, hedging is both an intermediate and a mixed strategy. This approach emphasises analysis of the instruments and behaviours of states. For Hornung,³⁶ the duality of balancing and engagement comes from the assumption that the former is inherently competitive while the latter is based on cooperation. Consequently, hedging becomes a strategy for reassuring other states through cooperative interaction while also preparing for revisionist behaviours through alliance-building and the strengthening of internal capabilities. In short, this second approach addresses the mixed nature of hedging and its relationship with other foreign policy strategies but fails to clarify the concrete means and goals of hedger states.

Finally, the third approach maintains that hedging is a compromise between the opposing strategies of balancing and bandwagoning. Like the preceding approach, it considers hedging to be both intermediate and mixed, but analytical interest is placed on the goals of the states. Two models from this approach must be highlighted. Koga³⁷ identified the three fields of foreign policy—economics, diplomacy, and security—though he considered diplomacy inferior to the other two. Koga developed his model based on two assumptions that appear to defy empirical logic: first, his prioritisation of economics and security, relegating diplomacy to a residual role. Perhaps it would have been more logical to integrate diplomacy into economics and security and consider only two fields, namely economic diplomacy and defence diplomacy. Second, Koga's assumption that states cannot engage in contradictory behaviours *within* each field reduces hedging to its minimal expression. This runs counter to political practices where contradictions *within* economics, diplomacy, and/or security are the norm. Therefore, despite its concreteness, this model is affected by analytical incongruity.

In contrast, Kuik³⁸ understood foreign policy behaviours as residing on a continuum between two extremes: rejection (pure balancing) and acceptance (pure bandwagoning). To Kuik, hedging is a mixed and intermediate strategy of various types of behaviours to limit risks and maximise benefits. According to Kuik, a hedging strategy *requires* contradictory foreign policy behaviours. Kuik identified six elements of hedging: economic diversification, dominance-denial, indirect balancing, economic pragmatism, binding-engagement, and limited bandwagoning.³⁹ Each of these relates to one field of foreign policy (economics, diplomacy, or security) in terms of either risk contingency or benefit maximisation. For Kuik,⁴⁰ hedging can be implemented in multiple ways, but it always requires the countervailing behaviours of cooperation and competition either *between* or *within* the fields of foreign policy.

Kuik also contributed to the theoretical development of hedging. He categorised states that favour risk contingency as 'heavy hedgers' and those primarily conducting benefit maximisation as 'light hedgers'⁴¹—a distinction that resembles Hornung's hard and soft

³⁶ Hornung, "Japan's Growing Hard Hedge against China," 97–122.

³⁷ Kei Koga, "The Concept of 'Hedging' Revisited: The Case of Japan's Foreign Policy Strategy in East Asia's Power Shift," *International Studies Review* 20, no. 4 (2017): 633–660.

³⁸ Kuik, "The Essence of Hedging," 159–185.

³⁹ *Ibid*; Kuik, "How Do Weaker States Hedge?" 500–514.

⁴⁰ Kuik, "The Essence of Hedging," 159–185.

⁴¹ Kuik, "Smaller States' Alignment Choices"; Cheng-Chwee Kuik, "Variations on a (Hedging) Theme: Comparing ASEAN Core States' Alignment Behavior," in *Light or Heavy Hedging: Positioning between China and the United States*, ed. Gilbert Rozman

hedging.⁴² However, it must be considered that the division between hard and soft does not apply as readily to hedging as it does to balancing and bandwagoning; these terms allude to *how* competition or cooperation is conducted, namely either directly (hard) or indirectly (soft). Instead, hedging occurs in the absence of an imminent threat, only adopting indirect behaviours and, therefore, *soft* foreign policy instruments. This incongruence can be overcome by differentiating between competitive and cooperative hedging, depending on the weight of the competitive or cooperative behaviours within the foreign policy. As for heavy and light hedging, these terms may warrant deeper interpretation. Heavy and light hedging might be linked to the *intensity* of the hedging strategy within a state's foreign policy. In this case, heavy hedging would refer to chiefly contradictory behaviours, whereas light hedging would mostly be associated with balancing or bandwagoning behaviours (which would eventually become contradictory). By distinguishing between competitive-cooperative hedging and heavy-light hedging, the basic features of a state's foreign policy can more easily be discerned.

In summary, the analytical framework of hedging has been clearly advanced and developed by scholars who regard it as an intermediate strategy between balancing and bandwagoning. However, they do not identify hedging as a soft strategy, obscuring which indicators are relevant for studying hedging. To build a complete theoretical and analytical model on hedging, its relationship with other soft strategies must also be understood. Thus, the theoretical boundaries of hedging are not found in the hard strategies of balancing or bandwagoning but in the softer alternatives: soft balancing and soft bandwagoning. To understand hedging's limits, composition, and indicators, it is essential to examine previous studies on soft strategies.

5. The Limits of Hedging

5.1. Soft balancing

Soft balancing is a reaction to a great power that is creating systemic unease, yet either provides an irreplaceable source of public goods or does not defy another's sovereignty.⁴³ While hard balancing assumes that competition between states is rooted in creating formal alliances with other powers (external balancing) or increasing capabilities (internal balancing), soft balancing seeks to limit a great power's influence through ententes or limited agreements.⁴⁴ Specifically, common soft-balancing instruments include limited arms build-up, cooperation agreements on specific issues, and collaboration within regional or global institutions.⁴⁵ This unmanifested form of competition avoids retaliation from stronger powers.⁴⁶

Theoretical studies on soft balancing emphasise several foreign policy instruments, such as the role of international organisations and economic statecraft, in limiting the influence

(Washington: Korea Economic Institute of America, 2015), 11–26.

⁴² Hornung, "Japan's Growing Hard Hedge against China," 97–122.

⁴³ Robert A. Pape, "Soft Balancing against the United States," *International Security* 30, no. 1 (2005): 7–45; T. V. Paul, "Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy," *International Security* 30, no. 1 (2005): 46–71.

⁴⁴ T. V. Paul, "Introduction: The Enduring Axioms of Balance of Power Theory and Their Contemporary Relevance," in *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*, eds. T. V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michael Fortmann (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 1–25.

⁴⁵ Justin Massie, "Toward Greater Opportunism: Balancing and Bandwagoning in Canada-US Relations," in *Game Changer: The Impact of 9/11 on North American Security*, eds. Jonathan Paquin and Patrick James (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014), 49–64; Paul, "Introduction," 1–25.

⁴⁶ Paul, "Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy," 46–71.

of the great powers.⁴⁷ In this context, Goh⁴⁸ encompassed the soft-balancing methods states employ under the term ‘complex balancing’. For Goh, complex balancing is composed of institutionalisation, diversification, and normalisation.⁴⁹

Institutionalization becomes a means of soft balancing because international organizations impose procedural and normative constraints that reassure members of maintaining their autonomy and channeling great powers’ competition in non-military ways.⁵⁰ He⁵¹ expressed this idea by outlining three methods of institutional balancing: inclusive institutional balancing, when competition occurs within an institution; exclusive institutional balancing, when the socialisation of a threatening state is impeded; and inter-institutional balancing, when competition emerges between institutions. Therefore, and in line with Paul,⁵² soft balancing uses international institutions and diplomatic agreements to balance power.

Economic diversification can also contribute to achieving soft-balancing goals,⁵³ leading Goh⁵⁴ to include it in her formulation of complex balancing. Economic diversification involves establishing economic links with multiple powers in order to avoid economic dependence on one power in particular. In this context, economic diversification aims to avoid being absorbed into others’ economic sphere, thereby countering the international goals of others and safeguarding its own economic autonomy. Specifically, the promotion of free trade agreements (FTAs) has become an essential means—though not the exclusive one—of fostering economic diversification.

Some authors have argued that soft balancing includes establishing security instruments to counterbalance regional rivals. Goh⁵⁵ describes this as ‘indirect military balancing’. Here, ‘indirect’ denotes the existence of a non-explicit threat. Indirect military balancing resembles low-intensity balancing,⁵⁶ which—in the absence of formal alliances—involves collaborating with a great power to maintain its regional engagement or to increase its regional military presence. Thus, soft balancers also normalise and politicise strategic competition in terms of security.⁵⁷

To summarise, soft balancing emerges as a rational, competitive reaction in an international system where intense institutional and economic interdependence makes direct challenges unsustainable.⁵⁸ The goal of soft balancing is to undermine the influence of a great power that poses an indefinite threat. Therefore, the key distinction from hard balancing is that soft balancing uses indirect means to undermine the relative power of others.

⁴⁷ Pape, “Soft Balancing against the United States,” 7–45; Paul, “Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy,” 46–71.

⁴⁸ Goh, “Great Powers and Hierarchical Order,” 113–157.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Kai He, “Institutional Balancing and International Relations Theory: Economic Interdependence and Balance of Power Strategies in Southeast Asia,” *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 3 (2008): 489–518.

⁵² Paul, “Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy,” 46–71.

⁵³ Pape, “Soft Balancing against the United States,” 7–45.

⁵⁴ Goh, “Great Powers and Hierarchical Order,” 113–157.

⁵⁵ Goh, *Meeting the China Challenge*; Goh, “Great Powers and Hierarchical Order,” 113–157.

⁵⁶ Roy, “Southeast Asia and China,” 305–322.

⁵⁷ Goh, “Great Powers and Hierarchical Order,” 113–157.

⁵⁸ Kai He and Huiyun Feng, “If Not Soft Balancing, Then What? Reconsidering Soft Balancing and U.S. Policy toward China,” *Security Studies* 17, no. 2 (2008): 363–395; Paul, “Introduction,” 1–25.

5.2. Soft bandwagoning

Similar to balancing, bandwagoning can be conducted indirectly and distinguished in terms of hard and soft. Indeed, cooperation results either in open alignment with another power (hard bandwagoning) or in a discreet alignment (soft bandwagoning).⁵⁹ In stark contrast to the extensive literature on soft balancing, there has been little academic interest in theorising soft bandwagoning. This has likely led to soft bandwagoning being drastically overlooked when it comes to theorising and analysing foreign policy strategies, despite it having been identified in the foreign policies of Canada,⁶⁰ Spain,⁶¹ and the Central and Eastern European states⁶² towards the United States.

On the one hand, hard bandwagoners support another state's goals and foster cooperative opportunities. The primary goal of hard bandwagoning is to profit—materially, politically, or ideologically—from such cooperation, even if this means the cooperating state must change its foreign policy goals.⁶³ On the other hand, soft bandwagoning uses indirect means of cooperation,⁶⁴ through which a state optimises security or takes advantage of the relationship without modifying the core tenets of its own foreign policy.⁶⁵ This cooperation is not limited to security⁶⁶ and can be extended to economics and diplomacy. Therefore, soft bandwagoning entails moderate or symbolic support for another state's power.

The indirect nature of cooperative foreign policy instruments is inherent to soft bandwagoning. Accordingly, it should be regarded as the opposite of soft balancing in each field of foreign policy. First, diplomatically speaking, soft bandwagoning consists of socialising other powers into an international/regional order. Second, economically, soft bandwagoning promotes bilateral economic relations, even when these create dependencies. Third, in terms of security, soft bandwagoners promote security exchanges (although they avoid formal alliances). In short, soft bandwagoners seek to benefit from easing the economic, diplomatic, and military reach of a partner.

Soft balancing and soft bandwagoning are opposites, but when combined, they forge the hedging strategy. Indeed, soft balancing provides hedging with the competitive element, and soft bandwagoning contributes to the cooperative element. Thus, while hedging may not have unique instruments, its originality can be found in the mixing of both soft balancing and soft bandwagoning instruments (Figure 2).

⁵⁹ Massie, "Toward Greater Opportunism," 49–64.

⁶⁰ Jean-Christophe Boucher, "The Cost of Bandwagoning: Canada-US Defence and Security Relations after 9/11," *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis* 67, no. 4 (2012): 895–914; Massie, "Toward Greater Opportunism" 49–64; David S. McDonough, "Getting It Just Right: Strategic Culture, Cybernetics, and Canada's Goldilocks Grand Strategy," *Comparative Strategy* 32, no. 3 (2013): 224–244.

⁶¹ David García Cantalapiedra, "Spanish Foreign Policy, the United States and Soft Bandwagoning," in *Contemporary Spanish Foreign Policy*, eds. David García Cantalapiedra and Ramon Pacheco Pardo (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 82–105.

⁶² Alexandru Grigorescu, "East and Central European Countries and the Iraq War: The Choice between 'Soft Balancing' and 'Soft Bandwagoning,'" *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 41, no. 3 (2008): 281–299.

⁶³ Massie, "Toward Greater Opportunism," 49–64.

⁶⁴ Grigorescu, "East and Central European Countries and the Iraq War," 281–299.

⁶⁵ Massie, "Toward Greater Opportunism" 49–64; Camilla T. N. Sørensen, "Is China Becoming More Aggressive? A Neoclassical Realist Analysis," *Asian Perspective* 37, no. 3 (2013): 363–386.

⁶⁶ Chaka Ferguson, "Soft Power as the New Norm: How the Chinese-Russian Strategic Partnership (Soft) Balances American Hegemony in an Era of Unipolarity" (PhD diss., Florida International University, 2011).

Table 2: Soft strategies continuum

Soft balancing	Hedging		Soft bandwagoning
	Competitive hedging	Cooperative hedging	

6. Explaining Hedging Incoherencies

When considering the previous section, it could be asserted that hedging is built upon trade-offs between maximising dependence and autonomy in foreign policy and can therefore be studied by using the same indicators used to study soft balancing and soft bandwagoning. Focusing on the three fields of foreign policy, I will use the term “economic hedging” to explain the trade-offs in the economic field, “political hedging” to address trade-offs in the diplomatic field, and “military hedging” to explore trade-offs within the security field. First, economic hedging involves trade-offs between economic dependence for promoting growth and economic diversification for reducing the risks of overdependence. Second, political hedging contains trade-offs between increasing diplomatic influence through cooperation with a great power and preserving diplomatic autonomy to avoid becoming entangled in the diplomatic interests of others. Third, military hedging arises from the trade-offs between safeguarding national security and reducing the risks of entrapment and abandonment (Figure 3).

Table 3: Trade-off in each foreign policy field

Trade-off between dependence and autonomy	
Economic hedging	Trade-off between economic development and economic overdependence
Political hedging	Trade-off between diplomatic influence and subordination to others’ diplomatic decisions
Military hedging	Trade-off between national security and the risks of entrapment and abandonment

It is worth noting that hedging competition arises either from diversification initiatives with third powers or from a state strengthening its own capabilities. Hedging usually involves multiple actors, as third states willing to cooperate in contesting the same source of uneasiness are needed. Cooperation with third powers can avoid excessive dependencies and foster autonomy in any of the fields of foreign policy.⁶⁷ Boon exemplified this idea in his analysis of India’s hedging strategy, stating that ‘the warmer US–India relationship is about Delhi’s desire to hedge against China as much as it is about the US’s desire to strengthen its hedging chips against China.’⁶⁸ Thus, when hedger states wish to compete through foreign policy diversification, they need third states that are willing to assume the risks and opportunities of competitive participation. States may also pursue autonomy by reinforcing internal capabilities—largely, though not exclusively, through the military. Simply put, in hedging, cooperation implies a bilateral relationship between the hedger state and the source of uncertainty about the future distribution of power, while competition may well involve several partners for diversification.

While distinguishing between foreign policy fields is a useful approach to hedging, any study of foreign policy strategies would be incomplete without a comprehensive

⁶⁷ Lim and Mukherjee, “Hedging in South Asia,” 493–522.; Rebecca Strating, “Small Power Hedging in an Era of Great-Power Politics: Southeast Asian Responses to China’s Pursuit of Energy Security,” *Asian Studies Review* 44, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 97–116.

⁶⁸ Boon, “The Hedging Prong,” 801.

analysis. Therefore, integrating the gradual nature of the foreign policy instruments and the interconnection between the three fields of foreign policy must be considered.

First, the hedging instruments in each field are opposite, not binary. Each foreign policy action expresses a different level of commitment to competition or cooperation. Behaviours that are intended to increase autonomy may differ in level of competitiveness, and behaviours aimed at increasing dependence show varying degrees of cooperation. Therefore, hedging requires a contextualised analysis. For instance, when comparing the world's average share of exports to China in 2018 (9.07%), an economic dependence on China in the Mongolian (92.78%), South Korean (26.81%), and Japanese shares (19.51%)⁶⁹ might be noticed. While all three could be described as economically dependent on China, the economic reliance of Mongolia on China is immensely greater than that of South Korea or Japan—to the extent that it can be described as incomparably so. This gradation also occurs in political hedging. The institutionalisation of state relations entails complying with institutional norms, but states can still decide whether it is worth joining such institutions after conducting a cost–benefit analysis. As states are well within their rights and abilities to do this, institutionalised binding (inclusive institutional balancing) denotes a lesser degree of competition than banning others from joining (exclusive institutional balancing) or creating competing institutions (inter-institutional balancing). In military hedging, the gradation applies to the security cooperation of states. For instance, participating in military exercises—even large-scale exercises, such as the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC), Cobra Gold, or Malabar—reveals a lower level of alignment than granting the right to establish military bases on a state's territory or signing mutual defence treaties.

Second, distinguishing between the three fields of foreign policy eases the analysis, but they must be studied jointly, as their boundaries are blurred. Cooperation in one field increases trust and expands the cooperation framework among states, thereby boosting collaboration in the other foreign policy fields. This process is especially evident when cooperation occurs within institutionalised frameworks. Goh⁷⁰ highlighted that the effects of security strategies are not confined to only one field, but also influence economic, diplomatic, and military power in Southeast Asia. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the flagship institutional framework in the region, exemplifies the need for a comprehensive analysis. ASEAN proposes initiatives to improve the economic, diplomatic, and security relations among its member states, as well as with other powers with regional interests. Therefore, interactions within ASEAN may be studied as institutionalised diplomatic initiatives, but the consequences of those interactions spread to other fields of international activity.

In conclusion, both features of hedging—gradation within and linkages between each field—mixed with its contradictory nature, make it a comprehensive but incoherent foreign policy strategy. Indeed, this incoherence is twofold: inter-field and intra-field. Inter-field incoherence, or behaving in ways that signal contradictory interests in different foreign policy fields, refers to the contradictions that occur when cooperation in some fields is mixed with competition in others. Accordingly, the inter-field incoherence runs counter to the balance of power theory's two-way division between cooperation and competition, reinforcing the idea that states actually manage several concurrent interests. Specifically, this

⁶⁹ The World Bank, "World Integrated Trade Solution," *The World Bank*, n.d., accessed date June 5, 2023 <https://wits.worldbank.org/>.

⁷⁰ Goh, "Great Powers and Hierarchical Order," 113–157.

incoherence signals how states harmonise competing interests *between* foreign policy fields. The literature has identified this incoherence in the simultaneous economic cooperation and security competition of Asian states with China. Moreover, contradictions may also occur *within* foreign policy fields, resulting in intra-field incoherence. Intra-field incoherence, or behaving in ways that signal different interests within just one field of foreign policy, occurs whenever states simultaneously cooperate and compete *within* the same foreign policy field. Examples of this are primarily found in economics and politics. States benefit from trading with China and from Chinese participation in international organisations, but also diversify their economic partners, bind China to international norms, and prevent China from joining certain international institutions. In short, it can be affirmed that inter- and intra-field incoherencies are an inherent feature of hedging. Accordingly, hedging studies should consider how these incoherencies materialise and become incorporated into foreign policies.

7. Analysing Hedging in the Asia-Pacific

7.1. Economic trends in the Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific economy has been booming for decades, mostly due to the rise of China. Multiplying its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) more than tenfold since 2000, China has monopolised exports for strategic goods such as rare earth elements, the global share of which China produced 63% in 2019.⁷¹ Likewise, the members of ASEAN are some of the world's most dynamic countries, collectively recording GDP increases of over 5% for most years since 2000. The Asia-Pacific's relevance can be confirmed by examining its participation in the global economy, as the region's share of global GDP has grown from 24.7% in 2000 to 30.20% in 2018. Over the same period, the region's share of global exports rose from 25.02% to 30.53%, and global imports from 22.89% to 29.46%.⁷²

From another perspective, Asian nations are becoming more economically interconnected with each other in terms of trade, investment, and global value chain integration. One of the main drivers behind Japan's macroeconomic stability is its expansion of trade with China; Japanese investments have integrated China into the global value chain and empowered the participation of Japanese businesses in it. In addition to Japanese capital flows into the region, China's promotion of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) investments have also strengthened regional economic interdependence. Also, the number of FTAs in the region has increased rapidly. At the time of writing, approximately 100 FTAs have been signed by the members of ASEAN+3 (i.e. ASEAN plus Japan, China, and South Korea), and this trend continues to grow.⁷³ Moreover, Asia-Pacific economies have been participating in FTAs—such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the South Korea-US FTA (KORUS), and the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (Japan-EU EPA)—which can set new global trade standards. China has increased its role in regional FTAs since signing the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

Although economic cooperation between China and Southeast Asia has been the norm

⁷¹ U.S. Geological Survey, *Mineral Commodity Summaries 2020* (Virginia: U.S. Geological Survey, 2020). <https://pubs.usgs.gov/publication/mcs2020>

⁷² Values calculated from World Bank data. The World Bank, "World Bank Open Data," *The World Bank*, n.d., accessed date June 5, 2023. <https://data.worldbank.org/>

⁷³ Asian Development Bank, "Asia Regional Integration Center: Free Trade Agreements," *Asia Regional Integration Center*, n.d., accessed date June 5, 2023. <https://aric.adb.org/database/fta>.

since the creation of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA) in 2002, Chinese economic cooperation with Northeast Asia is rarer. Despite geographic proximity and intense trade, economic integration of the major Northeastern Asian economies is severely limited. While China, Japan, and South Korea are among each other's top five partners in terms of both exports and imports,⁷⁴ the 2015 China-South Korea FTA is the only agreement of its kind between these three countries. The Northeast Asia region could foster economic integration by concluding FTAs that are currently under negotiation, such as the trilateral FTA between China, Japan, and South Korea, or by fully implementing the RCEP.

The uncertainty caused by China's rise has not stopped states from strengthening ties with the juggernaut; as a regional economic leader, China has provided dynamism and growth opportunities for smaller countries. However, these smaller states have also sought more diversified economic links beyond Chinese leadership, mainly (though not exclusively) through the promotion of bilateral and multilateral FTAs. This mix of economic cooperation and competition in the Asia-Pacific is a paradigmatic example of the economic intra-field incoherencies of hedging.

7.2. Political trends in the Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific has high levels of institutional cooperation and competition, but the region's integration is neither institution-based nor complete. Indeed, Northeast Asia has failed in its few attempts at regional integration, and the Japan–South Korea–China trilateral dialogue has been repeatedly hindered by territorial disputes and historical disagreements. A renewed momentum for cooperation appeared after the 2018 rapprochement and the 2019 joint statement on the Trilateral Cooperation Vision for the Next Decade. However, the lack of a regular high-level summit since 2013 reveals the sensitivity of this dialogue to the political interests of the participants.

In contrast, China has furthered its diplomatic aims in Southeast Asia by quickly and steadily delivering its own COVID-19 vaccine to developing countries.⁷⁵ Many Southeast Asian countries opted for Chinese vaccines, particularly as they were the only ones available. This allowed China to trade vaccines in exchange for greater leverage in Asia-Pacific affairs. However, with the efficacy of the Chinese-made vaccines called into question, along with the increased availability of Western vaccines, Asia-Pacific countries have started to diversify their vaccine portfolios.⁷⁶ Even countries such as Indonesia, which had mainly relied on Chinese vaccines, are seeking more Western alternatives.⁷⁷ Thus, as soon as the occasion presented itself, Asia-Pacific countries hedged on China by granting more leverage to the West, the United States in particular.

The diplomatic incoherence of hedging can be appreciated in Southeast Asian institutionalisation. In terms of cooperation, the region has established organisations based on coordination and dialogue, but they lack the means to establish compulsory norms or

⁷⁴ The World Bank, "World Integrated Trade Solution."

⁷⁵ "China COVID-19 Vaccine Tracker," *Bridge Beijing*, October 11, 2021, accessed date June 5, 2023. <https://bridgebeijing.com/our-publications/our-publications-1/china-covid-19-vaccines-tracker/>.

⁷⁶ "COVID-19 Science Macro Report: Science Based Forecasts for the Short- and Long-Term," *Airfinity*, September 24, 2021, accessed date June 5, 2023. <https://www.airfinity.com/articles/airfinitys-covid-19-forecast-for-china-infections-and-deaths>

⁷⁷ Sana Jaffrey, "How the Global Vaccine Divide Is Fueling Indonesia's Coronavirus Catastrophe," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, August 5, 2021, accessed October 14, 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/08/05/how-global-vaccine-divide-is-fueling-indonesia-s-coronavirus-catastrophe-pub-85107>; Anna Nishino, "China's Global Vaccine Gambit, Production, politics and propaganda: How Beijing has shaped the international COVID immunization drive," *Nikkei Asia*, October 12, 2021, accessed date June 5, 2023. <https://asia.nikkei.com/static/vdata/chinavaccine-1/>

intervene in member state domestic issues. In this context, formal and informal relations in the region have maintained ASEAN either as the centrepiece of wider initiatives, such as ASEAN+1, ASEAN+3, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit (EAS), or RCEP, or have included many of its members, such as in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) or the CPTPP.

The presence of institutional balancing is especially notable in the Asia-Pacific. Socialisation was favoured by the Asia-Pacific states to obtain greater transparency regarding China's intentions, as well as increasing the costs China would face for violating established norms. Thus, integrating China into regional institutions was a way to limit its assertiveness through attempts to secure compliance with institutional norms. An example of this inclusive institutional balancing is the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea between the ASEAN members and China, which will likely become a Code of Conduct in the near future. There have also been inter-institutional balancing initiatives between Chinese-supported institutions (e.g. ASEAN+3, RCEP, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank [AIIB]), and institutions under the Japanese and US sphere of influence (e.g. the CPTPP⁷⁸ and the Asian Development Bank [ADB]). While these institutions tend to cooperate when their goals align, each promotes different, longer-term objectives depending on Chinese or Japanese/US preferences when setting the regional agenda. Finally, the implicit ban on China's entry into the CPTPP is a notable instance of exclusive institutional balancing. The exclusion from CPTPP negotiations prevented China's participation in the creation of regulative clauses in an FTA designed to be a model for future regional agreements, limiting Chinese regional influence and hindering the country's international agenda.

For over a decade, Asia-Pacific states have exhibited caution in their diplomatic relations with China, benefiting from Chinese compliance with institutional norms, as well as from Chinese socialisation in multilateral initiatives. The latter has also strengthened security and economic ties in the region. As for diplomatic initiatives with security repercussions, increased cooperation with China can shed light on its intentions concerning the South China Sea disputes, build mutual trust, and increase China's transparency on matters of defence. Regarding diplomatic initiatives with economic effects, new institutions such as the AIIB can increase financial opportunities for many Asia-Pacific states, and the RCEP is expected to benefit all participants.⁷⁹ In short, Asia-Pacific states have used regional institutions to both limit Chinese regional influence and increase their cooperation with China. These contradictory diplomatic behaviours reflect the intra-field incoherencies of political hedging towards China's rise by Asia-Pacific states.

7.3. Security trends in the Asia-Pacific

The general trend in the Asia-Pacific is to compete with China on security matters. Asia-Pacific states expand their capabilities through increased military expenditures in absolute terms, as well as through capacity building supported by regional and non-regional powers. The United States plays a prominent role in this area—Asia-Pacific states promote regional

⁷⁸ A particular case of Japan and the United States leadership can be found in the CPTPP. The predecessor of CPTPP, the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership), was promoted by the United States with the aim of liberalizing trade in the Asia-Pacific and arraying high standards for global and regional liberalization. The TPP was signed in 2016, but Trump's administration withdrew from it in 2017. After that event, Japan led the negotiations among the remaining 11 members to create the CPTPP in 2018.

⁷⁹ Tomoo Kikuchi, Kensuke Yanagida, and Huong Vo, "The Effects of Mega-Regional Trade Agreements on Vietnam," *Journal of Asian Economics* 55 (2018): 4–19; Renuka Mahadevan and Anda Nugroho, "Can the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Minimise the Harm from the United States–China Trade War?" *The World Economy* 42, no. 11 (2019): 3148–3167.

engagement and reinforce military cooperation with the United States in order to counter security threats. However, security trends differ notably between countries.

Regarding competition in security affairs, South Korea is diversifying its security sources by, for instance, increasing trilateral security cooperation with the United States and Japan and deploying the American-made Terminal High Altitude Area Defense—an anti-ballistic missile defence system.⁸⁰ Similarly, Kuik⁸¹ affirmed that ASEAN members (with the exception of the Philippines since 2010) have been assisted by the United States and other regional powers⁸² in competing with China. Shekhar,⁸³ who studied ASEAN as a unitary actor, concluded that ASEAN's multi-tiered security structure is aimed at competing with China. The upper tier of this structure focuses on promoting security ties with the United States. In the second tier, ASEAN reinforces its military ties with India, Japan, Australia, and South Korea. The lower security tier relies on cooperation between ASEAN members. Similarly, Japan has also implemented a multi-layered security cooperation structure.⁸⁴ Thus, while the United States remains Japan's foremost ally, Australia, South Korea, and India have also become important partners in Japan's security structure. In the Asia-Pacific region, states seem to agree on the need to compete with China, which has, in turn, paved the way for strengthening security links among small- and medium-sized regional powers.

Military cooperation with China is also promoted, especially in Southeast Asia. An example is found in the three plans of action for implementing a strategic association between China and ASEAN. The first, in 2003, included the intent to conduct joint military exercises.⁸⁵ The third, in 2014, envisioned high-ranking military exchanges and increased efforts for joint training and capacity building.⁸⁶ As a result, the first maritime joint exercise between China and ASEAN members was held in October 2018.⁸⁷ However, it should be noted that security cooperation with China is primarily focused on non-traditional security matters. Indeed, the success of the EAS, the ARF, and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-plus (ADMM-plus) relies not on traditional security cooperation, but on non-traditional security matters such as counterterrorism, disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, cyber security, and military medicine.

Overall, the Asia-Pacific region has largely competed with China on security matters,

⁸⁰ Lee, "Hedging Strategies of the Middle Powers," 23–37; Jin Park, "Korea between the United States and China: How Does Hedging Work?" in *Light or Heavy Hedging: Positioning between China and the United States*, ed. Gilbert Rozman (Washington: Korea Economic Institute of America, 2015), 59–73.

⁸¹ Kuik, "How Do Weaker States Hedge?" 500–5014.

⁸² This idea has been studied in Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia. See, Antonio Fiori and Andrea Passeri, "Hedging in Search of a New Age of Non-Alignment: Myanmar between China and the USA," *The Pacific Review* 28, no. 5 (2015): 679–702; Lee, "Hedging Strategies of the Middle Powers," 23–37; Lim and Cooper, "Reassessing Hedging," 696–727; Kuik, "The Essence of Hedging," 159–185; Hong Hiep Le, "Vietnam's Hedging Strategy against China since Normalization," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 35, no. 3 (2013): 333–368.

⁸³ Vibhanshu Shekhar, "ASEAN's Response to the Rise of China: Deploying a Hedging Strategy," *China Report* 48, no. 3 (2012): 253–268.

⁸⁴ Matsuda, "Engagement and Hedging: Japan's Strategy toward China," 109–119; National Security Council and Cabinet of Japan, "National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2014 and Beyond," *National Security Council and Cabinet of Japan* 2013, accessed date June 5, 2023. http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217_e2.pdf; National Security Council and Cabinet of Japan, "Medium Term Defense Program (FY2014-2018)," *National Security Council and Cabinet of Japan*, December 17, 2013, accessed date June 5, 2023. https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/Defense_Program.pdf.

⁸⁵ "Plan of Action (2005-2010)," *ASEAN*, 2003, accessed date June 5, 2023. https://asean.org/?static_post=plan-of-action-to-implement-the-joint-declaration-on-asean-china-strategic-partnership-for-peace-and-prosperity.

⁸⁶ "Plan of Action (2016-2020)," *ASEAN*, 2015, accessed date June 5, 2023. https://www.asean.org/storage/images/2015/November/27th-summit/ASEAN-China_POA_2016-2020.pdf.

⁸⁷ MINDEF Singapore, "ASEAN and China Successfully Conclude ASEAN-China Maritime Exercise," *MINDEF Singapore*, October 27, 2018, accessed date June 5, 2023. https://www.mindef.gov.sg/web/portal/mindef/news-and-events/latest-releases/article-detail/2018/october/27oct18_nr.

although limited attempts towards military cooperation have recently been instigated. However, the pattern of competition with China is changing, as more powers are participating in the regional security structure. Most studies on hedging have highlighted a dichotomous alignment with one of the key rivals in Asia (the United States or China), but the escalating rivalry between these two powers—with no expectations of resolution during the Biden administration—is pushing Asia-Pacific countries towards security hedging via partner diversification. Therefore, as Asia-Pacific states largely wish to remain uncommitted in this rivalry, other regional powers, such as India, Japan, and Australia, have been claiming a larger role in regional security affairs. This has led to the emergence of complex and diversified security networks, especially regarding military cooperation in non-traditional security matters. In contrast to the economic and diplomatic fields, there seem to be few intra-field incoherencies in security affairs. However, inter-field incoherencies are certainly present, such as the existence of both security competition and economic and diplomatic cooperation.

8. Conclusion

This paper attempted to advance different theoretical aspects of the hedging strategy. I began by identifying the three main theoretical groups of authors: securitists, integrativists, and relationists. This division not only helps stratify each author's focus, but it also highlights the weaknesses of their positions: an over-emphasis on security matters (securitists), several—and occasionally opposed—analytical models (integrativists), and a lack of development (relationists). These different hedging perspectives have also created incommensurability problems that have undermined deeper theoretical debates and kept analytical models theoretically flawed.

The assertion of this paper follows the thought process of integrativists and relationists: hedging is a foreign policy strategy that deserves a comprehensive approach. Where this paper differs from previous works is the offer of an explanation that places hedging theoretically as an intermediate (unique) strategy and analytically as a mixed strategy, comprised of the common instruments of soft balancing and soft bandwagoning.

Theoretically, the hedging strategy is unique because it attempts to manage competing national interests under conditions of uncertainty about how the international system will evolve. In essence, for hedging to emerge, uncertainty alone may not be enough; it must lead to concurrently unattainable national interests—most commonly, national security, political stability, and economic prosperity. Thus, in contrast to strategies such as balancing or bandwagoning, hedging becomes the expression of how a nation weighs each national interest against the others and manages them when interacting with other nations.

In fact, when discussing a foreign policy strategy, we are referring to two distinct ideas: the goals a nation aims to achieve and the instruments, behaviours, and policies needed to achieve them. This distinction, often obscured in the balance of power theorization, becomes important in the study of the hedging strategy. First, even if the hedging strategy emerged within the balance of power theory, the goals of hedger states differ from those of balancers and bandwagoners. In this sense, hedging emerges as a distinctive strategy with a discernible goal, namely the management of national interests, making sense of referring to *the* hedging strategy, despite its mixed and contradictory nature in implementation. Furthermore, similar to soft balancing and soft bandwagoning, hedging is implemented indirectly. Thus, I have placed hedging theorisation where it most suitably belongs: alongside the other soft strategies

of foreign policy.

Building on this, this paper asserts that a state's contending interests result in a mix of cooperative and competitive behaviours. I further propose using an analytical model that studies this mix of behaviours in each of the three fields of foreign policy (economy, diplomacy, and security). This mix also allows differentiation between the inter- and intra-field incoherencies of hedging, which I argue are the distinguishing attributes of hedging.

To bolster these claims, I tested them by studying the responses of Asia-Pacific states to the uncertainty generated by the rise of China. My empirical analysis was not intended to explain the foreign policy strategies of few countries but, instead, to support that my theoretical and analytical claims can offer insights worth considering for future foreign policy research. In the Asia-Pacific region, hedger states behave contradictorily between and within different fields of foreign policy. By both cooperating and competing with China, Asia-Pacific states reinforce their economic interdependence and diplomatic interaction. Simultaneously, they challenge China within international institutions, build their own capabilities, and diversify their economic and security ties with third powers. As outlined above, contradictory behaviours occur both *between* and *within* foreign policy fields, leading to several intra- and inter-field incoherencies. Specific insights on what causes either intra- or inter-field incoherencies are beyond the scope of this paper but would be worth future investigation.

In the study of hedging, a comprehensive survey of foreign policy is essential. As the Asia-Pacific case shows, the degrees of cooperation and competition differ in every field of foreign policy. The extensive cooperation in economic affairs with China, coupled with concurrent competition in diplomacy and security, explains why these areas of foreign policy attracted the majority of academic interest in terms of hedging. However, the intensity and implementation of these efforts vary depending on the country. Furthermore, Asia-Pacific states also engage in a certain degree of economic diversification and diplomatic cooperation with China.

Finally, in the international context of a rising China, past studies on hedging have tended to consider alignment with either China or the United States as the only available options for smaller states. This paper has shown that this view is no longer valid. For obvious reasons, China is a source of concern, but the United States is no longer the only other protagonist. In today's increasingly interconnected Asia-Pacific region, future studies on hedging should consider the importance of cooperation and alignment with other regional partners, such as Australia, India, Japan, and ASEAN, as well as extra-regional partners such as the European Union.

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Contractual Origins of Anti-Americanism: Pew 2013 Results

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Abstract

Economic Norms Theory (ENT) implies that anti-modernist and anti-market values flourish in countries where the central authority poorly monitors contracts that bind economic transactions. Decades of research show that ENT astutely predicts civil war and interstate war incidents, as well as people's support for war, and suicide bombing in defense of Islam. This paper investigates the association between contract enforcement and anti-Americanism, which is the ENT's core, yet is a statistically under-evaluated implication. Accordingly, in countries with poor economic contract monitoring, power-contending elites can attribute the resultant loss of prosperity to the USA and relatedly spread anti-American values among citizens. It is the urban poor who are cognitively most available to adopt such elite-driven anti-Americanism since they tend to be hurt most socially and economically by unfulfilled market contracts. To investigate this argument, I statistically estimate random intercept models on a sample of Pew Global Attitudes Project's 2013 survey results. I observe that a three-way interaction among individuals' urbanity, poverty, and their nations' poor contract enforcement indicators increase anti-Americanism.

Keywords: Anti-Americanism, urban poverty, Economic Norms Theory, Hierarchical Modelling

1. Introduction

Early in the 2000s, when Recep Tayyip Erdoğan became Turkey's Prime Minister, his opposition blamed the United States for supporting his journey towards political authority. Erdoğan was dismissive of these accusations and called it a baseless conspiracy. In 2013, millions of Turks participated in the Gezi Park protests against Erdoğan. This time, it was Erdoğan who blamed the USA for organizing and supporting demonstrations against his rule. Meanwhile, Erdoğan's opposition ironically considered him as a believer in conspiracies. Yet, it was this very opposition who blamed the USA for supporting Erdoğan a decade ago. Whoever did the promoting, the elite-originated anti-American discourses had dire consequences for the USA's image in Turkey. A 2018 survey conducted by Kadir Has University shows that around 82% of Turks see the United States as a threat.

Pew global surveys¹ also indicate that Turkey often has one of the greatest shares of respondents that report somewhat or very unfavorable opinions toward the USA.² In the

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¹ Mustafa Aydın, et al., *Türkiye Sosyal-Siyasal Eğitlimler Araştırması 2018* (İstanbul: Kadir Has University Turkey Research Centre, 2019). <https://www.khas.edu.tr/khas-kurumsal-arastirmalar/>

² "Pew 2013 Spring Survey Data," *Pew Research Center*, March 2-May 1, 2013, accessed date November 10, 2023. <https://>

meantime, as a NATO member, Turkey continues to make foreign policy moves such as the purchase of S-400 missile defense systems from Russia at the expense of upsetting American policymakers. Erdoğan likely has little trouble convincing a considerable share of Turks with regards to policies that antagonize the USA, such as the S-400 purchase.³

The case of Turkey illustrates how high levels of anti-Americanism are related more to political elites' strategic use of conspiratorial ideas about the USA than actual US foreign policy choices.⁴ Yet, why do Turkish elites, and for that matter, many other elites, focus this much on antagonizing the USA and pointing to its supposed collaborators? While elite-driven polarization in a country is nothing new, only certain elites in certain countries appear to strategize around the promotion of unsubstantiated ideas that target the USA. From a logical standpoint, if certain elites strategically choose anti-Americanism, they must be doing so because they anticipate a large enough target audience that will buy into their strategy. Accordingly, there are two related questions: what countries are most likely to provide the scene for inter-elite competition that results in the promotion of anti-Americanism, and what target audience is most likely to buy into this strategy? Given that Muslims show significant variance in their anti-American attitudes, it is challenging to suggest that any Islamic society constitutes a viable target audience for elites to promote anti-Americanism.⁵ Thus, more theoretical effort is potentially needed to clarify why certain audiences seem more available than others for the elites to spread anti-Americanism.

In this paper, I argue that central authorities' inability to monitor market transactions generates a loss of societal prosperity, which eventually leaves certain segments of populations available to adopt anti-Americanism. To that end, I rely on the theoretical framework in Michael Mousseau's *Economic Norms Theory* (ENT).⁶ The core implication of the ENT is that regulations for economic exchanges in a society shape peoples' values and norms. When market transactions are poorly monitored by the central government, the urbanites who suffer from the resultant loss of prosperity seek a scapegoat that symbolizes market economies. In a quest to maximize their popular support, political elites can portray the USA as the urban poor's source of economic suffering and point to rival elites as US collaborators, or worse, puppets.

To investigate the empirical relevance of Mousseau's theory, I use a sample of respondents from 38 nations by Pew Global Attitudes Project's 2013 Survey. As part of my statistical investigations, I implement random intercepts models. In line with ENT, the results suggest that higher levels of poverty suffered by urbanites lead to greater levels of anti-American attitudes only in countries with lower than global median life insurance holdings per capita. I also replicate these results with the Pew 2002 survey, and through different variable operationalization approaches. In all my empirical analyses, I also re-evaluate recent findings with regards to how US foreign policy choices can directly affect people's bias towards the USA.⁷ I observe that findings with regards to the ENT appear to be most robust vis-à-vis

www.pewresearch.org/global/dataset/spring-2013-survey-data/ ; "Pew 2007 Spring Survey Data," *Pew Research Center*, April 2-May 28, 2007, accessed date November 10, 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/dataset/spring-2007-survey-data/>

³ Aydın, et al., "Türkiye Sosyal-Siyasal Eğilimler Araştırması 2018" report that around 44% of the Turks support the S-400 purchase.

⁴ Fouad Ajami, "The Falseness of Anti-Americanism," *Foreign Policy* 138, (2003): 52-61; Lisa Blaydes and Drew A. Linzer, "Elite Competition, Religiosity, and Anti-Americanism in the Islamic World," *American Political Science Review* 106, no. 2 (2012): 225-243.

⁵ Blaydes and Linzer, "Elite Competition," 225-243.

⁶ Michael Mousseau, "Market Civilization and Its Clash with Terror," *International Security* 27, no. 3 (2002): 5-29.

⁷ Michael A. Allen, et al., "Outside the Wire: US Military Deployments and Public Opinion in Host States," *American*

these alternatives.

An important question is why the ENT matters in the study of anti-Americanism. The ENT proves to be a useful theoretical framework in making sense of support for suicide bombing in defense of Islam, terrorist incidents, and people's support for their governments' war involvement.⁸ Arguments developed in these inquiries converge in the notion that failed economic markets push people to buy into anti-market and anti-modernity ideas. As implied in Mousseau's original theoretical work, the study of anti-Americanism is likely one of the most direct means to validate the core implications of ENT.⁹ Accordingly, not only does the present paper build on previous elite-based explanations of Anti-Americanism, it also constitutes one of the most direct investigations of Mousseau's theory.

In what follows, I first present a brief overview of the scholarly work on anti-Americanism. Next, I describe Mousseau's theory. Third, I lay out the research design and the empirical results. Finally, I discuss the implications of the present findings and highlight venues for future research.

2. Anti-Americanism: In Search of the Culprit

Anti-Americanism represents a negative bias in people's cognition when they are asked to evaluate any concept pertaining to the USA, such as American people, culture, foreign policy, entertainment, businesses, and/or economic systems. As Katzenstein and Keohane put, anti-Americanism cannot be limited to substantive assessment of US foreign policy choices. It is rather a cognitive process that distorts people's ability to make informed inferences on the USA.¹⁰ Thus, while people can be critical of US foreign policy choices, this does not directly make them anti-American. If a person sees every action committed by the USA as malicious or at least suspicious, they might be driven by a certain level of bias that is relatable to anti-Americanism.

Not everyone strongly buys into the notion that anti-Americanism is a pure form of bias. Many scholars still investigate the extent to which the USA's overseas agenda directly plays a role in shaping people's attitudes.¹¹ Some researchers, in fact, dismiss the notion of "bias" and see the Bush Administration's *War on Terror* campaign as the main reason for the rise of anti-Americanism in the 21st Century.¹² Empirical analyses show that people in the Islamic world are typically found to express concerns about the American unilateral foreign policy direction and dismissal of intergovernmental organizations.¹³

Political Science Review 114, no. 2 (2020): 326-341; Efe Tokdemir, "Winning Hearts & Minds (!) The Dilemma of Foreign Aid in Anti-Americanism," *Journal of Peace Research* 54, no. 6 (2017): 819-832.

⁸ Tim Krieger and Daniel Meierrieks, "The Rise of Capitalism and the Roots of Anti-American Terrorism," *Journal of Peace Research* 52, no. 1 (2015): 46-61; Mousseau, "Urban Poverty and Support for Islamist Terror: Survey Results of Muslims in Fourteen Countries," *Journal of Peace Research* 48, no. 1 (2011): 35-47; Mousseau, "The End of War: How a Robust Marketplace and Liberal Hegemony Are Leading to Perpetual World Peace," *International Security* 44, no. 1 (2019): 160-196.

⁹ Mousseau, "Market Prosperity, Democratic Consolidation, and Democratic Peace," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 44, no. 4 (2000): 472-507.

¹⁰ Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane, *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007).

¹¹ Jinwung Kim, "Recent Anti-Americanism in South Korea: The Causes," *Asian Survey* 29, no. 8 (1989): 749-763; Hamid H. Kizilbash, "Anti-Americanism in Pakistan," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 497, no. 1 (1988): 58-67.

¹² Juan Cole, "Anti-Americanism: It's the Policies," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 4 (2006): 1120-1129; Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, "Friends No More? The Rise of Anti-American Nationalism in Turkey," *The Middle East Journal* 64, no. 1 (2010): 51-66; Ussama Makdisi, "Anti-Americanism in the Arab World: An Interpretation of a Brief History," *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 2 (2002): 538-557.

¹³ Sergio Fabbrini, "Anti-Americanism and US Foreign Policy: Which Correlation?" *International Politics* 47, (2010): 557-573; Amaney A. Jamal, et al., "Anti-Americanism and Anti-Interventionism in Arabic Twitter Discourses," *Perspectives on Politics* 13, no. 1 (2015): 55-73.

It is, however, likely that US foreign policy cannot be a sufficient reason behind surges in anti-American attitudes. Decades of research efforts imply that people's ideological, psychological, and social predispositions, as well as how they receive their information, significantly matter in shaping their political opinions.¹⁴ In that regard, Nisbet and Myers' survey analyses suggest that Arab anti-Americanism and concerns for US foreign policy choices are closely associated with media exposure and political affiliation.¹⁵ In the case of Turkey, local media agents tend to portray American actions far more negatively than the international media, which explains why Turks worry about unilateral American actions despite their nation being one of the oldest NATO members.¹⁶ Hence, people rarely formulate their opinion on the USA in a vacuum, showing that factors such as how the media portrays the USA play a noteworthy role in this process.¹⁷

Media framing, however, is unlikely to be independent of elite politics. Typically, media sources directly or indirectly reflect the opinions of political or social elites they support. Relatedly, several scholars suggest that anti-Americanism is a function of elite polarization.¹⁸ As the Turkish example in the introduction of this manuscript alludes to, the USA can be portrayed by certain elites as an evil conspirator. This is not because the USA is evil *per se*, but elites choose to simplify otherwise complex political processes for their supporters by faulting the USA.¹⁹ As elites favor anti-American tones, the greater share of their audiences is exposed to anti-American information, which is theoretically a recipe for people to form strong opinions about the USA.²⁰ Relatedly, Blaydes and Linzer show that anti-Americanism in the Islamic world is more prevalent in nations with greater competition between secular and traditionalist elites.²¹

The inter-elite competition perspective in the study of anti-Americanism is limited to research conducted about the Islamic world. However, elites in all nations compete and can trigger the traffic of opinions that they choose to polarize over.²² For instance, early in Canada's history, certain right-oriented politicians sought to exaggerate the risk of invasion by the USA to promote nationalistic feelings.²³ Hence, there is no reason to dismiss the possibility that non-Muslim elites can polarize over the USA. Additionally, not all Muslim elites seek to polarize over the USA as a focal point.²⁴ Taken together, existing studies reasonably indicate

¹⁴ Angus Campbell, et al., *The American Voter* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960); Philip E. Converse, "Changing Conceptions of Public Opinion in the Political Process," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 51, (1987): 12-24; Benjamin I. Page, Robert Y. Shapiro, and Glenn R. Dempsey, "What Moves Public Opinion?" *American Political Science Review* 81, no. 1 (1987): 23-43; John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹⁵ Erik C. Nisbet and Teresa A. Myers, "Anti-American Sentiment as a Media Effect? Arab Media, Political Identity, and Public Opinion in the Middle East," *Communication Research* 38, no. 5 (2010): 684-709.

¹⁶ Ismail Onat, et al., "Framing anti-Americanism in Turkey: An Empirical Comparison of Domestic and International Media," *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics* 16, no. 2 (2020): 139-157.

¹⁷ See, Matthew A. Gentzkow and Jesse M. Shapiro, "Media, Education and Anti-Americanism in the Muslim World," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18, no. 3 (2004): 117-133; Kim, "Recent Anti-Americanism," 749-763.

¹⁸ Blaydes and Linzer, "Elite Competition," 225-243; Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, "Always Blame the Americans: Anti-Americanism in Europe in the Twentieth Century," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 4 (2006): 1067-1091; Sophie Meunier, "The Dog That Did Not Bark: Anti-Americanism and the 2008 Financial Crisis in Europe," *Review of International Political Economy* 20, no. 1 (2013): 1-25.

¹⁹ Heiko Beyer and Ulf Liebe, "Anti-Americanism in Europe: Theoretical Mechanisms and Empirical Evidence," *European Sociological Review* 30, no. 1 (2014): 90-106.

²⁰ Zaller, *The Nature and Origins*.

²¹ Blaydes and Linzer, "Elite Competition," 225-243.

²² James N. Druckman, Erik Peterson, and Rune Slothuus, "How Elite Partisan Polarization Affects Public Opinion Formation," *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 1 (2013): 57-79.

²³ Jack L. Granatstein and Reginald C. Stuart, "Yankee go Home? Canadians & Anti-Americanism," *The American Review of Canadian Studies* 27, no. 2 (1997): 293-310.

²⁴ Blaydes and Linzer, "Elite Competition," 225-243.

that anti-Americanism can be driven by elite polarization. However, this is not a polarization story that is peculiar to the Islamic world. Then, why do not only Muslim, but also certain non-Muslim elites choose the USA as the basis of their polarization strategy?

A candidate theory that can potentially fill in the theoretical gaps left by existing elite politics explanations of anti-Americanism is the *Economic Norms Theory* (ENT) by Michael Mousseau.²⁵ The ENT not only offers a generalizable explanation about elite competition over state resources, but also additionally clarifies why these elites find a strong popular basis to promote anti-Americanism. Towards that end, Mousseau counterintuitively highlights the role of economic institutions in shaping people's values and norms.

3. Economic Norms Theory

The ENT builds on Karl Polanyi's designation of what constitutes a market society. In his seminal book *The Great Transformation*, Polanyi describes the market society as a congregation of people with different kinship backgrounds that live in an urban nexus with the purpose of trading with each other.²⁶ The institutions that guide market societies ensure the maintenance of trade flow and resultant economic profits. Accordingly, Polanyi argues that living in a market society alienates many people. Humans are not at the center of market institutions and are hence disposable if they fail to play their role in the maintenance of profit maximization. Polanyi infers that people alienated under this sense of disposability organize around counter-market movements such as Fascism, Nazism, and Communism.

Mousseau agrees with Polanyi about what constitutes a market society, yet disagrees that markets always cause alienation and dissension. Rather, market societies can engender liberal values when governed by institutions that enable strangers to trust each other in their public transactions.²⁷ Ordinarily, it is cognitively difficult for strangers of different groups or backgrounds to trust each other in a vacuum to conduct public transactions.²⁸ However, if a central authority can take measures to deter cheaters, strangers can start trusting each other to transact. Such measures can be in the form of public identification and/or punishment of those that violate the contracts that define the terms of economic transactions in a market system.²⁹ Accordingly, when proper contract enforcement substantially decreases the risk of cheating, market transactions occur consistently. When its transactions occur stably, a market can generate significantly greater prosperity than the more confined economic systems that we come across in non-urban settings. Ultimately, when such prosperity is attained, its participants start advocating the market system and do not mind transacting nor interacting with those whom they do not personally know.³⁰

Many nations cannot economically afford to properly enforce the contracts that define the terms of market transactions. In such economically deficient countries, political elites are better off redistributing state rents to a small number of followers who keep them in power. This means that the rest of society remains devoid of public services, including contract

²⁵ Mousseau "Market Prosperity," 472-507.

²⁶ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon, 1944).

²⁷ Mousseau "Market Prosperity," 472-507.

²⁸ Joshua Greene, *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason and the Gap Between Us and Them* (NY, New York City: Penguin Books, 2013); Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

²⁹ Paul R. Milgrom, Douglass C. North, and Barry R. Weingast, "The Role of Institutions in the Revival of Trade: The Law Merchant, Private Judges, and the Champagne Fairs," *Economics & Politics* 2, no. 1 (1990): 1-23.

³⁰ Mousseau "Market Prosperity," 472-507.

enforcement, unless they constitute their leader's winning coalition.³¹ Without proper contract enforcement, private citizens in the market fail to trust each other due to fear of being cheated. To minimize the risk of being cheated, people reduce the volume and frequency of market transactions with those whom they see as strangers. Then, absent contract-induced trust, market transactions, and, hence, prosperity diminish, or never accumulate in the first place. Mousseau calls these countries contract-poor nations.³²

Unlike their counterparts in contract-rich nations, the urban centers of contract-poor nations contribute little to the global economy,³³ but typically become a source of rent redistribution for political leaders to consolidate their minimum winning coalition.³⁴ Consequently, access to basic means of subsistence such as food, clothing, water, medicine, or electricity in urban life in contract-poor nations is not always guaranteed, but can be contingent upon loyalty to political patrons who have or who promise access to state resources. For instance, access to water in various towns in India once depended on political and ethnic affiliation.³⁵ The urbanites who do not immediately find a patronage network risk remaining devoid of vital services. These are the urban poor. Some of the urban poor seek to solve their subsistence problems by establishing themselves in kinship networks. Yet, such networks often clash among each other and fail to generate any sufficient prosperity without any political ties.³⁶

The urban poor's material deprivation presents a major opportunity for certain political elites to exploit contract-poor nations. While the urban poor seek to find a patron that promises means of subsistence, political elites vie for *de facto* power, which is societal support. Without *de facto* power, elites' chances of attaining *de jure* power remain thin in a contract-poor nation.³⁷ For these political elites, marketing themselves with easily comprehensible anti-market ideas can be an effective communication strategy to captivate the urban poor.³⁸ Moreover, research indicates that the urban poor will not be swayed by liberal and globalist values whilst facing deficiencies in material means of subsistence.³⁹ Instead, they are more inclined to buy into any idea that targets the source of their frustration: the failed market system. To put it differently, living in an urban setting is a sign that the person in question was once captivated by the promise of prosperity from the market system. Then, material deprivation for urban dwellers represents an unfulfilled promise of the markets.⁴⁰ Thus, political elites/patrons can target the urban poor by promoting their cause as an anti-market one. For the urban poor, the recompense for allegiance to such elites is the promise of amelioration of their means of survival in the urban environment.

³¹ Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, et al., *The Logic of Political Survival* (Cambridge, MA: MIT University Press, 2003).

³² Mousseau "Market Prosperity," 472-507.

³³ Lise Bourdeau-Lepage and Jean-Marie Huriot, "Megacities without Global Functions," *Belgeo Revue belge de géographie* 1, (2007): 95-114.

³⁴ Alberto F. Ades and Edward L. Glaeser, "Trade and Circuses: Explaining Urban Giants," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 110, no. 1 (1995): 195-227.

³⁵ Nikhil Anand, "Pressure: The Politechnics of Water supply in Mumbai," *Cultural Anthropology* 26, no. 4 (2011): 542-562; Soundarya Chidambaram, "The "Right" Kind of Welfare in South India's Urban Slums: Seva vs. Patronage and the Success of Hindu Nationalist Organizations," *Asian Survey* 52, no. 2 (2012): 298-320.

³⁶ Matthew Desmond, "Disposable Ties and the Urban Poor," *American Journal of Sociology* 117, no. 5 (2012): 1295-1335; David A. Reingold, "Social Networks and the Employment Problem of the Urban Poor," *Urban Studies* 36, no. 11 (1999): 1907-1932.

³⁷ Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³⁸ Mousseau "Urban Poverty," 35-47.

³⁹ Ronald Inglehart and Paul R. Abramson, "Economic Security and Value Change," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 2 (1994): 336-354; Mousseau "Market Prosperity," 472-507.

⁴⁰ Mousseau "Market Prosperity," 472-507; "Urban Poverty," 35-47.

As Mousseau argues, the USA is cognitively the most recognizable symbol of a modern market system in the world.⁴¹ Additionally, people tend to embrace easily accessible ideas with minimum cognitive effort to formulate their political opinion.⁴² Hence, political elites in contract-poor nations can ideologically position themselves antagonistically against the USA to maximize their societal support. To the urban poor, ideological antagonism towards the USA not only reduces their cognitive dissonance compared to more inclusive ideas,⁴³ but also carries an inherent promise of salvation from supposedly market-caused poverty.⁴⁴ As a result, the urban poor are stuck in the traffic of anti-market and, hence, anti-American ideas, which sharpen their attitudes towards the USA.

Empirically, in contract-poor nations, urbanites who suffer from poverty may be more prone to developing a bias against the United States. Specifically, the more difficulty an urbanite faces in accessing the variety of means of subsistence (i.e., the greater the level of poverty), the more cognitive bias they are expected to form against the USA, and, hence, they express anti-American opinions as long as they live in a contract-poor nation. Accordingly, my hypothesis is stated below.

Hypothesis: *the greater the level of poverty an individual suffers from, the greater the level of anti-American opinions they express if they live in an urban area and, at the same time, if they live in a contract-poor nation.*

4. Empirical Research Design

4.1. Sample

To conduct the statistical analyses, I use Pew Global Attitudes Project's 2013 Survey.⁴⁵ The sample contains 31,155 observations (i.e., survey respondents) from 38 nations. In choosing the survey year, I follow three criteria: (i) being a recent survey, (ii) having a large and balanced sample of Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority nations, and (iii) replicability of Mousseau's covariates of interest.⁴⁶ I do not use Blaydes and Linzer's Pew 2007, which runs into variance issues with key covariates of interest that I use to test the *ENT*.⁴⁷ Also, though Pew 2014 and 2015 are the only two recent surveys with a larger pool of countries than 2013, only Pew 2013 has survey questions that I use to replicate Mousseau's measurement of urban poverty.⁴⁸ Overall, with these criteria, Pew 2013 stands as the optimal sample choice for the present analyses.

4.2. Anti-Americanism

Anti-Americanism represents a negative bias in people's evaluation of the concepts pertaining to the USA. Thus, the operationalization of anti-Americanism should consist of questions that inquire into people's general evaluations of the USA without forcing them to articulate highly substantiated opinions.⁴⁹ Pew 2013 has two general-enough questions in that regard.

⁴¹ See, Mousseau "Market Civilization," 5-29. Also, it may be relatively more difficult to place the blame on China or Russia, neither of which are known to always advocate free market economies.

⁴² Campbell et al., *The American Voter*; Zaller, *The Nature and Origins*.

⁴³ Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford University Press, 1957).

⁴⁴ Mousseau "Market Civilization" 5-29; Mousseau "Urban Poverty," 35-47.

⁴⁵ "Pew 2013 Spring Survey Data."

⁴⁶ Mousseau "Urban Poverty," 35-47.

⁴⁷ Blaydes and Linzer "Elite Competition," 225-243.

⁴⁸ Mousseau "Urban Poverty," 35-47.

⁴⁹ Giacomo Chiozza, "Disaggregating Anti-Americanism," in *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics*, eds., Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), 93-126.

Questions q9a and q9b ask: “Please tell me if you have a very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable opinion of the United States/the Americans.” Figures 1A and 1B display the response distribution by country for these two questions.

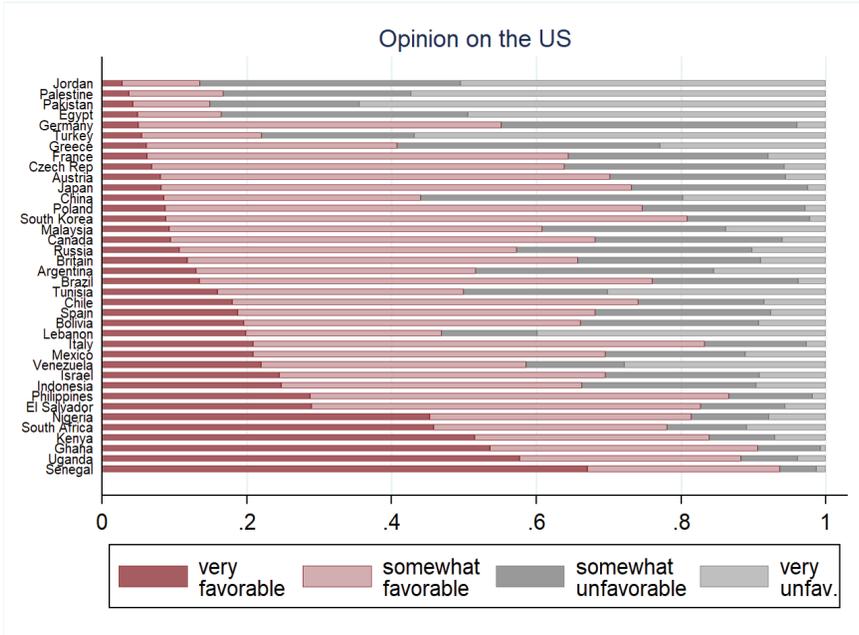


Figure 1A. Response Distribution by Country in the Pew 2013 Sample (Opinion on the USA)

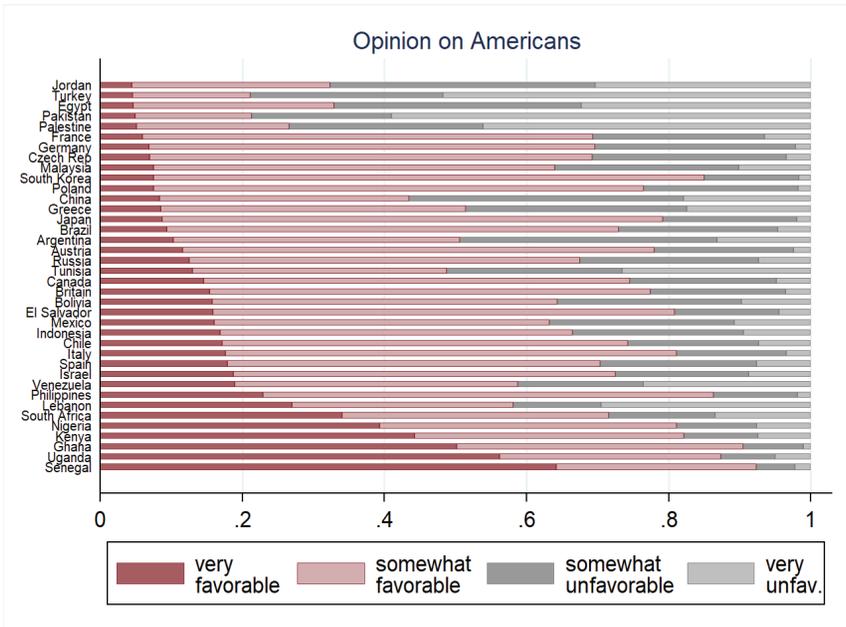


Figure 1B. Response Distribution by Country in the Pew 2013 Sample (Opinion on Americans)

As Figures 1A and 1B highlight, countries that have the greatest relative frequency of people who report negative opinions toward the USA also have that for Americans. In fact, negative opinions toward the USA and Americans are strongly correlated with Pearson's $r = 0.752$ ($p < 0.001$). Accordingly, instead of separately investigating the variance in both categorical variables, I sum the questions q9a and q9b.⁵⁰ Higher scores of the new continuous variable indicate greater levels of anti-Americanism.

4.3. Poverty

To measure poverty, I intend to capture the level of deficiency in a person's basic means of subsistence. Asking about people's income level may not always accurately reflect their lack of access to key means of subsistence. In certain countries, a person can be at a low tier of national income distribution but can also afford basic means of subsistence. Employment status tells us little about whether the person is unemployed and poor, whether they already have enough income and so do not care about joining the workforce, or whether they rely on their communities to obtain their basic means of subsistence. Finally, statements of economic satisfaction hardly capture poverty, as a survey respondent who reports dissatisfaction with their income can be a wealthy person who strives for greater income, or a poor person who is not content with their economic status. Taken together, like Mousseau, I argue that direct indicators of deficiency in material means of subsistence is the most accurate measure of poverty to assess the ENT.⁵¹

Accordingly, I use question q182 which asks all survey respondents: "*Have there been times during the last year when you did not have enough money (a) to buy food your family needed, (b) to pay for medical and health care your family needed, and (c) to buy clothing your family needed?*" For items a, b, and c, the respondents were asked to reply yes (coded as 1) or no (coded as 0). Like Mousseau, I sum the three versions of q182. Thus, if the summation takes the value of 3, this indicates that the respondent could neither afford food, medical care, nor clothing at some point one year prior to the time of the survey.⁵² The value of 0 means that the respondent had no trouble affording any of the said items of basic subsistence. In the sample, 21.17% ($n=7,613$) of the respondents failed to afford all three items, 9.89% ($n=3,558$) could not afford two of the items, and 11.89% ($n=4,276$) could not afford one of the items at least once in 2012. The remaining 57.05% reported not having trouble affording food, clothing, or medical care.

4.4. Urbanity

To denote whether respondents live in an urban environment or not, I rely on the country-specific versions of the question q207 of Pew 2013. For every version of this question, the surveyor records if the respondent lives in an urban, semi-urban, or rural area. Since I am only interested in marking urbanites, I create a binary variable that is recorded as 1 if the person lives in an urban area (60.09%, $n=22,024$), and 0 otherwise.⁵³

⁵⁰ The Pew 2013 dataset does not include more universally asked questions about the USA as q9a and q9b. Therefore, I only rely on these two questions for a combined score. If I create a factor score using *Principal Component Analysis*, I observe both variables to have equal weight, which is equivalent to simply summing the variables.

⁵¹ Mousseau "Urban Poverty," 35-47.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ I fail to distinguish between those who are urban, suburban, and rural due to a lack of the relevant data in the Pew 2013 survey results. Therefore, the present analyses cannot lay out a nuanced pattern with regards to types of urbanity, which would have otherwise been a relevant assessment of the ENT.

4.5. Contract Enforcement

I use Mousseau’s *Contract Intensity of National Economies* (CINE) dataset, which records the active life insurance contracts *per capita* for all countries in the world between 1816 and 2017.⁵⁴ While life insurance *per capita* is not a direct measurement of a nation’s ability to enforce economic contracts, it indicates governments’ commitment to fulfill intergenerational contracts, which is more challenging to attain in countries with poor contract enforcement. Furthermore, most economic contracts such as rent/purchase contracts and renter’s, travel, or health insurance are binding as long as the contracting parts are alive. With life insurance, the maintenance of the contract goes beyond one’s life. The enforcement of life insurance contracts requires stronger government scrutiny than most other contracts that do not span beyond one’s lifetime.⁵⁵ Relatedly, Mousseau’s choice of this indicator resembles a stress test for a government’s ability to monitor contracts, which makes it appropriate for the present case.

I rely on the binary version of Mousseau’s CINE score instead of the continuous version.⁵⁶ Specifically, this variable marks the countries that have a level of life insurance contracts *per capita* that is greater than the global median of the observed year. These countries are contract-intensive, whereas the rest are contract-poor countries. In the present sample, 25 countries are contract-poor (=1), but 13 are contract-intensive (=0) for the year 2012. For the interaction of contract poverty, urbanity, and poverty, Table 1 displays a cross-tabulation matrix.

Table 1. Cross-Tabulation of the Interaction Constituents

	<i>Contracts-Poor=1</i>		<i>Contracts-Poor=0</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Urban=0</i>	<i>Urban=1</i>	<i>Urban=0</i>	<i>Urban=1</i>	
<i>Poverty = 0</i>	4,042	8,252	3,211	5,016	20,521
<i>Poverty = 1</i>	1,360	1,872	469	575	4,276
<i>Poverty = 2</i>	1,171	1,610	469	575	3,825
<i>Poverty = 3</i>	3,234	3,260	503	616	7,613
<i>Total</i>	9,807	14,994	4,652	6,782	36,325

4.6. Remaining Covariates

I include 10 additional covariates in the statistical models. The *Online Appendix* details the operationalization of these variables. First, I construct a four-item indicator recording the respondents’ dissatisfaction with their own household income. Second, I add a four-item indicator that shows the respondents’ dissatisfaction with their nation’s economic performance. Third, I create a binary variable that marks if the respondent is unemployed or not. Fourth, I create a four-category variable indicating the respondents’ educational attainment. I also

⁵⁴ Mousseau, “The End of War,” 160-196.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ The binary version facilitates interpreting the three-way interaction between urbanity, poverty, and the rule of law.

include a squared term of this variable. Fifth, I record whether the respondent is female. Sixth, I control for the age of the respondent as well as its squared term. Seventh, I create a variable that is equal to 1 if the respondent follows the faith of Islam, and 0 otherwise. Eighth, I add a binary variable that is equal to 1 if the respondent is from the Middle East region, and 0 otherwise. The USA's involvement in the Middle East can lead people in this region to be particularly anti-American. Ninth, I account for the potential confounding effect of the peaceful US troop presence in the respondents' respective countries, as direct interaction with American troops can alleviate anti-American bias in a society. Data is borrowed from Allen *et al.*⁵⁷ Finally, Tokdemir finds that in autocratic regimes, greater US aid leads to greater frustration in the general population towards the USA, provided that this aid supplies the oppressive machinery that contributes to people's misery.⁵⁸ For foreign aid, I record Official Development Assistance (ODA) data from OECD.⁵⁹ Then I mark autocracies as countries with a *Polity 2* score that is strictly less than 0.⁶⁰ Table 2 presents the summary statistics for all the covariates that I use in the present study.⁶¹

Table 2. Summary Statistics

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Anti-Americanism _{ij}					
Urban _{ij}	36,651	0.601	0.490	0	1
Poverty _{ij}	35,968	0.952	1.230	0	3
Sociotropic income dissat. _{ij}	36,121	2.795	0.922	1	4
Egotropic income dissat _{ij}	36,003	2.521	0.812	1	4
Unemployed _{ij}	36,532	0.476	0.499	0	1
Education _{ij}	36,499	2.677	0.874	1	4
Female _{ij}	36,651	0.508	0.500	0	1
Age _{ij}	36,578	41.339	16.143	18	97
Islam _{ij}	36,651	0.269	0.444	0	1
Contract-poor _i	36,651	0.692	0.462	0	1
Middle East _i	36,651	0.162	0.368	0	1
US Troops _i	36,651	4183.520	12792.550	0	57359
US ODA _{pc i}	36,651	7.264	22.727	0	135.4901
Autocracy _i	36,651	0.192	0.394	0	1

5. Statistical Results

The sample is structured such that every respondent is nested within a greater unit (i.e., country). Thus, the OLS assumption regarding the independence of observations risks being violated if the individuals' anti-American responses are related based on which country they are from. This hierarchical unit dependence problem can lead to biased estimates with OLS

⁵⁷ Allen, et al., "Outside the wire," 326-341.

⁵⁸ Tokdemir, "Winning Hearts & Minds," 819-832.

⁵⁹ "Aid (ODA) Commitments to Countries and Regions [DAC3A]," *OECD.Stat*, December 1, 2023, accessed date December 10, 2023. <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TABLE3A>

⁶⁰ Monty G. Marshall, Ted R. Gurr, and Keith Jagers, "Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2015," *Systematic Peace*, June 6, 2016, accessed date December 10, 2023. <http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html>.

⁶¹ Ibid.

regression. As a remedy, I use a multilevel random intercepts modeling specification.⁶² When I estimate this model on the outcome variable with no regressors, I observe that 26% of the variance in anti-Americanism that is explained by the statistical model is caused by country-level variances.⁶³ This suggests that omitting the hierarchical nature of the sample risks losing a crucial level of variance in the observed outcome. Figure 2 displays the variance component estimated for each country in the sample by the ANOVA (i.e., no regressor) model.

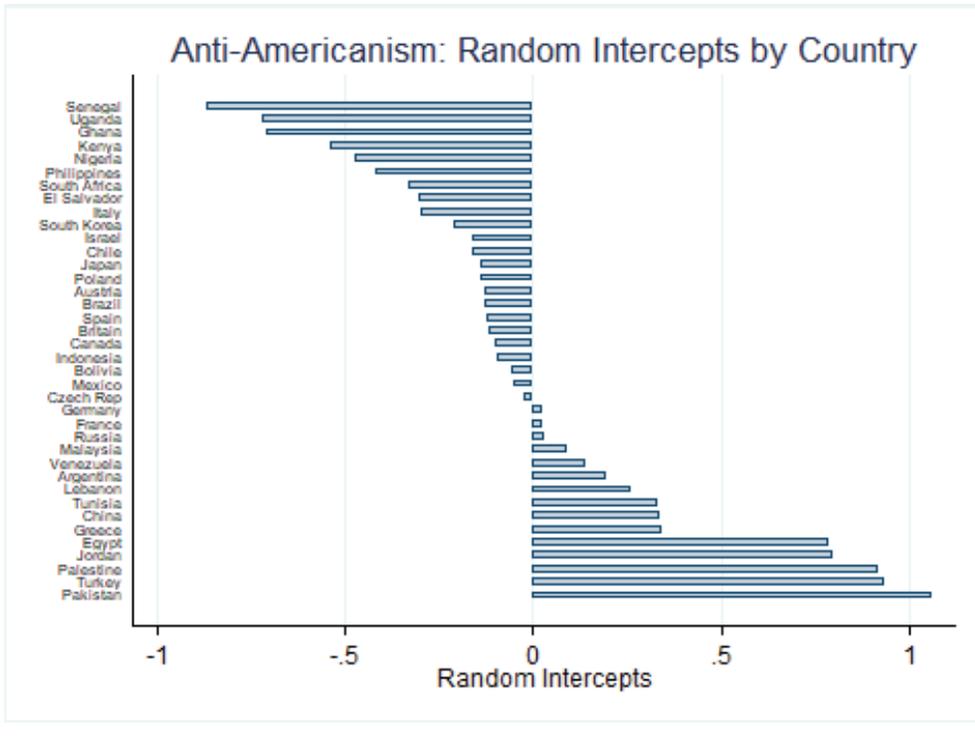


Figure 2. Random Intercepts Distribution

Estimates generated by the multivariate statistical models are displayed in Table 3. Model 1 in Table 3 only consists of variables that vary across survey respondents. Model 2 adds the country-level variables, which are contract poverty, Middle East region, US troop presence, and the interaction between ODA and autocracy. Finally, Model 3 displays the three-way interaction between urbanity, poverty, and contract poverty. For each model, I estimate robust standard errors and use a frequency weight relying on the relevant weighting variable presented by the Pew 2013 Survey.

⁶² Sophia Rabe-Hesketh and Anders Skrondal, *Multilevel and Longitudinal Modeling using Stata* (Texas: STATA Press, 2008).

⁶³ This is estimated as where σ^2 is the random error component and τ_j^2 is the variance of random intercepts estimated for each country j , where $j = \{1, \dots, 38\}$

Table 3: Random Intercepts Estimates of Anti-Americanism

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	(SE)	β	(SE)	β	(SE)
<i>Fixed Effects</i>						
Urban _{ij}	-0.116**	(0.043)	-0.116**	(0.043)	-0.038	(0.041)
Poverty _{ij}	-0.020	(0.022)	-0.020	(0.022)	0.017	(0.033)
Urban _{ij} × poverty _{ij}	0.029	(0.027)	0.029	(0.027)	-0.052	(0.031)
Urban _{ij} × contr-poor _j					-0.127	(0.075)
Poverty _{ij} × contr-poor _j					-0.052	(0.042)
Urban _{ij} × poverty _{ij} × contr-poor _j					0.110*	(0.045)
Sociotropic income dissat. _{ij}	0.069	(0.060)	0.069	(0.060)	0.069	(0.060)
Egotropic income dissat. _{ij}	0.111***	(0.026)	0.111***	(0.026)	0.112***	(0.027)
Unemployed _{ij}	0.082**	(0.030)	0.082**	(0.030)	0.081**	(0.029)
Education _{ij}	0.063	(0.080)	0.063	(0.080)	0.065	(0.079)
Education _{ij} ²	-0.027	(0.015)	-0.027	(0.015)	-0.027*	(0.015)
Female _{ij}	-0.053*	(0.027)	-0.053*	(0.027)	-0.053*	(0.027)
Age _{ij}	0.027***	(0.005)	0.027***	(0.005)	0.027***	(0.005)
Age _{ij} ²	-0.0003***	(0.00005)	-0.0003***	(0.00005)	-0.0003***	(0.00005)
Islam _{ij}	0.795***	(0.117)	0.791***	(0.119)	0.790***	(0.119)
Contract-poor _j			-0.012	(0.231)	0.060	(0.239)
Middle East _j			0.802	(0.483)	0.806	(0.482)
US Troops _j			9.23e-07	(3.31e-06)	0.000	(0.000)
US ODA pc _j			-0.035	(0.019)	-0.035	(0.019)
Autocracy _j			0.133	(0.524)	0.130	(0.522)
US ODA pc _j × Autocracy _j			0.035	(0.018)	0.035	(0.018)
Intercept	3.431***	(0.226)	3.409***	(0.221)	3.360***	(0.221)
<i>Random Effects</i>						
σ_j	0.638***	(0.171)	0.516***	(0.150)	0.515	(0.149)
ε	2.257***	(0.139)	2.257***	(0.140)	2.256	(0.140)
N _i	31,155		31,155		31,155	
N _j	38		38		38	
Wald χ^2	165.61		387.16		578.82	

Notes: (i) Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. (ii) P-values: ***<0.001, **<0.01, *<0.05 (iii) i = individual, j= country

Estimates from Model 1 suggest that living in an urban area has a statistically significant negative effect on anti-Americanism within a 95% confidence level ($\beta=-0.12$, $p=0.006$). Greater poverty, however, has a negative effect that is not statistically significant. I also include the interaction $urban_{ij} \times poverty_{ij}$, but I fail to observe a statistically significant effect of this interaction on the estimated outcome. This does not contradict the present hypothesis. I expect the urban-poverty interaction to increase anti-Americanism with statistical significance, only in nations with poor contract enforcement.

Model 2 adds country-level estimates to respondent-level variables. With the introduction of these variables, I observe that the variance explained by the model at the national level drops from 26 to 18.6%. However, none of the country-level variables appear to have a statistically significant effect on anti-Americanism. Moreover, contract-poor nations *per se* are not significantly more anti-American than contract-rich nations. Greater American

troop presence does not increase or decrease anti-Americanism with statistical significance. I also find that the interaction between US ODA and autocracy has no statistically significant positive effect on Anti-Americanism. Most surprisingly, living in a Middle Eastern nation does not make respondents more anti-American than those who live in other nations.

Estimates from Model 3 suggest that there potentially is statistical support for Hypothesis 1. Furthermore, holding all else constant, the β estimate for the interaction among urbanity, poverty, and contract-poverty is statistically significant ($\beta=0.11, p=0.015$). In addition, the null that all the constituents of the interaction are jointly zero can be rejected with $\chi^2(15)=39.12$ and $p=0.001$. I also conduct a sensitivity test and observe that the findings with regards to this interaction are not sensitive to removing any country's observations from the sample. Figure 3 is a caterpillar plot that displays the interaction term's 95% confidence interval values as a result of the country sensitivity test. Nevertheless, these statistics are insufficient to conclude that Hypothesis 1 finds statistical support.

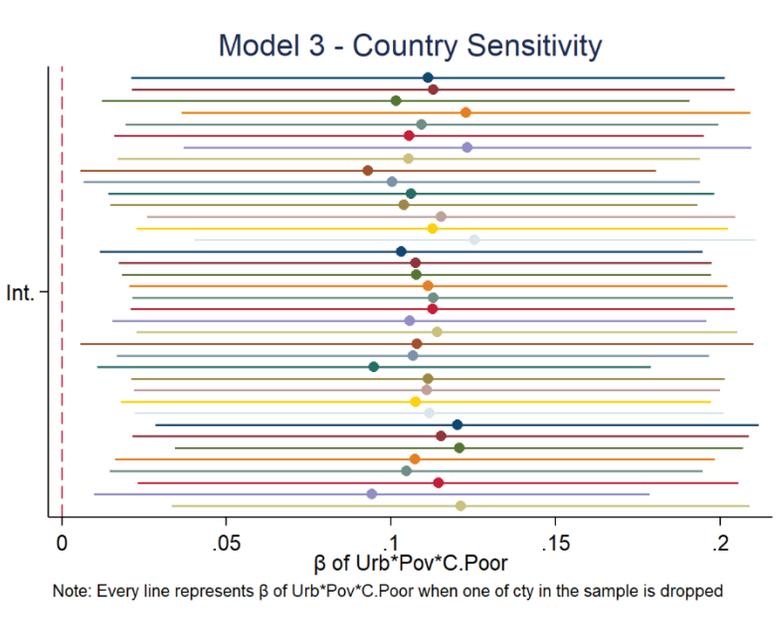


Figure 3. Assessing the Country Sensitivity of the Interaction in Model 3

To better make sense of the three-way interaction, I first obtain the average-over-the-sample predictions of anti-Americanism scores across all simulated values of the constituents of the three-way interaction. Instead of fixing arbitrary mean and median values to the control variables, the average-over-the-sample approach only uses information from the sample. This approach gives us a clearer account of what we learn with the present modelling specification with the sample that we use.⁶⁴ In doing so, for each observation in the sample, I first calculate the predicted values of anti-Americanism across each simulated value of urban k , poverty l , and contract-poor m , where $k = \{0, 1\}$, $l = \{0, 1, 2, 3\}$, $m = \{0, 1\}$. Then, for each simulated combination of k , l , and m , I sum the linear predictions of the whole sample and take the

⁶⁴ Raymond M. Dutch and Randolph T. Stevenson, *The Economic Vote: How Political and Economic Institutions Condition Election Results* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

resultant average to obtain , such that:

$$\hat{Y}_{klm} = N^{-1} \times \sum_{i=1}^N (\beta_0 + \sigma_j + \beta_1 \times \text{urban}_k + \beta_2 \times \text{poverty}_l + \beta_3 \times \text{contract poor}_m + \beta_4 \times \text{urban}_k \times \text{poverty}_l + \beta_5 \times \text{urban}_k \times \text{contract poor}_m + \beta_6 \times \text{poverty}_l \times \text{contract poor}_m + \beta_7 \times \text{urban}_k \times \text{poverty}_l \times \text{contract poor}_m + \mathbf{ZX}_{ij}) \tag{1}$$

In (1), σ_j represents the predicted variance component for country j , where the respondent i is from. \mathbf{ZX}_{ij} represents the remaining covariates with their actual realization values multiplied by their impact parameters estimated in Model 3. β_0 is the universal intercept estimated in Model 3. Hence, for each respondent i in country j , their individual intercept is equal to $\beta_0 + \sigma_j$. Figure 4 accordingly displays the predicted average-over-the-sample anti-Americanism scores for each simulated value of the constituents of the three-way interaction.⁶⁵

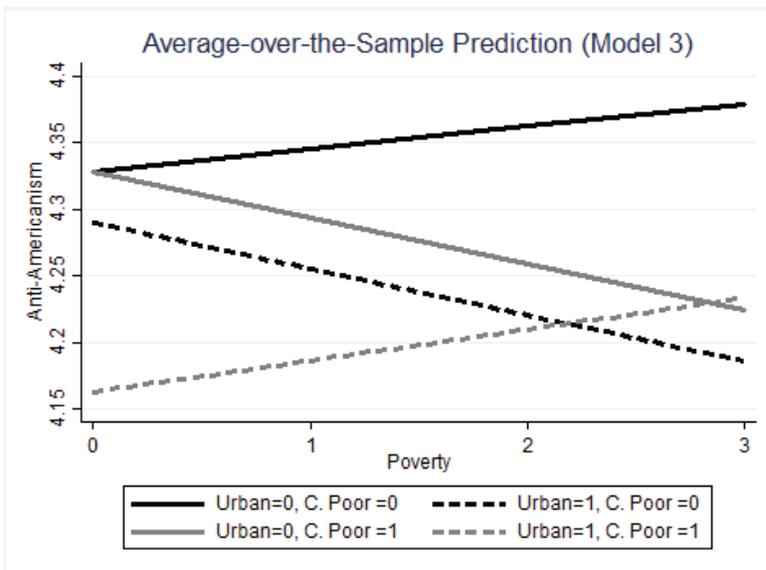


Figure 4. Predicted Anti-Americanism by Model 3

As can be observed in Figure 4, when the contract-poor variable is simulated to be 0 (black lines), increased levels of poverty decrease anti-Americanism if urbanity is simulated to be 1 (dashed line). However, if urbanity is 0 (straight line), increased levels of poverty also increase anti-Americanism when the nation of interest is a contract-intensive one. This suggests that rural poverty is a strong driving force behind anti-Americanism in contract-intensive nations. On the other hand, when the respondent’s country is simulated to be

⁶⁵ Despite its unique strength in relying on the sample to derive information, the disadvantage of the average-over-the-sample method is the lack of clear measurement precision. Calculating standard errors for the predicted values of each row in the sample and then taking their average does not generate actual standard errors of the average-over-the-sample prediction. Thus, in the *Online Appendix*, I use the *margins* command on *Stata* to calculate the confidence intervals around the predicted values. I find that that the substantive impact of the interaction on the predicted anti-Americanism is weak.

contract-poor, we observe a pattern that is in line with ENT.⁶⁶ Furthermore, in a contract-poor nation (grey lines), a respondent’s level of anti-Americanism increases if they are simulated to be an urbanite (dashed line) and decreases if they are simulated to be a non-urbanite (straight line). Stated differently, we observe that urban poverty leads to anti-Americanism if the individual lives in a contract-poor nation.

The second step in understanding the nature of the interaction involves calculating changes in the marginal effect of a constituent on the outcome variable across the simulated values of other terms in the interaction.⁶⁷ In that regard, I calculate how the marginal effect of the urban variable on anti-Americanism changes across the simulated values of poverty and contract-poverty. The marginal effect of the urban variable on anti-Americanism is expressed as:

$$\frac{\delta Y}{\delta urban} = \beta_1 + \beta_4 \times poverty + \beta_5 \times contract\ poor + \beta_7 \times poverty \times contract\ poor \tag{2}$$

Figure 5 displays the marginal impact of the urban variable on anti-Americanism and how this impact changes due to variations in the simulated values of poverty and contract poverty. I find that urbanity’s impact on anti-Americanism becomes positive with greater values of poverty only when the respondent’s country is simulated to be a contract-poor one. On the other hand, the marginal impact of urbanity on anti-Americanism becomes more negative as poverty increases and the respondent is simulated to live in a contract-intensive country. Overall, the substantive impact of the urbanity, poverty, and contract poverty interaction on anti-Americanism appears to be in the direction suggested by ENT.⁶⁸

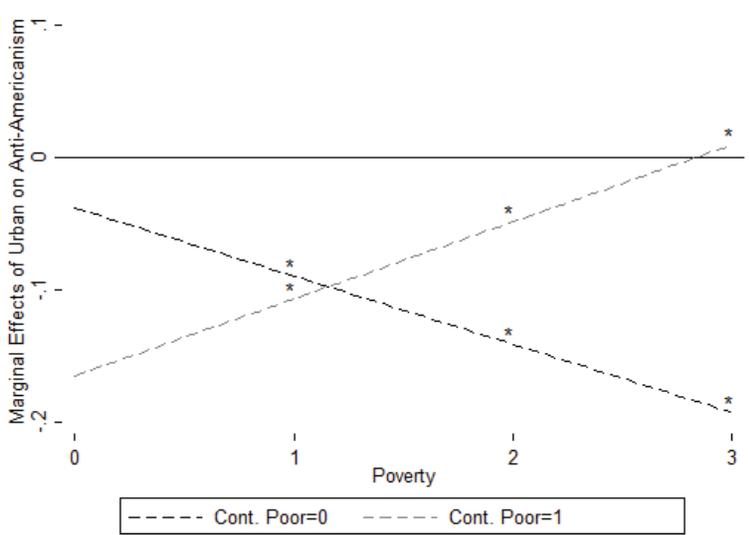


Figure 5. Marginal Effects Plots, Model 3 Interaction

⁶⁶ Mousseau “Market Civilization,” 5-29.

⁶⁷ Thomas Brambor, William Roberts Clark, and Matt Golder, “Understanding Interaction Models: Improving Empirical Analyses,” *Political Analysis* 14, no. 1 (2006): 63-82.

⁶⁸ Mousseau “Market Civilization,” 5-29.

To assess the statistical significance of the marginal effects, I estimate the standard errors for each value of the marginal effects plot obtained in Figure 5. For each marginal effect value, statistical significance fulfils the inequality $(\frac{\partial Y}{\partial \text{urban}}) / (\hat{\sigma}^2_{\frac{\partial Y}{\partial \text{urban}}}) > t - \text{value}$, where the critical t-value is 2.1 ($\alpha=0.05$) given the sample size and the degrees of freedom (15) for the interaction. The statistically significant points are marked with an asterisk above.⁶⁹ I find the marginal effects of poverty on urbanity across simulated values of contract poverty as statistically significant with a 95% confidence level. Details for the calculations are in the *Online Appendix* to conserve space in this article.

For the remainder of the covariates in Table 3, there are some intuitive and some counter-intuitive results. In terms of economic evaluation variables, while dissatisfaction with household income increases anti-Americanism with statistical significance, the same cannot be stated for dissatisfaction with national income. On the other hand, being unemployed increases anti-Americanism with statistical significance in all the models from Table 3. In terms of demographic variables, it appears that while being a female does not affect anti-Americanism with statistical significance, age does. Moreover, given that the age variable is positive with statistical significance, but its squared term is negative, there is an inverted-U type of relationship between age and anti-Americanism. I find that educational attainment has no precise effect on anti-Americanism. Finally, it was statistically significant that those who identify as Muslim score higher in anti-Americanism than those who do not.⁷⁰

5.1. Robustness Checks

I conduct five robustness check operations. To save space here, I detail the results in the *Online Appendix*. First, albeit having a strong correlation, I estimate respondents' attitudes towards the USA and Americans separately, using multilevel ordinal logit specification. I find that the interaction between urbanity, poverty, and countries' contract poverty account for respondents' somewhat and very unfavorable attitudes towards the United States as well as Americans. Thus, the ENT-driven anti-Americanism does not discriminate between the USA as a political entity and American people. It likely is a strong form of bias.

Second, to ensure that ENT-driven anti-Americanism is not sensitive to who the US president is, I investigate whether the approval of President Obama's reelection in 2012 is driven by the interaction of urbanity, poverty, and contract poverty. I find that this is not the case, and hence ENT-driven anti-Americanism is likely impervious to the Obama effect.⁷¹

Third, as a placebo analysis, I estimate people's opinions towards Russia, China, and the UN as a function of the covariates specified in Table 3. I find that the ENT-driven interaction does not account for people's opinions on Russia, China, or the UN. Thus, the ENT is likely not a mere story about nationalism, but more likely a theoretical account on how economic institutions motivate anti-modernist opinions.

Fourth, as an alternative to Mousseau's contract poverty variable,⁷² I use World Bank's

⁶⁹ Matt Golder, "Interactions," *MattGolder.com*, accessed date November 10, 2023. <http://mattgolder.com/interactions>

⁷⁰ I also remove all the statistically insignificant variables from Model 3, re-estimate the model, and find that the results with regards to the three-way interaction do not change.

⁷¹ Meunier, "The Dog That Did Not Bark," 1-25; Eike Mark Rinke, Lars Willnat, and Thorsten Quandt, "The Obama Factor: Change and Stability in Cultural and Political anti-Americanism," *International Journal of Communication* 9, no. 1 (2015): 2954-2979.

⁷² Mousseau "The End of War," 160-196.

Strength of Legal Rights Index measurement.⁷³ This indicator shows how lender and borrower rights are protected under a country's legal system. I observe that this alternative measurement of a country's contract enforcement capabilities still supports findings with respect to the ENT.

Finally, I retest the statistical models of Table 3 by creating a sample from the Pew 2002 Global Attitudes Survey and append it to the present Pew 2013.⁷⁴ Since Pew 2002 is the sample that Mousseau used to investigate the implications of the ENT in the case of support for suicide bombing among Muslims, a reasonable robustness check is to see if the same dataset presents evidence in favor of the present argument.⁷⁵ I find that the three-way interaction between urbanity, poverty, and contract poverty increases anti-Americanism in the direction specified by the ENT with statistical significance. This finding lends additional credibility to the ENT's ability to account for anti-Americanism.

6. Conclusion

The ENT explicates how the urban poor embrace anti-American ideas due to weak enforcement of legal contracts under a nation's market system.⁷⁶ The statistical analyses in this paper corroborate the ENT. The greater the level of poverty an urban respondent suffers from, the more anti-American they become if they live in a contract-poor nation. This finding offers a potential answer to the question advanced in the introduction: anti-Americanization of local politics can be beneficial for elites to pursue when the central authority fails to monitor and regulate market transactions, and when there is a notably poor urban audience. This might shed light on why not only the secular opposition in Turkey but also President Erdoğan adopted anti-Americanism to vilify each other. Similarly, by Mousseau's standards, Canada was a contract-poor nation in its earlier years. Thus, it would not be a surprise that certain politicians wanted to pursue an anti-American platform to gather support.⁷⁷

There are two caveats to be underlined regarding the findings of the present work. First, as this paper's statistical analyses show, the interaction among urbanity, poverty, and contract poverty does not nullify the impact of people's affiliation with Islam. This suggests that while the ENT successfully accounts for anti-Americanism, it does not necessarily show us why Muslims, on average, are more anti-American than non-Muslims.⁷⁸ Provided that many extant studies solely focus on anti-Americanism in the Islamic world, Muslim anti-Americanism remains an under-explained and under-compared phenomenon.

Second, the outcome variable that is investigated in this paper consists of people's general assessments of the USA and Americans. Hence, what the three-way interaction captures here is rather a level of bias and not a substantive evaluation of US foreign policy choices. The reader will be better off not employing the ENT to investigate why a random person is unhappy with, say, US involvement in Libya or Nigeria. Chances are strong that the urban poor in a contract-poor nation will be critical of US foreign policies. However, chances are also strong that those who do not suffer from poverty, who do not live in an urban area, or

⁷³ "The Strength of Legal Rights Index," *TheWorldBank.com*, September 16, 2021, accessed date November 10, 2023. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IC.LGL.CRED.XQ?end=2013&start=2013>

⁷⁴ "Pew Summer 2002 Survey Data," *Pew Research Center*, July 2-October 31, 2002, accessed date November 10, 2023. <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/dataset/summer-2002-survey-data/>

⁷⁵ Mousseau "Urban Poverty," 35-47.

⁷⁶ Mousseau "Market Civilization," 5-29.

⁷⁷ Granatstein and Stewart "Yankee Go Home?" 293-310.

⁷⁸ Mousseau "Market Civilization," 5-29.

who live in a contract-intensive nation can still be critical of the US foreign policy agenda. Nonetheless, it is the urban poor in contract-poor nations who will be more likely than a mild critic to be dismissive about anything related to the USA and Americans, as the present analyses highlight.

There is also room for future research. Although this paper is on anti-Americanism, its implications extend beyond people's perceptions of the USA and Americans. The *Economic Norms Theory* suggests that under poor enforcement of economic contracts, the urban poor will be inclined toward embracing ideas that oppose any concept related to the modern market economy.⁷⁹ Accordingly, the same theory may potentially account for various issues ranging from people's inclinations toward operating in the black market, or adherence to conspiracy theories such as so-called Zionist plans to rule the world, Bill Gates' so-called plan to enslave humans, or opposition to IGOs such as WHO or WTO. The present findings present one of the most direct means to corroborate the ENT. Thus, future studies can move on to explore further implications of Mousseau's theory.

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Data Availability Statement: In pursuit of fulfilling FAIR and Open Science principles, all data and statistical codes generated to produce this research will indefinitely be deposited in Harvard Dataverse. Readers who are interested in replicating the present results can find the replication material at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/ZN4WZ0>

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⁷⁹ Ibid.

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Examining Relationships Among Turkey, Israel, and the United States in Terms of Interest Similarity

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Abstract

Interest similarity is defined as the affinity of national interests in global affairs. This research aims to examine the interest similarity among Turkey, Israel, and the US. Interest similarity of countries has been examined by taking into account the factors of (a) alliance portfolio, (b) MID data, and (c) UNGA voting records. Quantitative data regarding these factors have been analyzed with correlation and regression models. The findings show that the interest similarities among these three countries have a statistically significant correlation. This research also examines the relationships between the three states to better understand which factors affect their interest similarity, and how. Thus, this study contributes to the political science and international relations literature by analyzing quantitative data while examining the interest similarity among Turkey, Israel, and the US.

Keywords: Interest Similarity, Turkey, Israel, the US

1. Introduction

In the International Relations (IR) literature, “bilateral political relationships have been characterized by the degree of similarity of national interests in global affairs between countries.”¹ In this respect, interest similarity helps researchers to characterize the foreign policies of states in terms of their powers, interests, preferences, and perceptions. Gartzke proposes measuring states’ national interests through their preferences.² “Preferences and interests play a crucial role in many IR theories, but they are difficult to operationalize.”³ Since it is difficult to observe the attitudes/preferences of states directly in foreign policy, it is necessary to obtain observable data showing these attitudes. Accordingly, this study has calculated “interest similarity scores” to evaluate political similarity among Turkey, Israel, and the US.

Since the relations and interests of Turkey, Israel, and the US converge on the Middle

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¹ Eric Gartzke, “Kant We All Just Get Along? Opportunity, Willingness, and the Origins of the Democratic Peace,” *American Journal of Political Science* 42, no. 1 (1998): 1-27.

² Eric Gartzke, “The Capitalist Peace,” *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no.1 (2007): 171.

³ Erik Voeten, “Data and Analyses of Voting in the United Nations General Assembly,” in *Routledge Handbook of International Organization*, ed., Bob Reinalda, (London: Routledge, 2013), 62.

East region, there are several reasons that make it important to examine the interest similarity among these three countries. Concerning the triangular relationship among Turkey, Israel, and the US, some observers have suggested that “there appeared to be a natural convergence of interests.”⁴ Turkey and Israel are two regional powers that share many similarities in their strategic outlooks. At the global level, the two states have displayed a strong pro-American orientation in their foreign policy.⁵ The stability of Turkish-Israeli relations holds great importance for the United States, “which is allied to both countries and has long viewed the Turkish-Israeli friendship as one of the most important components of its policies in the Middle East region.”⁶ Therefore, US leadership has also played a central role in shaping—and often mediating—the Turkish-Israeli relationship.⁷ While the relationship between Turkey and Israel provides military, economic, and diplomatic benefits to both countries, the close coordination between the two countries also provides an advantage for the interests of the US in the Middle East region.⁸ In this context, it is important to examine the similarity of national interests of these three allies in terms of adding a different dimension to the literature.

The intersection of their interests is an important factor in the formation of a strong association among the three countries.⁹ Internal and external factors affecting the relations between the three countries (for instance, Middle East political dynamics, security and economic concerns, and the structure of the international system) have been effective in establishing a strong diplomatic association among them. In the pre- and post-Cold War periods, tripartite relations mainly included policy harmony. Therefore, relations between these three countries whose interests intersect have gradually evolved into strategic relations.¹⁰ However, these trilateral relations have become a bottleneck during the period of 2008-2021. International and regional conjunctural changes contributed to the deterioration of relations, given that “as Turkey’s domestic power structure changed, so too did its foreign alignment choices.”¹¹ Therefore, Turkey’s national interests were not fully compatible with the interests of both the US and Israel in this period.¹² The Turkey-Israel part of the triangle has had problems since 2010. Turkey-Israel relations, which had the greatest tension given the Mavi Marmara incident (May 2010), affected Turkey’s relations with the United States.¹³ As a result of this high tension, the US, together with Israel, voted “No” against Turkey in the UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/15/21, 2010). Also, in the same period (June 2010), Turkey’s decision to vote “No” against the sanctions on Iranian nuclear power at the UN

⁴ William B. Quandt, ed., *Troubled Triangle: The United States, Turkey and Israel in the New Middle East* (Charlottesville, Virginia: Just World Books, 2011): 13.

⁵ Efraim Inbar, “The Resilience of Israeli–Turkish Relations,” *Israel Affairs* 11, no. 4 (2005): 591-607.

⁶ Bülent Alirıza, “The Turkish-Israeli Crisis and U.S.-Turkish Relations,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, September 20, 2011, accessed date August 15, 2020. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/turkish-israeli-crisis-and-us-turkish-relations>.

⁷ Dan Arbell, “The US-Turkey-Israel Triangle,” *Brookings: Center for Middle East Policy Analysis Paper*; no. 34 (2014): 2.

⁸ Steven A. Cook, “The USA, Turkey, and the Middle East: Continuities, Challenges, and Opportunities,” *Turkish Studies* 12, no. 4 (2011): 720.

⁹ Gregory F. Gause III, “The US-Israeli-Turkish Strategic Triangle: Cold War Structures and Domestic Political Processes,” in *Troubled Triangle: The United States, Turkey and Israel in the New Middle East*, ed., William B. Quandt, (Charlottesville, Virginia: Just World Books, 2011), 23.

¹⁰ Ellen Laipson, Philip Zelikow, and Brantly Womack, “Strategic Perspectives: Comments and Discussion,” in *Troubled Triangle: The United States, Turkey and Israel in the New Middle East*, ed., William B. Quandt, (Charlottesville, Virginia: Just World Books, 2011), 67.

¹¹ Ersel Aydınli and Onur Erpul, “Elite Change and the Inception, Duration, and Demise of the Turkish–Israeli Alliance,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 17, no. 2 (2021): 5.

¹² Efrat Aviv, “The Turkish Government’s Attitude to Israel and Zionism as Reflected in Israel’s Military Operations 2000–2010,” *Israel Affairs* 25, no. 2 (2019): 281-306.

¹³ Carol Migdalovitz, *Turkey: Selected Foreign Policy Issues and US Views* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress Congressional Research Service, 2008), 14. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA486490>

Security Council showed a difference of interests between the United States and Israel and reflected Turkey's attitude towards these two countries. Both of these events made it clear to the three states that there were serious differences in their approaches to and interests in regional issues. "Turkey has been critical of the US failure to put greater pressure on Israel, while the United States has been uncomfortable with the extent of Turkey's continued dealings with Iran."¹⁴ Moreover, the geopolitical changes experienced during the Arab Spring caused a change in the Middle East in the 2010s and also affected relations among Turkey, Israel,¹⁵ and the US. These types of events create a new dynamic and also provide evidence that bilateral relationships can affect tripartite relationships. The literature shows that as the interests of states intersect, their relations improve, and as the interests of states differ with the effects of local, regional, and global developments, their relations become strained.¹⁶ As a recent example, the visit of Israel's President to Turkey in February 2022 was expressed as the beginning of a new turning point in bilateral relations.¹⁷ Future relations among Turkey, Israel, and the United States may also be affected by other new developments currently being initiated in the international arena,¹⁸ such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the future role of NATO. Time will tell if this step taken to improve relations between Turkey and Israel will be reflected in Turkey-USA and Israel-USA relations.

Many leading theories in the field of international relations emphasize the significance of interest similarity as a key determinant of conflict and cooperation between countries.¹⁹ Interest similarity includes data that are employed to evaluate the interests or opposing interests of state pairs. The degree of similar or opposite interests, obtained by looking at the relationship between MID, alliance, and UNGA votes data, gives us concrete data on cooperation and conflict in interstate relations.²⁰ The measure of interest similarity matches up well with significant periods of both cooperation and conflict. Thus, the three states' interest similarity was measured with (1) alliance portfolio, (2) Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID)²¹ data, and (3) the similarity of votes in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

These three indicators, which were used to demonstrate the interests of states, will be ideal for quantitatively testing the preferences of the states in their national policies. Alliance portfolios were accepted as one of the central tools in which states build up their relations

¹⁴ Bülent Aliriza and Bülent Aras, *US-Turkish Relations: A Review at the Beginning of the Third Decade of the Post-Cold War Era*, (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2012).

¹⁵ Kıvanç Ulusoy, "Turkey and Israel: Changing Patterns of Alliances in the Eastern Mediterranean," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 22, no. 3 (2020): 415-430.

¹⁶ Sholomo Brom, "The Israeli-Turkish Relationship," in *Troubled Triangle: The United States, Turkey and Israel in the New Middle East*, ed., William B. Quandt, (Charlottesville, Virginia: Just World Books, 2011), 58.

¹⁷ "Türkiye-İsrail ilişkilerinde Yeni Dönüm Noktası," *Deutsche Welle*, March 9, 2022, accessed date March 9, 2022. [https://www.dw.com/tr/t%C3%BCrkiye-i%C3%BCrkiye-ili%C3%BCrkiye-ili%C5%9Fkilerinde-yeni-d%C3%B6n%C3%B6n%C3%BCm-noktas%C4%B1/a-61072319](https://www.dw.com/tr/t%C3%BCrkiye-i%C3%BCrkiye-ili%C3%BCrkiye-ili%C5%9Fkilerinde-yeni-d%C3%B6n%C3%BCm-noktas%C4%B1/a-61072319).

¹⁸ Anat Lapidot-Firilla, "Turkey's Search for a 'Third Option' and Its Impact on Relations with US and Israel," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (2005): 1-9.

¹⁹ Kevin John Sweeney and Omar M. G. Keshk, "The Similarity of States: Using S to Compute Dyadic Interest Similarity," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 22, no. 2 (2005): 165-187.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ MID data is an important determinant in revealing the political closeness of states, as they reflect the differentiation of interests between states. States with similar foreign policy interests are less likely to engage in military conflicts. Since most of the conflicts between states occur between states with different interests, the absence of conflict between the three countries is an indication that the countries have similar interests, but it is also an indication of high political similarity. In this study, although the extraction of MID data does not affect the S-score variable statistically, it is evidence that the relations between the three countries have made strategic cooperation progress in line with similar interests, and that they do not experience a conflict of interest that will lead to conflict. Therefore, the MID variable continues to be important data in revealing the political similarity between the three countries.

and behaviors in the international system²² and were also used as the indicator of national preferences of states.²³ In this respect, alliance portfolios were an indicator in determining the similarity or diversity of common interests between states.²⁴ According to Bueno de Mesquita, the similarity of nations' respective alliance portfolios is a measure of the similarity or commonality of those nations' underlying security interests.²⁵ Various data analyses were conducted on how the interactions of states would end and why conflicts began. Causal models have been developed to make sense of the behavior of states for this purpose. The most widely used measurement of analysis in interstate conflicts is the Interstate Militarized Dispute (MID) dataset.²⁶ Although MID refers to a clear threat of sovereign states' desire to use military power,²⁷ it is defined as a situation stemming from the interactions that resulted in peace or conflict between states.²⁸ MID portfolios enable our operationalization of common interests to tap both the cooperation and conflictual aspects of revealed preferences.²⁹ The most costly signal a state can send about its preferences is to engage in war with another state.³⁰ The least significant indicator is each state's United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voting record. The decisions made at the UNGA provide a setting in which states express their positions and interests in the global order, even if these decisions are not binding. "These similarity measures are all predicated on the idea that observing a pair of states voting frequently in unison is the result of preference affinities."³¹ In various studies, voting behavior in international organizations, especially the UNGA, is used to reveal the similarity of member countries' foreign policy preferences.³² As Voeten notes about the UNGA voting records, "there is no obvious other source of data where so many states over such a long time period have revealed policy positions on such a wide set of issues."³³ Thus, states' voting preferences at the UNGA provide information about their unique policy preferences.³⁴ On the other hand, voting preferences may not always reflect the foreign policy of a state since voting choices depend on the strategic agenda of states and can be affected by pressure from key global and regional actors.³⁵ Even if the countries cannot fully reflect their preferences in

²² Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1997); James D. Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances," *American Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (1991): 904-933.

²³ Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

²⁴ Curtis S. Signorino and Jeffrey M. Ritter, "Tau-b or not tau-b: Measuring the Similarity of Foreign Policy Positions," *International Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1999): 115-144.

²⁵ Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, "Measuring Systemic Polarity," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 19, no. 2 (1975): 187-216.

²⁶ Stephen Watts et al., *Understanding Conflict Trends: A Review of the Social Science Literature on the Causes of Conflict* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 14.

²⁷ Charles S. Gochman and Zeev Maoz, "Militarized Interstate Disputes 1816-1976," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 28, no. 4 (1984): 587.

²⁸ Eyasu Habtemariam, Tshilidzi Marwala, and Monica Lagazio, "Artificial Intelligence for Conflict Management," in *Proceedings IEEE International Joint Conference on Neural Networks, 2005*. <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?arnumber=1556310>

²⁹ Zeev Maoz et al., "The Dyadic Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs) Dataset Version 3.0: Logic, Characteristics, and Comparisons to Alternative Datasets," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63, no. 3 (2019): 815.

³⁰ James D. Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (1995): 379-414, 383.

³¹ Frank M. Häge and Simon Hug, "Consensus Decisions and Similarity Measures in International Organizations," *International Interactions* 42, no. 3 (2016): 503-529.

³² Michael A. Bailey, Anton Strezhnev, and Erik Voeten, "Estimating Dynamic State Preferences from United Nations Voting Data," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61, no. 2 (2017): 430-456; M. Margaret Ball, "Bloc voting in the General Assembly," *International Organization* 5, no. 1 (1951): 3-31; Steven Holloway, "Forty years of United Nations General Assembly Voting," *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 23, no. 2 (1990): 279-296.

³³ Voeten, "Data and analyses of voting in the United Nations General Assembly," 54-66.

³⁴ Soo Yeon Kim and Bruce Russett, "The New Politics of Voting Alignments in the United Nations General Assembly," *International organization* 50, no. 4 (1996): 629.

³⁵ Mohammad Zahidul Islam Khan, "Is Voting Patterns at the United Nations General Assembly a Useful Way to Understand a Country's Policy Inclinations: Bangladesh's Voting Records at the United Nations General Assembly," *SAGE Open* 10, no. 4 (2020):

the UN Security Council due to the binding nature of the Security Council, they often vote reflecting their own views in the UNGA.³⁶

There are various studies in the extant literature in which interest similarity is used to evaluate states' preferences. For example, the study conducted by Sweeney uses a similar interest construct to measure cooperation and conflicts of interest among the United States-Russia/Soviet Union, France-Germany/West Germany, Israel-Egypt, and Israel-Syria.³⁷ Furthermore, Strüver uses UNGA voting data to assess the foreign policy similarity of China.³⁸ Strüver's analysis involves studying voting patterns and behavior in the UNGA over the past two decades to understand why countries tend to vote similarly on various foreign policy issues. Johnston, meanwhile, shows the preferences and interests of China's conflict behavior and crisis management by using MID data.³⁹ Finally, Rajapakshe examines the similarity of interests and related effects in bilateral relations between states based on China-Sri Lanka relations.⁴⁰ He investigates China's credibility in explaining the similarities of its interests with other countries, particularly in the context of economic, diplomatic, strategic, and military relations, as well as bilateral relations. The outcomes of the study demonstrate that China's ability to foster similarity of interests appears to stem from its effective engagement with smaller states in international politics. Thus, interest similarity can help to measure states' preferences with analysis of the alliance, MID data, and UNGA voting records under changing domestic, regional, and international circumstances.

Consequently, this research aims to examine whether the bilateral political similarity between Turkey, Israel, and the US is statistically related to interest similarity, and to reveal the effects of interest similarity among Turkey, Israel, and the US on relations among these countries. For these purposes, three data sources (alliance, MID, and UNGA voting records) were used to reveal these countries' interests. This study explores trilateral interest similarity as its primary focus, with the example of Israel, Turkey, and the US serving as an illustration. It also employs quantitative methods to analyze the trilateral similarity of interests among Israel, Turkey, and the United States. The research questions guiding the study are listed as follows:

1. Is there any significant correlation between the bilateral relationships of Turkey, Israel, and the US in terms of interest similarity?
2. How can MID, alliance, and UNGA votes help to measure the interest similarity among those three countries?

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Firstly, Section 2 explains the theoretical issues of the concepts of national interest and interest similarity. Then, Section 3 elaborates on data selection, collection, and analysis. Thereafter, Section 4 presents the results and

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³⁶ Bailey et al., "Estimating dynamic state preferences from United Nations voting data," 437.

³⁷ Kevin John Sweeney, "A Dyadic Theory of Conflict: Power and Interests in World Politics," PhD diss., (The Ohio State University, 2004).

³⁸ Georg Strüver, "What Friends are Made of: Bilateral Linkages and Domestic Drivers of Foreign Policy Alignment with China," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 12, no. 2 (2016): 170-191.

³⁹ Alastair Iain Johnston, "China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behaviour 1949–1992: A First Cut at the Data," *The China Quarterly* no. 153, (1998): 1-30.

⁴⁰ R.D.P. Sampath Rajapakshe, "Similarity of Interests between Governments and Its Impact on their Bilateral Relations: Case study of China-Sri Lanka Relations," *International Journal of Scientific Research and Innovative Technology* 2, no. 11 (2015): 40-53.

discusses them via existing literature. Finally, Section 5 concludes the research by stressing various issues that need further research.

2. Theoretical Issues of National Interest and Interest Similarity

The interests of states are frequently used in the foreign policy analysis of states, as they are an important explanatory tool in international politics. Since the interests of states are not directly observable, the theoretical literature on interests reveals the meaning and origin of this issue. Examining the interests of states from different theoretical perspectives helps to understand the importance that states attach to their national interests. The national interest, which is used in explaining the interest similarity of states, is theoretically discussed in this section, and the views of different theories on the national interest concept is evaluated.

The concept of national interest is at the center of some international relations theories because of its role in explaining the behavior of states.⁴¹ Per IR theories, a state's foreign policy reflects its national interests, and thus, the national interests of the state are good variables for foreign policy. Therefore, a theoretical discussion could offer useful explanations of national interests. The concept of national interest has been examined through the lenses of realism, liberalism, constructivism, and many other theories of international relations. The perspectives of these theories regarding national interest are summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1: The Theoretical Toolbox

International Relations Theory	National Interest
Realism	National interest defined as the security and survival of the state
Neo-Realism	National interest is a product of the structure of the international system
Liberalism	Interests are an important determinant of conflict severity
Neo-Liberalism	National interest should be focused on the pursuit of peace among nations.
Constructivism	National interests constituted by ideas and identities

The realist approach infers that states act in line with their national interests in their foreign policies, asserting that it should be “the one guiding star, one standard thought, one rule of action” in foreign policy.⁴² For this reason, Realists expect the most violent interstate conflicts to occur between states with different policy interests. Liberals, on the other hand, see interests as an important determinant in the initiation and escalation of conflict. In terms of constructivism, national interest is a social construction and, at the same time, an important explanatory tool in international politics.

Each theory presents a different take on national interests. From a theoretical point of view, national interest has theoretical and empirical strengths and weaknesses. But they all argue that states with similar values or interests will establish a close relationship with shared interests, and that “the degree of interest similarity is an important determinant of dyadic

⁴¹ Jutta Weldes, “Constructing National Interests,” *European Journal of International Relations* 2, no. 3 (1996): 275.

⁴² Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), 242.

conflict and cooperation.”⁴³ For example, while Turkey-US relations moved to the dimension of strategic partnership in the 1990s, they were strained in the 2000s when the USA’s request to open a front to northern Iraq through Turkey was rejected. The national interests of countries may change, or the conflicting interests of today may turn into complementary interests for tomorrow.

Consequently, foreign policies of states are driven by their national interests, and the pursuit of national interests is the objective of a state’s foreign policy.⁴⁴ National interests offer a very appropriate framework to the international relations literature for the systematic examination of relations between states. Therefore, a theoretical discussion of this research has been formed within the framework of national interests. While accepting that national interests have different dimensions, this research has tried to present a concrete framework by emphasizing the importance of three different data in the analysis of state interests, namely: alliance, MID, and UNGA votes. By analyzing these data, the research aims to reveal the interest similarity of Turkey, Israel, and the US to each other through their national interests.

3. Research Method

This section identifies how the research is designed in order to answer the research questions in terms of the (1) data analysis method, (2) data selection and collection process, (3) data analysis process, and (4) limitations of the study.

3.1. Data Analysis Method

To evaluate the interest similarity,⁴⁵ we calculated the S-Score (Spatial Score) proposed by Signorino and Ritter. Signorino and Ritter have expressed that “...the closer two states are in the policy space - i.e. the closer their revealed policy positions - the more ‘similar’ their revealed policy positions. The further apart two states are in the policy space, the more dissimilar their revealed policy preferences.”⁴⁶ Thus, S has become something of a standard measure in the field of quantitative studies of international relations.⁴⁷ In this way, the qualitative data (i.e., existence of war or alliance, and foreign policy preferences) are converted into quantitative data (such as 0 or 1) in the evaluation of relations between countries, and the evaluation is made with the S-Score.⁴⁸ Bapat expressed that “Signorino and Ritter’s weighted measure of S captures the political similarity between target and host states.”⁴⁹ The interest similarity score takes a value between -1 and +1, and the proximity of this value to -1 shows a non-compliant relation while +1 shows a compliant relation.

⁴³ Sweeney and Keshk, “The similarity of states: Using S to compute dyadic interest similarity,” 165.

⁴⁴ Deng Yong, “The Chinese conception of National Interest in International Relations,” *The China Quarterly* 154, (1998): 308.

⁴⁵ In measuring the foreign policy similarity of the states, Kendall’s Tau-b correlation coefficient revealed the relationships between binary and ordinal variables, but since Signorino and Ritter’s S-score yielded more explanatory results than the Tau-b measure, foreign policy in statistical analyses of international relations became the dominant measure of their positions. See: Frank M. Häge, “Choice or circumstance? Adjusting Measures of Foreign Policy Similarity for Chance Agreement,” *Political Analysis* 19, no. 3, (2011): 287.

⁴⁶ Signorino and Ritter, “Tau-b or not tau-b: Measuring the Similarity of Foreign Policy Positions,” 126.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 115-144.

⁴⁸ Garrett Alan Heckman, “Power Capabilities and Similarity of Interests: A Test of the Power Transition Theory,” MS thesis, (London School of Economics, 2009): 712.

⁴⁹ Navin A. Bapat, “The Internationalization of Terrorist Campaigns,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 24, no. 4 (2007): 265-280.

3.2. Data Selection and Collection Process

Since political affinities among Turkey, Israel, and the US would be examined based on interest similarity score, the following data were selected to calculate S-Score: (1) Alliance,⁵⁰ (2) Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID),⁵¹ and (3) UNGA votes.⁵² In addition, considering the US is dominant/hegemonic in all dyads, the “weighted S-Score” method is used in order to calculate the interest similarity score through alliance and MID data. Therefore, (4) CINC (The Composite Index of National Capability)⁵³ data of each country were selected as the weight value in the weighted S-Score calculation. Thus, Appendix 1 shows all selected factors included in this research in order to calculate the S-Score.

To collect data regarding alliance, MID, CINC, and UNGA votes, we used two open-source dataset libraries. Firstly, alliance, MID, and CINC data were collected from “The Correlates of War Project.”⁵⁴ Secondly, UNGA vote data were collected from the “United Nations General Assembly Voting Data.”⁵⁵ Then, we calculated the S-Score using these four types of collected data. Thus, a total number of 72 dyadic data were used for the period of 1948-2019. The following subsection explains how we calculated the S-Score and how the similarity of interests can be interpreted based on the S-Score.

3.3. Data Analysis Process

To obtain S-Scores between each pair of countries ($S\text{-Score}_{\text{Israel-Turkey}}$, $S\text{-Score}_{\text{Israel-US}}$, and $S\text{-Score}_{\text{Turkey-US}}$), we have calculated (i) $S\text{-Score}_{\text{Alliance}}$, (ii) $S\text{-Score}_{\text{MID}}$, and (iii) $S\text{-Score}_{\text{UNGA_Votes}}$ for each pair of countries. Then, by taking the average of these S-Scores, we obtained the S-Score values between each pair of countries. For instance, $S\text{-Score}_{\text{Turkey-Israel}} = [S\text{-Score}_{\text{Alliance}}(\text{TUR_ISR}) + S\text{-Score}_{\text{MID}}(\text{TUR_ISR}) + S\text{-Score}_{\text{UNGA_Votes}}(\text{TUR_ISR})] / 3$.

Firstly, to calculate $S\text{-Score}_{\text{Alliance}}$, we have taken into account each alliance between the two countries. The alliance value in the dataset refers to one of the four alternative scores: 3 refers to Defense Pact, 2 refers to Neutrality or Non-Aggression Pact, 1 refers to Entente, and 0 refers to No Alliance. The Defense Pact entails military alliances to support treaty partners in any military interventions. The Neutrality or Non-Aggression Pact is a promise between signatories to remain military-neutral. Finally, Entente is an arrangement between nations to follow a particular policy in a crisis.⁵⁶

Secondly, to calculate $S\text{-Score}_{\text{MID}}$ between two countries, the fatality value is taken into account, and one of two different formulas is used based on this value because the probability of death in a conflict between two countries is interpreted differently in terms of the severity of the conflict.⁵⁷ Hostility level consists of a score between 1 and 4. 1 refers to no military action, 2 refers to a threat to use military force, 3 refers to a display of military force, and 4 refers to the actual use of force. To express the fatality level of the conflict, a score between

⁵⁰ Douglas M. Gibler and Meredith Reid Sarkees, “Measuring Alliances: The Correlates of War Formal Interstate Alliance Dataset, 1816-2000,” *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 2 (2004): 211-222.

⁵¹ Zeev Maoz, et al., “The Dyadic Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs) Dataset Version 3.0,” 811-835.

⁵² Erik Voeten, Anton Strezhnev, and Michael Bailey, *United Nations General Assembly Voting Data*, V27 (2009), Harvard Dataverse. <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LEJUQZ>

⁵³ David J. Singer, Stuart Bremer, and John Stuckey, “Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820-1965,” in *Peace, War, and Numbers*, Bruce Russett ed, (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1972), 19-48.

⁵⁴ “The Correlates of War Project – Data Sets,” *Correlates of War*, accessed date April 10, 2020, <https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets>

⁵⁵ Erik Voeten, Anton Strezhnev, and Michael Bailey, *United Nations General Assembly Voting Data*, V27.

⁵⁶ Gibler and Sarkees, “Measuring Alliances,” 211-222.

⁵⁷ Daniel M. Jones, Stuart A. Bremer, and J. David Singer, “Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816–1992: Rationale, Coding Rules, and Empirical Patterns,” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 15, no. 2 (1996): 163.

0 and 6 is listed according to the death toll of the created groups. Fatality level is categorized as follows in the MID data set: (1) 0, (2) 1-25, (3) 26-100, (4) 101-250, (5) 251-500, and (6) 501-999. In this context, the BRL (Baseline Rivalry Level) scale, which was developed by Diehl and Goertz, was used in processing the hostility and fatality level data. If there are no deaths when calculating the BRL score from the MID data, the hostility level of country A and B is used; however, if there is death, the fatality level is used. The formula used in calculating the BRL scale is presented in Equations 1 and 2 below.⁵⁸

Non-fatality:

$$\text{Dispute Severity} = 7.779 * \text{hostilityA} * \text{hostilityB} - 0.034 * (\text{hostilityA} * \text{hostilityB})^2 \quad (1)$$

Fatality:

$$\text{Dispute Severity} = 7.779 * (\text{Log}(\text{fatality}) + 16) - 0.034 * (\text{Log}(\text{fatality}) + 16)^2 \quad (2)$$

Thirdly, to calculate S-Score_{UNGA_Votes}, three alternative values are used in the calculation of the S-Score from the UNGA votes of the countries in question. Among these values, 1 refers to Yes, 2 refers to Abstain, and 3 refers to No.⁵⁹

The CINC score was used as the weight value in the weight calculation of the S-Score, which is among Alliance and MID data. CINC is a generally used measure of national power in the field of international relations.⁶⁰ The CINC score constitutes a combination in the calculation of national power by using demographic, economic, and military components.

Several criteria have been taken into account in the calculation of the binary alliance, MID, and UN Voting S-Score points of the three countries. These criteria are given in **Table 2** below.

Table 2: Criteria Taken into Account in S-Score Calculation

Alliance	MID	UN Voting
The data of all countries were taken into account because if the countries that do not have an agreement are similar, this affects the score.	Only the data that included two countries in conflict or at war were included in the calculation.	If one country voted for a resolution and the other did not, that decision was not taken.
Since some countries did not have CINC data for some years, in such cases, the CINC data were obtained from the CINC data average of the year before and after the corresponding year.	Since some countries did not have CINC data for some years, in such cases, the CINC data were obtained from the CINC data average of the year before and after the corresponding year.	CINC data were not used since UNGA Voting score calculation was made unweighted.
If there was more than one datum in a year between the two countries, only the wide-range alliance datum was included in the calculation of the alliance score.	If there was more than one datum in a year between the two countries, only the datum with higher value was included in the calculation of the MID score.	There was no resolution that Israel joined in 1948. In 1964, no country had United Nations resolutions.
When calculating on a yearly basis, the highest alliance value of that year was used in the crossover, with each country corresponding to its own name.	The level of conflict in the matrix of the country of the same name was set to zero (0) in the calculation process.	

⁵⁸ Paul F. Diehl and Gary Goertz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2001): 281-298.

⁵⁹ Bailey et al., "Estimating Dynamic State Preferences from United Nations Voting Data," 430-456.

⁶⁰ Hyung Min Kim, "Comparing Measures of National Power," *International Political Science Review* 31, no. 4 (2010): 405.

By considering the criteria given in **Table 2**, Equation-3 was used for alliance and MID, and Equation-4 was used for UN voting in the calculation of S-Score values.

$$S - Score_{A,B} = 1 - 2 \left[\frac{\sum_{n=1}^N \frac{|A-B|w}{d}}{\sum_{n=1}^N w} \right] \quad (3)$$

$$S - Score_{A,B} = 1 - 2 \sum_{n=1}^N \left(\frac{|A-B|}{d} \right) \quad (4)$$

In equations 3 and 4, N refers to the total number of data, A refers to a datum of one of the countries, B refers to the datum of the other country, w refers to the weight score of the country, and d refers to the difference between A and B . Interest Similarity is the average of the S-Scores for weighted MID portfolios, weighted alliance portfolios, and unweighted UN General Assembly voting portfolios. This study differs from the studies in which the weights of the countries are considered equal in the literature, because it uses the CINC values as the weight value of countries in S-Score calculation.

To analyze the data, R Project and SPSS 25 were used as data analyzing tools. R Project software was used in order to calculate the S-Score with alliance, MID, UNGA voting, and CINC data. These calculated S-Score values were used with SPSS 25 software for correlation analysis and a regression model. The correlation analysis explained whether the bilateral relations between the countries were statistically significant, and the regression model explained the factors that affected the bilateral relations. In addition, in order to determine the suitable correlation analysis method (e.g., Pearson, Spearman), it was taken into account whether data are distributed normally or not. Thus, correlation analysis was carried out by using the two-tailed Pearson correlation coefficient method.

3.4. Limitations

The beginning period of this research was determined as 1948 since Israel was established in that year. Additionally, the end period of this research was determined as 2019 since UNGA voting data were limited to the period of 1946-2019. Furthermore, alliance data is limited to the period of 1816-2012, and MID data is limited to the period of 1816-2010.

4. Results and Discussion

This section includes an assessment of the political affinities between Turkey, Israel, and the United States for the period 1948-2019 based on the results of correlation and regression analysis to reveal the impact of bilateral relationships. Quantitative findings regarding the correlation and regression analysis results are presented first, and then the results are discussed from the aspect of each country considering both the quantitative findings and the existing literature.

4.1. Correlation Analysis Results Regarding Bilateral Relationships Among Three Countries

The first research question examines the existence of statistically significant correlations between bilateral relationships among Turkey, Israel, and the US. Correlation analysis results have been presented from the aspect of (1) Turkey, (2) Israel, and (3) the US, respectively.

4.1.1. Correlation analysis results from the aspect of Turkey

Firstly, the bilateral relationships were examined from the aspect of Turkey, and **Table 3** shows the correlation analysis results that reveal whether there is a statistically significant correlation between Turkey-US and Turkey-Israel relationships in terms of interest similarity.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Coefficients of the TUR-ISR and TUR-US Variables

	S-Score TUR-ISR	p
S-Score TUR-US	.208	.040

According to **Table 3**, there is a statistically significant ($P < .05$) and weak-positive correlation (.208) between the interest similarities of Turkey-US and Turkey-Israel. How can this statistically significant correlation/result contribute to the discipline of Political Science? This correlation proved, based on quantitative data, that Turkey’s political similarity towards Israel was associated with Turkey’s political similarity towards the United States during the period of 1948-2019. This correlation of political similarity can also be expressed as follows: when the level of interest similarity between Turkey and Israel increased or decreased, then the level of interest similarity between Turkey and the USA similarly increased or decreased.

4.1.2. Correlation analysis results from the aspect of Israel

Table 4 shows the results of the correlation analysis in terms of Israel and helps us to understand whether there is a statistically significant correlation between the Israel-Turkey and the Israel-US interest similarities.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Coefficients of the ISR-TUR and ISR-US Variables

	S-Score ISR-TUR	p
S-Score ISR-US	-.020	.868

Table 4 shows that there is no statistically significant ($P > .05$) correlation between the interest similarities of Israel-Turkey and Israel-US. Accordingly, this absence of correlation of political similarity can be expressed as follows: the interest similarity between Israel and the US is not correlated with the interest similarity between Israel and Turkey for the period of 1949-2019.

4.1.3. Correlation analysis results from the aspect of the US

The presence of a significant correlation is also questioned in terms of the US, and **Table 5** shows the results regarding whether there is a statistically significant correlation between the US-Turkey and the US-Israel relationships in terms of interest similarity.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Coefficients of the US-TUR and US-ISR Variables

	S-Score US-TUR	p
S-Score US-ISR	-.286	.015

Table 5 shows that there is a statistically significant ($P < .05$) and weak-negative correlation (-.286) between the US-Turkey and the US-Israel relationships. Accordingly, this correlation of political similarity can be expressed as follows: during the period of 1948-2019, when the interest similarity between the US and Turkey increased, then the interest similarity between the US and Israel decreased, and when interest similarity between the US and Israel increased, then the interest similarity between the US and Turkey decreased.

Upon understanding that there are statistically significant correlations among the bilateral relationships in terms of interest similarity, a regression analysis was performed in order to determine the factors affecting the relationships with the third remaining country, and the results are presented below.

4.2. Regression Analysis Results Regarding Bilateral Relationships Among the Three Countries of Interest

The second research question defines the interest similarity factors affecting the bilateral relationships and determines the direction of effects in such relationships among Turkey, Israel, and the US. Thus, a regression model was employed to examine the relationships, and the analysis results have been presented and discussed from the aspect of (1) the Turkey-Israel relationship, (2) the Turkey-US relationship, and (3) the US-Israel relationship, respectively.

4.2.1. Effects of the Turkey-Israel Relationship on the Turkey-US and the Israel-US Relationships

The regression analysis results regarding the effects of interest similarity between Turkey and Israel on the interest similarities between Turkey-US and Israel-US are shown in **Table 6** and **Table 7**, respectively.

Table 6: Effects of the TUR-ISR Relationship on the TUR-US Relationship

Variables	The dependent variable (S-Score TUR-US)						
	B	SE	β	t	p	Sig	R ²
(Constant)	.322	.045			.000	.000	.435
Alliance TUR-ISR	-.333	.098	-.367	7.085	.001		
MID TUR-ISR	.017	.034	.052	-3.390	.612		
UNGA Votes TUR-ISR	.318	.081	.430	.510	.000		

Table 7: Effects of the TUR-ISR Relationship on the ISR-US Relationship

Variables	The dependent variable (S-Score ISR-US)						
	B	SE	β	t	p	Sig	R ²
(Constant)	.211	.050		4.195	.000	.026	.149
Alliance TUR-ISR	.208	.109	.255	1.919	.060		
MID TUR-ISR	.044	.038	.148	1.182	.242		
UNGA Votes TUR-ISR	-.108	.090	-.162	-1.199	.235		

Table 6 shows that 43.5% of the interest similarity between Turkey and the US can be explained by the interest similarity between Turkey and Israel. In other words, the interest similarity of the Turkey-Israel relationship affects the Turkey-US relationship at a rate of 43.5%. It was found that similarity in UNGA votes between Turkey and Israel has a powerful effect on the Turkey-US relationship in terms of political similarity (see the UNGA votes graphic in Appendix 2). Therefore, the political similarity of UNGA votes between Turkey and Israel may have reflected the relations between Turkey and the US in the past, or it might positively affect Turkey-US relations in the future. Furthermore, it was found that political similarity between Turkey and Israel in terms of military disputes has no impact on the Turkey-US relationship in terms of interest similarity (see the MID data graphic in Appendix 3). Moreover, the political similarity between Turkey and Israel in terms of alliance portfolio has a negative impact on the Turkey-US relationship in terms of interest similarity (see the alliance data graphic in Appendix 4).

Table 7 shows that 14.9% of the interest similarity between Israel and the US can be explained by the Israel-Turkey relationship in terms of interest similarity. In other words, the interest similarity of the Israel-Turkey relationship affects the interest similarity of the Israel-US relationship at a rate of 14.9%. Additionally, political similarity between Israel and Turkey in terms of alliance portfolio has a positive impact on the interest similarity of Israel and the US. Thus, as the level of similarity in the alliance portfolio between Israel and Turkey has increased, the level of interest similarity in the Israel-US relationship has also increased. On the other hand, when Israel strengthened its alliance with Turkey, political similarity between Israel and the US also increased, or the interest similarity between Israel and the US may have led Israel to strengthen its alliance with Turkey. Since political similarity in the Turkey-Israel relationship is important for the protection of the US’s interests in the Middle East, the impact of the Israel-Turkey relationship on the Israel-US relationship can be explained from this perspective.

4.2.2. Effects of the Turkey-US Relationship on the Israel-Turkey and the Israel-US Relationships

The regression analysis results regarding the effects of the interest similarity between Turkey and the US on the interest similarities of Israel-Turkey and Israel-US were shown in **Table 8** and **Table 9**, respectively.

Table 8: Effects of the TUR-US Relationship on the ISR-US Relationship

Variables	The dependent variable (S-Score ISR-US)						R ²
	B	SE	β	t	p	Sig	
(Constant)	.329	.076		4.337	.000	.000	.409
Alliance TUR-US	-.062	.095	-.074	-.652	.517		
MID TUR-US	.132	.043	.331	3.082	.003		
UNGA Votes TUR-US	-.280	.055	-.555	-5.126	.000		

Table 8 shows that 40.9% of the interest similarity between the US and Israel can be explained by the interest similarity between the US and Turkey. In other words, the interest similarity of the US-Turkey relationship affects the interest similarity of the US-Israel relationship at a rate of 40.9%. Furthermore, it was found that political similarity between the US and Turkey in terms of both military disputes and UNGA votes has an impact on the US-Israel relationship in terms of interest similarity. Thus, the US may have considered its interest similarity with Turkey in determining its interest similarity with Israel. However, interestingly, although political similarity between the US and Turkey in terms of military disputes positively affected the interest similarity of the US-Israel relationship, the similarity of UNGA votes between the US and Turkey negatively affected the interest similarity of the US-Israel relationship. At this point, future studies can analyze UNGA votes to understand which kind of decisions caused this negative effect.

Table 9: Effects of the TUR-US Relationship on the TUR-ISR Relationship

Variables	The dependent variable (S-Score TUR-ISR)						R ²
	B	SE	β	t	p	Sig	
(Constant)	.100	.105		.949	.347	.868	.012
Alliance TUR-US	.025	.132	.028	.192	.848		
MID TUR-US	-.002	.060	-.004	-.028	.978		
UNGA Votes TUR-US	.064	.076	.118	.842	.403		

Table 9 shows that the effect of the Turkey-US relationship on the Turkey-Israel relationship was not at a statistically significant level ($P > .05$). In other words, Turkey's relationship with Israel was not affected by Turkey's relationship with the US. The Interest Similarity Graphic presented in Appendix 5 shows that the relationship between Turkey and Israel has an up-and-down trend in some periods; however, in these periods, the Turkey-US relationship was stable and not affected by this fluctuation. For this reason, the inability to explain the change in the Turkey-Israel relationship given the Turkey-US relationship is an understandable result.

4.2.3. Effects of the US-Israel Relationship on the US-Turkey and Turkey-Israel Relationships

The regression analysis results regarding the effects of interest similarity between the US and Israel on the interest similarities of the US-Turkey and Turkey-Israel relationships were shown in **Table 10** and **Table 11**, respectively.

Table 10: Effects of the US-ISR Relationship on the US-TUR Relationship

The dependent variable (S-Score TUR-US)							
Variables	B	SE	β	t	p	Sig	R ²
(Constant)	.336	.084		3.977	.000	.025	.150
Alliance ISR-US	-.359	.131	-.363	-2.738	.008		
MID ISR-US	.091	.062	.183	1.483	.144		
UNGA Votes ISR-US	.008	.157	.006	.049	.961		

Table 10 shows that 15% of the interest similarity between the US and Turkey can be explained by the interest similarity of the US-Israel relationship. In other words, the interest similarity of the US-Israel relationship affects the interest similarity of the US-Turkey relationship at a rate of 15%. At this point, the regression analysis revealed that the political similarity between the US and Israel alone in terms of alliance portfolio has an impact on the US-Turkey relationship. However, the direction of this effect is negative. Thus, it has been found that as the level of alliance portfolio between the US and Israel has increased, the level of interest similarity between the US and Turkey has decreased.

Table 11: Effects of the ISR-US Relationship on the ISR-TUR Relationship

The dependent variable (S-Score ISR-TUR)							
Variables	B	SE	β	t	p	Sig	R ²
(Constant)	.078	.091		.857	.395	.724	.023
Alliance ISR-US	.045	.142	.045	.315	.754		
MID ISR-US	.053	.066	.106	.803	.425		
UNGA Votes ISR-US	.078	.170	.065	.456	.650		

Table 11 shows that the effect of the interest similarity between the US and Israel on the Israel-Turkey relationship was not at a statistically significant level ($P > .05$). In other words, the interest similarity between Israel and Turkey was not affected by the interest similarity of the US-Israel relationship.

4.3. Discussion

4.3.1. Discussion of the Correlation and Regression Analysis Results

The quantitative results have revealed that the interest similarities among Turkey, Israel, and the US are interrelated. Moreover, some of the interest similarities between two countries have affected the interest similarity with the third remaining country, or have been affected by the interest similarity with the third country. Figure 1 summarizes the quantitative results below, and the green arrows show which interest similarity between two countries influences the interest similarity of another country. In addition, the “+” (positive) and “-” (negative) signs explain the factors affecting interest similarity and show the direction of the effects.

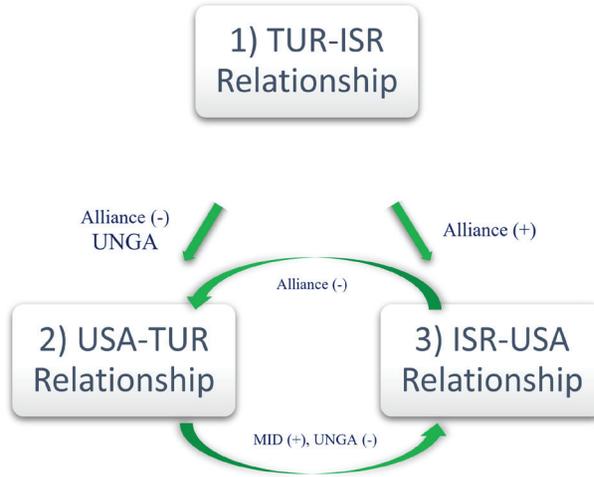


Figure 1: Effects of interest similarities among the relationships between Turkey, Israel, and the US

Firstly, the correlation analysis results have revealed that there is a statistically significant and weak-positive correlation between the interest similarities of the (1) Turkey-Israel and (2) US-Turkey relationships. Additionally, the regression analysis results have revealed that the interest similarity between (1) Turkey and Israel have an impact on the interest similarities between both (2) the US-Turkey and (3) the US-Israel relationships. However, the interest similarities between both (2) the US and Turkey and (3) the US and Israel have no effect on the interest similarity of (1) the Turkey-Israel relationship. On the other hand, the correlation and regression analysis results have revealed that an increase in the similarity of the UNGA votes between (1) Turkey and Israel positively affect the interest similarity of (2) the US-Turkey relationship. Interestingly, while an increase in similarity of alliance between (1) Turkey and Israel negatively affect (2) the US-Turkey relationship, an increase in the similarity of alliance between (1) Turkey and Israel positively affect (3) the US-Israel relationship. Existing literature supports that the Turkey-Israel relationship has an important role in the improvement or deterioration of relationships among these three states. For instance, in response to the harsh policy of Turkey after Israel's declaration of Jerusalem as its eternal capital in 1980, the US sent a letter to the Ambassador of Turkey to Washington and warned that "Ankara's policy towards Israel could negatively affect Turkish-American relations."⁶¹ In addition, it is expressed that the relationship to be established between Ankara and Tel Aviv will also be decisive in the Ankara-Washington relationship, since the security problem of Israel is one of the fundamental policies of the United States regarding the Middle East.⁶² Thus, this research helps to better understand one of the reasons why the President of Israel visited Turkey in February 2022 to repair the weak Turkey-Israel relationship, because the regression results have shown that Israel's alliance with Turkey positively affects Israel's relationship with the United States.

⁶¹ Mehmet Kaya, "Türk-İsrail İlişkileri ve Filistin," *Bingöl Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 9, no. 18 (2019): 1043-1066.

⁶² Tayyar Arı, "Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri: Sistemdeki Değişim Sorunu mu?" *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika* 13, (2008): 17-35.

Secondly, the correlation analysis results have revealed that there is a statistically significant and weak-negative correlation between the interest similarities of the (2) US-Turkey and (3) US-Israel relationships. Moreover, the regression analysis results have revealed that the interest similarity of (2) the US and Turkey affects the interest similarity of (3) the US-Israel relationship. Furthermore, the interest similarity of (3) the US-Israel relationship affects the interest similarity of (2) the US-Turkey relationship as well. The correlation and regression analysis results have shown that an increase in the similarity of Militarized Disputes (MID) between (2) the US and Turkey positively affects the interest similarity of (3) the US-Israel relationship. However, an increase in similarity of UNGA votes between (2) the US and Turkey negatively affects the interest similarity of (3) the US-Israel relationship. In addition, an increase in the similarity of alliance between (3) the US and Israel negatively affects the interest similarity of (2) the US-Turkey relationship. Existing literature supports these results as well. For example, it has been stated that an increase in the US-Israel relationship is based on different strategic foundations,⁶³ and its special relationship with the United States has been of fundamental importance for Israel.⁶⁴ The effect of Israel on the US stems from the Israel lobby's power in affecting the decisions of the US.⁶⁵ Therefore, the influence of the lobby within the US may help to explain the power relationship between the United States and Israel.⁶⁶ Furthermore, according to Blackwill and Slocombe, "there is no other Middle East country whose definition of national interests is so closely aligned with that of the United States."⁶⁷ On the other hand, it has been said that the US played a "catalyst" role between Israel and Turkey during the period between the 1990s and 2000s.⁶⁸ However, the global interests of the US may have clashed with Turkey's regional interests, thereby possibly causing the interest similarity of the Turkey-US relationship to lower in recent years.

Turkey, Israel, and the US share similar strategic interests in the Middle East region in their foreign policies, which has positively affected their political similarity. The deteriorating relations between Turkey and Israel may weaken the US influence in the region and create a strategic problem for the US. Therefore, with the effect of its hegemonic power, the US has stressed that the relations between these countries should not deteriorate,⁶⁹ and the hegemonic power of the US has played a unifying role in the relations between the countries.

4.3.2. Discussion of Interest Similarity S-Score Results

The historical process of relations must be considered to understand by which events the Turkey-USA and Turkey-Israel relations were affected. In this respect, when the relations

⁶³ Bernard Reich and Shannon Powers, "The United States and Israel: The Nature of a Special Relationship," in *The Middle East and the United States, Student Economy Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2016): 227-243.

⁶⁴ Robert O. Freedman, *Israel's First Fifty Years* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000): 200.

⁶⁵ Said Al-Haj, "The Israel Factor in Tense Turkey-US Relations," *Middle East Monitor*, August 7, 2018, accessed date November 9, 2020, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180807-the-israel-factor-in-tense-turkey-us-relations/>; Shira Efron, *Future of Israeli-Turkish Relations* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2018); John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, "The Israel Lobby," in *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence*, ed., James M. McCormick, (London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, 2012): 89-103.

⁶⁶ Daniel Bosley, "The United States and Israel: A (neo) Realist Relationship," *Spire Journal of Law, Politics and Societies* 3, no. 2 (2008): 33-52.

⁶⁷ Robert D. Blackwill and Slocombe B. Walter, "Israel: A Strategic Asset for the United States," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, October 31, 2011, accessed date November 9, 2020, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/israel-strategic-asset-united-states-0>

⁶⁸ Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz, "Soğuk Savaş Sonrası Dönemde Türkiye-İsrail İlişkileri," *Akademik Orta Doğu* 4, no. 2 (2010): 51.

⁶⁹ Ken Liu and Chris Taylor, "United States-Turkey-Iran: Strategic Options for the Coming Decade," *Institute of Politics*, 2011, accessed date November 9, 2020, XX. https://iop.harvard.edu/sites/default/files_new/Programs/US_TurkeyIranPolicyPaper.pdf

were evaluated according to the interest similarity graphic shown in Appendix 5 in the historical process, the agreement in Turkey-USA relations until 1990 can be explained with the fact that Turkey and the USA considered the Soviet Union as a common threat during the Cold War Period. One of the key elements of Turkish Foreign Policy during the Cold War years (1945-1990) was to limit the influence of the Soviets on the USA and NATO. It has been stated in several studies that the agreement during this period was because of Turkey's security concerns.⁷⁰ According to the graphic, when Turkey-Israel relations from this period are evaluated, it is understood that the relations had an up-and-down trend. The strategic imperatives of the Cold War forced countries to apply bandwagoning policies.⁷¹ Turkey's tendency to develop good relations with Israel largely stemmed from its alliance with the West. For this reason, Turkey acted cautiously to establish a balance between the two goals because of its interests. On the one hand, it tried to develop normal relations with Israel as required by its alliance with the United States, and on the other hand, it tried not to sever diplomatic and economic ties with the Islamic World. The period from 1961 to 1964 represents the important years in which relations with both the United States and Israel showed a low trend for Turkey. In this period, the United States withdrew Jupiter missiles from Turkey because of the Cuban Crisis, and the following year, Turkey sending a warning letter to President Johnson regarding the Cyprus issue caused Turkey to reevaluate its relations. However, this attitude of Turkey was shaped not by moving away from the USA, but by its wish to eliminate its loneliness in terms of foreign policy. The challenges in the relations with the USA also affected Turkey's relations with Israel as a global parameter.⁷² By 1974, the oil crisis caused Turkey to reconsider its relations with Israel, and the dependency on oil led Turkey to improve its economic relations with the Arab world.⁷³ Until the 1990s, the issues defining Turkey-Israel relations included the Arab-Israeli wars, the Palestinian issue in particular, the Cyprus issue, and the search for Arab support during Turkey's economic problems. The low-level relations between the two countries that were kept a secret for the first forty years began to become official and clear with the change of the international system by the late 1980s.⁷⁴ For this reason, the up-and-down trend in the bilateral relations between Turkey and Israel during this period can be explained in the interest similarity graphic in Appendix 5. In brief, it can be argued that Turkey's relations with the USA were agreeable from 1948 to 1990; however, the relations with Israel followed an up-and-down trend again, and this finding was similar to the literature.⁷⁵ Factors affecting Turkish relations with the USA and Israel in this period include security and economy.

In the 1991-2000 period, Turkey-USA relations were agreeable, and Turkey-Israel relations were stronger than in later years. In this period, important changes occurred in Turkey's security perceptions with the 1991 Gulf War. Turkey's Gulf policy was squeezed between its strategic relations with the USA and the US policies towards the Kurds and Saddam. For this reason, Turkey was not able to convert its relations with the United States

⁷⁰ Erkan Ertoşun, "Türkiye'nin Filistin Politikasında ABD ya da AB Çizgisi: Güvenlik Etkeninin Belirleyiciliği," *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika* 7, no. 28 (2011): 57-88.

⁷¹ Kostas Ifantis, *The US and Turkey in the fog of Regional Uncertainty, GreeSe Paper 73* (London: Hellenic Observatory LSE, 2013). [https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/50987/1/_libfile_REPOSITORY_Content_Hellenic%20Observatory%20\(inc.%20GreeSE%20Papers\)_GreeSE%20Papers_GreeSE%20No73.pdf](https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/50987/1/_libfile_REPOSITORY_Content_Hellenic%20Observatory%20(inc.%20GreeSE%20Papers)_GreeSE%20Papers_GreeSE%20No73.pdf)

⁷² Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Stratejik Derinlik* (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları, 2009), 418.

⁷³ Alon Liel, *Turkey in the Middle East: Oil, Islam and Politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 27-101.

⁷⁴ Jacob Abadi, "Israel and Turkey: from Covert to Overt Relations," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 15, no. 2 (1995): 1.

⁷⁵ Yavuz Turan, *Çuvallayan İttifak*, (Ankara: Destek Yayınları, 2006), 87-88; Ayça Eminoğlu, "Tarihsel Süreçte Türkiye İsrail İlişkilerinin Değişen Yapısı," *Gümüştane Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü* 7, no.15 (2016): 88.

into concrete gains.⁷⁶ In this respect, this situation was quite different for Turkey, although it was considered as the “golden age” of Turkey-USA cooperation. As Ian Lesser has noted, the Gulf War is “where the trouble started.”⁷⁷ Although the USA’s Iraqi Operation imposed risks on Turkey, Turkey aimed to protect its interests in the region by taking advantage of the US military presence in neighboring regions.⁷⁸ In the new period, the role imposed on Turkey by the USA changed; however, the relations with Turkey continued to accelerate positively. As seen in the graphic (Appendix 5), although the interest agreement with the United States decreased slightly, the cooperation continued. The 1990s brought changes not only in relations with the USA, but also with Israel. Regional problems affecting both countries brought Turkey and Israel closer together. Turkey’s problems with neighbors that supported terrorism and Israel’s experience with similar threats from Syria and Iran led to the perception of common threats between the two states. In this way, a strategic alliance was formed between the two countries. As seen in the graphic, the years between 1996 and 2000 constituted a period in which the relations were more agreeable. In brief, Turkey’s relations with the USA were agreeable between 1990 and 2001, and relations with Israel were relatively stable. Among the factors that affected the relations among Turkey, the USA, and Israel during this period, there is the conjunctural structure that changed after the Cold War. The changing conjunctural structure brought all three countries closer together.

In the period after 2001, the interest similarity between Turkey and the USA and Turkey and Israel decreased compared to previous years. The USA-Iraqi war led to a deterioration of relations between Turkey and the USA in 2003, and at the same time, caused interest differences between Turkey and Israel. There was a “sack crisis”⁷⁹ with the United States after this process, and separations started with Israel regarding the support to the Kurdish structure in Iraq.⁸⁰ The significant changes in the domestic and foreign policies of Turkey affected the separation of Turkey’s political similarity from that of the USA and Israel. The events that played roles in the change in Turkey’s domestic policy can be listed as follows: the Islamic-Ideological orientation of the Justice and Development Party, which came to power in 2002; the change in power between the military and civilian structures of Turkey; and the perception change in the Turkish public towards the USA and Israel.⁸¹ The change of international and regional conjuncture was effective in the change of Turkey’s foreign policy. Turkey’s relations with the USA and Israel proceeded in an equal trend at this time when political resemblance caused such sharp declines in both countries. It is possible to speculate that there is a differentiation of interest with both countries in the emergence of such “co-trends.” The events, which were effective in the up-and-down trend in relations between Turkey and the USA, can be listed as follows: the US’s support for Israel in the face of the Israeli-Palestinian issue; the difference in Turkey’s approach to the Iranian nuclear program;

⁷⁶ Tayyar Arı, *Yükselen Güç: Türkiye-ABD İlişkileri ve Orta Doğu* (İstanbul: Marmara Kitap Merkezi, 2010), 43.

⁷⁷ Ian O. Lesser, “Turkey, the United States, and the Geopolitics of Delusion,” *Survival* 48, no. 3 (2006): 2.

⁷⁸ Stephen, F. Larrabee, *Troubled partnership: US-Turkish Relations in an Era of Global Geopolitical Change* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010), 4.

⁷⁹ On July 4th, 2003, Turkish soldiers were arrested with a sack over their heads in Sulaymaniyah, Northern Iraq, by US soldiers. The sack crisis was seen as the US’s revenge for Turkey’s rejection of the March 1st, 2003, parliamentary resolution. See: Ayşe Ömür Atmaca, “Yeni Dünyada Eski Oyun: Eleştirel Perspektiften Türk-Amerikan İlişkileri,” *Orta Doğu Etütleri* 3, no. 1 (2011): 177.

⁸⁰ Banu Eligür, “Crisis in Turkish-Israeli Relations (December 2008–June 2011): From Partnership to Enmity,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 48, no. 3, (2012): 431.

⁸¹ Matthew S. Cohen and Charles D. Freilich, “Breakdown and Possible Restart: Turkish-Israeli Relations under the AKP,” *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 8, no.1, (2014): 45.

the S-400 missiles bought by Turkey from Russia; and the different attitudes of Turkey and the USA against the structures in Syria. The fact that Turkey is experiencing some kind of “alienation” in its communication with Israel overlaps astonishingly with the fact that this foreign policy trend of Turkey is moving away from America and Europe.⁸² The factors that played a major role in the deterioration of relations between Turkey and Israel during this period were: Israel’s harsh interventions in the Palestinian conflict, Israel’s natural gas exploration activities with Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean, and Israel’s stance on the Syrian crisis. In brief, considering the period after 2001, it can be argued that the bilateral political similarity among Turkey, the USA, and Israel was parallel, and the relations had an up-and-down trend. Although the reflections of crises affecting these three countries on their internal policies were effective during this period, the new geopolitical realities in the Middle East became an important factor in determining the course of their relations.

5. Conclusion

This research has examined the interest similarity among Turkey, Israel, and the US considering quantitative data, namely MID, alliance, and UNGA votes. The research questions explore whether there is any significant correlation between the bilateral relationships of Turkey, Israel, and the US in terms of interest similarity, and how MID, alliance, and UNGA votes can affect the interest similarity among these three countries.

The findings have revealed that there are statistically significant relations among the interest similarities of Turkey, Israel, and the US. The analysis of quantitative data has shown that the interest similarity of the Turkey-Israel relationship plays an active role in affecting the US-Turkey and the US-Israel relationships. Moreover, there is a negative correlation between the interest similarity of the US-Turkey and the US-Israel relationships. The interest similarity between the US and Turkey has an impact on the interest similarity between the US and Israel, and the interest similarity between the US and Israel has an impact on the interest similarity between the US and Turkey as well. In addition, this research has revealed, depending on the analysis of quantitative data, that the similarity between two of the countries in question in terms of MID, alliance, and UNGA votes affects the interest similarity with the third remaining country.

Suggestions for future studies are presented below for those who would like to conduct further research on examining international relations among Turkey, Israel, and the US based on quantitative and/or qualitative data.

5.1. Suggestions for Future Studies

Existing literature expresses that interest similarity can be estimated by MID, alliance, and UNGA votes data. At this point, future studies can investigate which other factors cause an increase or decrease in the level of interest similarity, such as economic and military capability, cultural and diplomatic influence, and natural resources. In addition, future research can focus on the influence of country leaders on relationships.

In this research, interest similarity score was calculated by using MID, alliance, and UNGA votes with the S-Score method. However, although the S-Score method was suitable

⁸² Al-Hajj, “The Israel Factor.”

for standardizing the UNGA votes data, it was not entirely suitable for alliance and MID data. Therefore, additional rules shown in Table 2 were employed to figure out this issue towards reducing miscalculation. However, a new statistical method that can be used to standardize alliance and MID data is still needed.

The examination of interest similarity has been performed by using correlation and regression analysis methods in this research. Future studies can employ alternative analysis methods, such as artificial intelligence or artificial neural networks. These kinds of methods can enable researchers to predict the future of such relationships from retrospective data.

Finally, this research has just focused on the similarity of the votes used in the United Nations General Assembly. Therefore, future studies can categorize the UNGA votes of Turkey, Israel, and the US to reveal which issues they agree on and/or which issues they conflict on.

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The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in Harvard Dataverse at <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/TTS9Z9>

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Searching for a Place in Global IR Through Exceptionalism: Turkey and the Mediation for Peace Initiative

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to rethink exceptionalism both in Turkish Foreign Policy and in Global IR. It critically engages with Turkey's contribution to the Global IR debate within the discourse of exceptionalism in Turkish foreign policy over its role in the Mediation for Peace Initiative (MPI). Following Nymalm and Plagemann (2019), we rethink exceptionalism used in Global IR, critically analyzing Turkey's role in the MPI within the framework of internationalist exceptionalism. In doing so, we aim to unbox exceptionalism in Global IR and understand how some exceptional foreign policy discourses of non-Western states may contribute to the interconnectedness between regional worlds, as well as the circulation of ideas and norms between the global and local levels.

Keywords: Global IR, Exceptionalism, Turkish Exceptionalism, Mediation, Mediation for Peace Initiative

1. Introduction

In today's world, Turkey's situation and location in our world is entirely exceptional and it is impossible to search for any similarities with other states.¹

I do not find useful a discussion on Turkey's "true location" in the world; whether it is European or Asian, whether it is in the Balkans, in the Caucasus, or in the Middle East. Nor is there any need to choose "one or the other," for Turkey is the embodiment of them all. That is our uniqueness, our richness, and our strength.²

Turkey's unique access to both the global north and south makes it a suitable mediator over a wide geographical range. Turkey's cultural-civilizational background and long experience with Western political and security structures create an advantage in the field.³

This study is an attempt to rethink exceptionalism both in Turkish Foreign Policy and in Global IR. Despite the reference to Turkey's geographical and historical uniqueness (a reflection on

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¹ Hamit Batu, "Dış Siyaset ve Tanıtma," *Dışişleri Belleteni* 2, no. 10 (1964): 115-116.

² İsmail Cem, "Turkey: Setting Sail to the 21st Century," *Perceptions* 2, no. 3 (1997): 2.

³ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkey's Mediation: Critical Reflections from the Field," *Middle East Policy* 20, no. 1 (2013): 90.

its exceptionalism) since the establishment of the Republic in the quotations above, as Yanık aptly underlines, “Works explicitly discussing Turkish exceptionalism are rare and mostly focus on political or economic processes at the domestic level.”⁴ Exceptionalism discourse in Turkish foreign policy and research on how it shapes the country’s behaviors have been largely neglected in the literature. In light of these criticisms, this study critically engages with Turkey’s contribution to the Global IR debate within the discourse of exceptionalism in Turkish foreign policy and its role in the Mediation for Peace Initiative (MPI).

Early scholarly debate in Global IR revolved around “the distinction between West and non-West” and broadening the conception of agency of non-Western actors by “eschewing cultural exceptionalism and parochialism.”⁵ In this approach, exceptionalism is described as “the tendency to present the characteristics of a social group as homogeneous, collectively unique and superior to those of others.”⁶ Moreover, it is asserted that “claims to exceptionalism often underpin false claims to universalism.”⁷ More recently, however, the agenda of the Global IR research program inspired by Chinese, Indian, and Japanese cosmovisions⁸ aimed at demolishing the “cognitive prisons of one world versus many worlds.”⁹ For instance, Shahi argues that West vs. non-West typologies create “plural local exceptionalisms,” not “plural global universalisms.”¹⁰ She argues that ethnocentrism and exceptionalism, “irrespective of their source and form,” must be avoided in Global IR in order to reject “the West–non-West binary”¹¹ since these cognitive prisons create barriers to the establishment of effective global partnerships for addressing the challenges of global crises.¹² In this study, we aim to unbox the exceptionalism in Global IR and understand how some exceptional foreign policy discourses may contribute to the interconnectedness between regional worlds by avoiding creating new cognitive prisons.

Nymalm and Plagemann assert that exceptionalism is not “necessarily confrontational, unilateralist, or exemptionalist.”¹³ The authors argue that exceptionalism is neither static, nor hegemonic, and they define four ideal types of exceptionalism: imperialist, civilizational, internationalist, and globalist.¹⁴ Following Nymalm and Plagemann, we rethink exceptionalism in Global IR by critically analyzing Turkey’s role in the MPI within the framework of “internationalist exceptionalism.”

⁴ Lerna K. Yanık, “Constructing ‘Turkish Exceptionalism’: Discourses of Liminality and Hybridity in Post-Cold War Turkish Foreign Policy,” *Political Geography* 30, no. 2 (2011): 81.

⁵ Amitav Acharya, “Global International Relations and Regional Worlds: An Agenda for International Studies,” *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (December 2014): 649.

⁶ Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, *The Making of Global International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 307.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ These cosmovisions are Tianxia (under all heaven) from China, Advaita (non-duality) from India, Mu No Basho (place of nothingness) from Japan, and Sufism. For detailed analyses, see; Deepshikha Shahi, “Advaita in International Relations: A Philosophical Restoration,” in *Advaita as a Global International Relations Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 21-50; Shahi (ed.) *Sufism: A Theoretical Intervention in Global International Relations*, (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2020); Kosuke Shimizu, *The Kyoto School and International Relations: Non-Western Attempts for a New World Order* (New York: Routledge, 2022); Zhao Tingyang, *All under Heaven: The Tianxia System for a Possible World Order*, trans. Joseph E. Harroff, (California: University of California Press, 2021).

⁹ Deepshikha Shahi, “Global IR Research Programme: From Perplexities to Progressions,” *All Azimuth* 13, no. 1 (2024): 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹³ Nicola Nymalm and Johannes Plagemann, “Comparative Exceptionalism: Universality and Particularity in Foreign Policy Discourses,” *International Studies Review* 21, no. 1 (2019): 13.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

Starting in 2010, the MPI, co-chaired by Turkey and Finland in the UN platform, has been a venue for developing mediation norms, procedures, and capacities by bringing together regional organizations part of the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). At this point, the MPI emerges as an interesting case contributing to the most recent Global IR scholarship by illustrating a case of an effective Western–non-Western partnership. Furthermore, Turkey being the only country co-chairing these mediation groups and its foreign policy discourse in this initiative can be evaluated in the internationalist exceptionalism category.

Hence, this study is an attempt to rethink exceptionalism both in Turkish Foreign Policy and in Global IR as a response to the invitation of Global IR to explore the multiple ways to enrich the discipline of IR.¹⁵ It asserts that contrary to taking exceptionalism as a given category in Global IR, internationalist exceptionalism discourses illustrate how ideas and norms circulate between the global and local levels, thus contributing to the Global IR debate.

Through utilizing comparative exceptionalisms via the MPI, this article firstly aims to highlight the “disruptive potential”¹⁶ of Turkey’s role in the MPI case to illustrate the need for modification of the existing perception of exceptionalism in Global IR. Secondly, by connecting a political discourse to the scholarly world of IR disciplinary sociology, it suggests a “renewed” thinking on one of the oldest debates on the contribution of the local (parochial) to the global. It, therefore, aims to establish a bridge between the local and the global in world politics. In a broader theoretical sense, we search if/how it might be sensible to talk about parochialism in Global IR discussions and argue for the reversal of exceptionalism through parochialism in building a genuine universal discipline. In this regard, this paper will analyze whether the MPI has the potential to contribute to the exceptionalism debate in Global IR in light of these questions:

How does revisiting exceptionalism from a Global IR perspective contribute to our understanding of global politics in IR? How can we conceptualize Turkish exceptionalism in foreign policy? How and with what tools did Turkey’s foreign policymakers operationalize this exceptionalist discourse in foreign policy in the 2000s? What might be the contribution of the local (parochial)—in this case, Turkey’s role in the MPI—to building a genuine Global IR endeavor?

To answer these questions, the article is organized around four main parts. Following the introduction, the second part of the article aims to reconceptualize exceptionalism and exceptionalist foreign policy in Global IR. To achieve this, it first discusses the exceptionalist conception of foreign policy discourses with regards to Western IR exceptionalism vs. Global IR exceptionalism. It then delves into a theoretical discussion/critique of exceptionalism in early works of Global IR, mostly in Acharya’s writings, and suggests a reversal of exceptionalism through parochialism, acknowledging the oldest debate of the contribution of the local (parochial) to the global in the evolution of the IR discipline.

¹⁵ Amitav Acharya, “Global International Relations (IR) and Regional Worlds, A New Agenda for International Studies,” *International Studies Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (2014): 649, 657.

¹⁶ Kate Sullivan de Estrada, “IR’s recourse to Area Studies: Siloisation Anxiety and the Disruptive Promise of Exceptionalism,” *St Antony’s International Review* 16, no. 1 (2020): 209-210. She highlights the importance of Burawoy’s method of casing in challenging the dominance of some concepts. The method requires choosing a case according to its power to illustrate the disruption of a theory or general rule. Here the important thing is not to find a case representative, rather it aims for a change in the dominant understanding of concepts.

The third part specifically scrutinizes Turkish exceptionalism in the case of the MPI. Building on Nymalm and Plagemann's framework of comparative exceptionalism, it first traces various previous conceptualizations regarding Turkey's exceptionalist foreign policy discourse. It then specifically analyzes the case of Turkey's position in the MPI in the framework of internationalist exceptionalism by deciphering the speeches of Turkish policymakers at various platforms, UN resolutions, as well as articles and books focusing on the themes of exceptionalism and uniqueness.

The fourth part is the discussion of findings and theoretical implications of the MPI case. The article concludes that the MPI contributes to the advancement of the Global IR research agenda on two main grounds: First, by connecting a political discourse to the scholarly world of IR disciplinary sociology, it suggests a renewed thinking on one of the oldest debates of the contribution of the local (parochial) to the global. Secondly, by highlighting the "disruptive potential" of the MPI, it illustrates the need for modification of the existing perception of exceptionalism in Global IR and argues for the reversal of exceptionalism through parochialism in building a genuine Global IR endeavor, as well as a universal discipline.

2. Conceptualizing Exceptionalist Foreign Policy

In emphasizing the distinction between "difference" and "exception," Holsti argues that the term exceptionalism means a rare form of behavior. He reasons that every state has different foreign policies based on various beliefs, rhetoric, and actions, but not all states "have universal aspirations that guide their foreign policy choices."¹⁷ Therefore, he underlines that "foreign policy exceptionalism is not exceptional but rare,"¹⁸ and, "It is a type of foreign policy."¹⁹ As Yanık underlines, there are critical, favorable, and deconstructive analyses of exceptionalist foreign policy discourses in the literature.²⁰ As illustrated below, the variety of exceptionalisms challenges the understanding prevailing in the US-centric literature on foreign policy exceptionalism.

2.1. Western IR Exceptionalism versus Global IR Exceptionalism

Underlining the meaning associated with American exceptionalism, Holsti lists five traits of an exceptionalist type of foreign policy, including "subordination of self-interest to a universal good" and "to be free from rules and norms governing ordinary states," seen in almost all cases of exceptionalist types.²¹ However, although the literature is dominated by studies focusing on American exceptionalism, research on Chinese, Indian, and Russian versions of exceptionalism are growing.²² For instance, Zhang's study of Chinese exceptionalism as "an important source for policy ideas" underlines that exceptionalist narratives of the country vary in different historical periods. He discusses the changing meaning of exceptionalism even within a country.²³ Hence, not only do the examples of exceptionalist foreign policy

¹⁷ K. J. Holsti, "Exceptionalism in American Foreign Policy: Is it Exceptional?" *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 3 (2010): 384.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 401.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 384-385.

²⁰ Yanık, "Constructing Turkish 'Exceptionalism'," 81.

²¹ Holsti, "Exceptionalism in American Foreign Policy," 384.

²² See, Kevork K. Oskanian, "A Very Ambiguous Empire: Russia's Hybrid Exceptionalism," *Europe-Asia Studies* 70, no. 1 (2018): 26-52; Kate Sullivan, "Exceptionalism in Indian Diplomacy: The Origins of India's Moral Leadership Aspirations," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 37, no. 4 (2014): 640-655; Feng Zhang, "The Rise of Chinese Exceptionalism in International Relations," *European Journal of International Relations*, 19, no. 2 (2011): 305-328.

²³ Zhang, "The Rise of Chinese Exceptionalism," 307.

cases differ, but also, it is difficult to agree easily about a universal understanding of exceptionalism.

Yanık categorizes the literature on exceptionalism into two groups. The first group includes studies focusing on the creation of “superiority vis-à-vis other states and nations” based on the differences regarding “the cultural, religious, historical, strategic or societal grounds of a state or a nation.”²⁴ The second category comprises other studies that focus on “anomalies in the political science or international relations literature.”²⁵ Nymalm and Plagemann’s recent work is a valuable contribution to exceptionalism literature since, other than US exceptionalism as a part of Western IR literature, they emphasize that exceptionalist foreign policy discourses carry different meanings that deserve detailed analysis. In other words, they unbox the concept of exceptionalism and help us to better understand the variety of sources and effects of exceptionalist foreign policy discourses experienced in Global IR comparatively. In their words:

Several other countries apart from the United States (and China) do have a long history of exceptionalist discourses. These foreign policy discourses have hardly ever been looked at comparatively, despite both their family resemblance and relevance for debates on international politics in a world composed of ever more self-confident foreign policy actors outside the transatlantic orbit.²⁶

Firstly, they maintain that “exceptionalism is hardly an established concept which goes beyond the case of American exceptionalism.”²⁷ By looking into the cases having different power capacities, they show that exceptionalist foreign policy discourse is not unique to the United States. They analyze the variety of exceptionalisms across different regions of the world, including cases from India, Turkey, and China.

Secondly, they underline that at the core of all exceptionalisms considered in the literature is the belief in the universal good that is understood as vital for international society in international relations.²⁸ Here we see a relationship between the particularity and universality inherent in exceptionalism. If exceptionalism is constructed “as foreign policy discourse that is part of a society’s debates around its identity as a nation,”²⁹ one can find the relationship between universality and particularity. In terms of identity construction, Nymalm and Plagemann argue that an exceptionalist conception of the identities of states frames foreign policy discourses and, at the same time, their actorness.³⁰ In this context, contrary to the dominance of the US type of exceptionalism, they argue that “exceptionalism necessarily is not confrontational, unilateralist, or exemptionalist.”³¹

Sullivan de Estrada also attempts to unbox the concept of exceptionalism by underscoring the connection between the local and the global embedded in the cases of “narratives of nuclear exceptionalism in South Asia.”³² By comparing and contrasting the Indian and Pakistani narratives on nuclear weapons, she asserts that exceptionalist foreign policy discourses might

²⁴ Yanık, “Constructing Turkish ‘Exceptionalism,’” 81.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

²⁶ Nymalm and Plagemann, “Comparative Exceptionalism,” 13.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

³² Sullivan de Estrada, “IR’s recourse to Area Studies,” 207-214.

seek relations of solidarity and practices of resistance instead of uniformity and hegemony.³³ Therefore, in this paper, we argue that, together with Sullivan de Estrada's study, there is a potential in Nymalm and Plagemann's categorization of exceptionalisms to contribute to Global IR by taking exceptionalism as a term "not predefined." To further revolutionize the term, we need to explore the relationship between the concepts of exceptionalism, uniqueness, superiority, and exemption.

2.1.1. *Uniqueness and superiority*

By focusing on the distinction between difference and exception, Holsti underlines the common understanding of exceptionalist states as they are different from others. However, he highlights that this kind of difference inherent in exceptionalist states' identity construction involves superiority.³⁴ Nymalm and Plagemann demonstrate that the relationship between uniqueness and foreign policy is thought to belong to a higher order.³⁵ Uniqueness constitutes the basis of the belief in the creation of a "universal common good" through foreign policy. However, in contrast to Holsti, although exceptionalism necessarily involves superiority, their understanding of superiority assumes the impossibility of the duplication of one's unique qualities by others. A unique insight into universal values and their foreign policy implications may have sources from different perspectives, such as "a particular civilizational or spiritual heritage, political history, and geographical location."³⁶ These different sources make states' use of uniqueness different; therefore, uniqueness cannot be duplicated. In this context, exceptionalism may take two different forms: Exemptionalist or Non-Exemptionalist Exceptionalism.³⁷

2.1.2. *Exemption or non-exemption*

Based on the American type of exceptionalism, Holsti describes two meanings in exceptionalism. One is Americans' view of themselves based on the perceptions of superiority rooted in American values. Secondly, based on these superiority claims, the US is argued to have the privilege of not being bound by multilateral regimes and agreements. This usage of exceptionalism is related to American actions in providing peace and security for the world populated by "enemies of freedom," "rogue states," "tyrants," and "axes of evil."³⁸ Here he underlines the exclusivity of reference to the common usage of exceptionalism regarding US foreign policy and its effects in global politics as exemptionalism. However, Nymalm and Plagemann argue that exceptionalism does not necessarily mean to be exemptionalist, and exemptionalism may take forms of *exemptionalism* or *nonexemptionalism* in global politics.³⁹ The confrontation and unilateralism inherent in exemptionalism are replaced with an emphasis on engagement, dialogue, and multilateralism in nonexemptionalism. In nonexemptionalist cases, the exceptionalist identity of states carries features of "adherence to international law, international cooperation amongst equals, and a conflict-mediating role in international politics."⁴⁰

³³ Ibid., 209-212.

³⁴ Holsti, "Exceptionalism in American Foreign Policy," 384.

³⁵ Nymalm and Plagemann, "Comparative Exceptionalism," 14.

³⁶ Ibid., 14.

³⁷ Ibid., 18.

³⁸ Holsti, "Exceptionalism in American Foreign Policy," 381-382.

³⁹ Nymalm and Plagemann, "Comparative Exceptionalism: Universality," 18.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 18.

2.1.3. *Effects of various versions of exceptionalist foreign policy discourse in global politics*

The variety of exceptionalisms challenges the understanding prevailing in the US-centric literature, which presents exceptionalist foreign policy discourses as inherently confrontational. Sullivan de Estrada, for example, criticizes the main assumptions in the US and Western-centric perception of exceptionalism and argues that exceptionalism narratives can be read as a “response to hegemony” and “manifest resistance” in different geographies.⁴¹ In response to the argument that “exceptionalism is unexceptional” by other scholars, she highlights that “not all exceptionalisms are created equal.”⁴² Therefore, why and how states need such narratives varies according to their cultural and historical circumstances, as well as perceptions of the existing international system. In this regard, exceptionalist states may follow either *missionary* or *exemplary* foreign policy.⁴³ Exemplary foreign policy discourses may include the same degree of moral superiority as the missionary type, but without the desire to convert others due to various reasons.⁴⁴

In light of these dimensions, Nymalm and Plagemann introduced four ideal types of exceptionalist foreign policy discourses, namely imperialist exceptionalism, civilizational exceptionalism, internationalist exceptionalism, and global exceptionalism.⁴⁵ *Imperialist Exceptionalism* has both missionary and exemptionalist traits in global politics. There is this understanding of an exceptional duty to liberate others, and this creates justification for exemption from international law and other binding conventions for the “unexceptional rest.”⁴⁶ *Civilizational Exceptionalism*, on the other hand, has an exemplary foreign policy discourse with exemptionalism. This type of exceptionalism reflects an exceptionalist state’s understanding of itself “as the world’s center and most advanced civilization,” and therefore, it is believed to “stay out of entanglements with the unexceptional rest.”⁴⁷ Apart from these two exceptionalisms, *Internationalist Exceptionalism* differs in its having both exemplary and non-exemptionalist traits. It is nonexemptionalist since in this approach, “egalitarian multilateralism” is believed to be the basis of international politics. The exemplary character of this type takes its roots from “specific geographical, historical, or cultural circumstances that make the respective society an example for those situated at a lower level of political development.”⁴⁸ Therefore, *Internationalist Exceptionalism* requires “a self-confident foreign policy and a paternalistic approach vis-à-vis the unexceptional rest.”⁴⁹ Although *Globalist Exceptionalism*, like internationalist exceptionalism, is nonexemptionalist in global politics, its missionary character makes it different. However, the missionary dimension does not necessarily bring interventionism. In this approach, “the unexceptional rest” is regarded as “objects of tutoring and paternalism.”⁵⁰

These four different categorizations demonstrate that “exceptionalism is not necessarily confrontational, exemptionalist or a natural feature of great or rising powers.”⁵¹ Based on this

⁴¹ Sullivan de Estrada, “IR’s recourse to Area Studies,” 208-209.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 209.

⁴³ Nymalm and Plagemann, “Comparative Exceptionalism,” 14, 18.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

variation, we can further discuss the possibility of the existence of Global IR exceptionalism, and, if such a concept does exist, deciphering its contribution to the scholarly debate.

2.2. Exceptionalism in Global IR

Early scholarly work in Global IR, in Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan's words, aimed at "opening up the neglected story of thinking about IR that took place outside the West." To this end, they wonder "what IR theory would look like had the discipline been developed elsewhere than in the West."⁵² Criticizing the dominance of American and Western perspectives in IR, both institutionally and in terms of setting the theoretical agenda of IR,⁵³ Global IR aspires to develop a truly "inclusive and universal discipline that reflects the growing diversity of its IR scholars and their intellectual concerns."⁵⁴ It is more a framework of inquiry and analyses of IR by due recognition of multiple actors' experiences, voices, and agency. Initially, Global IR scholars suggested that non-Western peoples, societies, and states' experiences introduce new understandings and approaches to the study of global politics.⁵⁵ Therefore, the Global IR research agenda seeks not to displace Western-dominated IR knowledge, but only to "displace its hegemony by placing it into a broader global context."⁵⁶ Many most recent Global IR writings, however, propose a reconciliation between the West and the non-West dichotomy.⁵⁷ Shahi, for instance, underlines that "the Global IR neither imagines 'the national' as a homogenous conceptual category nor establishes 'the national' and 'the international' as areas of conflict."⁵⁸

Also, another contribution to Global IR by Shimizu, inspired by Buddhist philosophy, claims that "the current international situation is localized in each region in its own way, which in turn affects international relations as a whole" and hence the whole international situation is created "in a continual process of multiple partial local-global interactions."⁵⁹ Moreover, for Shahi, Sufism can offer a universal discourse applicable to Global IR while accommodating the specific realities of IR within a particular province or region with a "universal alongside provincial" perspective.⁶⁰ Therefore, the dialogic approach to Global IR has the potential to stimulate an intellectual stance of "universal alongside particular" or "single alongside plural."⁶¹

While categorizing Global IR's seven dimensions, Acharya and Buzan assert that "global IR eschews concepts and theories that are solely based on national or cultural exceptionalism."⁶² Exceptionalism, as defined by them, is the "tendency to present the characteristics of a social group as homogeneous, collectively unique and superior to those of others."⁶³ Acharya and Buzan refer to examples such as the Western standard of civilization, China's tribute system, the idea of a league or concert of democracies to succeed the UN, or domestic agendas such

⁵² Acharya and Buzan, *The Making of Global International Relations*, 3.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 290.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 298.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 303.

⁵⁷ Shahi, *Sufism*; Shimizu, *The Kyoto School, and International Relations*; Shahi, "Global IR Research Programme," 1-22; Deepshikha Shahi, "Global IR Research Programme: From Perplexities to Progressions," *All Azimuth* 13, no. 1 (2024): 1.

⁵⁸ Shahi, "Global IR Research Programme," 6.

⁵⁹ Kosuke Shimizu, "Buddhism and Global IR," *E-International Relations*, August 17, 2023, accessed date April, 2024. <https://www.e-ir.info/2023/08/17/buddhism-and-global-ir-from-part-of-the-whole-to-part-of-the-whole/>

⁶⁰ Shahi, *Sufism*, 6.

⁶¹ Shahi, "Foregrounding the Complexities," 172.

⁶² Acharya and Buzan, *The Making of Global International Relations*, 2, 300.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 306.

as “Asian values” and “Chinese characteristics,” which are frequently authoritarian.⁶⁴ More importantly, exceptionalism in IR is regarded as a justification for the dominance of the big powers over the weak. American exceptionalism, in this regard, can easily be associated with the Monroe Doctrine, which might look benign from the inside, but could be read as self-serving global interventionism. According to Acharya and Buzan, introducing something like a “unique Chinese tributary system as the basis of a new Chinese School of IR” is a similar possibility.⁶⁵ However, referring to Africa, for instance, it is asserted that not all agencies need to be necessarily exclusive, but could also be inclusive. African agency is not solely about “African solutions to African problems.” It also encompasses a range of contributions in which Africans “define the terms for understanding the issues.”⁶⁶

In Acharya’s understanding, exceptionalism is defined as a “poor and dangerous basis for scholars to organize themselves.”⁶⁷ He asserts that claims of exceptionalism “shut the door to genuine ideational intercourse between the global and the regional, or between regions,” and “exceptionalism can be a powerful tool to resist change.”⁶⁸ He criticized scholars of Asian Studies for making parochialism “to reify and essentialize shared characteristics” in countering the ethnocentrism of Western disciplinary concepts.⁶⁹ However, we argue in this paper that the prevailing perception of exceptionalism in the Global IR venue reflects a kind of parochialism seen in Western IR. In other words, by associating exceptionalism with parochialism, exceptionalism is used in Global IR as perceived by Western IR categories focusing on the US and Western Europe’s perceptions of exceptionalism. Nevertheless, the works of Nymalm, Plagemann, and Sullivan de Estrada show that exceptionalism has different meanings in different geographies, as will be explained through the lens of Turkey’s role in the MPI. Clearly, looking at the concept from different angles other than the Western perspective enriches the Global IR endeavor.

2.3. Challenging the Parochialism of Exceptionalism in Global IR

Long ago, Holsti identified parochialism as one of the problems in the field of International Relations. For Holsti, this was not only a problem created by national perspectives on international relations arising out of differences in geography, history, language, and culture, but also a conceptual and methodological one.⁷⁰ Referring to grand debates in IR, namely between behavioralism and traditionalism, Holsti argued that this form of parochialism “contradicts the scientific spirit which emphasizes exploration, novelty, and innovation.”⁷¹ Years later, Thomas Weiss also asserted that our field is “on the edge of an abyss of irrelevance.”⁷² For him, the problem was, again, arising from the “fragmentation” and “atomization” of our field. Weiss noted that theoretical fragmentation and “othering” proved unfruitful, if not destructive. Similarly, Smith argued that “liberating ourselves from a parochial approach

⁶⁴ Ibid., 306.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 252.

⁶⁷ Amitav Acharya, “Identity Without Exceptionalism: Challenges for Asian Political and International Studies,” *Asian Political and International Studies Review* 1, no. 1 (2015): 6.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 6.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁰ K. J. Holsti, “Theories of International Relations: Parochial or International?” (Paper prepared for presentation at the 30th Anniversary of the Japan Association for International Relations, Tokyo, October 19, 1986, accessed date April, 2024, 18) https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/kokusaiseiji1957/1987/85/1987_85_L17/_pdf/-char/ja

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² T. G. Weiss and Rorden Wilkinson, “Global Governance to the Rescue: Saving International Relations?” *Global Governance* 20, no. 1 (2014): 19.

will enable us to recognize a much wider range of theoretical innovations, and also allow for the discovery of similarities of seemingly different worldviews.”⁷³ What is interesting and striking about these excerpts from different eras is that they are all cautious about parochialism,⁷⁴ but also acknowledge the crucial contribution of parochialism to our field by opening up local theoretical discussions and innovations, which later became universal. Mainstream IR theories started out as parochial, too, but then took on a universal character.

The idea of Global IR, as formulated by Acharya, essentially builds on the critiques of IR’s parochialism. Sullivan de Estrada also underlines that Acharya aimed to develop the agenda of Global IR to advance IR towards a “truly inclusive” and “universal discipline” that better understands how multiple actors with diverse intentions, aspirations, and power resources co-produce the global from the local.⁷⁵ However, Anderl and Witt criticize the problematizing of the global in Global IR.⁷⁶ They argue that despite its “greater inclusiveness and representatives of politics around the globe,” Global IR idealizes “the model of one global knowledge canon.”⁷⁷ In this regard, Global IR aims to demonstrate concepts and theories of non-Western contexts that are “able to be applied to a larger global canvas.”⁷⁸ Yet, Anderl and Witt reject this “global applicability as an unquestioned benchmark for the value of the knowledge,” because they believe “it is de-legitimizing particularity while re-legitimizing globality.”⁷⁹ In other words, Global IR will only become a truly novel and pluralistic enterprise if it reengages with the questions of what the fundamental purpose of knowing is, as well as whose knowledge matters.⁸⁰

Therefore, as seen in the prevailing perception of exceptionalism in Global IR, there is no place for claims of exceptionalism in this applicability of the local to the global canvas. In line with this, Lie also argues that “national IR must be saved” from exceptionalism since it is the “barrier” to creating “dialogue” between nations.⁸¹ However, in contrast to these arguments, Nymalm and Plagemann’s comparative approach to exceptionalism and Sullivan de Estrada’s contribution to unboxing exceptionalism narratives show that exceptionalism is not a barrier to bridging the local with the global, which could also enrich Global IR.

While Sullivan de Estrada acknowledges the “fragmentation threat” in the discipline, creating an obstacle in providing the necessary ideational interchange in making IR global, she proposes to look at exceptionalism from a different perspective and provides a powerful contribution to overcoming this anxiety by establishing a close connection between local and global. She claims that “exceptionalism’s focus on uniqueness places local doing and thinking comparatively and along lines of similarity within a broader global and historical context, but is intended to highlight difference.”⁸² She argues that if exceptionalism is studied as “exceptionalism-as-practice,” one can better understand not only how people from

⁷³ Karen Smith, “The Dangers of Parochialism in International Relations,” *E-International Relations*, August 30, 2018, accessed date April, 2024. <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/08/30/the-dangers-of-parochialism-in-international-relations/>

⁷⁴ “Parochial” means “restricted to a small area, or scope; narrow, limited, provincial.” See, Asbjorn Aide, “Global or Parochial Perspectives in International Studies and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research* 12, no. 1 (1975): 79-86.

⁷⁵ Sullivan de Estrada, “IR’s Recourse to Area Studies,” 208.

⁷⁶ Felix Anderl and Antonia Witt, “Problematizing the Global in Global IR,” *Millennium Journal of International Studies* 49, no. 1 (2020): 32-57.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁸¹ Xiaoting Li, “Saving National IR from Exceptionalism: The Dialogic Spirit and Self-Reflection in Chinese IR Theory,” *International Studies Review* 23, no. 4 (2021): 1399-1423.

⁸² Sullivan de Estrada, “IR’s Recourse to Area Studies,” 210.

different geographies “think and observe in a particular location and time,” but also how they “place their situation” comparatively in a wider global and historical context. In her words, “exceptionalism moves us towards an understanding of the global and the local not as two separate things in need of dialogue or reconciliation, but as already coexisting in a specific place and time, and constant co-constitution.”⁸³ Hence, in line with the Global IR research program, this endeavor refrains from creating many exceptionalisms to create a binary opposition between one world/the West and many worlds/the non-West.

Moreover, if the Western conception of exceptionalism is challenged, she asserts that “exceptionalist narratives can be leveraged as a significant analytical resource within Global IR,” and “they offer one solution to the challenge of bridging general IR theories and local-actor theorizations of the international.”⁸⁴ Hence, we argue that Sullivan de Estrada and Nymalm and Plagemann’s works offer solutions to the particularity/global problem in Global IR, which needs “a novel knowledge building enterprise recognizing the possibility and legitimacy of particular experience, informing and potentially transforming the abstract, general formulation.”⁸⁵

Within this framework, while exceptionalist narratives may appear parochial, they reach beyond the local to embrace parts of a wider context since “the global is embedded in the local.”⁸⁶ In Sullivan de Estrada’s words, “If the hegemonic structures and logics at work at the global level in part constitute the local, then to study the local is also to study the global.”⁸⁷ In Shimizu’s perspective on Global IR, “Parts (many) are different representations of the whole (one) and vice versa.”⁸⁸ In light of these arguments, we claim that Nymalm and Plagemann’s categorization of exceptionalisms is an important contribution to analyzing exceptionalism from different angles in global politics and, hence, has a potential to revisit “unquestioned exceptionalism” in the contemporary world.

Drawing on Acharya’s call for scholars “to discover new patterns, theories, and methods from world histories and the need to change the way that we study, publish, and discuss IR,”⁸⁹ and building on Sullivan de Estrada’s suggestion to study “exceptionalism-as-practice,”⁹⁰ the rest of the article attempts to unbox the concept of exceptionalism in IR by seeking to discover different patterns, tools, and uses of exceptionalism in foreign policy with specific reference to the Turkish experience in the 2000s. In doing so, we aim to understand how this kind of exceptionalism may contribute to Global IR, following Aydinli and Erpul in thinking that local and native businesses’ contributions are important to create a “genuinely global IR.”⁹¹ In this regard, we challenge the parochialism of exceptionalism in Global IR as an attempt to contribute to creating a genuinely global IR by arguing against Acharya’s idea of exceptionalism closing the door for ideational intercourse between the global and the local.

⁸³ Ibid., 212.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 208.

⁸⁵ Navnita C. Behera, “Knowledge Production,” *International Studies Review* 18, no. 1 (2016): 153-157; Anderl and Witt, “Problematising the Global in Global IR,” 45.

⁸⁶ Sullivan de Estrada, “IR’s recourse to Area Studies,” 208.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Shimizu, “Buddhism and Global IR.”

⁸⁹ Acharya and Buzan, *The Making of Global International Relations*, 298.

⁹⁰ Sullivan de Estrada, “IR’s recourse to Area Studies,” 212.

⁹¹ Ersel Aydinli and Onur Erpul, “The False Promise of Global IR: Exposing the Paradox of Dependent Development,” *International Theory* 14, no. 3 (2022): 421.

3. Turkish Exceptionalism and Global IR

In this section, we will evaluate Turkish exceptionalism with regard to Nymalm and Plagemann's categorization of internationalist exceptionalism, which has the potential to be accepted as a part of Global IR exceptionalism.

3.1. Conceptualizing Turkish Exceptionalism as a Foreign Policy Identity

In both the general public and academia, one can easily witness the common belief that Turkey has unique features that make it different from other countries. In a way, there is a common and implicit belief in its exceptional identity traits. Hanioglu asserts that compared with American and French exceptionalism, Turkey is a society where the majority has internalized its exceptionalism without naming it and, therefore, this idea sustains its dominance without being exposed to any intellectual criticisms. He describes this implicit acceptance of exceptionalism as a fact lurking behind the political culture of "exceptionalism under shadow."⁹² He claims that like France before the Second World War and/or the USA after 1945, the emphasis on authenticity, uniqueness, and the traits of "guidance of history" and "being a model" find popularity among many politicians, ordinary citizens, and academics. In the early Republican period, the Turkish Revolution has not only been compared with the 1789 French Revolution, but in the Turkish example, the emphasis on uniqueness has taken its roots from the neolithic age. It is asserted that the Turkish example is a model—"*numune-i imtisa*"—for oppressed nations—"*ezilmiş milletler*." In the following years, Turkey is being the only secular democracy in the Middle East and Muslim world is thought to be a kind of uniqueness, and this caught the attention of political scientists.⁹³ Turkish conservatism, on the other hand, constructed Turkish exceptionalism based on a different historical basis, via its Ottoman heritage. To explain the *sui generis* aspect of Turkish Islam, Mardin uses the concept of "Turkish exceptionalism." He describes Turkish-Islamic exceptionalism and states that it takes its roots from "the specifics of Turkish history that have worked cumulatively to create a special setting for Islam, a setting where secularism and Islam interpenetrate."⁹⁴

As a valuable contribution to the field, Yanık's works shed light on how the geography and history of Turkey created an exceptional national self-image in the formulation of its foreign policy.⁹⁵ Turkey's liminality is based on the hybridization of its history, referring to the multiethnic and multireligious Ottoman past and geography. In line with "facts do not speak for themselves, they are spoken for," she underlines the role of elites' images and discursive practices in shaping unique reality. The liminal representation of Turkey taking its roots from geography and history empowers Turkish policymakers' perception of Ankara as a "mediator/peacemaker between East and West," making its place exceptional in world politics.⁹⁶

Bilgin and Yeşiltaş also evaluate "Turkish exceptionalism" from a critical geopolitical perspective. Bilgin highlights "the historical centrality of geopolitical assumptions and

⁹² Şükrtü Hanioglu, "Gölgede Kalan İstisnacılık," *Sabah*, September 9, 2018, accessed date October, 2021. <https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/hanioglu/2018/09/09/golgede-kalan-istisnasilik>

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Şerif Mardin, "Turkish-Islamic Exceptionalism Yesterday and Today: Continuity, Rupture, and Reconstruction in Operational Codes," *Turkish Studies* 6, no. 2 (2005): 148.

⁹⁵ For some of these works, see: Yanık, "Constructing Turkish 'Exceptionalism'," 80-89; Yanık, "Atlantik Paktı'ndan NATO'ya: Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi'nde Türkiye'nin Konumu ve Uluslararası Rolü Tartışmalarından Bir Kesit," *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 9, no. 34 (2012): 29-50; Yanık, "The Metamorphosis of Metaphors of Vision: 'Bridging' Turkey's location, Role, and Identity," *The Geopolitics* 14, no. 3 (2009): 531-549.

⁹⁶ Yanık, "Constructing Turkish 'Exceptionalism'," 80-82.

language to Turkey's security imaginary" and "foreign policy discourse."⁹⁷ She describes this with the concept of "geopolitics dogma," meaning "a structure of well-established assumptions as to what geography tells one to do and why this makes sense."⁹⁸ She argues that one of the main features of Turkey's geopolitics dogma is related to its geographical location's uniqueness, which has "deterministic power over Turkey's policies more than the other countries."⁹⁹ The basis of this "extra-determinism" is its uniqueness, since it is considered a central state that "constitutes the hinge of the world island that is made up of three continents. It is both lock and key to this hinge."¹⁰⁰ Yeşiltaş also analyzes the codes of exceptional Turkish geography in the discourses of the Turkish military.¹⁰¹ One of the features of discourses on Turkey's geopolitics is Turkey's being a central state or bridge. In line with that, its geopolitical position is located at the intersection of world politics. With these features, and together with history, culture, and society, Turkey is defined to have an exceptional status in human history. Therefore, Yeşiltaş contends that, in the military's geopolitical discourse, there is this double-layered uniqueness strategy.¹⁰² In addition to these studies, Bagdonas's study on how geopolitical discourse in Turkey has been used by Turkish policymakers in its relations with the West/Europe claims that Turkey's uniqueness in terms of its geopolitical location, role, and identity is "marketed" by policymakers due to "Turkey's ontological anxiety vis-à-vis Europe."¹⁰³

Although historical and geographical exceptionalism have been used as a foreign policy discourse during and in the aftermath of the Cold War, the promotion of Turkey as a mediator between East and West, as well as Islamic and Christian civilizations, increased after 9/11.¹⁰⁴ During the Cold War years, Yanık argues, Turkish elites perceived and portrayed Turkey, in terms of location, values, and culture, as being a part of the West, and its function in the international system as in between East and West, not fully belonging to one or the other. However, she asserts that this liminality in terms of function is different from the other forms of liminality that Turkey constructed in the 1990s and 2000s.¹⁰⁵ According to İsmail Cem, who was the Turkish Foreign Minister from 1997 to 2002, "Turkey's function as a 'bridge' to which we historically and justifiably attached so much importance, will become a thing of the past in the 2000s."¹⁰⁶ Referring to Turkey's uniqueness, Cem argued that "there was a growing awareness that Turkey is uniquely poised to serve as a genuine model for modernization in societies with Islamic traditions."¹⁰⁷ In fact, after the 9/11 attacks, the bridge metaphor in the civilization discourse started to emphasize more "religious tones," such as portraying Turkey "as a bridge between West and Islam," especially with the Justice and Development Party

⁹⁷ Pınar Bilgin, "Turkey's Geopolitics Dogma," in *The Return of Geopolitics in Europe? Social Mechanisms and Foreign Policy Identity Crises*, ed. Stefano Guzzini, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 151-152.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 152.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 154.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 154.

¹⁰¹ Murat Yeşiltaş, "Coğrafya Kaçılmazdır: Militarizm, İstisnacılık ve Türkiye'de Ordu Merkezli Jeopolitik Zihniyetin İnşası," in *Türkiye Dünyanın Neresinde? Hayali Coğrafyalar, Çarpışan Anlatılar*, eds. Murat Yeşiltaş, Sezgi Durgun ve Pınar Bilgin, (İstanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2015), 63-95.

¹⁰² Ibid., 80.

¹⁰³ Özlem Demirtaş Bagdonas, "A Shift of Axis in Turkish Foreign Policy or A Marketing Strategy? Turkey's Uses of Its 'Uniqueness' vis-à-vis the West/Europe," *Turkish Journal of Politics* 3, no. 2 (2012): 113.

¹⁰⁴ Nymalm and Plagemann, "Comparative Exceptionalism," 28; Yanık, "The Metamorphosis of Metaphors," 531-549.

¹⁰⁵ Yanık, "Atlantik Paktı'ndan NATO'ya," 50.

¹⁰⁶ İsmail Cem, "Turkish Foreign Policy: Opening New Horizons for Turkey at the beginning of New Millenium," *Transatlantic Policy Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (2002): 5.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 6.

(AKP) government.¹⁰⁸

Nymalm and Plagemann's study is one of the recent studies evaluating Turkish exceptionalism from a comparative perspective in the IR literature. They point out that Turkish exceptionalism, besides the relationship between the state and Islam, is based on two sources: Turkey's Ottoman past and its geographical location between Europe and Asia. All three elements of Turkish exceptionalism—geographic, historical, and the relationship between the state and Islam—make Turkey an exemplary model, or “inspirational” state, to other Muslim and developing countries in the prevailing world order, where globalization issues, religious conflict, and the rise of new powers receive increasing attention. They assert that during the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) government in the early 2000s, in both academic circles and in the official discourse, Turkish exceptionalism has been much more emphasized in foreign policy discourse.¹⁰⁹ Güney and Mandacı also underline that the changing geopolitical vision of Turkey in the period where Davutoğlu's influence had its dominance in Turkish foreign policy formulation is called “Turkish exceptionalism” and “Exceptionalism a la Carte,” implying Ankara's setting “global objectives to bring order” to its geography and “address universal human problems.”¹¹⁰

As Arkan and Kınacıoğlu underline, former prime minister and foreign minister Ahmet Davutoğlu had an ambitious Turkish foreign policy vision, and his perception of Turkey's foreign policy can be traced through various speeches and works. Davutoğlu argued that Turkey had a unique historical depth and legacy due to its Ottoman past and therefore had a unique position to play an effective role based on its historical accumulation and heritage despite the imposition of “artificial borders” following World War II.¹¹¹

Given the unique identity that Turkey has in relations with its neighbors, it is expected to expand its international agency at the regional and global levels to play a more active and influential role. An important dimension of this foreign policy identity that Davutoğlu refers to in his speeches is the metaphorical conception of Turkey as a bridge country. Turkey's location between Europe and Asia as a meeting place of differing cultures and regions is reflected in the discourses as a bridge between civilizations. Emphasizing Istanbul's unique locality has also been frequently used with reference to Turkey's Ottoman past and multicultural heritage under a “pax-Ottomana.”¹¹²

However, the usage of this bridge metaphor later changed to “central country” with “multiple regional identities that cannot be reduced to one unified category” since he wanted to emphasize that “Turkey is no longer limited to playing a passive role like the Cold War years. It is time for transforming Turkey into a key regional and global actor with a special role in the making of a new and just global order.”¹¹³ Within this context, Davutoğlu contended that Turkey's unique geographical and historical qualities give it the opportunity and responsibility to play a more active and effective role in international mediation. He argued that Turkey should better commence mediation because of its “cultural-civilizational

¹⁰⁸ Yanık, “Constructing Turkish ‘Exceptionalism’,” 86; Yanık, “The Metamorphosis of Metaphors,” 544.

¹⁰⁹ Nymalm and Plagemann, “Comparative Exceptionalism,” 27-28.

¹¹⁰ Aylin Güney and Nazif Mandacı, “The Meta-Geography of the Middle East and North Africa in Turkey's New Geopolitical Imagination,” *Security Dialogue*, 44, no. 5-6 (2013): 436.

¹¹¹ Zeynep Arkan and Müge Kınacıoğlu, “Enabling ‘Ambitious Activism’: Davutoğlu's Vision of a New Foreign Policy Identity for Turkey,” *Turkish Studies* 17, no. 3 (2016): 390.

¹¹² Nymalm and Plagemann, “Comparative Exceptionalism,” 28.

¹¹³ Arkan and Kınacıoğlu, “Enabling ‘Ambitious Activism’,” 394.

background” together with its “unique access to both the global North and the global South.”¹¹⁴

3.2. Turkish Exceptionalism and Mediation for Peace

Turkey’s multilateral efforts to achieve cooperation and peace through mediation go back to the 1930s. Conceptualizing Turkey as a “middle power,” Barlas argues that the diplomats of the 1930s were aware of Turkey’s distinct status in the international power hierarchy.¹¹⁵ She discusses that despite limitations on the outcomes, Ankara played the historic role of serving as both a land bridge and a fortress connecting Europe and Asia, inherited from the Ottoman Empire, and the city also initiated collaborative efforts to become a mediator between the great powers in the 1930s by forming coalitions like the Balkan Entente.¹¹⁶ During the Cold War years, due to the systemic limitations regarding super power rivalry, as well as deadlock in international organizations like the UN, there was not much manifestation of Turkey’s mediation role per se. Turkey’s growing interests in mediation efforts increased in the post-Cold War era in various cases.¹¹⁷ In the 1990s, for instance, Turkish policymakers followed an intense diplomacy and mediation effort to draw international attention to conflicts in the Balkans in an effort to develop a formula to end the 1992-1995 Bosnian war.¹¹⁸ However, due to the unwillingness of the UN Security Council members, the war continued until the end of August 1995. As Altunışık and Çuhadar underline, with the influence of systemic and domestic factors, Turkey became more eager to play a facilitator role specifically in the Middle East region in the 2000s, based on Davutoğlu’s formulation of a new vision of foreign policy as security for all, dialogue, and inclusiveness.¹¹⁹

While referring to mediation, Davutoğlu emphasized Turkey assuming “for itself a central role in regional and international politics, and mediation is a necessary tool for contributing to peace and stability at various levels.”¹²⁰ Retired Ambassador Ertuğrul Apakan referred to Istanbul’s “unique geographic position at the center of Afro-Eurasia and its proximity to many conflict zones as offering an ideal location for a mediation center.”¹²¹

Before launching the Mediation for Peace initiative in the UN in 2010, Turkey acted in many mediation efforts—though it failed to produce tangible results—such as reconciliation efforts in Iraq, Lebanon, and Kyrgyzstan, trilateral cooperation processes in the Balkans, and searching for a peaceful resolution of the Iranian nuclear program, as well as projects for resolution of the conflict in Somalia, among others.¹²² Whether these efforts have been successful or not, the willingness of Ankara to play such a role deserves attention. We can assert that the most tangible results of Turkey’s mediation efforts have been achieved with the MPI initiative at the global level.

In this regard, the Friends of Mediation (FoM) initiative could be a test case for better understanding Turkey’s international exceptionalist foreign policy discourse, as well as how

¹¹⁴ Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Mediation,” 90.

¹¹⁵ Dilek Barlas, “Turkish Diplomacy in the Balkans and the Mediterranean Opportunities and Limits for Middle-power Activism in the 1930s,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, no. 3 (2005): 442.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 443.

¹¹⁷ Rahime Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm, “A New Sector in Turkish Foreign Policy: Mediation,” *Boğaziçi Journal* 25, no. 2 (2011): 189-213.

¹¹⁸ Didem Ekinci, “The War in Bosnia Herzegovina and Turkish Parliamentary Debates (1992- 1995): A Constructivist Approach,” *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 6, no. 22 (2009): 57.

¹¹⁹ Meliha Altunışık and Esra Çuhadar, “Turkey’s Search for a Third-Party Role in Arab Israeli Conflicts: A Neutral Facilitator or a Principal Power Mediator,” *Mediterranean Politics*, 15, no. 3 (2010): 372.

¹²⁰ Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Mediation,” 90.

¹²¹ Ertuğrul Apakan, “Mediation: The Best Way Forward in Conflict Prevention and Resolution,” *All Azimuth*, 2 (2013): 41.

¹²² Arkan and Kinacıoğlu, “Enabling ‘Ambitious Activism,’” 395.

it is practiced in global politics. Turkey and Finland agreed to introduce the FoM initiative at the UN in September 2010. Together with 20 member states, the UN, and 7 regional organizations, the membership has now increased to 58, including 50 states and 8 IOs. The FoM has a three-layered meeting/consultation structure in terms of its functioning. The first level is designed to include consultations between co-chairs and the UN Secretariat, especially the Mediation Support Unit. The second level is composed of the FoM's expert meetings, including groups that negotiate early drafts of resolutions before they are brought before the United Nations General Assembly. The third level includes the FoM members' ministerial meetings. Turkey and Finland, as co-chairs, periodically host annual high-level ministerial meetings in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly.¹²³

An analysis of the Turkish leader's speeches at the UN General Assembly, as well as Security Council sessions regarding mediation, also reveals the exemplary character of Turkey's uniqueness discourse in the Friends of Mediation Initiative. For instance, in the 2006 UNSC Meeting,¹²⁴ the UN Representative to Turkey, Baki İlkin, emphasized Turkey's mediation experience in both its region and beyond, underlining Turkey's commitment to active involvement in mediation efforts in the UN platform.¹²⁵

President Erdoğan also refers to Turkey's assuming responsibility for finding solutions to conflicts by referring to its unique identity as encompassing the cultural heritage of both Eastern and Western civilizations, as follows:

Turkey is a rightful successor to the collective heritage of both Eastern and Western civilizations, owing to its geographical location at the centre of the ancient world. Therefore, we are obliged to take the necessary steps, assume responsibility, and rise to the occasion. We will continue to fulfill our responsibilities to humankind because we are deeply affected, directly and indirectly, by the crises that besiege our region. . . . There are now 59 members of the Group of Friends of Mediation, which we co-chair. We have carried that United Nations initiative into the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. I believe that it is within our reach to find fair, equitable, and conscientious solutions to all the global challenges we face.¹²⁶

One can trace the non-exemtionalist but rather exemplary character of Turkey's uniqueness discourse in the mediation efforts made through international platforms:

Turkey and Finland are two experienced countries in mediating conflicts and reconciling differences. We have so far carried out active mediation efforts in the field ranging from the Middle East to the Balkans, the Horn of Africa, and Afghanistan. We feel that now is the time to carry our national experiences and those of our partners to another level...¹²⁷

The exemplary character of Turkey, which carried some paternalistic features, as seen in other international exceptionalist cases, could also be found in Turkey's mediation efforts in the 2005 Iraqi elections. Davutoğlu, as the chief adviser to Prime Minister Erdoğan at

¹²³ Burak Akçapar, *Political Entrepreneurship in International Peace Mediation: A Study of Turkey's Role at the UN, OSCE, and OIC* (New York: Center on International Cooperation at New York University, 2019), 6.

¹²⁴ United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council 6108th Meeting*, S/PV.6108, New York: UN Headquarters, 2009, accessed August 05, 2022. <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/spv-6108.php>

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, "Statement by Recep Tayyip Erdogan on General Assembly Seventy-Fourth Session 3rd Plenary Meeting," *United Nations General Assembly Records*, September 24, 2019, accessed date April, 2024. <https://undocs.org/A/74/PV.3>

¹²⁷ Ahmet Davutoğlu and Erkki Tuomioja, "Mediation for Peace: A Means toward a Better World," *Hürriyet Daily News*, February 25, 2012, accessed date November, 2021. https://www.mfa.gov.tr/article-by-mr_-ahmet-davuto%C4%9Flu_-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-turkey-and-mr_-erkki-tuomioja_-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-finland-published-in-turkish-daily-news_-25-february-2012.en.mfa

the time, urged engagement “in discreet, confidential diplomacy to bring all the primary resistance leaders to Turkey to persuade them to participate in the elections as political parties.”¹²⁸ After months of negotiations, in the end, Davutoğlu described how the solution was achieved with these words:

I described the choice before them: “Either you will reestablish Baghdad as a center of civilization or you will be part of the destruction of Baghdad, as the Mongols were.” ... One of the leaders, the oldest one, in his seventies, from the Ubeydiye tribe, stood up and said, “Look, my sons” — the others were much younger — “we have to listen to this brother because he speaks like a Baghdadi.” He does not speak like someone from the outside. After that hour, we reached an agreement; these groups came together and formed what we call tavafuk, and they participated in the elections. The important thing is this: If we are mediating between Iraqi people, we should be speaking like Baghdadis. We have to speak like Damascenes if the issue is Syria, or like someone from Sarajevo if the issue is related to the Balkans. This is the most important aspect if we are to convince others.¹²⁹

As Arkan and Kınacıoğlu underline, rather than “a superior role performed by the leader of an ancient civilization,” Turkey preferred to speak as “the wisdom of the eldest in the family.”¹³⁰

Another example was Turkish leaders justifying their country’s uniqueness with reference to its ability to “empathize” and “build consensus” by being not a “neutral outsider” but an “interested insider,” as follows:

We indeed have a strong insight of the dynamics that undermine the peace in our region, as well as those that underpin it. As a result, we are able to empathize with a large group of countries around us and understand their concerns and aspirations...In other words, we are not a neutral outsider that has no special stakes involved in the resolution of the conflict. On the contrary, we are an interested insider guided by our own values, with an ability to build consensus on these values and interests.¹³¹

Here we can see the understanding of superiority as a kind of richness that cannot be duplicated by others. On the other hand, this superiority is not turned into a kind of missionary-nonexemptionalist foreign policy discourse. According to Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s unique access to both the global north and south makes it a suitable mediator over a wide geographical range. Turkey’s cultural-civilizational background and long experience with Western political and security structures creates an advantage in the field.”¹³²

Having said that, an analysis of Turkey’s mediation activities demonstrates that the promotion of mediation in international organizations has been particularly successful in “setting the agendas” in IOs and generating “concrete outcomes” in the mediation field. In this regard, Turkey became the only country that co-chairs three distinct Friends of Mediation groups at three major international institutions. Firstly, Ankara introduced the OIC Contact Group of Friends of Mediation in 2018. After the launch of FoM, Turkey, together with Finland and Switzerland, initiated and led the establishment of such a group at the OSCE.

¹²⁸ Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Mediation,” 84.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Arkan and Kınacıoğlu, “Enabling ‘Ambitious Activism,’” 396.

¹³¹ Ahmet Davutoğlu, “Speech Delivered by Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey at the Informal High-Level UN General Assembly Meeting in New York on the ‘Role of Member States in Mediation,’” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, May 23, 2012, accessed date November 25, 2021. https://www.mfa.gov.tr/speech-delivered-by-mr-ahmet-davuto%C4%9Flu_-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-turkey-at-the-informal-high-level-meeting-on-the-_role-of-member-states-in-mediation_-_23-may-2012_-new-york.en.mfa

¹³² Davutoğlu, “Turkey’s Mediation,” 90.

Turkey and Finland took the lead also in the first UN General Assembly resolution on mediation in 2011.¹³³ Furthermore, the Istanbul Conferences on Mediation have become a crucial venue that brought multiple actors, from government representatives to civil society actors. The Istanbul Conferences on Mediation are also followed by another conference series in Istanbul by the OIC specifically.¹³⁴ In this regard, former foreign minister Çavuşoğlu conceptualized these multilateral initiatives as integral components of the MPI. Çavuşoğlu referred to Turkey's pioneering role as being "the first nation to offer a voluntary financial contribution to the UN's Innovation Cell."¹³⁵ He emphasized how the success of the Group of Friends initiative within the UN served as "a model," prompting the establishment of similar collaborative frameworks within the OSCE and the OIC.¹³⁶ On every occasion, the Foreign Ministry of Turkey emphasized the unique contributions of Turkey through the Istanbul Mediation Conferences to the development of the conceptual framework for conflict resolution and mediation.¹³⁷ For instance, in the 2019 Meeting of the Friends of Mediation, Minister Çavuşoğlu went on to underline the importance of incorporating digital technology in diplomacy with reference to Turkey's own initiatives, like "Digital Diplomacy" at the 11th Ambassadors' Conference and the focus on the matter during the Istanbul Mediation Conferences.¹³⁸ The UN's "Guidance for Effective Mediation" was translated into Turkish, which marks the first time it has been translated into a language outside the UN's official languages. Furthermore, Ankara's wide-ranging dissemination of the document across the academic and civil society circles illustrates Turkey's commitment to the field.¹³⁹

Regarding outcomes, Turkey, and Finland's multilateral efforts to mobilize the UN through the Friends of Mediation have led to four crucial UN General Assembly resolutions regarding mediations.¹⁴⁰ The UN General Assembly resolution on July 28, 2011, was a landmark document, as it was the first UN Resolution on mediation.¹⁴¹ It elaborated the normative basis for mediation with the result of intense negotiations. This was followed by three additional General Assembly resolutions. Draft resolutions were contested during 20 different expert-level meetings co-chaired by Turkey and Finland. As a result, on September 13, 2012, the General Assembly adopted the Resolution on UN Guidance for Effective Mediation, which introduces measures for "effective mediation."¹⁴² Thirdly, Turkey and Finland conducted brainstorming sessions with academics and representatives

¹³³ Akçapar, *Political Entrepreneurship*, 12.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

¹³⁵ In January 2020, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs launched the Innovation Cell, an interdisciplinary team dedicated to helping the Department and its field presences to understand and explore, pilot, and scale new technologies, tools, and practices in conflict prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding. See, "Innovation – Political and Peacebuilding Affairs," *United Nations*, January, 2022, accessed date April, 2024. <https://dppa.un.org/en/innovation>

¹³⁶ "Co-Chairs Summary, 11th Ministerial Meeting of the UN Group of Friends of Mediation entitled – Mediation as a tool for peaceful settlement and resolution of conflicts: Taking stock after 10 years of the first UN Resolution and looking ahead," *Istanbul Mediation*, February 2, 2022, accessed date April, 2024. <http://www.istanbulmediation.org/pdf/8-istanbul/Co-chairs-summary-Ministerial-mtg-Feb-2022.pdf>

¹³⁷ "Summary Report of 8th Istanbul Mediation Conference," *Istanbul Mediation*, March 22, 2022, accessed date April, 2024. <http://www.istanbulmediation.org/pdf/8-istanbul/8th-istanbul-Mediation-Conference-Report.pdf>

¹³⁸ "Co-Chairs' Summary of the United Nations Group of Friends of Mediation 10th Ministerial Meeting New York, 26 September 2019," *United Nations Peacemaker*, September 26, 2019, accessed date April, 2024. <https://peacemaker.un.org/node/3374>.

¹³⁹ Spyros A. Sofos, "Turkey as Mediator," *The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform*, 2022, accessed date April, 2024. https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/119754/1/Turkey_as_a_Mediator.pdf

¹⁴⁰ Akçapar, *Political Entrepreneurship*, 13.

¹⁴¹ United Nations General Assembly. *United Nations General Assembly Sixty-Fifth Session Agenda Item 33, A/RES/65/283*, New York: UN Headquarters, 2011, accessed March 28, 2023. <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/ares65283.php>

¹⁴² United Nations General Assembly. *United Nations General Assembly Sixty-Sixth Session Agenda Item 34 (a), A/RES/66/291*, New York: UN Headquarters, 2012, accessed February 21, 2023. <https://peacemaker.un.org/node/487>

of regional organizations, including the OSCE, the African Union, and the European Union. Their findings were published in a report, which was then incorporated into the drafting of the UN General Assembly Resolution in July 2014.¹⁴³ Turkey and Finland co-chaired both the FoM group and the General Assembly deliberations on these above-mentioned resolutions, which were adopted by consensus on July 31, 2014. The resolutions invited the UN, as well as regional organizations, to “improve cooperation, coordination, coherence, and complementarity in specific mediation contexts.”¹⁴⁴ The fourth resolution was about the UN’s review processes and the role of mediation and was adopted in September 2016, again with the Turkish-Finnish leadership in cooperation with the UN Secretariat. Not only the UN General Assembly resolutions, but also Turkey and Finland’s efforts made important contributions to the UN Secretariat’s thematic guidelines that defined and clarified both the normative and procedural content of the mediation training.¹⁴⁵ As a result, the UN Secretary-General released the “UN Guidance for Effective Mediation” and “Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies” at an FoM meeting in March 2017. Therefore, together with the efforts of Finland, the FoM group at the UN, and the OSCE, Turkey’s multilateral efforts have been crucial in terms of creating awareness, advocating capacity-building, and developing mediation norms and procedures, as well as institutional infrastructure, through UN General Assembly resolutions and the UN Secretariat’s thematic guidelines.¹⁴⁶

Apakan, in his 2013 article, contended that there has been a growing momentum built around the concept of mediation in the last decade, and Turkey, as the co-chair of the Friends of Mediation, played a leading role in this process. He also underlined that UN involvement conferred legitimacy and credibility to the mediation efforts initiated by Finland and Turkey in 2010. In the words of Apakan, the Friends of Mediation group acts as a “bridge between the UN Secretariat, Member States, NGOs, and civil society.”¹⁴⁷ He also underlined the “contestation” and “synergy in diversity” as building blocks of the Friends of Mediation initiative: “The mix of views, experiences, and realities that Friends of Mediation members bring to the group’s discussions and activities produces a synergy in diversity.”¹⁴⁸

In response to the critics of the discrepancy between Ankara’s actual mediation efforts and its diplomacy concerning the MPI, Akçapar argues that the emphasis on mediation has been a continuous theme in Turkish foreign policy in its region and through international organizations. This was the case even after Turkey decided to recourse a different foreign policy concept in 2017; Turkish foreign policymakers had shifted to a realpolitik approach in 2016 with the use of hard power resources such as Operation Euphrates Shield in Syria, continuing through to 2018 with Operation Olive Branch.¹⁴⁹ In other words, since 2010, Turkey seems to have focused more on capacity-building diplomacy within international organizations such as the MPI than on engaging in actual mediation activities on the ground. However, the most recent mediation efforts, such as the Black Sea Grain Initiative (“Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian ports”), is highly

¹⁴³ United Nations General Assembly, *United Nations General Assembly Sixty-Eight Session Agenda Item 33 (b)*, A/RES/68/303, New York: UN Headquarters, 2014, accessed date April 27, 2023. <https://undocs.org/A/RES/68/303>

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ United Nations General Assembly, *United Nations General Assembly Seventieth Session Agenda Item 34 (b)*, A/RES/70/304, New York: UN Headquarters, 2016, accessed March 19, 2023. <https://peacemaker.un.org/GA%20Resolution%20A/RES/70/304>

¹⁴⁶ Akçapar, *Political Entrepreneurship*, 11-12.

¹⁴⁷ Apakan, “Mediation,” 40.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Akçapar, *Political Entrepreneurship*, 3

important in demonstrating the interplay between actual mediation efforts and the country's international diplomacy in producing outcomes. Turkey's mediator role between Russia and Ukraine has helped to achieve the Black Sea Grain Initiative in Istanbul on July 22, 2022, which was welcomed by the UN. This example is illustrative in the sense that Turkey stayed true to its exceptionalist discourse in the mediation efforts, and these efforts had tangible results on the ground, with "exceptionalism as a practice."¹⁵⁰

Nevertheless, conceptualized as a middle power, Turkey also attempted to make international mediation a "niche diplomacy," with an evident will to institutionalize this practice through international organizations.¹⁵¹ In other words, for Turkey, its activism has encompassed involvement in fostering mediation capacity at an international level, notably within the UN. Turkey's insistence on inclusive multilateralism and its efforts for mediation at the global level, together with its exemplary role to other nations, warrants the inclusion of Turkish exceptionalism in the "internationalist exceptionalism" category laid out by Nymalm and Plagemann. Moreover, Finland and Turkey's co-partnership in the MPI contributes to the most recent Global IR discussions as an illustration of a case of "Western along with non-Western." Such effective partnerships could certainly aid in tackling the challenges of current global crises.

3.3. Discussion

Long ago, Eide asserted that traditional approaches that analyzed conflicts only in their local settings were the parochial. Peace research, which locates conflicts and processes within the driving forces inherent in the international system, is what escapes parochialism.¹⁵² However, as Sullivan de Estrada notes, if the hegemonic structures and logics at work at the global level constitute, in part, the local, then "to study the local is to study the global."¹⁵³ What is required is a method through which to engage "global-in-local" narratives in a way that purposefully disrupts and remakes global theories.¹⁵⁴ As Aydınlı and Erpul assert, "For a genuinely global IR we need local and native businesses to thrive through their efforts and initiatives."¹⁵⁵ In this regard, the case of the MPI contributes to advancing local IR and developing a genuine Global IR from three main aspects.

First of all, with actual world politics often being omitted in the Global IR discussion, a topic like the MPI might be an ideal venue to explore the circulation of ideas and norms between the global and local levels. Thoroughly utilizing "exceptionalisms" via a Global IR case study (the MPI), this article connects a political discourse to the scholarly world of IR disciplinary sociology. In this regard, Turkey's role in the MPI demonstrates the characteristics of Nymalm and Plagemann's categorization of "internationalist exceptionalism" and could be considered an example of what Sullivan de Estrada calls "exceptionalism-as-practice."¹⁵⁶

Secondly, it suggests a renewed thinking on the concept of exceptionalism in Global IR by

¹⁵⁰ For details on the Black Sea Grain Initiative, see: "The Black Sea Grain Initiative: What it is, and why it's important for the world," *United Nations News*, September 16, 2022, accessed date April, 2024. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1126811>; Galip Dalay, "Why Turkey is in a unique position to mediate," *CNN*, March 29, 2022, accessed date April 3, 2024. <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/03/29/opinions/turkey-mediator-russia-ukraine-dalay/index.html>

¹⁵¹ Milena Dieckhoff, "International Mediation: A Specific Diplomatic Tool for Emerging Countries?" *European Review of International Studies* 1, no. 2 (2014): 116.

¹⁵² Eide, "Global or Parochial Perspectives," 79-86.

¹⁵³ Sullivan de Estrada, "IR's recourse to Area Studies," 208.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 207.

¹⁵⁵ Aydınlı and Erpul, "The False Promise of Global IR," 3.

¹⁵⁶ Sullivan de Estrada, "IR's Recourse to Area Studies," 209.

de-emphasizing Western exceptionalism. Building on Nymalm and Plagemann's framework, Turkey's role in the MPI demonstrates that "neither all exceptionalisms are identical, nor are they created equal,"¹⁵⁷ and illustrates the non-exemtionalist yet "exemplary" character of Turkey's uniqueness discourse in mediation efforts at international platforms, which can be defined as "internationalist exceptionalism."

It then challenges the understanding that all exceptionalist discourses are hegemonic and dominant, and thus should be avoided in Global IR. In other words, Turkey's reference to its exemplary role, not superiority, to other nations, seen in its role in the MPI, offers a rethink of exceptionalism as bridging the local with the global. Therefore, we suggest a more productive engagement with the concept of exceptionalism in Global IR, in line with Sullivan de Estrada's selected cases, not to illustrate a theory or extract a general rule, but based on its disruptive potential.¹⁵⁸ Following her, we also argue that Global IR's exceptionalism *requires* a modification of existing theory.

Thirdly, from a wider theoretical perspective, this study attempts to contribute to one of the oldest debates between the local (parochial) and global. As Weber highlights, from the very beginning, IR's creation myths tell us what to study, why, and how, such that we do not or cannot question those assumptions. The myth function in IR theory is "the transformation of what is particular, cultural, and ideological into what appears to be universal, natural, and purely empirical."¹⁵⁹ Similarly, Smith demonstrates how international relations discourse "constructs the categories of thought within which we explain the world" in a manner that reinforces the particular (cultural) perspective of those authoring the discourse.¹⁶⁰ As Eide claims, "The global framework now taking shape would not have obtained its realistic content unless there had been close communication between scholars who seek to understand the relationship between the specific dynamics of their society and processes going on in different parts of the world and described by scholars from those other parts."¹⁶¹ In the context of this study, we argue for the reversal of exceptionalism in Global IR through parochialism in building a genuine universal discipline. At this point, we suggest that social constructivism and its conceptual and methodological richness may provide a fertile ground to better and persuasively grasp the nexus between global and local in Global IR's future research agenda.

4. Conclusion: Is There Any Role for Internationalist Exceptionalist States in Global IR?

At an IR meeting, Puchala and Fagan write that a distinguished scholar reportedly called for "a one-year suspension on methodological innovations" in the discipline.¹⁶² "His reason was," the authors write, "so that actual research into world politics can be started." According to the authors, this inquiry pointed to a very crucial problem in the discipline of IR: "We probably do not understand contemporary international politics as well as we should, since theoretical development in our discipline is presently lagging behind the evolving reality

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁵⁹ Cynthia Weber, *International Relations Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2005), 7

¹⁶⁰ Steve Smith, "Singing Our World into Existence: International Relations Theory and September 11," *International Studies Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (2004): 499.

¹⁶¹ Eide, "Global or Parochial Perspectives," 79-80.

¹⁶² Donald J. Puchala and Stuart I. Fagan, "International Politics in the 1970s: The Search for a Perspective," *International Organization* 28, no. 2 (1974): 247.

of day-to-day practice in international affairs.”¹⁶³ Following that, we argue that, with actual world politics often being omitted in Global IR discussions, a topic like the MPI might be an ideal venue to explore the circulation of ideas and norms between the global and local levels.

As shown throughout the paper, Nymalm and Plagemann’s recent work presents a valuable contribution to exceptionalism literature by unboxing the exceptionalist foreign policy discourses prevailing in Western IR literature. Their ideal types of exceptionalism help us to better understand the variety of sources and effects of exceptionalist foreign policy discourses experienced in Global IR. Their work also created the grounds on which to discuss or revisit exceptionalism in Global IR as Acharya and Buzan first described. Therefore, as answers to the first set of questions posed in the introduction, we can conclude that, with the help of Nymalm and Plagemann’s framework, revisiting exceptionalism from a Global IR perspective contributes to our understanding of global politics in IR and prevents the creation of new cognitive prisons caused by a Western IR/Global IR dichotomy. As stated in the paper, despite the common features of superiority and uniqueness claims present in all exceptionalism types, these do not necessarily turn into confrontational policy outcomes at the global level. Therefore, non-exemptionalist and exemplary exceptionalism discourses pave the way for reconciliation in global governance.

Evaluating Turkish exceptionalism with this new understanding of exceptionalism in Global IR, the paper concludes that, in line with Nymalm and Plagemann, Turkey’s position in the MPI can be regarded as an example of the “internationalist exceptionalist” category. Turkey’s foreign policy discourse in the 2000s underlined its unique historical and geographical features given Turkey’s location between Europe and Asia. Being a meeting place of differing cultures and regions is reflected in the discourses of the “bridge between civilizations” metaphor. This exceptionalist discourse is operationalized with mediation as a foreign policy tool in the international sphere via its efforts in the MPI. This is also an example of “exceptionalism-as-practice.” Unlike the Western IR exceptionalism approach of foreign policy as missionary and exemptionalist, Turkey’s role in the MPI could be evaluated as non-exemptionalist and exemplary. Therefore, the policy outcomes of internationalist exceptionalist cases as witnessed in the MPI demonstrate how some exceptional foreign policy discourses of states may contribute to the interconnectedness between regional worlds, as well as the circulation of ideas and norms between the global and local levels.

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¹⁶³ Ibid.

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Sanctions and Postcolonial Statecraft in Iran: Resisting the Iran Libya Sanctions Act and Beyond

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Abstract

Though economic sanctions are designed to weaken and isolate their target for the stated purpose of policy change, in the case of Iran they have often invigorated its desire to defy Western coercion and domination. Since the Islamic revolution this has led to multiple political standoffs, including notably during the Mahmoud Ahmadinejad administration and the post-nuclear deal standoff with the United States (US). Through sanctions, the West has often been unwilling to accept little less than a grand bargain on Iranian foreign policy, which has informed and contributed to a postcolonial narrative of resistance in the Iranian state. This narrative has served as an integral tool of Iranian statecraft in an effort to bolster the leadership's legitimacy. By looking at elite discourse and Iranian government responses to the Iran Libya Sanctions Act during Ahmadinejad's government and the Trump Administration's Maximum Pressure campaign, this article highlights narratives of postcolonial resistance in Iran's response to US sanctions, in an effort to explain why sanctions often push them further away from acquiescence to international norms.

Keywords: Sanctions, Postcolonialism, Resistance, Iran

1. Introduction

The efficacy of sanctions in altering the policies of target-states is a significant point of contention in International Relations (IR) scholarship. Though they have been used in a variety of contexts for some time, the controversy arises from a largely unproven track record in their mandate.¹ They may have been able to effectively isolate target states, but sanctions are often ineffective at changing their policies in the years following the Cold War.² Yet they are one of very few options at the disposal of states in the Global North in response to states that contravene international norms. As such, they remain a staple at the disposal of states that wish to either express their disapproval for another state's actions or attempt to coerce them into changing their behaviour.

From a postcolonial perspective however, sanctions are far from a legitimate form of coercion. Their purpose is to shape the Global South from without and mould it to comply with the needs of the Global North. The sanctioned state can therefore see themselves as an

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¹ Susan Hannah Allen, "The Determinants of Economic Sanctions Success and Failure," *International Interactions* 31, no. 2 (2005): 117.

² Tim Niblock, *Pariah States and Sanctions in the Middle East: Iraq, Libya, and Sudan* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 217-220.

object of domination at the hands of power structures that have long subjugated subaltern peoples. But adjacent to legitimate moral and political critiques of sanctions, sanctioned governments are often able to cultivate significant political legitimacy from being a target of sanctions by drawing specifically on postcolonial narratives. This often counteracts the intended effects of economic coercion, especially in states that incorporate this narrative into their economic and security policy.

Iran has been the target of both unilateral and multilateral sanctions since the Islamic revolution, beginning with the US enacting punitive measures in relation to the hostage crisis. For the most part, sanctions have been employed in response to three Iranian policy paradigms; its nuclear enrichment program, its regional activity through proxy armies and human rights abuses. Despite the severe economic impact sanctions have had on the economy since the revolution, Iran has made few concessions regarding these policies since.³ Decades of sanctions prior to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) had succeeded in enacting heavy consequences on the government and its population but had not forced Iran to the negotiating table until 2012. In fact, it had further emboldened resistance to negotiation. During the second term of President Ahmadinejad, Iran outwardly celebrated their own ability to weather Western efforts to change its policy. Ahmadinejad told NBC in September 2010 that:

Even if the U.S. administration increases the sanctions and — 100 times more, and even the Europeans join the United States to impose heavier sanctions, we in Iran are in a position to meet our own requirements.⁴

It is important to note that these words were spoken a year before the Ayatollah approved bilateral talks with US to relieve intense economic pressure. But Iran was able to foil Western attempts at economic coercion for decades prior. It is resistance to sanctions had been largely successful due to fostering a discourse of resistance that has been embraced by the leadership as part of its ideological narrative.⁵

This article explores sanctions regimes employed against Iran; focusing primarily on the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) during the Ahmadinejad administration and the Maximum Pressure campaign following the US withdrawal from the JCPOA. It pays particular attention to the elite institutionalisation of postcolonial discourses that informed ‘resistance policies,’ which significantly hindered the effectiveness of these frameworks. The main takeaway from this piece is that policy coercion will remain ineffective if isolation through sanctions continues to be the only goal of US policy toward Iran, thanks to the way the Islamic Republic have incorporated a postcolonial approach into their policy formulation. Framing sanctions through a postcolonial lens adds strength to the government’s narrative that the West are only willing to negotiate on their own terms, providing proof of the US as a bad-faith actor. Sanctions have enacted an enormous economic toll on Iran, and conventional theoretical wisdom says that the material relative gains do not seem to exist for the regime to continue resisting them. But this says more about how *realpolitik* perspectives tend to sideline some perspectives and historical context in favour of assumptions about national interest. Efforts to curtail Iran’s regional policies are seen by the Islamic Republic as a continuation of a desire

³ Ray Takeyh and Susan Maloney, “The Self-Limiting Success of Iran Sanctions,” *International Affairs* 26, no. 1 (2011): 1297.

⁴ “Ahmadinejad: Muslims ‘are not against Americans, Jews, Christians,’” *NBC News*, September 16, 2010, accessed date April, 2024. <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna39202371>

⁵ Takeyh and Maloney, “The Self-Limiting Success of Iran Sanctions,” 1306.

of the West to control Iran in the same manner they had done in the colonial past, making it in the national interest to resist economic coercion wherever possible - even at significant cost.⁶

Iran often incorporates economic resistance to sanctions into its domestic and foreign policy. Postcolonialism forms the ideological core of this effort, providing a policy rationale and rhetorical lexicon domestically. However, this arguably took on a new dimension in the post-JCPOA period and following the introduction of the Trump administration's Maximum Pressure campaign. This is because the goals of US sanctions drifted even further away from policy change, favouring political isolation and regime change. Effectively removing the option for Iran to make policy concessions in exchange for sanctions relief has not only made resistance to their effects existential for the Islamic Republic, it also further cements the postcolonial narrative as an effective justification.

However, theoretically this piece does not see postcolonial narratives deployed by the state as an emancipatory project. Postcolonialism as a critical theory highlights the violence of oppressive structures through the legacy of colonialism. While Iran was not a formal colony of European powers, it undoubtedly has a colonial experience through resource, human and political exploitation at their hands. But as Emmanuel Bueya points out, while the colonial state opposed the colonial people, "the postcolonial system [often becomes] an instrument of oppression fused by the political elite."⁷ In this case the postcolonial resistance of sanctions, though rooted in real historical exploitation at the hands of colonial powers, is primarily a tool of statecraft and upholding the legitimacy of the Islamic Republic. Routinely, government resistance to sanctions has led to further oppression of the Iranian people both economically and politically and should not be confused with an emancipatory project.

As such, the article will focus primarily on elite discourses that frame resistance to sanctions in anti-imperialist terms. The article begins by situating the literature on sanctions as both a form of policy coercion and containment of revisionist states, then looks at the nature of US sanctions on Iran before and after the JCPOA. The incorporation of postcolonial resistance into Iran's national interest discourse and policy will then be explored, followed by discussion on why this means sanctions have been ineffective.

2. Coercion through Sanctions

Few scholars dispute that sanctions in general have a less-than desirable rate of success historically.⁸ Though the character of sanctions changes significantly from case to case,⁹ sanctions are often ineffective in many of their stated goals. The International Committee of the British House of Commons issued a report in 1999 stating that, "Although sanctions may well represent a low-cost alternative to war in financial terms, they are all too often as damaging – in humanitarian and developmental terms – as armed conflict."¹⁰ Tim Niblock, in his analysis of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions in the late twentieth century, found that sanctions indeed strengthened the governments of the target state and undermined democratisation, stability and regional cooperation efforts, all while failing to

⁶ Oliver Borszik, "International Sanctions against Iran under President Ahmadinejad: Explaining Regime Persistence," *German Institute for Global Area Studies*, no. 260 (2014): 10-14.

⁷ Emmanuel Bueya, *Stability in Postcolonial African States* (Maryland: Lexington, 2018), x.

⁸ Elena V. McLan and Taehee Whang, "Designing Foreign Policy: Voters, Special Interest Groups, and Economic Sanctions," *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 5 (2014): 589.

⁹ Niblock, "The Regional and Domestic Political Consequences of Sanctions Imposed on Iraq Libya and Sudan," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (2001): 59.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

“achieve the immediate objectives sought by the Security Council.”¹¹ Shortly after the 9/11, Gary Clyde Hufbauer explained that targeted sanctions could effectively assist in curbing transnational terrorism and support coalition efforts in the “war on terror.”¹² Since then, the updated Threat and Imposition of Sanctions (TIES) data shows that in the period between 1945 and 2005, fifteen sanctions regimes were imposed of which only four were deemed to have positive outcomes.¹³ Hufbauer, et al. suggest that roughly one-third of global economic sanctions were successful in achieving their stated objectives, while successful sanctions involving the US have declined from the post-war period to about 25 percent.¹⁴ Hufbauer and Oegg attribute this decline partially to globalisation. The notion is that, while an increase in global economic interdependence potentially has made target economies more vulnerable, it has also “created more opportunities to evade sanctions as alternative markets and suppliers become available.”¹⁵

Where behaviours cannot be changed, sanctions are often used punitively and can have a cyclical or ‘indefinite’ character. This is particularly common in target states where the costs of compliance are seen to be higher than non-compliance. Isolation and punishment are therefore often an unstated goal. Though almost all sanctions regimes have objectives and criteria for the target state to meet, they are often difficult to define or benchmark.¹⁶ For example, Belarus has been under evolving but mostly consistent European Union (EU) sanctions for more than two decades. When sanctions had been temporarily relaxed, they were not in response to any changes in the policies of the target. In this case, suspension of measures and negotiation with the target has been “due to political considerations rather than because their conditions were being met.”¹⁷

Postcolonial scholarship argues that punishment for the purpose of subordination is often the primary goal of sanctions. In contexts like Mugabe-era Zimbabwe, Munoda Mararike posits that where states refuse to comply, institutional, financial, and humanitarian damage is an intentional side-effect.¹⁸ The response in the case of Western sanctions on Zimbabwean land reform in 2001 was *Chimurenga*: a ‘war’ against colonial domination, waged by both the state and ordinary ‘native’ Zimbabweans.¹⁹ In defiance of Western sanctions and to massive economic detriment, the state pursued a land distribution that reversed the colonial provisions laid out in the Lancaster House Agreement. While Mugabe’s government also subjugated its citizens, it effectively created a ‘rally around the flag’ effect through colonial resistance. This is illustrated in the post-Mugabe governments embrace of continued land reform and upholding the values of *Chimurenga*.²⁰

In this view, economic sanctions are not just ineffective at policy change – they are often not designed to be. We should therefore not be surprised when target states rally around

¹¹ Ibid., 63.

¹² Navin A. Bapat, et al., “Economic Sanctions, Transnational Terrorism and the Incentive to Misrepresentation,” *The Journal of Politics* 78, no. 1 (2016): 249.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Gary Clyde Hufbauer, et al., *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered, 3rd Edition* (London: Pearson 2007), 98.

¹⁵ Gary Clyde Hufbauer and Barbara Oegg, “Economic Sanctions: Goal and Private Compensation,” *Chicago Journal of International Law* 4, no. 2 (2003): 309.

¹⁶ Yulija Miadzvetskaya and Celia Challet, “Are the EU Restrictive Measures Really Targeted, Temporary and Preventive? The Case of Belarus,” *Europe & the World* 6, no. 1 (2022): 1-20.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Munoda Mararike, “Zimbabwe Economic Sanctions and Post-Colonial Hangover: A Critique of Zimbabwe Democracy Economic Recovery Act (ZDERA),” *International Journal of Social Sciences* 7, no.1 (2019): 30.

¹⁹ Ibid., 29.

²⁰ Ibid., 31.

resisting them. Sanctions often speak to an international dissonance of order and justice, situating states in a hierarchy, “thus pitting a globally subaltern vision, broadly defined, against a globally hegemonic or dominant one.”²¹ While not an endorsement of their policies, this is a potential explanation as to why non-Western societies vehemently oppose Western sanctions regimes and are willing to weather significant consequences to resist them.

The current method and application of sanctions is essentially viewed as imperialist by postcolonial analysis. The sanctioning party “defines its identity through the act of dissociating itself from the target it considers to be ‘the troublesome or the evil other.’ The ‘virtuous self’ is defined through this process of dissociation.”²² Sanctions are a tool of both differentiation and subordinating primarily. Therefore, the instrumental justification of sanctions is flawed for states in that the probability of failure or eliciting unwanted outcomes is high.²³ However, though multilateral and unilateral sanctions aim to delineate what is just in the international community, there are also problems with judging their success in this context. The justification of sanctions often equates the citizenry of a target state with the government. Adeno Addis points to the example of Iraq, in which former US Secretary of State Madeline Albright suggested that the alleged half-million deaths related to sanctions was an acceptable price for policy change.²⁴ The result is the devaluing of non-Western lives and an insensitivity to non-Western points of significance. Secondly, emphasising ‘objective’ notions of morality based on Western values in international politics gives governments cause and credibility to resist them. The target citizenry and authority alike begin to view sanctions as not a tool for justice, but instead yet another method of subjugation, in which values are imposed from the top to the detriment of those at the bottom.²⁵

Indeed, the postcolonial perspective is convincing on the purpose, utility, and effect of sanctions. For the US in particular, Iran appears to be an object of other political considerations rather than a peer with which they could come to an agreement with. We can see some of the Obama-era sanctions policies and the JCPOA negotiations as an exception to this otherwise consistent rule. Sanctions on Iran were an opportunity to solidify US hegemony post-Cold War, informing the rogue/pariah state narrative that allowed the international community to rally around US foreign policy interests. This is exemplified by the multiple occasions in which the Islamic Republic presented an olive branch to the US, each of which was rebuffed in favour of isolating it politically. The legacy of much of Western sanctions on Iran is punishment and subordination – not to change policy or to enable re-engagement, which has often served the consolidation of the Islamic Republic’s political power. Where it can, this has been exploited by the Islamic Republic and used to strengthen their economic and political legitimacy.

3. Sanctions on Iran

It is worth pointing out that there is a wealth of scholarship and commentary on the details of US sanctions on Iran prior to the JCPOA. The summary of the ILSA will therefore be brief, but it is also worth exploring multilateral and EU sanctions on Iran, as well. US sanctions

²¹ Mohammed Ayoob, “Making Sense of Global Tensions: Dominant and Subaltern Concepts of Order and Justice in the International System,” *International Studies* 47, no. 2-4 (2010): 129.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 583.

²⁴ Adeno Addis, “Economic Sanctions and the Problem of Evil,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (2003): 608.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 601.

coupled with UNSC and EU sanctions were foundational in Iran's postcolonial justification for resistance.

3.1. Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA/ISA)

Since the Iranian hostage crisis, Iran has been the target of a broad array of sanctions from the US. The most notable began with the US-imposed Iran and Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) in 1995, which sought to “deny Iran the resources to further its nuclear program and to support terrorist organisations such as Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad.”²⁶ Leading up to the ILSA, President Bill Clinton's administration was particularly keen to use Iran as an example of how it planned to lead a world-wide non-proliferation movement.²⁷ This meant that, short of Iran abandoning all nuclear proliferation, there was little room for negotiation on these economic measures.

The ILSA marked a departure in strategy from previous sanctions regimes undertaken by the US. Typically, US sanctions had focussed on only restricting American companies from trading and conducting business with targeted nations and individuals.²⁸ The ILSA broadened presidential powers by allowing the executive branch to penalize foreign companies that invested in the Iranian or Libyan petroleum and gas industries.²⁹

Sanctions under the ILSA continually evolved over the next two decades to encompass more individuals and institutions, while increasing pressure on Iran's energy sector. In 2006, UN Security Council resolution 1737 unanimously adopted targeted multilateral economic pressures on Iran in relation to its nuclear activity, stating that Iran should suspend “all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including research and development; and work on all heavy-water related projects, including the construction of a research reactor moderated by heavy water.”³⁰ Having previously done little more than uphold the sanctions regimes outlined in resolution 1737, the EU followed the US in 2010 and imposed its own autonomous sanctions.

In 2006, with Iran's nuclear program becoming of increased concern to the US government, congress deemed that the sanctions program needed to continue its pressure on the Iranian economy while promoting a democratic change of government. The amendments became law in the form of Iran Freedom Support Act Amendments³¹ which altered the ILSA by:

- “Impos[ing] (two or more) mandatory sanctions on a person or entity that knowingly helps Iran acquire or develop chemical, nuclear or biological weapons of mass destruction or destabilising types and numbers of conventional weapons...;
- “Add[ing] a requirement that Iran be determined to pose no significant threat to U.S. national security, interests, or allies in order to lift sanctions against entities investing in Iran's petroleum industry;

²⁶ Kenneth Katzman, “Iran Sanctions,” *Current Politics and Economics of the Middle East* 2, no. 2 (2011): 211.

²⁷ Ofira Seliktar and Farhad Rezaei, *Iran, Israel, and the United States: The Politics of Counter-proliferation Intelligence* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018).

²⁸ Meghan McCurdy, “Unilateral Sanctions with a Twist: The Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996,” *American University International Law Review* 13, no. 2 (1998): 398.

²⁹ “Security Council Imposes Sanctions on Iran for Failure to Halt Uranium Enrichment, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1737 – SC/8928,” *United Nations*, December 23, 2006, accessed date May 25, 2023. <http://www.un.org/press/en/2006/sc8928.doc.htm>

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ H.R. 6198 – Public Law: 109-293, Passed during 109th US Congress on 30 September, 2006.

- “Renam[ing] the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996 as the Iran Sanctions Act [ISA] of 1996;
- Declar[ing] that it should be U.S. policy to support: (1) efforts by the Iranian people to exercise self-determination over their country’s form of government; and (2) independent human rights and peaceful pro-democracy forces in Iran;
- Authoris[ing] the President to provide financial and political assistance to eligible foreign and domestic individuals and groups that support democracy in Iran...³²

The ISA had transformed from unilateral sanctions that sought to isolate Iran from the world’s energy economy into a public declaration that the US sought to undermine the government’s legitimacy domestically. Though the Iran Freedom Support Act Amendments specifically stipulated that the use of force for democratic ends is prohibited,³³ the way the US had recently dealt with other violators of human rights in the region did not fill the clerical elite with confidence that they were completely safe from military confrontation. Furthermore, the conservatives along with Khamenei were concerned that any concessions made in relation to nuclear proliferation would result in more demands in the domain of human rights,³⁴ given what the US had put forward in their changes to the ISA.

The US sanctions beginning in 2009 are lauded for bringing Iran to the negotiating table, and there is certainly truth to this. But there are a number of factors that make this strategy different to the early ILSA/ISA sanctions. Through the Obama administration’s Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act (CISADA) the US couched its concerns of Iranian nuclear enrichment in international law, drawing significant support from the international community.³⁵ CISADA sought to isolate the financial sector and included targeted measures against members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), as it was believed to have significant influence over the financial sector.³⁶ The short-term goals of this suite were two-fold; improve the communication freedoms for Iranians and to restrict the capital and assets of regime government officials involved in undermining human rights. This had an immediate and unprecedented effect on banks in the Persian Gulf, who abandoned Iran’s oil industry wholesale.

The main difference between these sanctions and previous measures is how hard they hit working class Iranians. The decline of the manufacturing sector led to plant closures, delayed salary payments and 40% of male Iranians losing their jobs by September 2012.³⁷ The minimum wage dropped from 10,000,000 rials per month to 3,900,000, which was well below the poverty line. Though at the same time, Porsche was able to deliver more luxury cars to Tehran than any other major city in the Middle East.³⁸ The middle class had been destroyed. These sanctions certainly created the conditions for Iran to be amenable to negotiate, but the subsequent negotiations (and the way they were conducted) were far more important. In fact, had the JCPOA negotiations not occurred Iran could have plummeted into an economic and human catastrophe.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Borszik, “International Sanctions against Iran under President Ahmadinejad,” 10.

³⁵ Pardis Gheibi, “The Rise and Fall of US Secondary Sanctions: the Iran Outcasting and Re-Outcasting Regime,” *Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law* 50, no. 2 (2022): 401.

³⁶ Ibid., 402.

³⁷ “Manufacturing, Blue-Collar Workers, and the Urban Poor,” *Centre for Human Rights in Iran*, April 29, 2013, accessed date April, 2023. <https://www.iranhumanrights.org/2013/04/manufacturing-blue-collar-workers-and-the-urban-poor>

³⁸ Ibid.

3.2. UNSC and EU sanctions

Concurrent to US sanctions, UN multilateral sanctions began with those outlined in Security Council (UNSC) resolution 1737 in 2006. This package deviated from its US counterpart in rhetoric and scope, though the elements of forcing Iran to the negotiating table through economic and political isolation was the same. The sanctions were ratified after Iran failed to comply with resolution 1696, which stipulated that Iran must “without further delay take the steps required... [that are] essential to build confidence in the exclusively peaceful purpose of the nuclear programme...”³⁹ 1737 was brokered under the condition of compromise with Russia and China and their concerns that previous iterations had been too broad and punitive, as they hoped sanctions regimes would be designed only to restrict Iran’s nuclear weapons proliferation. The Security council did vote to restrict the export or transfer of “items, materials, equipment, goods and technology”⁴⁰ to Iran, but did not outline any punitive measures for states which did not comply. Sanctions outlined in the resolution targeted a list of 22 Iranian individuals and entities “engaged in, directly associated with or providing support for Iran’s proliferation... activities or the development of nuclear weapons systems...”⁴¹ by freezing their assets and restricting their investment.

But it would take until 2010 for the harshest multilateral sanctions to be imposed by the UNSC. Resolution 1929, citing a failure of Iran to “meet the requirements of the IAEA Board of Governors and comply with [previous] resolutions,”⁴² imposed restrictions on the trade of conventional weapons and sweeping sanctions on Iran’s financial sector. This effectively gave the green light for CISIDA and EU sanctions that aimed to cripple the Iranian economy. Resolution 1929 was a watershed moment in Iran’s resistance to sanctions because it became financially existential for the Islamic Republic. The Iranian effectively unable to conduct international transactions through the SWIFT transaction hub resulting in members of government facing significant factional political pressure over inefficiency and a floundering economy in 2011.⁴³ It is from this point that Iran pursues a concerted external diplomatic and economic effort to undermine the IAEA and UNSC’s enforcement capability.

Despite the struggle of the EU to agree on common foreign policy goals in other areas, Europe had largely been united behind its efforts to curb Iranian nuclear proliferation since 2003.⁴⁴ Europe had previously advocated dialogue-oriented mediation, abandoning this for direct involvement in line with the US. Notably though, despite wanting to improve transatlantic relations, the EU continually voiced its disapproval of the ILSA/ISA, citing the illegality of extraterritorial sanctions.⁴⁵ The EU also wanted to uphold the mandate of the non-proliferation treaty, and curbing Iran’s proliferation efforts would both address the problem of a nuclear Iran directly and strengthen the role of the IAEA.⁴⁶ However, the

³⁹ “Security Council Demands Iran Suspend Uranium Enrichment by 31 August, or Face Possible Economic, Diplomatic Sanctions – SC/8792,” *United Nations*, July 21, 2006, accessed date May 25, 2017. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2006/sc8792.doc.htm>

⁴⁰ “Security Council Imposes Sanctions on Iran for Failure to Halt Uranium Enrichment, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 1737 – SC/8928,” *United Nations*, December 23, 2006, accessed date May 25, 2017. <https://press.un.org/en/2006/sc8928.doc.htm>

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² “United Nations Security Council Resolution 1929,” *United Nations*, June 09, 2010, accessed date June 03, 2024. <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n10/396/79/pdf/n1039679.pdf?token=9ITubi684krxsYHwk0&fe=true>

⁴³ Thomas Erdbrink, “Ahmadinejad admits impact of financial sanctions on Iran,” *The Washington Post*, November 5, 2011, accessed date June, 2024. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/ahmadinejad-admits-impact-of-sanctions-on-iran/2011/11/01/gIQAyBlacM_story.html

⁴⁴ Cornelius Adebahr, *Europe, and Iran: The Nuclear Deal and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2017) 42.

⁴⁵ Ruari Patterson, “EU Sanctions on Iran: The European Political Context,” *Middle East Policy Journal* 20, no. 1 (2013): 135.

⁴⁶ Adebahr, *Europe and Iran*, 42.

moderate elements within the government simply lacked the political influence to induce any desired changes in domestic policy.⁴⁷ When sanctions from the European bloc began in 2006, they were primarily minor supplementations to the Security Council sanctions, until 2010 when the EU “imposed three rounds of increasingly comprehensive autonomous economic sanctions that [went] well beyond UN requirements.”⁴⁸ The first round came into effect shortly after the passage of resolution 1929 and restricted European investment in Iranian oil and gas production as well as the export of refinery equipment.⁴⁹ The next round expanded restrictions on petrochemical products to encompass their import from Iran by EU states and froze Iranian Central Bank assets held in the EU.⁵⁰ Crucially, this round also banned the insurance of Iranian oil transportation. This had a significant impact on the global oil market, as 95 percent of oil-tankers world-wide were insured by one company which also fell under European law jurisdiction, making the secure transport of Iranian oil significantly more difficult.⁵¹ In 2012, similar insurance and import restrictions were placed on natural gas, though the EU had not previously imported any natural gas from Iran, making the measure largely symbolic.⁵² After this final round imposed during the Ahmadinejad administration, a total of Iranian 490 entities and 150 individuals were subject to EU asset freezes and travel bans.⁵³

3.3. “Maximum Pressure” sanctions

It is still not entirely clear what the policy rationale for the US withdrawal from the JCPOA was, other than it being an election promise of President Trump. Rhetorically however, the President presented the accord in 2018 as “the worst and most one-sided transaction the United States has ever entered into” failing “to protect America’s national security interests.”⁵⁴ These remarks were given following multiple reports of Iran’s compliance with the deal from both the IAEA and the Trump administration itself.⁵⁵ It was posited by the administration that while Iran was complying with its commitments to the JCPOA on paper, it was not complying with the “spirit” of the agreement, thanks to their continued ballistic missile testing and sponsorship of terrorism.⁵⁶ With this, the administration sent a signal to Iran and other signatories of the JCPOA that it was seeking a grand bargain on issues including and beyond nuclear proliferation.

From 8 May 2018, all ISA sanctions were reimposed, with a period in place for businesses to transition away from dealing with Iran. In the following years, additional sanctions were formulated and imposed creating what the administration called “the strongest sanctions in history.”⁵⁷ In total, the US imposed or re-imposed over 1,500 different sanctions on individuals

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Patterson, “EU Sanctions on Iran,” 135.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 136.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “President Donald J. Trump is Ending United States Participation in an Unacceptable Iran Deal,” *Trump White House Archives*, May 8, 2018, accessed date November 22, 2023. <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trump-ending-united-states-participation-unacceptable-iran-deal/>

⁵⁵ Kristina Daugirdas and Julian Davis, “Trump Administration Recertifies Iranian Compliance with JCPOA Notwithstanding Increasing Concern with Iranian Behaviour,” *The American Journal of International Law* 111, No. 4 (October 2017): 1056.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1058.

⁵⁷ Hamidreza Azizi, Vali Golmohammadi, and Amir Hossein Vazirian, “Trump’s ‘Maximum Pressure’ and Anti-containment in Iran’s Regional Policy,” *Digest of Middle East Studies* 29, no. 2 (2020) 151.

and businesses in 21 countries with a significantly expanded policy scope. Sanctions targeted the nuclear program, ballistic missile program, the funding of proxy militias, cyber warfare, and human rights abuses.⁵⁸ As before however, sanctions were primarily wielded against the energy sector, the IRGC and government officials. Before US sanctions were re-imposed, the Iranian economy experienced steady GDP growth between 2016 and 2018. By 2019, Iran's oil exports had fallen from 2.8 million bpd to less than 500 thousand bpd, causing its revenue from oil to plummet from \$100 billion to \$8 billion USD in less than 12 months.⁵⁹

In addition, sanctions after the US exit from the JCPOA have been less effective in other areas, most notably in their ability to restrict Iran's strategic reach in the region. The Quds Force remained as active as ever in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and beyond. Less than a year after sanctions were reimposed, attacks on US drones and on the Saudi Aramco oil facility in Jeddah originated in Tehran, while rocket attacks and roadside bombs from Quds-affiliated forces in Iraq stepped up against US troops.⁶⁰

Sanctions also appeared to have very little effect in strengthening pro-reform forces in Iran. As time went on anger towards the government increased dramatically, but the economic pressure on ordinary Iranians made it more difficult for this to translate into political action and activism. Poverty rates in Tehran households doubled from their lowest point in 2012, going from 15.4 percent to 26.6 percent in 2019, precipitated by sanctions.⁶¹ Spikes in gas prices initially caused public unrest and a brutal regime response that killed over 300. A pandemic, grief, economic frustration, and a growing cynicism of Iranian electoral politics led to record low voter turnout in both the 2020 parliamentary and 2021 presidential elections.⁶² The government's choice to effectively abandon voter choice in the electoral politics arguably contributed to a deep cynicism in voters, rather than embolden them to change their government.⁶³

While Maximum Pressure sanctions were clearly successful in dealing significant damage, they are yet to extract any deliverable policy changes from the Iranian government. Further, a clear desire to inflict economic damage on the Iranian government – and by extension its people – allowed Iran to return to its pre-JCPOA resistance of Western power. The difference this time is that there are very few options for a diplomatic off-ramp.

4. Building Resistance through Postcolonial Narratives

To say that US sanctions over four decades had no desired effects on Iran is not accurate. Much like Tim Niblock's study found in the post-Cold War era,⁶⁴ both unilateral and multilateral sanctions were somewhat effective at isolating Iran economically – though this is more complicated in the post-JCPOA period. It is also not suggested that sanctions did not play a role in getting the Iranian leadership toward the negotiating table with the P5+1. But as explained by Colin H Kahl, the Iranian leadership staked its legitimacy on its resistance to

⁵⁸ Andrew Hannah, "Sanctions 5: Trump's 'Maximum Pressure' Targets," *The Iran Primer*, March 3, 2021, accessed date November 22, 2023. <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2021/mar/03/sanctions-5-trumps-maximum-pressure-targets>

⁵⁹ Azizi, Golmohammadi and Vaxirian, "Trump's 'maximum pressure' and anti-containment," 155.

⁶⁰ Daniel Drezner, "How Not to Sanction," *International Affairs* 98 no. 5 (2022): 1543.

⁶¹ Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, "The Impact of Sanctions on Household Welfare and Employment in Iran," *Middle East Development Journal* 15, no. 2 (2023): 215.

⁶² Amir Mahdavi, "Iran's 2021 Election as a Turning Point from Electoral Authoritarianism to Hegemonic Autocracy," *The Muslim World* 113, no. 1-2 (2023): 90.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁶⁴ Niblock, *Pariah States and Sanctions*, 217-220.

Western power and influence, including sanctions regimes⁶⁵ and was therefore able to weather much of the costs. This narrative of resistance formed primarily during Ahmadinejad's government is a well that Iran has returned to and drawn heavily from after the JCPOA.

Prior to the JCPOA Iran only experienced three years of meaningful economic contraction between 2008 and 2017 – in 2012, 2013 and 2015.⁶⁶ Non-oil export diversification and building other forms of industrial resilience arguably led to “ultimately manageable...trade flow” in this period, despite contractions in the energy sector and government.⁶⁷ As a result, the JCPOA required years of hard-fought diplomacy on the part of US policy makers and an acknowledgement that top-down, punitive or ‘grand-bargain’ demands would not extract a desired policy outcome.

Maximum pressure on the other hand does the opposite. It removes any form of agreeable policy outcome by linking all of Iran's actions together – its nuclear program cannot be separated from its ballistic missile program, which cannot be separated from its funding of proxies, etc. As the policy rationale of resistance to colonial control was moderately effective prior to the JCPOA, it became even easier for the government to frame its policy of self-reliance and resistance as a core element of its national interests.

It is impossible to talk about Iranian resistance to sanctions without exploring the discourses and policies of the Ahmadinejad era. His presidency would build much of the resistance capacity that has served Iran after the JCPOA, and much of the postcolonial justification for resistance was institutionalised at this time. The bulk of analysis on the Ahmadinejad presidency early on does not take his ultra-nationalist rhetoric as serious foreign policy, instead it touted it as a manifestation of his lack of experience as a politician and expected the oligarchy to rein him in.⁶⁸ Masoud Kazemzadeh argues the opposite, saying that his comments “were not inadvertent words of an inexperienced official. Rather they were carefully chosen and accurately reflect the policies of his government, his inner circle, and his sub-faction.”⁶⁹ He and his cabinet reinvigorated the uncompromising anti-Western sentiment of the revolution within the political factions⁷⁰ and the Supreme Leader publicly and frequently endorsed Ahmadinejad's rhetoric. At the time Ahmadinejad and his faction, the principlists, represented a unique and powerful unifying force; one that loyally upheld the ideals of Khomeini and the revolution while being able to rally the population around anti-Western and anti-colonial rhetoric. Though the principalists' authority was eventually scuttled by the Supreme Leader himself, they were able to successfully navigate through a period in which Iran was one of the most sanctioned states worldwide without capitulation to external demands.⁷¹

Ahadinejad was essentially free to pursue a policy of zero capitulation without any elite dissent. Thus, the rhetorical and policy construction of a ‘resistance economy’ was invoked in response to sanctions. The idea of a political economy that is not just immune to Western coercion, but also pushes back at its enemies is something that had been close to Ayatollah

⁶⁵ Colin H. Kahl, “Not Time to Attack Iran: Why War Should Be a Last Resort,” *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 2 (March/April 2012): 166-173.

⁶⁶ Esfandyr Barmanghelidj, “The Ins and Outs of Iranian Resilience Under Sanctions,” *Muslim World* 111, no. 1 (2021): 97.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Masoud Kazemzadeh, “Ahmadinejad's Foreign Policy,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 2 (2007): 424.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Borszik, “International Sanctions Against Iran,” 10.

⁷¹ Borszik, “International Sanctions Against Iran,” 6.

Khamenei's heart since the early 1990s. For Khamenei, economic policies were not mere reactions to cost-benefit analyses like their neoliberal counterparts. An economy based purely on material gain was seen as un-Islamic and meant that the Iranian economy could be easily manipulated. Writings from clerics like Ayatollah Taleghani show how the resistance economy could easily be incorporated into state economic discourses.

Islamic Economics are founded on the principles of right and justice and are not based on any special group or class...The appearance of classes is the result of the defect of individuals in society [due to their] not following right and just principles. It is the by-product of transgression and colonialism.⁷²

Though they brought with them heavy economic pressures, the resistance economy provided potential political capital for hardliners. Iranian political leadership in the 1990's focussed on economic reform and distanced itself from revolutionary policies. Now that those who wished to return to the roots of the revolution were in power, sanctions presented an opportunity to deploy a narrative of revolutionary cohesion around resisting Western control. Both Khamenei and principalist leadership sought to remind both Iranians and Westerners that sanctions had never worked on the Islamic Republic, which had flourished in its self-sufficiency.⁷³ Khamenei often articulated these ideas publicly, as he did at the shrine of Imam Reza in March 2007:

Sanctions cannot deal a blow to us. Didn't they sanction us until today? We acquired nuclear energy under sanctions; we achieved scientific progress under sanctions; we achieved the country's broad reconstruction under sanctions. It is even possible that under certain conditions sanctions work to our advantage; from this perspective they can increase our ambition.⁷⁴

Contrary to the assessment of US State Department officials at the time, this statement from Khamenei was more than just empty rhetoric. Iran's long history of being the target of economic isolation had in fact given the leadership the tools to weather many of their effects. In some cases, Iran's manufacturing and technology industries have been emboldened by sanctions. A doctrine of 'self-reliance' was "well-accepted amongst state-level authorities and Iranian politicians continually assert that restrictions have helped propel industrial growth...turning sanctions into opportunities for progress."⁷⁵

This public rhetoric intensified gradually, but most significantly after the passage of UNSC Res. 1929. The decision of Russia and China not to veto the US-led sanctions scheme put Iran under significant international and domestic political pressure. From the end of 2010 cabinet members and officials issued a mixture of defiant threats and public statements lauding Iran's ability to skirt the intended effects of international sanctions. For example, the head of Iran's central bank threatened to "have an effect" on global fuel prices if sanctions were not lifted and raise the price to \$150 a barrel,⁷⁶ a foreign ministry spokesman bragged about Iran's domestic ballistic missile production capacity and Iran's foreign minister Ali

⁷² Ayatollah Taleghani in Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics, The Question of the Islamic Republic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 175.

⁷³ Adib-Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics*, 1307.

⁷⁴ Ayatollah Khamenei, (2007) in Borszik, "International Sanctions Against Iran," 11.

⁷⁵ Mehdi Majidpour, "The Unintended Consequences of US-led Sanctions on Iranian Industries," *Iranian Studies* 46, no. 1 (2013): 12.

⁷⁶ Ben Birnbaum and Eli Lake, "Iran Central Banker: Lift Sanctions or Face Spike in Oil Prices," *Washington Post*, April 20, 2011, accessed date April, 2024. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/apr/18/iranian-warns-retaliation-through-spike-price-oil/>

Akbar Salehi said that the US had repeated the mistake of sanctioning Iran for “32 years” without results.⁷⁷

But the increase in public rhetoric was also backed-up by policy changes. The primary effect of UNSC sanctions was an intensification of Iran’s export deflection policy. This had been quite effective in the past, and resulted in two-thirds of Iranian exports effected by sanctions to be deflected to non-sanctioning countries (NSCs) between 2008 and 2011.⁷⁸ By September 2010, Iranian money was making its way into Europe through Turkey, India paid of \$5 billion US in oil Purchase debt to Tehran and Pakistan agreed to accelerate the construction of the IP natural gas pipeline project.⁷⁹ At the same time, Iran’s nuclear enrichment technology was improving significantly, seeing an increase in centrifugal activity of 60%.⁸⁰

Thanks to US-led multilateral and unilateral sanctions, gas turbines used in refineries and power plants are now built entirely in Iran.⁸¹ In 2011, the Industry, Mine and Trade Ministry funded the construction of Iran’s first ‘gas to liquids’ (GTL) plant, which converts natural gas into petroleum or diesel fuel.⁸² GTL technologies are complex and difficult to develop, yet the plant was developed entirely indigenously.⁸³ Similarly, Iran pursued the indigenous production of petrochemical catalysts, after their German supply was cut off due to sanctions, reaching a stage of commercialised production of aMDEA (activated Methyl-diethanolamine).⁸⁴ For this reason, claims made by experts that advocate sanctions on Iran in political studies only look at half the story as the isolation has “stimulated a degree of enthusiasm and energy devoted to capability-building.”⁸⁵

Following then-President Barack Obama’s signing of CISIDA, President Ahamdinejad spoke to industrialists in July 2010 and characterised new US sanctions as “pathetic,” adding:

[the West] thought that having meetings and talking to each other and signing papers they could stop a great nations progress... Iran is much greater than what they can perceive it in their small minds. We know that if this Iranian civilisation [awakens] there would be no more room for arrogant, corrupt, and bullying powers.⁸⁶

Ahamdinejad’s talk of civilisation is similar to that of 20th century activist Jalal Al-e Ahmad in his book *Gharbzadagi*. Al-e Ahmad likened Western influence to an illness, or “an infestation of weevils,”⁸⁷ which has prevented Iran from preserving its own “historico-cultural character.”⁸⁸ Iran was in a period of sickness, unable to manifest its own civilizational destiny, instead moulded by other nations with “high wages [and] low morality.”⁸⁹ He notes

⁷⁷ Vaun Vira, “Sanctions on Iran: Reaction and Impact,” *Critical Threats*, 28 September 2010, accessed date June 1, 2024. https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/sanctions-on-iran-reactions-and-impact#_ednddec69bf699a706e9fb678f9409a065f25

⁷⁸ Jamal Ibrahim Haidar, “Sanctions and Export Deflection: Evidence from Iran,” *Economic Policy* 32, no.90 (2017): 326.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ivanka Barzashka, “Using Enrichment Capacity to Estimate Iran’s Breakout Potential,” *Federation of American Scientists Policy Brief*, January 21, 2011, accessed date June 1, 2024. https://pubs.fas.org/_docs/IssueBrief_Jan2011_Iran.pdf

⁸¹ Majidpour, “Consequences of US-led Sanctions,” 14.

⁸² Ibid., 13.

⁸³ Ibid., 14.

⁸⁴ aMDEA is “a catalyst for the removal of acid gases such as hydrogen sulphide and carbon dioxide... a high tech and expensive product in the petrochemical industry.” See, Ibid., 13.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁸⁶ Ramin Mostafavi, “Ahmadinejad Calls Sanctions Against Iran Pathetic,” *Reuters*, July 3, 2010, accessed date July 31, 2017. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-sanctions-ahmadinejad-idUSTRE66211K20100703>

⁸⁷ Jalal Al-e Ahmad, “Diagnosing an Illness,” in *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then*, ed. Prasenjit Duara, (London: Routledge, 2004), 57.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 60.

⁸⁹ Duara, *Decolonization*, 57.

that completely shaking off the Western “machine” is utopian, but accepts that “so long as [Iranians] remain consumers, so long as we have not built the machine, we remain poisoned by Occidentalism.”⁹⁰ An important voice for many Iranian conservatives including the Supreme Leader, Al-e Ahmad undoubtedly influenced Ahmadinejad’s rhetoric and policy on sanctions and relations with the West. Al-e’s writings explore “the conditions of Eurocentric and racialized forms of knowledge production...” and has been institutionalised in modern Iran’s political discourse.⁹¹

In 2013, President Ahmadinejad claimed that “the enemies of the Iranian nation try to block the nation’s progress... [by] wage[ing] a massive psychological war.”⁹² Through statements like these, the government constructed a narrative around its nuclear program that sought to both discredit the effects of Western sanctions and rally the population around self-reliance. Opinion polls, for what they were worth, seemed to support the intensification of Iran’s nuclear enrichment program - which the principalists interpreted as the public endorsement of the government’s “sanctions-tailored approach.”⁹³ They declared that sanctions and their negative effects were necessary in the pursuit of “anti-hegemonic foreign policy,”⁹⁴ constructing Iran’s foreign policy around the “awakening” of a defiant civilisation against an oppressor.

There is also substantial use of Islam as a postcolonial metaphor at the elite level. Primarily this is used to lexically link Islamic piety and postcolonial resistance. Ahmadinejad often coupled postcolonial rhetoric with “Twelver” Shiism. Like the Supreme leader, Ahmadinejad and those in his inner circle often publicly spoke of the return of the Hidden Imam, also known as the Twelfth Imam, the messianic saviour who would bring about justice through an Islamic new world order.⁹⁵ The Twelfth Imam has been a crucial element to Iran’s resistance narrative, historically used as a mobilisation of grassroots support during the revolutionary period.⁹⁶ The Mahdi, who will rid the world of injustice and evil, is predicted to return before the Day of Judgement according to Shi’a ‘Twelver’ teachings.⁹⁷ Mohebat Ahdiyih explains that while the Mahdi is mostly referred to in the Islamic context, similar concepts have significance in Iranian culture beyond Shi’a Islam. “The idea of the Mahdi has historical precedence, for example, in ancient Zoroastrian beliefs. Persian culture and poetry are awash with the notion of a promised saviour.”⁹⁸ Twelvers tell of a scenario in which Imam Mahdi vanquishes the forces of evil through inspiring confrontation, directly analogous to Islam’s confrontation with the West.⁹⁹

It is true that the rhetoric of resistance from the government masked real hardship felt by ordinary Iranians. Though President Ahmadinejad denied that sanctions were having any effect on Iran, the Iranian people felt their full force. A Gallup poll conducted in 2012 showed that sanctions were increasingly impacting the everyday living of Iranians, to the extent

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Eskander Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, “Gharbzadeghi, Colonial Capitalism, and the Racial State in Iran,” *Postcolonial Studies* 24, no. 2, (2021): 173-194.

⁹² “Iran: Ahmadinejad Sees Western Sanctions as ‘Psycho War,’” *Khabar Online*, April 23, 2013, accessed date June, 2024. <https://english.khabaronline.ir/news/184642/Ahmadinejad-Sees-Western-Sanctions-as-Psycho-War>

⁹³ Borszik, “International Sanctions Against Iran,” 10.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁹⁵ Afshin Shahi, “Paradoxes of Iranian Messianic Politics,” *Digest of Middle Eastern Studies* 21, no. 1 (2012) 109.

⁹⁶ Cara Hinkson, “The Messianic Idea in Shi’I Islam and its Modern Politicization,” *Arena Journal* 43, no. 44 (2015): 136.

⁹⁷ Mohebat Ahdiyih, “Ahmadinejad and the Mahdi,” *Middle East Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (2008): 28.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Kazemzadeh, “Ahmadinejad’s Foreign Policy,” 441.

that almost half of those surveyed (48%) worried about paying for food and shelter in the previous year.¹⁰⁰ Western leaders had hoped to “engage ordinary Iranians”¹⁰¹ and capitalise on their dissent against the Iranian leadership by weakening it with sanctions. However, Iranian approval of Western leaders and policy remained as low as 8% in both 2011 and 2012, revealing that public dissatisfaction with the Iranian leadership did not translate to increased support for Western action.¹⁰² Iranians also overwhelmingly attributed worsening pollution in urban areas to Western sanctions. In 2010, US sanctions targeting gasoline production forced Tehran to turn petrochemical plants into makeshift refineries in order to account for lost imports.¹⁰³ An unofficial report in December attributed 2,500 deaths to this bout of pollution, with Iran’s health minister noting “an 18% increase in emergency room admissions with heart problems and a 30% increase for respiratory problems.”¹⁰⁴ This report exacerbated the public’s anger, who attributed the pollution to the widespread use of the poorly refined Iranian-produced gasoline that was being produced as a direct result of sanctions¹⁰⁵

As such, there was significant dissent that did not go unnoticed by the leadership. Part of the response to this dissent was to make sanctions subversion as effective as possible and was baked into the economic resistance policy – a focus on building effective domestic economic production and further exploit smuggling routes to lessen the economic impact of sanctions on Iranian households. Another part of the response was a heavy crackdown against dissent. The 2009 election and marches in solidarity with Egyptians and Tunisians during the 2011 Arab Spring were met with mass arrests and violence. As governments had been toppled in the Middle East without a suitably swift response to economic issues, this only solidified the Islamic Republic’s need to be in near total control of the economy¹⁰⁶ and crack down on counter-revolution wherever it occurred. This would be a strategy the leadership would return to after the US withdrawal from the JCPOA.

The changes to domestic production and petrochemical conversions of the Ahmadinejad era provided a clear economic roadmap for the government to resist the Trump administrations Maximum Pressure campaign. Economic growth was predictably slower in the 2018/19 fiscal year and slowed even further in 2019/20, thanks to both sanctions and the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁰⁷ But the US government’s shift from a policy of coercion to effectively a policy of containment prevented any form of capitulation despite the severe economic consequences. It is at this point that Iran doubles-down on a strategy of ‘anti-containment,’ engaging more forcefully in the policies the US outlined in the Maximum Pressure sanctions. Azizi et al. describe this as a kind of asymmetric warfare and deterrence deployed by revisionist states to “overcome [their much more powerful] opponent’s strength and benefit from their vulnerabilities.”¹⁰⁸ They also note that Iran has made resistance a core part of its

¹⁰⁰ Steve Crabtree, “Iranians Expect to Feel Sanctions; Many More Had Troubles Paying for Food and Shelter Last Year,” *Gallup Poll News Service*, February 7, 2012, accessed date June, 2024. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/152510/iranians-expect-feel-sanctions.aspx>

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Farnaz Fassihi, “Iranians Blame Smog on Wests Sanctions,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 11, 2010, accessed date June, 2024. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703727804576011722938628008>

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Misagh Parsa, *Democracy in Iran: Why It Failed and How It Might Succeed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 303-305.

¹⁰⁷ “Iran’s Economic Update – April 2020,” *The World Bank*, April 16, 2020, accessed date June, 2024. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/iran/publication/economic-update-april-2020>

¹⁰⁸ Azizi, Golmohammadi and Vaxirian, “Trump’s “maximum pressure” and anti-containment in Iran’s Regional Policy,” 153.

anti-containment strategy, evolving from a revolutionary slogan to a “strategic concept.”¹⁰⁹

But while Azizi et al. describe this phenomenon through the realist concept of power balancing,¹¹⁰ the government’s framing of resistance in terms of civilisation, race and subalternism suggests that a postcolonial justification was key to its transition as a strategic concept. It is worth noting that realist theory is often considered a major justification for sanctions in the first place, as their successes hinge on the receiving state conducting a cost-benefit analysis based on relative economic and geopolitical gains. Iranian officials often communicated that its resistance to neo-colonial domination through sanctions outweighs many of its other economic and political considerations. Iran has also made clear that it would not consider diplomacy if it contributes to the idea that sanctions, are an effective tool. In September 2019, Ayatollah Ali Khomeini made a statement saying “Negotiating would mean Washington imposing its demands on Tehran... Their objective in [offering to hold] talks is to prove to everyone that the policy of maximum pressure has yielded results, and that Iranian authorities were forced to come to the negotiating table despite what they said.”¹¹¹

This kind of framing continued in the years following, even as Iran’s economic health deteriorated. In September of 2020, well into the COVID-19 pandemic, President Rouhani described the re-imposition of sanctions as “futile” and that Iran would give a “crushing response to America’s bullying.”¹¹² The new government under Ebrahim Raisi, who took office in 2021, continued attempts to rescue the JCPOA but noted the government would not “back off from the Iranian people’s nuclear rights... not even an iota.” At his first address to the UN General Assembly in September of 2022, he also clearly framed sanctions a weapon against the subaltern “Sanctions are a punishment for seeking justice and independence of the Iranian nation. Sanction is a weapon of mass murder, and accompanying or remaining silent towards it is aiding and abetting oppression.”¹¹³ In a 2023 meeting with Belarusian Alexander Lukashenko, Khamenei called for more solidarity in resisting Western sanctions. “The countries that have been sanctioned by the United States must cooperate with each other and form a united front to destroy the weapon of sanctions. We believe that such a thing is achievable.”¹¹⁴

As much as this resistance narrative is an elite level discourse that attempts to solidify government power, similar narratives have been reflected in public opinion. In October 2019, *IranPoll*¹¹⁵ found that public opinion had shifted dramatically on Iran’s relations with foreign powers. Attitudes towards the JCPOA fell below fifty percent for the first time and a policy of nuclear enrichment in excess of the limits of the agreement became significantly more popular. At its highest, approval for the agreement was over 75 percent. However, a diplomatic resolution to the impasse over *any* of the US’s policy concerns was also unpopular. 58 percent of Iranians opposed extending the agreement to allow for negotiations under any

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ “Ayatollah Khamenei: No talks with US; Maximum Pressure Campaign Futile,” *Press TV*, September 17, 2019, accessed date April, 2024. <https://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2019/09/17/606389/Iran-Ayatollah%C3%82%C2%A0Seyyed-Ali-Khamenei-US-talks>

¹¹² “Iran vows ‘crushing response to US bullying’ after sanctions announcement,” *BBC News*, September 21, 2020, accessed date April, 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-54227052>

¹¹³ “Year One: Raisi on the Nuclear Deal,” *The Iran Primer*, September 21, 2022, accessed date April, 2024. <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2022/sep/14/year-one-raisi-nuclear-deal>

¹¹⁴ “Ayatollah Khamenei Urges Concerted Action against US Sanctions,” *Tasnim News Agency*, March 14, 2023, accessed date April, 2024. <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2023/03/14/2867433/ayatollah-khamenei-urges-concerted-action-against-us-sanctions>

¹¹⁵ *IranPoll* is an independent Canadian opinion research company that focussed on Iran. In the 2019 polls, they partnered with the Centre for International and Security Studies Maryland (CISSM) at the University of Maryland.

circumstances, while only a third endorsed an extension based on sanctions relief.¹¹⁶ If this poll is reflective of larger sentiment in Iran at the time, it shows both a dissatisfaction with sanctions as a policy of US interference and a support of political resistance – not diplomacy – as the solution. The poll also showed that Iranians were very concerned over the economy, despite their opposition to negotiations with the United States. Though a majority had a favourable opinion of revolutionary institutions like the IRGC¹¹⁷ and the economic approach of the Ahmadinejad era had provided a somewhat effective framework to insulate the regime from meaningful dissent. They were also not afraid to crack down on protest, particularly evidenced by the response to the ‘Bloody November’ protests of 2019 over fuel prices.¹¹⁸ Those who were arrested or killed were accused of collaborating with the CIA in a conspiracy.

Iran entered a brutal recession in early 2020 due to the COVID pandemic, but by FY 20-21 it had returned to modest growth driven predominantly by its oil industry recovery and services.¹¹⁹ The government has since framed this as proof that the resistance economy is a sustainable way forward, given that a diplomatic solution seems so far off. Though the Iranian economy in 2021 was far from healthy, with consumer inflation reaching 43.3% and labour force participation at 41.4%, which is still significantly lower than pre-pandemic levels.¹²⁰

5. Discussion and Concussion

Prior to the popular uprisings following Mahsa Amini’s death in 2022, scholars were almost universally critical of the impact of sanctions on Iran – both on policy and humanitarian grounds. Nader Habibi criticises the intensification of Western sanctions since 2011, specifically in relation to the harm they caused the population.¹²¹ He claims that the West was “no longer interested in pressuring the regime without causing humanitarian suffering... Sanctions have affected the entire economy of Iran and ordinary citizens are suffering as a result of them.”¹²² He notes that the worsening economy plays into the hands of the political establishment, leading to the consolidation of significant economic resources by the IRGC and a subsequent militarisation of the Iranian economy that may be difficult to reverse for reformists.¹²³

Mahmoud Reza Golshanpazooch and Marzieh Kouhi Esfahani go as far as characterising the Islamic Republic’s maintenance of its soft power as skilful, considering the scope and magnitude of sanctions.¹²⁴ They argue that Iran has been able to do this by maintaining and nurturing its main cultural pillars; Persian civilisation, Islamic culture and anti-Westernism.¹²⁵

¹¹⁶ Nancy Gallagher, Ebrahim Mohseni, and Clay Ramsay, *Iranian Public Opinion under Maximum Pressure*, (Maryland: Centre for International and Security Studies Maryland, 2019), 4.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Babak Dehghanpisheh, “Iran says 200,000 took to streets in anti-government protests,” *Reuters*, November 28, 2019, accessed date June, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-protests/iran-says-200000-took-to-streets-in-anti-government-protests-idUSKBN1Y11PE/>

¹¹⁹ Majid Kazemi Najaf Abadi and Razieh Zahedi, “Iran Economic Monitor – Adapting to the New Normal: A Protracted Pandemic and Ongoing Economic Sanctions,” *World Bank Group*, October 1, 2021, accessed date April, 2024. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/iran/publication/iran-economic-monitor-fall-2021>

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Nader Habibi in Parvin Alizadeh and Hassan Hakimian ed., *Iran, and the Global Economy: Petro Populism, Islam, and Economic Sanctions* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2012), 194.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Mahmoud Reza Golshanpazooch and Marzieh Kouhi Esfahani, “Culture, the Core of Soft Power: An Overview of Iran’s Cultural Component of Soft Power,” *Hemispheres* 29, no. 4 (2014): 88.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Indeed, scholars like Afshin Shahi and Mohebat Ahdiyyih also see these factors as a priority for the government's maintenance of unity in light of sanctions. The integration of messianic politics through Twelver Shi'ism, while puzzling to many Iranians, did fit neatly into the imperial resistance messaging. The resistance narrative constructed by the elite acted as an important aspect of Iran's foreign policy, including resisting economic coercion.

Yet, it is clear that the political project of this resistance should not be confused with other emancipatory projects of postcolonial politics. Ramin Jahanbegloo sees the actions of the government as undermining its narrative of solidarity for the downtrodden. The conditions created by sanctions caused Ahmadinejad's administration to enter a crisis of legitimacy as its "violent repression against Iranian civil society and the fractures within Iran's ruling class have eroded the image of the government as the vanguard of resistance against oppressors in the Muslim World."¹²⁶ With the Arab Spring dissolving autocratic governments all around Iran, the 'rally around the flag' effect that sanctions had on Ahmadinejad's popularity in the short-term could not erase the question of legitimacy that loomed over his administration.

In the Maximum Pressure era of Trump, the return to postcolonial narratives was essential for consolidating the power of the Iranian state. However, Iran's resistance to this round of sanctions is meaningfully different from the Ahmadinejad era. The pre-JCPOA secondary sanctions were only part of the US engagement strategy, with bilateral discussions supplementing economic pressure. This "carrot-and-stick" approach dealt a heavy economic toll but promised a reintegration into the global financial system once Iran became compliant. Importantly this included concessions from the US that made it to the deal, such as allowing Iran to enrich Uranium on its own soil. Contrary to previous measures, these negotiations treated Iran as a peer – not a recalcitrant pariah.

Maximum Pressure sanctions reflected a return to a strategy of isolating Iran unless a grand bargain was reached. Though Iran was initially rewarded for complying with nuclear non-proliferation guidelines through the JCPOA, for the Trump administration this was no longer good enough. As Pardis Gheibi points out, "the economic relief – or 'carrot' in the carrot-and-stick regime – lost some of its attractiveness for Iran."¹²⁷ This not only means that Iran is reluctant to take the US at their word in future negotiations, it also means they have little reason not to weather US sanctions for as long as possible. In fact, Iran has made attempts to expand its demands beyond nuclear sanctions on several occasions in its negotiations with the Biden administration.¹²⁸

The Iranian state's resistance of US sanctions has clear parallels to Zimbabwe's Chimurenga policies. There is a similar targeting of elites with sanctions policy and a desire on the part of the government to frame resisting them as a moral obligation. The similarities are particularly stark in the Mugabe era, as his Chimurenga both emphasised external exploitation in an effort to mask local injustices and corruption perpetrated by the government.¹²⁹ There are also similar framings of sanctions as a 'blunt weapon' of oppressors present in Iranian discourses.¹³⁰ Just like the Chimurenga, the resistance doctrine informed a

¹²⁶ Ramin Jahanbegloo, "Iran and the Democratic Struggle in the Middle East," *Middle East Law and Governance* 3, no. 1-2 (2011): 126-135.

¹²⁷ Gheibi, "The rise and fall of US secondary Sanctions," 438.

¹²⁸ Doina Chiacu, "Iran adds demands in nuclear talks, enrichment 'alarming' – US envoy," *Reuters*, July 6, 2022, accessed date April, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/us-envoy-iran-adds-demands-nuclear-talks-makes-alarming-progress-enrichment-2022-07-05/>

¹²⁹ Mararike, "Zimbabwe Economic Sanctions and Post-Colonial Hangover," (2019) 29.

¹³⁰ "Sanctions are 'US way of war,' Iranian President at UN," *UN News*, September 21, 2018, accessed date April, 2024. <https://>

modification of security and political institutions that provided a direction for public anger, but also a justification for state responses to it.

Since Trump, the Biden administration has relaxed some of the Maximum Pressure sanctions on Iran and some diplomatic inroads were made. However, this has done little to address the ineffectiveness of sanctions as policy coercion tool against Iran. Through responding to US sanctions by institutionalising postcolonial rhetoric, Iran has created a framework for resisting external hegemonic forces. President Raisi has expressed his desire to expand this project internationally, calling for expanded Central Asian economic and security cooperation in order to thwart “draconian” US sanctions¹³¹ and signing an economic cooperation deal with the United Arab Emirates.¹³²

Even following the death of Mahsa Amini and the Women Life Freedom protests, when the government’s legitimacy has been at its most vulnerable for decades, the Iranian state has been able to continue and justify a path of resistance. As we have seen, the postcolonial discourses of the government serve the purpose of statecraft, not the Iranian people. But this does not mean that past oppressions and exploitations cannot be drawn upon and institutionalised in order to resist future “oppressions.”

US justification for sanctions often ignores the perception of hegemony in the Islamic Republic and their historical relationship with Western Power. Iranian officials saw events like the hostage crisis as an “act of national assertiveness, of Iran standing up and taking charge of its own destiny. The humiliation of 1953 was exorcised by the taking of American hostages in 1979.”¹³³ This is the way Iranian officials wish to characterise foreign policy from the revolution on – to cooperate or retaliate on its own terms, returning its dignity while manifesting its identity and national prosperity.

Exploring postcoloniality and sanctions in Iran is fraught with issues. On the one hand, Iranians have undoubtedly had a colonial experience with external powers in their recent collective memories. This must be acknowledged and appreciated when it comes to how the formulation of sanctions policy and coercive economic policies impacts those on the ground. On the other, it is also clear that elites in the Islamic Republic utilise postcoloniality to justify policies that undermine the wellbeing and agency of Iranians, for the purpose of consolidating the power of the state resisting coercion.

Though there are also clear *realpolitik* justifications for sanctions resistance – especially following the US withdrawal from the JCPOA. Iran is forced to resist sanctions, as a capitulation results in a significant reduction in its power and security in relative terms to the US. But what *realpolitik* assessments of Iran’s counter-sanctions policies do not acknowledge is that decades of attempted economic coercion against Iran have necessitated a relative immunity to them in the Iranian economy and society. The framing of sanctions as not just ineffective, but *unjust* and tantamount to colonial domination of those who would resist colonisers, was a deliberate discursive effort to mobilise the state around resistance. The result is a clear policy of resistance to Western economic coercion that is more than just

news.un.org/en/story/2021/09/1100572

¹³¹ “Iran’s Raisi says thwarting U.S. sanctions needs new solutions,” *Reuters*, September 16, 2022, accessed date April, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/world/irans-raisi-says-thwarting-us-sanctions-needs-new-solutions-2022-09-16/>

¹³² “Iran top official reveals an economic agreement with UAE,” *Middle East Monitor*, March 20, 2023, accessed date April, 2024. <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230320-iran-top-official-reveals-an-economic-agreement-with-uae/>

¹³³ Vali Nasr in Steven Kinzer, “Inside Iran’s Fury,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, October, 2008, accessed date September 4, 2023. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/inside-irans-fury-11823881/>

rhetorical – it provided a clear roadmap for the survival of the Islamic Republic. Therefore, if sanctions against Iran continue to justify and confirm this characterisation of sanctions, they will continue to be ineffective.

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Abstracts in Turkish

Türkiye, İsrail ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri Arasındaki Çıkar Benzerliklerinin İncelenmesi

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Öz

Çıkar benzerliği, uluslararası ilişkilerde ulusal çıkarların yakınlığı olarak tanımlanır. Bu araştırma, Türkiye, İsrail ve ABD arasındaki çıkar benzerliklerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ülkelerin çıkar benzerlikleri, (a) ittifak portföyü, (b) MID verileri ve (c) BM Genel Kurulu oylama kayıtları faktörleri dikkate alınarak incelenmiştir. Bu faktörlere ilişkin nicel veriler korelasyon ve regresyon modelleri ile analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, bu üç ülke arasındaki çıkar benzerliklerinin istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir korelasyona sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca, bu araştırma üç devlet arasındaki ilişkileri, hangi faktörlerin çıkar benzerliklerini etkilediğini ve nasıl etkilediğini daha iyi anlamak için incelemektedir. Böylece, bu çalışma, Türkiye, İsrail ve ABD arasındaki çıkar benzerliklerini incelerken nicel verileri analiz ederek siyaset bilimi ve uluslararası ilişkiler literatürüne katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İlgî Benzerliği, İsrail, ABD, Türkiye

Risk Dengelemeyi (Hedging) Kuramsallaştırma: Ulusal Çıkarlar, Hedefler ve Karma Dış Politika Araçları

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Öz

Risk dengeleme (hedging), rekabetçi ve işbirlikçi yaklaşımları harmanlayan ve gelecekteki güç dağılımı konusundaki belirsizlik koşullarında rekabet eden ulusal çıkarları yönetmek için kullanılan kapsamlı bir dış politika stratejisidir. Ancak, literatürde risk dengelemenin merkezi özellikleri konusunda bir uzlaşmazlık bulunmaktadır ve bu durum, risk dengeleme kavramının uygulanmasında çelişkilere yol açmaktadır. İlk olarak, bu makale risk dengelemenin tanımını değerlendirir, üç rakip yaklaşımı tanımlar ve risk dengelemenin risk ve fırsatlarını, gelecekteki uluslararası güç dağılımı üzerindeki belirsizlikle ilişkilendirir. İkinci olarak, risk dengelemenin çeşitli yorumlarının farklı analitik modelleri nasıl ilham verdiğini tartışır. Son olarak, risk dengelemeyi teorik olarak orta düzeyde ve analitik olarak karışık bir strateji olarak açıklar. Bu iddialar, Çin'in yükselişinden kaynaklanan gelecekteki

güç dağılımı üzerindeki belirsizlikle başa çıkmak için risk dengelemenin baskın strateji haline geldiği Asya-Pasifik bölgesi incelenerek desteklenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Asya-Pasifik, Çin, rekabet, Risk Dengeleme, belirsizlik

Amerikan Karşıtlığının Sözleşmesel Kökenleri: Pew 2013 Sonuçları

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Öz

Ekonomik Normlar Teorisi (ENT), merkezi otoritenin ekonomik işlemleri bağlayan sözleşmeleri zayıf şekilde denetlediği ülkelerde modernite ve pazar karşıtı değerlerin geliştiğini öne sürer. On yıllarca süren araştırmalar, ENT'nin iç ve devletlerarası savaş olaylarını, halkın bu savaflara verdiği desteği ve bu savaflarda İslam'ı savunma amacıyla gerçekleştirilen intihar bombalamalarını öngörmeye başarılı olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu makale, ENT'nin merkezi bir bileşeni olan ancak istatistiksel olarak az çalışılan bir çıkarım olarak sözleşme uygulama ve Amerikan karşıtlığı arasındaki ilişkiyi araştırmaktadır. Buna göre, ekonomik sözleşme denetiminin zayıf olduğu ülkelerde, güçle mücadele eden elitler, ortaya çıkan refah kaybını ABD'ye atfedebilir ve ilgili olarak vatandaşlar arasında Amerikan karşıtı değerler yayılabilir. Özellikle kentsel yoksullar, sosyal ve ekonomik olarak yerine getirilmeyen piyasa sözleşmelerinden en çok zarar gören kesim oldukları için, elitlerin yönlendirdiği bu tür Amerikan karşıtlığını benimsemeye en açık olanlardır. Bu argümanı araştırmak için, Pew Küresel Tutumlar Projesi'nin 2013 anket sonuçlarına ilişkin rastgele kesişim modellerini istatistiksel olarak tahmin ediyorum. Bireylerin kentlilik, yoksulluk ve ülkelerinin zayıf sözleşme uygulama göstergeleri arasındaki üç yönlü etkileşimin Amerikan karşıtlığını artırdığını gözlemliyorum.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Amerikan karşıtlığı, Ekonomik Normlar Teorisi, Hiyerarşik Modelleme, kentsel yoksulluk

Malezya'nın Güney Çin Denizi'ndeki "Üçlü Deniz Diplomasisi" Stratejisi

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Öz

Malezya'nın Güney Çin Denizi'ndeki Kasawari gaz sahasını korumanın önemi, Malezya'nın Çin'in bu yarı kapalı denizde artan iddialılığı karşısındaki deniz diplomatik stratejilerini yeniden şekillendirmiştir. Çin'in sahil güvenlik ve deniz kolluk kuvvetleri aracılığıyla artan deniz ihlalleri, Malezya'nın bu makalede "üçlü deniz diplomasisi" olarak adlandırılan, zorlayıcı, ikna edici ve işbirlikçi deniz diplomasisinin bir kombinasyonunu benimsemesine yol açmıştır. Bu nedenle, Malezya'nın deniz diplomatik stratejileri, Malezya'nın denizlerdeki egemenliğini savunma girişiminden ziyade, çelişkili politikalar seti olarak hareket etmektedir.

Bu makale, iki merkezi ampirik soruyu ele almak için nitel bir inceleme yapmaktadır: Birincisi, Malezya, denizlerdeki egemenliğini koruma ve Çin ile yakın ekonomik ilişkilerini sürdürme arasındaki hassas dengeyi nasıl yönetmiştir? İkincisi, Kasawari gaz sahası ile ilgili olarak Luconia Sığılıkları çevresinde artan ihlallere rağmen, Malezya'nın sürekli olarak "hafife alma" tutumu neye dayanmaktadır? Bu çalışmanın bulguları üç ana unsur ortaya koymaktadır: Birincisi, Malezya'nın Kasawari gaz sahasını geliştirmeye öncelik vermesi, zorlayıcı deniz önlemlerini donanma varlıklarını kullanarak uygularken aynı zamanda krizleri hafife alan bir retorik benimseyerek, çelişkili politikaların benimsenmesini gerektirmiştir. İkincisi, Malezya'nın deniz diplomasisi, zorlayıcı, ikna edici ve işbirlikçi yaklaşımları kapsayan "üçlü" stratejiler olarak nitelendirilebilir. Son olarak, bu görünüşte tutarsız politikalar, hem Çin'i içeren acil ve olası ekonomik fırsatları dikkate alırken, aynı zamanda büyük küresel güçlere karşı tarafsız duruşunu işaret eden stratejik bir tepkidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kasawari gaz sahası, Luconia Sığılıkları, Malezya, Deniz diplomasisi, Güney Çin Denizi

Küresel Uluslararası İlişkilerde İstisnacılık Yoluyla Yer Arayışı: Türkiye ve Barış İçin Arabuluculuk Girişimi

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Öz

Bu çalışma hem Türk Dış Politikasında hem de küresel Uluslararası İlişkilerde (Uİ) istisnacılığı bir yeniden düşünme girişimidir. Türkiye'nin Barış İçin Arabuluculuk Girişimi (ABG) rolü üzerindeki Türk dış politikasında istisnacılık söylemi çerçevesinde Küresel IR tartışmalarına katkısını eleştirel bir şekilde ele almaktadır. Nymalm ve Plagemann (2019) çalışmalarını takip ederek, bu çalışma Küresel Uİ'de kullanılan istisnacılığı yeniden düşünüyor ve Türkiye'nin ABG'deki rolünü uluslararası istisnacılık çerçevesinde eleştirel bir şekilde analiz ediyor. Bu süreçte, Küresel Uİ'de istisnacılığı açığa çıkarmayı ve bazı istisnai dış politika söylemlerinin, bölgesel dünyalar arasındaki karşılıklı bağımlılığa ve küresel ile yerel düzeyler arasındaki fikir ve normların dolaşımına nasıl katkıda bulunabileceğini anlamayı amaçlıyoruz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Küresel Uluslararası İlişkiler, İstisnacılık, Türk İstisnacılığı, Arabuluculuk, Barış İçin Arabuluculuk Girişimi

İran’da Yaptırımlar ve Postkolonyal Devlet Yönetimi: İran Libya Yaptırımları Yasasına Karşı Direniş ve Ötesi

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Öz

Ekonomik yaptırımlar, politika değişikliği amacıyla hedefi zayıflatmak ve izole etmek için tasarlanmış olsa da, İran örneğinde bu yaptırımlar genellikle Batı’nın zorlamasına ve egemenliğine karşı koyma arzusunu artırmıştır. İslam devriminden bu yana bu durum, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad yönetimi ve nükleer anlaşma sonrası ABD ile olan siyasi gerginlikler dahil olmak üzere birçok siyasi çatışmaya yol açmıştır. Yaptırımlar yoluyla Batı, İran dış politikasında büyük bir tavizden daha azını kabul etmeye çoğunlukla isteksiz olmuştur ve bu durum, İran devletinde bir postkolonyal direniş anlatısını bilgilendirmiş ve katkıda bulunmuştur. Bu anlatı, liderliğin meşruiyetini güçlendirme çabasında İran devlet yönetiminin ayrılmaz bir aracı olarak hizmet etmiştir. Bu makale, Ahmadinejad hükümeti döneminde İran Libya Yaptırımları Yasası’na ve Trump Yönetimi’nin Maksimum Baskı kampanyasına yönelik İran hükümetinin tepkilerini ve elit söylemleri inceleyerek, İran’ın ABD yaptırımlarına yanıtındaki postkolonyal direniş anlatılarını vurgulamaktadır. Bu, yaptırımların neden onları uluslararası normlara boyun eğmekten daha da uzaklaştırdığına dair bir açıklama çabasıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yaptırımlar, Postkolonyalizm, Direniş, İran