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## **IMPACTS OF CRITICAL CROSSROADS OVER RECEP TAYYIP ERDOĞAN'S POPULIST THREAT IMAGINATION**

Furkan Çay

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### **ABSTRACT**

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been a long-standing leader of Turkey. In the first years of the government, he focused on gaining the trust of elites inside and outside of the country. Such trust nevertheless ended in 2007 when the military elites attempted to interfere in the presidential election. Aftermath, a referendum was held by Erdoğan's initiative and Turkish electorates voted in its favour. As a result, the Kemalist elites settled in the military were pushed away from the political arena. In his latter terms, Erdoğan nevertheless directed his rage to judiciary elites, interest rate lobby, and foreign powers. Accordingly, he became a colossus of Turkish populism. Previous studies over Turkish populism did not stress the significance of the critical crossroads on Erdoğan's populist threat imagination. Therefore, extant studies remain insufficient. This article aims to fill this gap by giving a comprehensive examination of the critical crossroads among others 2007 presidential election crisis, 2010 constitutional amendments, 2013 Gezi Protests, and 2016 coup attempt. It accordingly stresses the impact of these crossroads over Erdoğan's populist discourse.

Key words: Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkish populism, AKP, elites, Turkish politics, populism in Turkey

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### **Introduction**

Since 2002, Turkey has been ruled by Justice and Development Party (AKP) with the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan though it is very difficult to claim that his policies have followed a straight line in such a long period. Each term of his incumbency indeed has been characterized by distinct social, political, and economic changes. In the first years of the government (2002-2007), for instance, he emphasized social, economic, and political reforms while having good relations with elites inside and outside of the country. The second term (2007-2011) however marked the change of civil-military relations. In the meantime, he intended to focus on the consolidation of power while having controlled the state institutions of judiciary and military.

Whereas from 2011 on, the dominance of the military and judiciary over political affairs was cut off by Erdoğan's bold strategy by casting himself as a protector of civil liberties. He thus no longer needed to address these domestic elites as enemies of people. Accordingly, Gezi Park protests in 2013 and failed coup attempt in 2016, to a certain extent, enforced Erdoğan to construct new enemies among others thugs, interest rate lobby, and foreign powers. In his populist discourse, the interest rate lobby became the main ethos of Gezi protests though a failed coup attempt defined by foreign powers.

The main aim of this paper is to demonstrate that during his long rule, Erdoğan faced critical crossroads that define his populist stance. Thus, the study laid particular stress on the 2007 presidential election crisis, 2010 Constitutional Amendments, 2013 Gezi Protests, and 2016 Coup Attempt to answer two questions. Firstly, it investigates how Erdoğan changed his populist threat imagination after having encountered enemies during the crossroads. Secondly, it inquires the impacts of crossroads over Erdoğan's populist threat imagination. Consequently, answers to these questions will be sought with more details.

Concerning the structure of the article, the 1<sup>st</sup> section argues that the 2007 presidential election caused the first inevitable major conflict between Erdoğan and the military. In an effort to solve it, he adopted "people" versus "elites" populist rhetoric.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> section reveals that as a result of the constitutional amendments, the hegemony of judicial elites has been crushed and Erdoğan consolidated his power. It puts forward a claim that the term of the domestic "elites" came to an end after the controversial constitutional amendments.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> section argues that environmentalist concerns were considered to be the main driver of the Gezi Park protests though Erdoğan's authoritarian policies sparked the flames. It notes that the spreading of the protests could have been stopped earlier however Erdoğan's early address to the development project provoked the protesters.

The 4<sup>th</sup> section explores Erdoğan's populist discourse after the 2016 failed Coup attempt. It discusses that foreign elites who aim to plot against the country became Erdoğan's arch-enemy. Thus, he found a mass space to practice his populism.

## Overview of literature: populism in general

Populism became a buzzword of the 21st century. Hence, many politicians stretching from the right-wing (i.e., Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Viktor Orban, and Marine Le Pen) to the left-wing (i.e., Bernie Sanders and Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela) are labelled as populists. However, many scholars argue that they do not illustrate precisely the same characteristics of populism. (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017; Pappas, 2016; Müller, 2017) We call them populists because the term is still unclear and boundaries are not set yet. (Pappas, 2016)

The ambiguity of the term however should not mislead us to think that we lack approaches to grasp the phenomenon. Indeed, today we have many approaches which perceive populism as communication style, particular logic, ideology, or political strategy. For example, the political strategy approach argues that the leader seeks the rule and chase power alongside his supporters. Hence, build and maintain power is the main aim. In this approach, charisma and power go hand in hand together and a leader communicates with the masses through them. It gives people social and political freedom while radical “democracy” is urged to achieve such freedoms. (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017) Conceptually, it developed in Latin America but became a very common interpretation to understand populism across the world except for Western populism. However, Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) claim that the political strategy approach and others disregard the demand side of populism. Hence, they offer the alternative by addressing Mudde’s definition in his article titled “The Populist Zeitgeist” (2004) which takes into account both sides of populism.

Indeed, Mudde’s concept of populism has two essential characteristics: “appeal to people” and “denunciation of elites”. Lack of one of these essential characteristics nullifies populist labels. So, how does Mudde define it? He says that populism should be regarded “as an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people” (2004) He considers it as a thin-centered ideology because it does not have coherence as any other ideologies such as socialism, liberalism, and capitalism. He also argues that populists have a Manichean worldview. That is to say, there are mere “friends and foes” (2004) So far, Mudde’s “*minimal definition*” (Pauwels, 2011) is the most influential approach in academia and this study will rely on his definition to identify Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s populist threat imagination at critical crossroads.

## **The literature on Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's populism**

Concerning the contemporary populism studies over Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan received significant attention. Many researchers (e.g. Türk, 2018; Elçi, 2019; Sawae, 2020) argued that he is a colossus of populism in Turkey while others (i.e., Yetkin, 2010; Köroğlu, 2016) scrutinized his populist policies as an extension of former leaders including Turgut Özal, Adnan Menderes and Necmettin Erbakan. The literature revealed that when Erdoğan came to power in 2002, he was seen as suspicious by the political establishment of Turkey due to his Islamist background. Hence, he preferred to have good relations inside and outside of the country (Aytaç and Elçi, 2019). However, as many studies (Türk, 2018; Elçi, 2019; Dinçşahin, 2012) pointed that the real conflict between the military and Erdoğan began during the 2007 presidential election crisis due partly to Erdoğan's surprising resistance against aggression stems from the military. These studies scrutinized that Erdoğan defied the military by appealing to the "people".

The significant crossroads over Erdoğan's career examined by several researchers with giving particular emphasis on the dates of the political crises in 2007, 2013, and 2016 respectively (Öney, 2018; Türk, 2018; Sawae, 2020). The researchers argued that such crises provided a suitable arena for Erdoğan to appeal to the people directly (Elçi, 2019; Dinçşahin, 2012). However, the researchers disregarded 2010 constitutional amendments due to reason that it is not considered as political crisis. Thus, the studies did not constitute the constitutional amendments as part of the crossroads in Erdoğan's political career.

Firstly, in addition to the dates of 2007, 2013, and 2016 respectively, the study will take 2010 constitutional amendments as part of crossroads in Erdoğan's political career. The reason behind is that after constitutional amendments, Erdoğan no longer referred to domestic elites as part of the threat to the nation. Secondly, it will attempt to give a comprehensive study to understand how critical crossroads had an impact on Erdoğan's populist threat imagination. Hence, intending to provide new insight and fulfil the gap in the literature, this article constitutes the 2007 presidential election, 2010 constitutional amendments, 2013 Gezi protests, and 2016 coup attempt in a comprehensive way.

**2007 presidential election crisis; first attack to military**

The term of Ahmet Necdet Sezer, 10<sup>th</sup> President of Turkey, was about to come to an end in April 2007. Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) thus decided to hold the presidential election in the following month, May 2007. Meanwhile, rules for the presidential election were very plain: having reached the two-thirds of the majority was a precondition to be elected in the first two rounds. If the first two rounds did not bring success, the simple majority would have been sufficient in the third and fourth rounds. If the last round, the 4<sup>th</sup> round, also failed to elect the president snap elections would have been sought to restore the Parliament. These rules were introduced by the 1982 constitution and previous presidents, elected in 1989, 1993, and 2000, waited for the third rounds due to having failed to reach two-thirds of the majority in the first two rounds. (Çarkoğlu, 2007, pp.507–508)

In light of the previous presidential election results, one could expect a similar outcome from the upcoming 2007 presidential election. However, unlike anticipation, it provoked a political and constitutional crises due to the Kemalist elites had various concerns that possible president from AKP circles might impose a threat to the republican and secular values of the country. At that point, the involvement of the military, judiciary, and several NGOs in the presidential election process fuelled the flames by pressuring the government with the legal barriers. In response, Erdoğan called for snap elections to mitigate the pressures and stipulated the will of the nation. Accordingly, the snap elections were set in July 2007 and Turkish electorates went to ballot boxes.

After vote casting, results revealed that the AKP increased its vote share and percentage though election of the AKP's Islamist candidate, Abdullah Gül, was still not possible due to an insufficient majority in the parliament. At this stage, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) helped the AKP in the parliament, and Gül was accordingly elected. As such, the AKP and Erdoğan won the first major conflict that gave Erdoğan confidence that he could ignore the Kemalist elites in the state institutions. (Türk, 2018, p.156)

Moreover, as a result of the snap election, the government achieved a majority in the parliament. Erdoğan therefore was willing to exercise the popular sovereignty for weakening the power of the Kemalist elites. For this purpose, AKP proposed a package of constitutional amendments that brings the direct popular election of the president with 5 years term, maximum 2 times, and shortens the legislative term from five years to four years. However, the package had been vetoed by Ahmet Necdet Sezer. Erdoğan hence once again stipulated the popular referendum



and the government set the date in October 2007. After votes were cast, results revealed that 68.95 percent of the electorates have approved the amendments. (Özbudun, 2012, p.45) In hindsight, Erdoğan noticed that challenging the elites of Turkey does not need a great effort but a considerable amount of popular support with majority in the parliament.

Victory over the presidential election and constitutional amendments convinced AKP leadership to redesign the Kemalist regime in which the military and judiciary played a central role. As a means, the discovery of hand grenades by Istanbul police in 2007 was followed by a series of high-profile arrests of military officers, journalists, and former politicians who have been accused to plot against the government. This conspiracy was named *Ergenekon* and court trials have begun thereafter.

In the following years, due to the increasing number of arrests, trials became more complicated and opposition parties and journalists began to raise their voices while calling Ergenekon trials as AKP's *modus operandi* to silence the adversaries. Opposition's claims indeed frustrated the AKP leadership and AKP circles claimed that plotters have been morally and politically supported by opposition parties of Republican People's Party (CHP) and MHP. Erdoğan particularly claimed that he stands as a prosecutor of Ergenekon trials. (Kalaycıoğlu, 2012, pp.3–4) Meanwhile, the Turkish military mentally worn out and lost its untouchable status in Turkish society. Erdoğan, hence, exploited the military's exhaustion and replaced the arrested army officers with conservative-minded people from AKP's circles. Consequently, he gained an upper hand against the Kemalist elites.

The presidential election victory, in precis, changed Erdoğan's discourse from a liberal to a more authoritarian tone. This change indeed has been legitimized by increasing popular support from the masses. Hence, Erdoğan found an appropriate space to justify his policies with references to the final source of legitimacy, will of the people. Besides, a transformation of such discourse restored the relations between Erdoğan and the state because Ergenekon trials not only wiped out the Kemalist elites in the military but also replaced it with AKP supporters. Therefore, Erdoğan's frequency of criticism to the military accordingly began to decrease. However, the main judicial institutions among others the High Council of Judges and Prosecutor (HSYK) and Constitutional Court (AYM) remained at the center of his critics until the 2010 Constitutional Changes. (Özsel et al, 2013, pp.563–565)

## **2010 constitutional changes; defeat of domestic elites**

After the military was redesigned and subdued, the judiciary remained the only institution where the Kemalist elites had domination. Therefore, confrontation between Erdoğan and the judiciary was to become unavoidable. The first confrontation indeed took place by 2008 when the AKP unveiled its plan to introduce a new constitution and change the two articles of the constitution concerning the principle of equality (article 10). Its aim for constitutional change was nevertheless met with increasing suspicion from the opposition groups. CHP, for instance, appealed to Constitutional Court and argued that such amendments cannot be changed since the principle of secularism is an “unamendable article of the constitution.” (Yegen , 2017, pp.77–78)

AKP party closure case in the following months nonetheless shadowed the CHP’s appeal to Constitutional Court and Chief public prosecutor, alongside the Constitutional Court, filed a lawsuit to close AKP and ban its cadre, including Erdoğan and Gül, from the politics on the ground that it became “a focal point of anti-secular activities”. In July 2008, Court gave its decision and AKP avoided closure with one vote however required to pay a “heavy fine.” (Aytaç and Elçi, 2019, p.95)

Throughout the period, relentless challenges from the judiciary indeed crippled the AKP’s ability to pass the laws in the parliament with ease. Thus, redesigning the judiciary became AKP’s prime concern. (Yegen, 2019, pp.78–79) For such purpose, the government started the constitutional amendment package talks and the initial proposal was approved subsequently. However, in the first round, AKP’s proposal failed to reach the required two-thirds of MPs due to opposition groups such as CHP and Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) boycotted the parliamentary session while MHP opposed the proposal in the assembly. The proposal hence went to the second round.

In his evaluation of the issues at the AKP group meeting, Erdoğan targeted the opposition’s attitude and argued that the alliance of opposition, launched against the AKP, uses all kinds of ugly slander and accusation. He put forward a claim that the AKP will “patiently answer every slander, every denunciation, and every lie” while using “gentle style” and not leaving “dignity and sanity.” “It seems that the Constitutional amendment will go to a referendum and our beloved nation will have the last word on this subject after the Turkish Grand National Assembly”, he added. (Milliyet, 2010) The second round resulted as Erdoğan predicted and the referendum remained the only option to break the hegemony of the judiciary.

Aftermath, in a highly polarized atmosphere, president Abdullah Gül announced that the referendum is to set on September 12, 2010, the 30th anniversary of the 1982 Constitution. However, the content of the package was still a matter of debate. The package consisted of changes in 24 articles and two added provisional articles including the introduction of an ombudsman, change of fundamental rights and party closures, restructuring the HSYK, and new rules for the election of AYM members. It also covered the increase in the number of members of the HSYK and the AYM. For instance, HSYK's number of members increase from seven to twenty-two while the AYM's members from seven to seventeen. In doing so, AKP aimed to increase the president's role in the selection of the members and halt the hegemony of the judiciary with the submission of HSYK and AYM. (Özbudun, 2012, pp.46–49)

Referendum campaigns began after Gül's announcement and throughout the campaign, AKP presented the package as progress in the democratization process of Turkey by weakening the hegemony of elites in the state institutions. Erdoğan persistently emphasized the significance of the package in the confrontation of tutelary democracy brought by the 1982 constitution. He claimed that the package will lift the "armor immunity" of the military and the country will no longer "suffer" from coups. In a very optimistic manner, "intervention to democracy" will be inconceivable. (Hamsici, 2017)

Initially, Erdoğan found a small number of supporters from the opposition groups such as Felicity Party (SP) and Great Unity Party (BBP) though larger opposition parties of CHP and MHP did not change their previous attitudes. CHP, in particular, refused the package by arguing that it will not only change the structure of the judiciary but replace the Kemalist prosecutors with conservative-minded people. As such, a new regime will have authoritarianist traits under the rule of Erdoğan. (Kalaycıoğlu, 2012, pp.4–6)

CHP's concerns nevertheless fell on deaf ears and Erdoğan continued his blames to the opposition groups. In his speech at Hatay, for example, he denounced his adversaries and associated them with the supporters of the tutelary democracy. He addressed the entire opponents of the package among others "the gangs who benefit from the dark atmosphere", various networks that profit from the preservation of the tutelary democracy, "well-being elites", the terrorist organizations, and opposition parties of CHP, MHP, and BD He hence dismissed them all and called the CHP, MHP, and BDP as the "alliance of evil." (Hürriyet, 2010)

After a long and polarizing debate, Turkey went to the referendum and initial results revealed that the package had been approved by 58% of Turkish electorates. That is to say, Erdoğan has become the victor of this process. In his first statement concerning the changes, he spoke to the AKP's Istanbul Provincial and claimed that the “coup mentality” had been defeated. He argued that “all sorts of dirty games” will be destroyed by the strength derives from the “will of the people.” The opponents of the package were also addressed by stating that “those who assume to gain from the “gangs and terrorist organizations” will be disappointed (Hürriyet, 2010a). The results and his speech indeed revealed the fact that Erdoğan strategically ignored the opposition's concerns and refused their critics by references to “will of the people”. Because, in his state of mind, such popular will is the supreme determiner and decisions derive from the people are simply *fait accompli*. (Özsel et al, 2013, pp.564–565)

As the package had been approved, Erdoğan, on the one hand, consolidated his power by crushing the hegemony of “secularist judges” who exercise tutelary role over his policies. On the other, military officers had been stripped from their privileges while civilian courts have taken over the role of military courts to prosecute military officers who are allegedly involved in coup plans. (Özbudun, 2014, p.156) Accordingly, the term of the Kemalist elites came to an end. However, the latter terms were to reveal the new elites, but this time, beyond the territorial borders of Turkey.

### **Gezi protests 2013; unfolding of interest rate lobby**

As Erdoğan gained an upper hand against the military and judiciary, he began to intensify his majoritarian understanding of democracy where the “ballot box” serves as an only instrument to gain legitimacy. (Özbudun, 2014, p.157) Hence, Erdoğan's main constituency, AKP supporters, should have been given priority while implementing the public policies. That is to say, government policies merely reflected the demands and desires of the AKP electorates. Such a situation inevitably led to discontent, disappointment, and anger among the opposition groups because their needs had been intentionally disregarded by the government. Having put the disapproval of the government's policies into a public expression, so-called protests, however, have not occurred during the period. (Ete, 2013, pp.16–18) In May 2013, the social context began to change when the implementation of the development project began in Gezi Park, situated in Taksim Square of Istanbul.

In the course of 2013, the development project that aims to build an artillery barrack and a small shopping mall by cutting the trees in Gezi Park inflamed the mass protests. In late May, Gezi Park was occupied by many protesters after the news concerning the bulldozers sent to demolish the park circulated on social media. In the following days, the park witnessed an influx of new protesters who aimed to protect the trees but riot police interrupted protesters and cleared the park. The police brutality nevertheless did not stop the protests spreading across the country. (Sözen, and Hakan, 2013, pp.147–149) Initially, protests took place in major cities among others, Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir but other cities were to follow in the upcoming days.

The first impression of the protests indeed indicated the environmentalist apprehensions. Patton nevertheless argues that protecting the secular and individual lifestyle that had been under attack by Erdoğan's recent sectarian and authoritarian policies was the main cause. In hindsight, after eliminating the Kemalist elites, Erdoğan tightened his grip on power and began to severely impose such policies in a patronizing manner. During 2012, for instance, he consistently urged people to have at least three children while framing abortion as a murder. He also supported the law over alcohol ban after 10 pm and interrupted how much salt should be put during the bread production (Patton, 2013, p.33). Nonetheless, these authoritarian acts did not cause a big public reaction until Gezi Park. At this point, one can say that Gezi Park protests marked a milestone in Turkish politics due to fact that protesters from a diverse ideological spectrum ranging from nationalists, Kurdish, feminists to environmentalists and liberals, came together for a common foe, Erdoğan's repressive policies. (Kalaycıoğlu, 2012, p.17)

In early June, Erdoğan revealed that the government will not capitulate to protesters. In his speech for the launching of the mega project, he argued that despite the protests, the development project will continue "for the sake of people". He addressed the Gezi protesters and claimed that the decision is already made and protesters cannot change it. (Tansel, 2013, pp.129–130) However, in the upcoming days, he agreed to meet protest organizers, and meetings were held thereafter. In these meetings, protesters expressed their concerns however Erdoğan found them unjustified and dismissed the protesters while associating them with the collaborators of "enemies of people." (Rodrik, 2016, pp.129–130) To this purpose, he framed the protests as us versus them.

Clashes between protesters and police forces continued in the following days while images and videos were being circulated via social media. Meanwhile, international media began to live broadcast of police brutality, and various foreign media outlets such as CNN and BBC covered

the protests as “revolution” or “Turkish Spring” with comparison to Arab Spring. The situation was indeed very alarming for Erdoğan due to two core points. First, media coverage could have damaged the Democratic Muslim country profile of Turkey and Erdoğan’s reputation in the Western world. Second, the Turkish economy could have been struck by the high exchange rates as the international investors began to withdraw their money from the Istanbul Stock Exchange. (Bilgin, 2013, pp.1–3) Therefore, in an aim to discredit protesters, he addressed the role of “interest rate lobby”, social media, “internal traitors”, and foreign powers in the organization and promotion of protests. (Nefes, 2017, p.614) The secret plan of this alliance indeed was to dominate the rhetoric of Erdoğan during the Gezi Park protests.

Meanwhile, Erdoğan maintained his populist rhetoric and persistently spoken about the plotting of the alliance. Indeed, entire components of the alliance were already part of his populist political discourse, however “interest rate lobby” among others became foremost. He first addressed the interest rate lobby in his speech at Atatürk Airport after his return from a North Africa trip on 7th June 2013. He argued that the interest rate lobby is engaged in stock-market speculations (NTV, 2013). However, as noted by Sarıtaş (2014) that Erdoğan’s speech was very incomprehensible to addressees because he did not name any institution or a person. The interest rate lobby was already a very comprehensive term and associated with the banking sector and financialization. Tarım nevertheless clarifies the complexity of this term and argues that Erdoğan used this slogan in a very limited sense with connection to the national and international financial powers that attempt to “increase the fee on the loans given to Turkey.” (Tarım, 2013)

Overall, state policies that merely reflected the demands and desires of AKP electorates led to mass protests across the country. Initially, environmentalist concerns were considered to be the main driver of the protests however, under the beneath, authoritarian policies sparked the flames of the protests. At an early period, the AKP government could have stopped the spreading of the protests by finding the middle ground with adversaries however Erdoğan’s early address to the development project provoked the protesters. Thereafter, he constructed the new enemies as thugs, interest rate lobby, and foreign collaborators and accordingly dismissed them all. Besides, the interest rate lobby among others became his main target and attributed to the populist rhetoric of Gezi protests.

As time went on, protesters lost their enthusiasm, and protests died down. However, it should not mislead the reader to assume that Erdoğan’s foreign enemies stopped to challenge him.

Indeed, he was to face a major struggle that would pave the way for the coup attempt held on July 15, 2016.

### **2016 coup attempt; mysterious foreign powers**

In the first years of the AKP government, Erdoğan was under close scrutiny of Kemalist elites. However, in 2007, intending to break the hegemony of the Kemalist elites in the state institutions, Erdoğan began to collaborate with the Fethullah Gülen Movement, known as *Gülenist*. Later on, this collaboration turned into a partnership and became very practical for the two sides. While Gülenist gained an opportunity to increase their presence in the state institutions Erdoğan had a chance to wipe out the Kemalist elites and reorganize the state institutions. (Hakan and Koç, 2016, p.136) For this purpose, the first crackdown began on the military elites.

As mentioned in the first section, unearthing the hand grenades that belongs to a former army officer at Istanbul exposed an illegal organization named Ergenekon. Set of trials, known as Ergenekon trials have begun thereafter in 2008. During these long and controversial trials, retired or active members of the military, politicians, and journalists had been accused to plot against the civilian government but later on, “narcotics trafficking” and blackmailing came as additional charges. (Jenskin, 2019) Indeed, the Gülenist bureaucracy and secret networks took an active role in such trials either by launching the campaigns or providing the police intelligence that criminalized the opponents. They also worked alongside the AKP media by framing the trials as a platform to confront the “deep state”. (Aytaç and Elçi, 2019, p.96) Accordingly, comprehensive crackdowns followed the trials and the top brass of the military was substituted by Gülenists. In the aftermath, Gülenists turned their attention to other state institutions among others judiciary and police forces. (Hakan and Koç, 2016, pp.137–139)

In the following years, Gülenists fulfilled their overarching aim and dominated the state institutions of the military, police forces, and judiciary. Their increasing power nevertheless began to concern Erdoğan. Indeed, Erdoğan’s apprehensions were not unreasonable as differences between the Gülenists and AKP were very noticeable. Former, for instance, were more pro-Western and standing by neo-conservatives while the latter presented itself as a significant player in the Middle East by referring to historic relations, supporting the Palestinian case, and reinforcing the reconciliation with Iran. Besides, while occupying the key institutions

and allocating the state resources, the relations between Gülenists and Erdoğan worsened. For instance, in 2011, electronic bugs put in Erdoğan's ministerial office caused the first conflict. Erdoğan's former chief bodyguard and various policemen alongside were found guilty and convicted though it ruined his trust in the Gülen Movement. Thus, blocking the Gülenist's economic sources decided by Erdoğan. (Hakan and Koç, 2016, pp.139–140)

In 2012, the government attempted to close the private preparatory schools (*dersane*), Gülenists' main financial source but due to Gülenists' unpredicted resistance, it could not achieve its aim. Gülenists prosecutors, in response, invited the director-general of the National Intelligence Organization, Hakan Fidan, for responding questions related to the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK). AKP circles hence believed that Erdoğan was the real target of Gülenists rather than Fidan. As a concluding strike, Dersanes were closed in November 2013 though it was far from decreasing Gülenist's power. The real war indeed was yet to come in the following month. (Hakan and Koç, 2016, pp.139–140)

The anti-corruption police investigations began on December 17, 2013, led to the detention of the son of ministers, top-brass bureaucracy, and Iranian businessman Reza Sarraf. It also unveiled the taped conversations among Erdoğan, his son, and ministers. Erdoğan however dismissed the corruption inquiries and claimed that foreign powers and Gülenists are behind the probes. Shortly after, he constructed a very strong discourse and addressed the probes as an attempt to overthrow the civilian government. Thus, to regain control, he initiated a comprehensive crackdown against the Gülen Movement. On the one hand, nearly 70 percent of police forces were replaced. (Hakan and Koç, 2016, pp.140–141). On the other, Gülenists media organizations were silenced by the appointment of trustees and became AKP's mouthpiece. Gülenists' attempt to weaken Erdoğan's power thus failed. Gülen Movement by contrast not only became weaker after the police operations but also located at the center of Erdoğan's populist political discourse as every opponent was being labelled as Gülenist.

Furthermore, on the night of July 15, 2016, Turkey witnessed a bloody coup attempt by alleged Gülenist supporters in the military. It was initially considered that the conspirators' main aim is to topple the government and assassinate Erdoğan. Their first acts indeed verified this consideration as Erdoğan's presidential palace and Turkish Parliament was bombarded by f16s while soldiers and the military tanks have taken the streets in Ankara and Istanbul. In the early hours, coup plotters claimed to have taken control however, as Erdoğan remained silent, his whereabouts were unclear. (Türk, 2018, pp.157–158) He nevertheless broken his silence in



upcoming hours and gave a speech to the nation with his iPhone face time application. “There is no power higher than the power of the people ... I call on our people to gather in squares, airports. Let them come with their tanks. I am the commander in chief in this country”, he said. (Çelik and Balta, 2020, p.174) His speech indeed encouraged more people to have taken the streets. Thus, the visibility of clashes between the military and the people became more visible. The unprecedented situation caused the casualty with more than 200 dead and 2000 injured. (Türk, 2018, p.157) Coup plotters nevertheless could not achieve their aims and the coup attempt failed.

A state of emergency was declared in the following days for 3 months and suspended the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). As such, the AKP government did not concern about the restriction of freedoms while passing numerous laws in the parliament (Amnesty International, 2016). It also provided a significant amount of power to AKP for launching a comprehensive crackdown. Initial alarming statistics revealed that in the first few days after the coup attempt, 15,000 people have been detained in connection with being members of the Gülen Movement while more than 45,000 people have been dismissed from their jobs without judicial trials. Media outlets, publishing houses, journalists, and private educational institutions were also among those crushed by initial crackdowns. 40 journalists for instance have been detained, 131 media outlets and publishing houses were closed while the numbers of the closure of private schools and educational institutions outnumbered 100,000, and students were forced to study in state schools. (Amnesty International, 2016) Besides, entire military academies and military high-schools were shut down and replaced by National Defence University. (Türk, 2018, pp.157–158) As the climate of fear escalated across the country, Erdoğan achieved his aim; the silence of his political adversaries.

Moreover, the declaration of the state of emergency coincided with nightly held democracy watch rallies. (Carney, 2019, p.140) People were initially summoned by Erdoğan to have taken the main public squares across the country. He also attended the rallies either psychically or via the live broadcast. Indeed, Erdoğan viewed these rallies as a suitable platform to demonstrate the power of the “people” against the new foreign “elites” who have been accused to support the plot. The rallies lasted 27 days and finished with Erdoğan's address to people on August, 10, 2016 in Presidential Palace's garden. In his speech at the final rally at Presidential Palace, he pointed out the roles of foreign powers in the coup attempt and blamed them to support the Gülenists. He addressed the arrests of coup financiers in Bulgaria and claimed that plotters are being chased by Turkey. United States' policy in regards not to repatriate the head of the Gülen

Movement, Fethullah Gülen, has also angered him. He thus called the US government to choose the side. “We’ve sent 85 packs of files. The U.S. probably will not allow this coup plotter, coup organizer, this villain who took refuge in the U.S. for the past 17 years to stay and will repatriate this charlatan”, he said. (Yeni Safak. n.d.) Indeed, it was not the first time Erdoğan pointed the role of international powers in the political affairs of Turkey but in the meantime, he signaled that international powers, particularly Western allies, will be his new target in his populist speeches.

Erdoğan changed his populist strategy numerous times in his long incumbency. In the early period of his government, domestic elites of the judiciary and the military served as threats to the power of people however from 2010 on, when Erdoğan took the power from the judiciary and military by constitutional changes and Ergenekon trials, the main opposition party, CHP, academics, journalists, and international dark powers began to serve as threats to people. Particularly, the role of international dark powers have been part of Erdoğan’s discourse since 2013 Gezi Protests though, 2016 failed Coup attempt boosted his appeal to people based on “people” against “foreign elites” who are aiming to plot against the country. In fact, weakening the state institutions at a snail’s pace corresponded with the increasing popularity of Erdoğan. Consequently, he found a mass space to practice his populist speeches. (Aytaç and Elçi, 2019, pp.99–101)

## **Conclusion**

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan definitely left his mark on Turkish political life. The reason is not because he is the longest-serving political leader since the founding of the Republic but his determination to change the entire political system of the country. In doing so, he primarily attempted to control the main state institutions. Ergenekon trials and constitutional amendments, in particular, significantly shifted the balance of power in his favour and Kemalist elites in the state institutions were replaced by conservative-minded people. Accordingly, the legacy of the Kemalist regime has been thrown away. However, such process was not easy as he confronted with numerous challenges from Kemalist elites in the military and the judiciary

I discussed the impacts of domestic challenges on Erdoğan’s populist threat imagination as the first two components of critical crossroads in Erdoğan’s long political career: The 2007 presidential election crisis and 2010 constitutional amendments. The findings I presented

suggest that the 2007 presidential election crisis led the military and judiciary to be involved in political affairs and thus, Erdoğan considered the national elections as only a way out to solve such crisis. The results of the election indeed proved him right and AKP not only gained a majority in the parliament but also accomplished to elect Gül as 11th president of Turkey. As such, Erdoğan noticed that weakening the power of the Kemalist elites does not need a great effort but inciting popular sovereignty. Thereafter, it became his *modus operandi* to nullify the Kemalist elites. Similarly, in the course of 2010 constitutional amendments, he once again stimulated the final source of sovereignty, the referendum. As the referendum favoured by Turkish electorates, not only did he achieve his aim to change the structure of the judiciary but he also, in refers to Türk (2018), launched the final “strike” to Kemalist elites in state institutions.

The study accordingly traced Erdoğan’s response to succeeding challenges. It explored that after Erdoğan nullified the Kemalist elites with constitutional amendments, there was no counter-power left to oppose him. Thus, he tightened his authoritarian grip. Unforeseen Gezi Park protests in the middle of Istanbul however worried him that the country could have been dragged into a huge mass as in Arab countries. Showing sympathy was therefore out of question. Accordingly, he called the protesters thugs and puppets of interest rate lobby and foreign powers. Nevertheless, the interest rate lobby set it apart from other phrases and perfectly became the *zeitgeist* of Gezi Park protests.

Later, I argued in the last part of this article that the appalling 2016 coup attempt did not lead Erdoğan to coin a new term but he only continued of references to foreign elites. I put forward the idea that democracy watch rallies held after the coup-attempt was a perfect stage to display Erdoğan’s understanding of politics: the final struggle between good and evil, so-called “people” versus “elites”. Evil elites therefore must be subdued through any action that leads to the right outcomes. Because, in Erdoğan’s viewpoint, the end simply justifies the means.

As a result of conducting this research, I propose that Erdoğan’s populist threat imagination cannot be grasped without a detailed analysis of critical crossroads in his political career. While this study does not offer a conclusive answer to the question of how the critical crossroads had an impact on Erdoğan’s populist threat imagination it certainly raises important questions and encourages further research in the field.

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## **ANALYSIS OF MODERN CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY: ITS CHANGE AFTER XI JINPING AND CONSIDERATIONS OF CHINESE ‘DEBT-TRAP DIPLOMACY’**

Jan Kouřil

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### **ABSTRACT**

The foreign policy of China has been changing with Xi Jinping becoming President of China in 2012. This paper will first aim to analyze the former concepts of foreign policy of China and how China conducted foreign policy prior to Xi, before moving on to discuss Xi's foreign policy. Over these past few years, there have been specific features of Xi's foreign policy, both in the economic field and the cultural field in terms of the media. This analysis is going to include the examination of the concept of Major Country Diplomacy that is being used in the foreign policy of China. The former foreign policy concept that has been thought of by the former leader of China, Deng Xiaoping, is nowadays not as popular in China as this new concept. Finally, there will be a discussion on the concept of debt-trap diplomacy that China is alleged to practice, however this belief will be dispelled as it is not true.

Key words: foreign policy, China, debt-trap diplomacy, Xi Jinping, diplomacy. Peaceful rise, Peaceful rise 2.0, major country diplomacy

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### **Introduction**

The famous professor John J. Mearsheimer has identified a new cold war present in the current times – a cold war between China and the United States. The realist playbook is being used by China right now, and thus a cold war situation is not anything strange. There is even a palpable danger in the goals that China seeks to accomplish, obviously from the point of view of the US. The issue is that this visible problem for the US could have been regulated to fit the US. This is because the US once was once the leader in a unipolar world; it was a great power that was the only one left in the international system after the conclusion of the Cold War. As China was seen back then as a poverty-stricken country by the US, the US was not anxious about China at all. There was support for the *gradual* growth of China by the US. A democratic country that would espouse peace would be the end-state of China, which was expected by the US. With this in mind, the process of China becoming a part of the structure of world trade was encouraged by the US. However, with the growth of China, China had greater aspirations and

also became more authoritarian. (Mearsheimer, 2021) The growth of China and China's realist behavior in the world can be seen, as Mearsheimer illustrates it, as a result of failed US policy, and ultimately a negative result. On the other hand, it can also be seen as a natural occurrence, something which was bound to happen as China became richer and wanted to set its own path in foreign policy as well as challenge the prevailing unipolarity, and not necessarily negative.

The issue with Mearsheimer's point of view is that if one uses realist ideas to explore China's growth, the ideas themselves are very confining. This is because there is engagement from the side of China in the liberal order that is oriented towards the US. (Aoyama, 2018, p.13) Therefore, China's current foreign policy is very nuanced and deserves to be examined in closer detail.

This research article is going to examine three main points: firstly, it is going to talk about how Chinese foreign policy was directed prior to Xi Jinping becoming President. There has been a growth of combativeness of foreign policy of China according to the global community. (Wang, 2019, p.25) This may be one of the reasons why China is considered to be this power that is challenging the unipolar world. Secondly, this article will talk about Chinese foreign policy in the Xi Jinping presidency, and thirdly it is going to talk about the so-called debt trap diplomacy, which is a point that can be seen as a hallmark of Xi's foreign policy.

### **Chinese foreign policy prior to Xi Jinping: a historical excursion**

China has a long and expansive history as a nation, and for the purpose of this research, focus will be placed on Chinese diplomacy from the leader Deng Xiaoping onward. As the Chinese civilization is seen as pre-eminent by the Chinese, this worldview matches in proportion to the actions taken of trying to become a great power, which is an aim of China's foreign policy. This aim has been unchanged in terms of time by any leader of China. For this aim to be attained, various measures were used by the different cohorts of the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Deng as a leader of China thought of a plan for China's foreign policy, where China would act in a vigilant way and would aim to have a foreign policy that is very inconspicuous. This policy was present from the end of the 1980s. Some of the actions that China should have taken as a result of this policy are that the objectives of China should appear friendly to the world and different states should be assured of this by China. Another objective would be that the prevailing international system should be acclimatized to by China. This plan



can be seen in two different ways; if at a certain period of time China became a great power, there would be a scrapping of this plan, and therefore it would be used in the short term. The second view would be that it was a plan to be used for an extended period of time. Deng himself did say that the behavior of China should still be humble even if their level of development is advancing. (Smith, 2021, pp.4–5) Therefore, the latter view is more likely to have been espoused by the plan of Deng.

Although China pursued this policy, the conduct of China in Asia was worrying for countries in Asia, with an example being the 1995 Mischief Reef capture by China. This particular perception of the conduct of China by countries in Asia was actually comprehended by the Chinese bureaucrats. (Glaser & Medeiros, 2007, p.293) The Chinese government was therefore conscious of the mistakes it made and how China was not pursuing the policy that Deng set up. There were three specific steps that became a greater priority for China in its diplomacy in Asia, so that the worries that the Asian countries had would be confronted. These included namely, “...engagement, confidence building and reassurance.” (Glaser & Medeiros, 2007, p.293) These can be seen as extensions of the fairly general policy that Deng set up, but are more detailed actions which the Chinese foreign policy can take. The diplomacy of China in Asia was actually ameliorated because of these new steps. This is because China’s appearance in front of countries in Asia was displayed as more friendly by the Chinese government. (Glaser & Medeiros, 2007, p.293) An article from 2007 by Yahuda did describe, at that time, the role of China. For example, in Asia, multilateralism has been accepted by China. There were other positive characteristics of being both collaborative and crucial that were ascribed to China by the West to a growing extent. Both the World Trade Organization, and the UN as international organizations have been backed crucially by China from the mid-1990s. In 2001, China even became a member of the WTO. Military troops have been provided to the UN peacekeeping forces, even though in the past, peacekeeping was an idea that China was against. Indeed, standards of the international community were being met by steps that China was taking at that time in 2007. Rather than caring about liberal principles however, the national interest of China has been conformed to by these steps. (Yahuda, 2007, pp. 338, 340–341, 343)

In this regard, the concept of peaceful rise used in Chinese foreign policy is important to examine as the most recent predecessor to Xi’s foreign policy. This concept has been expressed by China from the beginning of the 2000s and can be seen as an extension of Deng’s idea. The idea of this concept is that the standing of being a great power will be obtained in a non-violent manner by China with its actions. This would be present rather than what was commonly

present before that the international system would be undermined by a great power that is recently growing in power. (J. Zhang, 2015, p.8)

### **Foreign policy of China after Xi Jinping**

China has certain core interests that it seeks to achieve and when it comes to the topic of international relations, they are referred to on a regular basis to a greater extent when in 2012, the role of president of China was assumed by Xi Jinping. There are several points that can be identified which make up the core interests of China. One of them is making sure that the socialist structure and the standing of the leading party is preserved or that China should make sure that developing countries are collaborated with on a mutually beneficial basis. The features that these core interests have should primarily concentrate on the concerns of the communist party. Thus, there is a clear hierarchy present where the concerns of the party are on top and must be fulfilled by the core interests. (Zhou, 2019, p.34) In this case, the core interest of the communist party represents the national interest of China, therefore the national interest reigns supreme over anything else in foreign policy. Going against this would be deadly for any Chinese foreign minister because of the so-called “The Three Alls” slogan that was decided on in 2019. It symbolizes the strong position that Xi holds and how he is the primary one responsible for any decision made on foreign policy. These three “alls” include: “All major matters are decided by Chairman Xi Jinping; all work must be responsible to Chairman Xi Jinping; all actions must heed the direction of Chairman Xi Jinping.” (Zhou, 2019, p.35) The foreign policy decisions are thus made under a Maoist structure which is traditional, and very consolidated. This is because this particular structure is being used by Xi again. (Zhou, 2019, p.35)

Moving on the specifics of foreign policy during Xi’s presidency, the concept of peaceful rise 2.0 can characterize the foreign policy of Xi. This basically means that there has been an evolution, not a revolution in foreign policy. Subsequently, what is extremely important for the advancement of the economy of China, namely the goal of making sure that the world outside of China is secure is still complied with which is part of the peaceful rise concept. The distinction between Xi’s peaceful rise and the previous one is how it will be accomplished by China. In particular, the concept of reciprocity would be applied by China and would be used as a basis for any form of dedication to the peaceful rise concept by China. (J. Zhang, 2015, pp.6, 10)

One part of Chinese diplomacy would be its status in the economic system nowadays. However, liberalism coming from the West, instead of socialism forms the paradigm for Xi in terms of philosophy. This is a belief that there is a process of enhancement in two areas, first being that within international relations, there is a greater integration of China and secondly the global community is relied on more by China. Countries will, in the end, understand that they will require collaborating with China on the basis of mutual benefit because there will be a joint fate that countries will face. Moreover, liberal economics have been favored by Xi, specifically globalization has been supported. (Wang, 2019, p.24)

Another part of China's foreign policy is using cultural elements, such as the China Central Television (CCTV). Foreign media have been collaborated with on certain ventures and there are English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Chinese, and Russian iterations of CCTV available. Rahman notes that global viewers, not just Chinese viewers can be reached using CCTV. There has been a prompt by Xi to the media (including CCTV) where they should make sure that this aspect of being responsible for peace efforts which is a character of China should be emphasized by the media. Thus, having this aspect of being a country that is trustworthy can be articulated by China, as the capacity to do so is greater because of the media. (Rahman, 2019, pp.96, 98) In this case, the CCTV is part of the foreign policy of China since it can reach people of the world, and thus people of the world will see China as a trustworthy country and could potentially elect politicians that have the same worldview. This would be positive for China as they could interact with that country on a friendlier note.

Deng's concept of what China should do however seems to be losing popularity to a newer concept that has supplanted it in times of the Xi presidency. In newspapers controlled by the Chinese state, such as the Global Times or the People's Daily, they have alluded to a different concept much more, following the speech by Xi in November of 2014. If one compares Deng's theory that has been mentioned before and this new theory and how many times they have been mentioned in newspapers, there is a quite clear trend. Deng's theory has been cast out by this new theory that is mentioned much more, especially since 2015. This concept is called Major Country Diplomacy which has two parts to it, the so-called "China dream" and the "community of shared future for mankind" which should be accomplished using this theory which is scientific in nature. The first part is about the power of China becoming the most dominant in the world. There would be an international system that would be a second option to the current international system and this goal encompasses this second part of community of shared future for mankind that should be constructed by China. (Smith, 2021, pp.6-8) When there was a Belt

and Road Forum for International Cooperation in 2017, China did advance this concept. Specifically, when there was the opening ceremony for this event, this concept had been mentioned by President Xi. (D. Zhang, 2018, p.196) One can ponder whether this is just a grandiose idea by Xi and has no substance in it and is rather just another idea that aims to present China to the world in a better light. Advancement of the economy is among the points that make up this idea, which is what Xi believes. The issue is that there is an undefined definition of these points. (D. Zhang, 2018, p.198)

The coherence of Chinese diplomacy can be questioned furthermore, primarily because of the oft-cited idea of ‘wolf-warrior diplomacy’. Chinese diplomats acting in a bolder way is what characterizes this concept. This wording comes from a Chinese movie called “Wolf Warrior”. The synopsis of the movie is that there are US mercenaries (among other nationalities) that are acting as adversaries to Chinese people who are at the end rescued by the protagonist who is also Chinese. Acting decisively without any worries should be done by Chinese diplomats who should take on the role of being wolf warriors. Having the role of a wolf warrior however has been refused by Chinese functionaries. This does not correlate with reality, since there was a Tweet written in 2020 by the Director of the Foreign Ministry Information Department of China, Hua Chunying. In it she notes that TikTok, the popular app, begets anxiety from the US. (Jiang, 2021, pp.33–35) This interaction on Twitter shows a more coercive diplomatic approach from China. This is not out of the ordinary, since as of late, the actions of China have been seen as more belligerent by analysts. (Rahmadini & Hennida, 2021, p.437)

What is important to note is that the peaceful rise 2.0 theory that has been posited by Zhang is not applied by China nowadays, judging from its actions and because the major country diplomacy concept is being applied. This can be seen in the example when close to Taiwan, when there was a presence of 149 warplanes from mainland China, at the beginning of October 2021. A scenario where China would get coerced by any country should not happen at any time, which every country in the world should understand. This is being emphasized by China and the international community at large is the target focus of these operations by China over Taiwan. (Jett, 2021) This was however something that was to be expected in the past, as Xi made a speech in 2014 where he did say that the sovereignty of the Chinese land should be sustained. (Rahmadini & Hennida, 2021, p.438) In this instance, Taiwan is one of the territories included in one of the core interests of China that aims for national integrity to be sustained. (Zhou, 2019, p.34) The actions in Taiwan illustrate Xi’s diplomacy well, as the bottom-line thinking has been applied. The basic definition is that no situation will exist where a

country/person can break limits that should be created by China. Should the idea of an independent Taiwan be sought out by a group, it can be crushed by China, since the capacity to do so is on their side, as Xi did say. Additionally, a status of major power cannot be placed on China, should the problem of independent Taiwan still exist and cannot be worked out, according to Xi himself. (Wang, 2019, pp.25–26) China cannot appear strong to the international community, if Taiwan exists as an independent country with an independent government that is recognized at least by some countries, which directly corresponds to the part of the “China dream” set out by the concept of major country diplomacy.

### **Considerations of ‘debt-trap diplomacy’**

The so-called concept of debt-trap diplomacy can be taken as a case study of Xi's foreign policy. Brahma Chellaney, an expert from India, has been responsible for coming up with this term. There are loans which are not viable in the long-term being offered to developing countries by China in an intentional manner. The issue is then that trying to pay back these debts is grappled with by these countries. An advantage is then gained by China over these countries should the debt levels go up. This theory has been resorted to by the US (quite unsurprisingly) in order for the connection that China has with developing states to be sabotaged. The issue is that this theory is not correct in reality (Singh, 2021, pp.240–241), and can be considered highly exaggerated, especially if one looks at the data. An example of this lies in the African continent, and the loans that the Chinese have made to African states. According to Singh, when looking at what the states in sub-Saharan Africa received in terms of loans from China, “approximately 80% consisted of loans from China’s two official policy banks which are lent at low, fixed interest rates or commercial rates.” (Singh, 2021, p.243) Thus, the absolute majority of loans that China gives to African states do not have excruciatingly high interest rates with which countries could grapple to pay back. This can be an illustration of the “community of a shared future for mankind” principle that was talked about before which seems to not have been considered by either Chellaney or the US.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) also has been a target of criticisms by the West, as when it was introduced by China the theory of debt trap diplomacy became fashionable. (Shaomin & Jiang, 2020, pp.69–70) Therefore, it would make sense to talk about the BRI in this sense and whether it is part of this debt trap diplomacy. In the year of 2013, Xi instituted the BRI, where globally there has been funding of infrastructure projects by China. There are two parts that the

BRI is made up of. The 21<sup>st</sup> century Maritime Silk Road where China and Europe are going to be tied together by a sea lane for trade. The Silk Route Economic Belt is the second part where China and Europe are going to be tied together using rail and pipelines. Africa, Europe, and Asia being intertwined is an aim that is encouraged by BRI. BRI is being funded, among others, by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) that China is directing. (Were, 2018, pp.3–4) Numbers illustrate the popularity of loans by the AIIB, since Were does note that “In 2016, for instance, the AIIB approved \$1.7 billion in loans for nine BRI development projects.” (Were, 2018, p.4) One of the many reasons why the US is challenging this debt-trap diplomacy by China could primarily be because China is a contender of the US in Africa and elsewhere in the world. This is because Africans have had experience with the SAPs that were initiatives for development in Africa by Western states. They could be considered problematic as their outcome was ambivalent at best. For example, both unemployment and inequality had grown as a result of the SAPs in Kenya. (Were, 2018, p.5)

## **Conclusion**

Chinese foreign policy has been inspired by the leader Deng Xiaoping in the past. The actions that China should have taken according to Deng’s view should fulfill some sort of criteria. Namely, that the policy is performed carefully and its foreign policy should not stand out, but rather be on the quiet side. Whether or not China would use this foreign policy in specific ways has been debated, more specifically, China could have been using this policy only up until it became a great power and then drop it, or whether it would have been used for a prolonged duration. The foreign policy of China in the 1990s and the 2000s was discussed, namely how Asian states in the 1990s were distressed by what China was doing which was grappled with by China. Glaser & Medeiros note that engagement for example was concentrated on by China. In the 2000s, the peaceful rise concept became paramount, and China would use non-violent methods to become a great power.

With Xi becoming President, there are certain aspects of foreign policy that center around the economic and cultural aspect. Related to the economy, Xi’s viewpoint is such that globalization is good and has been backed by him alongside him supporting liberal economics. Culture-wise, there is an importance of the media, like CCTV, to the foreign policy of China. The viewpoint of China that the global population has, as a result of being able to access CCTV, can be positive, namely that China will be seen as trustworthy. The concept of Major Country

Diplomacy has also been discussed with relation to Xi's foreign policy where there has been an example of a forum that China attended in which the concept was advocated for. An issue however can be found in the consistency of Chinese foreign policy which has been presented through the concept of wolf-warrior diplomacy. There has been a Tweet written by an official which is more coercive even though acting as a wolf-warrior has not been accepted by Chinese bureaucrats. Finally, the essay discussed the debt-trap diplomacy concept ascribed to China that has been questioned, primarily through the case study of African states.

It is obvious that China is a rising power and possibly is among the great powers, and thus people are increasingly living now in a multipolar world. One proof of this is in the concept of debt-trap diplomacy that has been adopted by the US which shows that the US is being challenged by another power which can offer an alternative path to developing countries (compared to say the SAPs that the West put forward), and thus is one of the reasons why China is so popular among these states. It remains to be seen whether China's foreign policy will change even more or whether the foreign policy delineated by Xi will stay for a long time.

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## ALGERIA AND ANGOLA: A PAINFUL DECOLONISATION

Afonso Ferreira Marques Morango

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### Introduction

The end of World War II provided an opportunity for the effective independence of the African colonised peoples, initiating a process of decolonization by a set of favorable factors. First of all, the liberation of many peoples from the Nazi and fascist yoke was a balloon of hope for the colonial peoples. Secondly, the colonizing countries emerged, weakened from the war and, after the collaboration of the colonized countries against the Axis forces, found no arguments to continue this territorial occupation. The sometimes deaf, sometimes open, struggle between the USA and the USSR led to a climate of bipolar tension which was aggravated by the existence of the nuclear threat. The superpowers became more demanding and more authoritarian about the alignment of countries in the face of the nuclear threat. This has generated a climate of dissatisfaction on the part of some territories which have declared a path to independence and autonomy in the face of an increasingly dichotomous world. In 1955, Bandung opened the way for the emergence of political movements of a cultural nature and identified with the values and principles of the people who demanded their independence from an imperialism or colonialism that oppressed them by occupying the territory. These movements were very important in the process that led to the independence and self-determination of peoples after the Second World War, giving them their own identity and negotiating their freedom either peacefully or violently. In the colonised territories, independentist political parties appeared, many of them armed, whose boards were students at European Universities and were now part of active national bourgeoisies. European democratic governments were faced with the need to negotiate independence with these new political realities as a way of guaranteeing a peaceful passage of power, which did not always happen. This has not always been the case in India with Great Britain, in Indonesia with the Netherlands, in Algeria with France or in Congo with Belgium.

For many authors, if in 1935 “colonialism suffocated Africa with its tourniquet”, it was an ephemeral phenomenon: “In the space of about forty-five years from that year, more than 90% of African territory had freed itself from colonialism, which remained only to the south of the

Limpopo. (...) In the history of a people and a continent, this period is more than brief.” (Boahen, 2010, p.919) Since the Second World War and throughout the 1960s, the whole of Africa has experienced a strong process of independence and self-determination. It began in North Africa with the liberation and independence of Libya in 1951 and of Tunisia and Morocco in 1956. The Algerians also decided that their intentions should be put into practice with the design of complete territorial and political autonomy, following the winds of History, clearly enshrined in liberation and parity between the people, first in the Atlantic Treaty of 1941, and then by the Charter of the United Nations. The Algerian war of 1954-62 was the precursor to the wars that broke out in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s. It was one of the bloodiest “wars of national liberation.” The dream of liberation in the Portuguese colonies of Africa was also beginning to be drawn.

This paper aims to answer the question of how two African colonies- Algeria and Angola- broke free from the European yoke, with a different temporal dimension, dealing with different political regimes (Portuguese in a dictatorship and French with its democracy), but with many points in common: a violent liberation that implied armed conflicts that lasted in time and the repatriation to France and Portugal of thousands of people who fled persecution in the territories where they lived and where many were born. On the other hand, we consider it appropriate to address these two liberation processes because two main figures that could not be more antagonistic are linked to them: Charles De Gaulle, icon of democracy and freedom, called by the French government in 1958 to manage the Algerian crisis and, in that same year, grants the self-determination to the Algerian people, and Oliveira Salazar, the dictator Portuguese who regarded the issue of the colonies as something undebatable. While Salazar said that the Homeland, the Family or the Authority was not to be discussed, De Gaulle agreed to open negotiations on Algeria’s destinies.

The two processes of independence are set in a context of colonial war, with profound consequences for the internal politics of the two countries. In France’s case, the colonial war caused, directly or indirectly, the fall of six French prime ministers and the collapse of the Fourth Republic and almost led to the fall of President De Gaulle. In the case of Portugal, the colonial war in Angola contributed decisively to the national and international discredit of Oliveira Salazar’s dictatorial regime. These two processes of decolonisation became symbolic of the struggle against colonialism and openly denounced the inequalities between colonised and colonising. The aim of this work, based on the analysis of the sources cited, is to make a direct comparison between these two processes of decolonisation: the historical context in

which they took place, the leaders of the metropolises in question and the drama of thousands of people who were caught up in this whole process and who, for many years, found themselves without direction. The Portuguese poet Paulo de Carvalho demonstrated this feeling of despair well in the poem *E depois do Adeus*.

### **Analysis**

The Berlin Conference in 1885 determined the fates of Africa which became a puzzle belonging to the European powers. Both Portugal and France regarded the colonies as an extension of the metropolis and never gave up control of these territories. Initially regarded as a settlement colony, Algeria became a very important territory for France from an economic point of view. The colony functioned as a place of disposal of materials and a simple consumer of manufactured products in the metropolis. The existing industry in Algeria was mostly linked to agriculture and household goods, such as chemicals and housing construction industries, without any industrial development plan. Agricultural development and oil and natural gas exploration in the Saara strengthened the myth of “French Algeria”, but poverty and extreme poverty raged mainly over Muslim populations, which were the majority. Oppression of citizens in these areas, the escalation of violence in cities, the wage differences between Europeans and Maghreb natives, the high rate of urban unemployed and the low level of education were favouring the nationalist cause, which grew at considerable speed. The entire policy of the colonial Portuguese regime had also been moved towards keeping Angola a Portuguese possession. In addition to the promotion of Portuguese emigration to establish a white population in Angola, the Portuguese state facilitated financial investments and economic interests linked to large Portuguese business groups.

In the mid-1950s, while in the French colony the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale) took the case of Algerian independence to the United Nations, supported by several Arab, Asian and socialist countries, the Portuguese dictator, in 1951, repealed the Colonial Act of 1930 and made the old colonies overseas territories which were considered, at the juridic level, as a natural continuation of the territory Portuguese which would be “one and indivisible”, trying to prevent the UN from considering them as likely to be decolonized. In 1961, Salazar says that The environment of security, peace and fraternal coexistence among the very diverse elements of the population - unique case in Africa today - is the greatest work. (...) And that this unity does not involve alienation, compromises or abandonments, (...). (Oliveira Salazar, 1961). The UN

General Assembly, in the face of Salazar's new thesis, not only condemned Portugal, but presented the Resolution 1514 that pointed the Portuguese colonies as territories that could be liberated, peacefully or not. In December 1965, the United Nations General Assembly, convinced that Portugal's attitude towards the African population of its colonies (...) constitutes a threat to international peace and security, (...) again affirms that the Portuguese colonies were entitled to independence and the struggle is legitimized by the United Nations. (Resolution 2107, December 1965) However, not even John Kennedy's proposal to Salazar for a peaceful decolonization accompanied by economic aid in African possessions so that they did not approach the Soviet sphere, which Salazar hated so much, convinced the Portuguese State to liberate the colonies. Salazar's stubbornness of not accepting the sign of the times and the rapid changes that the world was going through after the war caused Portugal to become increasingly isolated within the UN and bilateral relations between states, remaining "proudly alone".

The two colonies experienced an intense war that killed thousands of people and stirred opinions both in the colonizing countries and the rest of the world. In France, 1959 was a turning point in public opinion. It was becoming clear that time was running out in favour of the Algerians and against the French. The weight of public opinion was beginning to express itself in the form of fatigue and discouragement. Unlike Portugal, where the dictatorship prevented public debate on ideas, freedom of the press, in France international censorship was more visible and facilitated a lively and unhindered debate on the value to the nation of keeping Algeria in Gaul sovereignty. Unlike Oliveira Salazar, De Gaulle understood that France would not progress in the concert of nations until it liberated Algeria - because History shows that the end of 20th century colonialism was a phenomenon of double liberation – De Gaulle knew that the best time to negotiate had come.

Thus, after the military round, on 16 September 1959 the President announced the new policy of self-determination in a televised speech. Algerians could choose one of three solutions: independence, integration or association with broad autonomy. For the first time, a French government considered the possibility of an "Algerian Algeria". Not forgetting the 500,000 French soldiers sent to Algeria since 1954, de Gaulle now pointed to the democratic mechanism of universal suffrage in 1959 and gave the rebel organisation FNL the opportunity to take part in the decision through elections. (Martelo, 2001) On the contrary, in 1961 the Portuguese dictator ordered To Angola and in Force, taking the Portuguese troops overseas, unaware of the scale this war would take not only in Angola, but in all the colonies of Africa. The death of Salazar and the arrival to power of Marcelo Caetano gave new impetus to all those who wanted

an end to the colonial war and the regime. Marcelo Caetano did not defend a culture based on “Luso-tropicalism” and as the colonial war continued with more and more deaths and with liberation movements with more and more intentional support, he presented a plan of “progressive autonomy” and Angola and Mozambique would be named “State” with their own courts, assemblies and governments, although certainly restrained by the Portuguese State. However, nothing stood in the way of the international challenge to the Portuguese government, which in 1973 was hooted in London. Pope Paul VI humiliated the Portuguese government by welcoming to the Vatican the highest representatives of the liberation movements fighting against the Portuguese presence in Africa. A political solution was urgently needed, which came in the form of a book in early 1974 with the political positions of General Spínola: “Portugal and the Future”: We shall continue in Africa. Yes! But not by the force of arms, nor by the subjection of Africans, (...). But by the clear vision of the problems within the framework of a Portuguese solution. (Spínola, 1974) The situation in Angola and Algeria is clearly linked to the domestic policy of Portugal and France, although with different outlines. In Portugal, the scenario was the fall of an authoritarian regime that had lasted for forty-eight years.

Decolonisation was part of the programme of the rebels and was the central issue of the movement that led to the coup of 25 April 1974 and overthrew the Portuguese dictatorship. Democratizing, Developing and Decolonizing summarized this programme. Many Portuguese soldiers were already fraternizing with guerrillas of the nationalist movements and negotiations on the political transition to independence were only carried out between the military forces that took part in the war. The views of civilians, irrespective of their ethnic or racial origin, were not considered. According to Pezarat Correia (1991), the phase of the transfer of power to Angolans was a living reflection of how the liberation struggle took place in Angola. After much negotiation, the liberation movements, which in no way represented the interests of all the inhabitants of the Angolan territory, signed the Alvor Accords on 15 January 1975.

In both Algeria and Angola, war and insecurity led to thousands of people coming to France and Portugal respectively. The first Portuguese arrived in Angola in the 15th century for purely commercial purposes. Emigration policy was only encouraged from the first quarter of the 20th century onwards. As in France, in Portugal, there was no clear separation between the ‘national’, the ‘colonial’ and the ‘imperial’. (Thomaz, 2001, p.57) For the propagandists of Portuguese colonialism, the “perfect settler” would be the guarantee of the permanence of Portuguese sovereignty in the overseas territories and an indispensable element of the civilizing work. It was indispensable for the settler to be healthy, robust and relatively young to withstand

the most hostile tropical environments. Women, provided they had good physical stamina, were seen as essential elements of colonisation because their presence depended on maintaining the dignity of the settlers in Africa, removing all immoral temptations and vices, and reproducing the Christian family. With regard to schooling and professional aptitude, the settler should at least be able to read, write and have a trade. Otherwise he would have no advantage over the indigenous people with whom he could not and should not compete in manual tasks, so as not to diminish or degrade himself.

The settlers sent to Angola constituted a very small proportion of individuals that the state managed to “divert” from emigration to central Europe. Much of the migration from Portugal and overseas was determined by the dream of social promotion. Those who migrated to the colonies had the perception that arriving at their destination would be framed within the dominant stratum of society, regardless of their social and economic position, both at the outset and within the community itself. This was because the colonial territories offered increased opportunities to the locals of the metropolis, due to the economic model, based on the exploitation of local labour, and the very social structure built on strong racial barriers that protected the settlers and guaranteed them unquestionable status and prestige (Castelo, 2007). When the war of national liberation broke out, the main demands of Angola’s settlers were on security, economic development and administrative autonomy. The settlers wanted to participate more actively in the conduct of their own destinies and to abolish a colonial pact considered harmful to the interests of the colonies. (Castelo, 2007, pp.351–352). However, they could not imagine themselves outside the Portuguese “empire” either. In the early 1970s, Luanda was a “European” city, more modern than Lisbon, cosmopolitan and with an above average standard of living in the African context. The majority of the population of metropolitan origin did not want to lose these and other privileges that they enjoyed in the colonial environment and seem not to have realised, perhaps due to censorship and New State propaganda, that the war would never be won and that Angola would cease to be Portuguese. The armed groups that took over Angola saw the white population as a threat and the immediate result was the beginning of the mass exodus of settlers.

The process of decolonisation that took place after the second war meant that some 5.4 to 6.8 million people living in the colonies returned to or arrived in the metropolises of the former empires. (Smith, 2003) During 1962, some 650,000 French arrived in France from Algeria, which became independent in July 1962 after eight years of war of liberation. More than a decade later, in 1975, in the midst of the revolutionary process unleashed by the coup of 25

April 1974, which ended 48 years of dictatorship, Portugal received about half a million Portuguese from Angola and Mozambique. In the space of six months, well over one million settlers left Algeria for France. In addition to those who went to France, about 50,000 *piets noirs* left for Spain, 12,000 for Canada and 10,000 for Israel. Many of those who arrived in France were Algerians who fought alongside French forces in the war and who worked for the colonial French administration. They were known as the Harkis, considered traitors in Algeria and therefore subject to persecution and death. More than 160,000 were reintegrated into the armed forces in France between 1962 and 1967. They were granted French citizenship, but many have faced and continue to face problems of integration and discrimination.

Although these two migratory movements took place in different political and economic contexts, both nationally and internationally, France and Portugal had to think of concrete actions and policies to respond to the set of questions raised by the arrival of these “national migrants”, the French *piets noirs* and the Portuguese returnees. The first mission of the two European states was to repatriate their citizens. France created a maritime and air evacuation of the French from Algeria, and Portugal organised a similar evacuation between Angola and Portugal from the spring of 1975, within which the famous “air bridge” took place. Portugal had the cooperation of several foreign governments (United States, United Kingdom, USSR, German Democratic Republic, France, Federal Republic of Germany, and Belgium) which carried out 265 flights during the month of September 1975, to transport thousands of Portuguese to Portugal daily.

Although the two States created bodies, such as the *Secrétariat d'État aux Rapatriés* (1961) and the Institute of Support for the Return of Nationals - IARN (March 1975) to support those who came from overseas, it is undeniable that many thousands were more or less left to their own devices, the means of repatriation itself were less than necessary. The objective of the French and Portuguese States would be the integration of these people and the promotion of national solidarity. The authorities of both countries feared that pre-existing social and political tensions would increase with the arrival of the returnees, and should therefore commit themselves to solving a number of problems created by the arrival of these people. In France, the attacks by terrorist organisations continuing to fight for a “French Algeria” and the attack on General de Gaulle were on the minds of all the French cities during the summer of 1962, while thousands of French people arrived from Algeria every day. In Portugal, the revolutionary political and social context in which the country lived in 1975 endangered the young Portuguese democracy, the repatriated settlers were often viewed with disquiet, were associated with right-wing

extremism and were reminiscent of a colonialism that should be forgotten. These returnees resettled in areas in which they had family ties and were thus able to avail themselves of the extended family's assistance, which would help facilitate their social reintegration. Housing was a serious problem and the measures taken by the respective governments were not always those that conferred and respected human dignity. Both in France and Portugal, collective accommodation centres were set up with particularly difficult conditions that were etched in the memory of the people who benefited from this policy. Another great challenge was the integration of these people into the labour market, which was already scarce for those already here. France and Portugal quickly reintegrated the majority of colonial workers, but doing the same for the self-employed was a much more difficult task. In France, the socio-professional skills of the French arriving from Algeria did not match the demand for skilled workers sought by French industry. In Portugal, those coming from Angola could be an asset to the Portuguese economy because they were workers in commerce and services. In the Portuguese case, a reverse situation occurred. The economic context of the country made one fear of a sudden and extreme increase in an already high unemployment rate. Nevertheless, the professional characteristics of the Portuguese who came from Angola and Mozambique, many active in the tertiary sector, namely in services and trade, represented an advantage for the Portuguese economy. To all these people it earned them some solidarity but, above all, a lot of resilience.

## **Conclusion**

Algeria's Independence war began in November 1954 in the Aurès mountains, 400 km south-east of the capital, Algiers. In few years, France deployed about 500,000 soldiers on the ground, roughly the same number that the United States would send to Vietnam in the 1960s. The French army was caught between a colonising community and the growing military uprising led by the Front de Libération Nationale. The French government faced this military insurrection, but the successes were few and the armed revolt continued. Even with General De Gaulle's return to power in 1958 and the proclamation of the Fifth Republic the following year, many years would still have to pass before a political solution to the conflict could be found. When France recognised Algeria's independence in 1962, Portuguese troops had already been fighting in Angola against the liberation movements for a year. Both Portugal and France faced international challenge, notably from the United Nations, in the face of persisting colonies in Africa. However, Angola was too important for the Portuguese dictator to recognise the



independence of this territory and the Empire remained intact, with the exception of Goa who left Portuguese rule in 1961. The liberation of Portuguese territories in Africa only became a reality in the 1970s and was clearly driven by the revolutionary movement of 25 April 1974 which put an end to the Portuguese dictatorship that had lasted since 1933. The two European countries had to face guerrilla movements that became protagonists of wars associated with a bloody decolonisation. The war in Angola against the colonial power of the metropolis began in 1961 and lasted until 1974. Although there is a certain tendency to devalue them, and several times overcome by history, the Alvor Accords signed on 15 January 1975 played a key role in Angola's independence process. Firstly, because it was shown that the conflict had to be resolved directly between Portugal and the Angolan Liberation Movements, without any foreign interference. Secondly, because it was in these same Accords that an exact date was set for the proclamation of Angola's independence: November 11, 1975, an Independence that would be internationally recognised.

Although spaced out in time and under totally different regimes, the independence processes of Angola and Algeria were violent and the armed conflicts that characterised them killed thousands of families who, after the end of the war, found themselves without direction. For some authors, the exodus of returnees and *pieds noirs* was one of the most painful events with serious consequences of the last century. The sudden departure of thousands of Portuguese and French from Angola and Algeria left these territories with serious difficulties in terms of political and economic organisation. However, those who returned also lived many years in despair. The majority of the returnees arrived in Portugal with only one suitcase in their hand and the country that received them, in the grip of a Revolution that had just been born, was unable to welcome them with dignity. The housing and economic integration policies pursued by the French and Portuguese states were essential for the active integration of the *pieds noirs* and returnees in France and Portugal, without, however, managing to resolve all the difficulties experienced by them. Of course, this integration did not take place without creating tensions, but these two European states that lived in very different political, economic and social contexts, managed to show that when there is political will, it is possible to find the necessary financial means for the integration of migrants.

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## **CHINA IN RUSSIA’S SPACE DIPLOMACY: IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES**

Arushi Singh

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Space diplomacy is an essential component in the persistent pursuit of peaceful relations and interactions in space. As the players, both public and private increase, the necessity for space diplomacy initiatives rises as well. Space has been a vital part of national security calculation for all nations alike, however, now its significance has evolved to encompass the ambit of geopolitics and geoeconomics. To take full advantage and to acquire leverage in the domain, space-faring nations such as China and Russia are collaborating to achieve their respective goals including ending the prospects for increasing US unilateralism in space.

To that end, Russia supports the No First Placement initiative which has been resisted by the US and Western countries who have highlighted detrimental probable outcomes such as increase in dual-use counter-space technologies. Furthermore, Russia has signed an agreement with China for cooperation in the institution of permanent lunar base. Notably, China has now revealed that one goal of its Cheng’e space program is extracting helium-3 from the lunar surface which could be vital for fusion energy in the future. This has led to concerns regarding the lack of regulatory norms which could impact the energy security on earth. However, convergences in other domains have created opportunities for collaboration in the space domain as well for Russia and China who have refused to participate in the Artemis Accords and have chosen to engage together on the United Nations Committee on Disarmament.

According to scholars, since 2018, Russia has turned more assertive in space. Russia has positioned a succession of co-orbital satellites in orbit that may well realistically immobilise adversarial countries’ satellites in orbit while Roscosmos is slated to solely collaborate with China National Space Administration (CNSA). Additionally, Russia has delineated proposals to split its section of the International Space Station (ISS) by 2028 while focusing on plans to establish an orbital launch complex in order to acquire a “significant first-mover advantage” in the developing commercial space mining and mobility. (Weichert, 2021) Russia also intends to

post cosmonauts on Tiangong, China's new space station that has been designed to accommodate collaboration.

The research paper will attempt to understand the objectives of Russia's space diplomacy; to explore the institutional ties between China and Russia in the space domain; to evaluate the nuances and dimensions of Russia's space diplomacy in respect to China; to critically analyse the challenges and prospects for Russia's space diplomacy with China; and to assess the repercussions of Russia's space diplomacy with China on the international system.

### **The objectives of Russia's space diplomacy**

Moscow through its Entitled Guidelines for the Policy of the Russian Federation in the Field of Space-Related Activities until 2020 and Beyond has put immense importance on the independence of Russia in carrying out its space activities. (David A. Mindell, 2009)

### ***Defending Russian interests and priorities***

Russian space diplomacy is focused on securing the priorities outlined by President Vladimir Putin that encompass "improving its space infrastructure and producing innovative spacecraft and technologies". Some of the reasons for specifically outlining these priorities include jumpstarting Russia's stagnant domestic economy, ensuring state security and preserving Moscow's leadership in the space market. Accordingly, the Russian government has put forth the unified financing policy for the Federal Space Program for 2016-2025 and has shown its willingness to utilise instruments of public-private partnership.(Xinhua, 2020)

### ***Undercutting American unilateralism***

Space has been reinvigorated as a key amphitheatre of great power competition. (Defense, 2020) Russia wants to engage with the US inly on "equal footing" and is reluctant to condone the "US policy of extraterritorial jurisdiction". (Russia, 2016) As such Moscow's has preferred to work with China to undermine efforts of US in achieving space dominance. Russia is also focusing on preserving its strategic autonomy through retention of its space infrastructure and assets including satellites and cosmodrome.

### *Offsetting limitations*

Russia has been referred to as the “celestial travel agency” (Mizin, 2003) However, Moscow is trying to vanquish the moniker through a tripartite strategy centred around purchasing, innovating and borrowing space technology. Nevertheless, there are multiple structural weakness that inhibit Russia’s space aspirations including superseded infrastructure dispersed throughout its territory. Russia also faces limitations due to Western sanctions leading to limited access to funding while it becomes more suspectable despite its nuclear deterrent through space-based armaments while increasingly ineffectiveness of its conventional forces becomes more apparent. (David A. Mindell, 2009) This has led to the advent of convergences between Russia and China in the space domain wherein Beijing can provide Moscow with access to resources to implement its tripartite strategy in exchange technology transfers. For instance, Russia has been assisting China in building an early-warning system to identify ballistic missiles.

### **The institutional ties between China and Russia in the space domain**

Russia has cooperated with China in its first spacewalk and human spaceflight that showcased technological edge, tangible economic disbursements and larger political stimulus. Additionally, Beijing emphasises cooperation and exploration as one of the objectives of their space program. To that end, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) Siberian Branch have initiated an agreement on scientific collaboration. The Space Research Institute (IKI) of the Russian Academy of Sciences and China National Space Administration’s Lavochkin Association worked on the Phobos-Grunt (FGSC) for Mars exploration. (Wu Ji, 2021) Notably the NSSC has been described as “China's gateway to space science” and is instrumental in China’s space efforts. (National Space Science Center, n.d.) Roscosmos and the China National Space Administration (CNSA) has a space cooperation program for the period of 2018-2022 focused on cooperative endeavours to assemble lunar and “deep space data center; area of satellite systems; Earth remote sensing; and space-debris research”. (Vidal, 2021)

## **Nuances and dimensions of Russia's space diplomacy in respect to China**

Space diplomacy refers to “formulating and implementing practical initiatives so that interests of States are converging in space and also it is the art of negotiating to coexist peacefully in outer space for the future of humankind”. (Dodik Setiawan Nur Herianto, 2019) In 2008, China and Russia in conjunction presented to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) the draft Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects (PPWT) in order to avert the weaponization of outer space. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008) In the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, Moscow had vetoed 21 guidelines as its 7 guidelines were rejected and thus, Russia was at risk of isolation while China was stated to have taken a ‘hands off’ approach. Together, Russia and China had been willing to implement a permanent Group on the Long-Term Sustainability (LTS) of Outer Space Activities in lieu of agreement on the 21 guidelines. However, the group was not established due to concerns regarding its possibility of emergence as an opportunity for grievances regarding US policies as well as a setting to help the Russia-China backed PPWT. (Hitchens, 2019) These factors have not been able to deter Russia from pursuing further cooperation in space diplomacy with China as cooperation is likely to make any programmes more “stable” while guaranteeing steady funding as well as a “certain degree of continuity in activities”. (Mathieu, 2008) This is in addition to the opportunity for China and Russia to come up with an “alternative set of rules and norms” for space governance that could undercut and temper the ambitions of Western nations. Notably, the US through the introduction of the Wolf amendment has decreased its own manoeuvring space as it could have increased cooperation with China to the detriment of Russia. (Hines, 2021)

Another area of space diplomacy cooperation between Russia and China is centred on International Lunar Research Station (ILRS) with both countries coming with their own updated editions of the Roadmap and Guide for Partnership to outline the indicators of ILRS progress in all stages and phases. The ILRS has been described as a “complex set of experimental research facilities created on the surface and/or in the orbit of the moon” that is multilateral in nature through the commitment and participation from various countries and collaborators. (Xiaoci, 2021)

The genesis of the ILRS cooperation goes back to 2019 when China and Russia signed documentation pertaining to cooperation on Luna-Resurs-1 and Chang'e 7 exploration missions along with an agreement focused on the construction of a “joint lunar and deep-space

exploration data center”. This has additionally led an impetus for an intergovernmental lunar cooperation treaty. (Azarova, 2021)

Both China and Russia have been involved in a consultation procedure aimed at the compilation of an International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities that was in response to the United Nations (UN) General Assembly Resolution 61/75 aimed at highlighting and inquiring for proposals for “Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities”. China and Russia have been opposed to the draft due to a deficiency of transparency and there not being enough of an effort to be inclusive or consulting other countries in the drafting process. Other concerns aimed at subsequent drafts encompass security and self-defence related issues with Russia and China not being in favour of their inclusion as opposed to other Western countries. China along with Russia Thailand, Brazil, Ethiopia, Ukraine and Belarus also wanted there to be more emphasis on peace uses and as such had asked for a change in the name to an “international code for peaceful uses in space” while commiserating its non-legally binding voluntarily status. On the other hand, Russia alongside with China has shown considerable fight to a more comprehensive attachment of capacity building as well as technical assistance/input in space technological know-how in the fourth draft.

## **Challenges and prospects for Russia’s space diplomacy with China**

### ***Prospects***

#### *Nuclear-powered space tug*

It has been said that “only a nuclear-powered space tug can become a transportation space system to propel large research stations or habitable orbital modules in the solar system and outside it.” Russia’s Roscosmos has been working on the technology that may elicit greater cooperation with China in the future. (Tass, 2021a)

#### *Exchange of technology*

In 2019, Russia extended supply rocket engines to Beijing in compensation for Chinese microelectronics. (Global Times, 2021) The Russian Orbital Service Station has further provided opportunities for cooperation (Tass, 2021b) with Russia’s space authority to integrate

a Chinese superheavy launcher into its indigenous manned spacecraft intended for upcoming moon-landing operations. (Lo, 2021)

### *New diplomatic initiatives including on space cybersecurity*

There have been negotiations undertaken in the United Nations Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space focused on guidelines that would result in “the long-term sustainability of space activities” with the help of the space cybersecurity domain. (Lewis, 2016) These negotiations will provide China and Russia to become agenda setters if both nations are able to cooperate and coordinate together as well as find convergences. A renewed sense of trust has already been exhibited by both countries as China has decided to accommodate Russian GLONASS positioning system for better “global range and accuracy” albeit there is a security uncertainty but can pose a security threat whereas Russia is hosting Chinese BeiDou system’s ground stations. (Ridgwell, 2021) Other initiatives can be focused on space debris removal and mitigation.

### ***Challenges***

#### *Priorities*

A focus on “bilateral competition” on behalf of space is likely to lead to discounting of probable partners and counteract the beneficial usage of funds. (Gadd, 2021) A divergence in priorities between Russia and China could lead Russia to invest in space diplomacy through other partners such as India.

#### *Contestation*

Contemporaneously, Russia’s relations with China are tied together by interest convergences coupled with endeavours to end US control of the space domain. Strategic analysts posit that Russia and China are “incentivized” to create abilities to nullify the advantages accrued by the US over the decades. However, there below the surface still remains “deep-seated nationalism, there is some level of mistrust and some level of competition” that is exacerbated by Chinese encroachment in the Arctic as well as Central Asia, traditional Russian sphere of influence and



might hinder a more comprehensive space diplomacy cooperation and collaboration. (Ridgwell, 2021)

### *Junior partner*

Experts have propounded that “it is no secret that Beijing is the senior party” with a relatively better funded program that is accelerating at a rapid pace. However, a dynamic is evolving where Russia is being viewed as a junior partner while both Moscow and Beijing remain adamant in terms of maintaining their strategic autonomy. This perception especially with Russian leaders in the domestic sphere can limit the full opportunity fulfilment in the space diplomacy domain between Russia and China. (Rome, 2021)

### **Repercussions of Russia’s space diplomacy with China on the international system**

Russia through the aid of China has been able to exert more leverage in the space domain including in negotiations pertaining to space assets and laws. However, the US and its allies has shown more heft in honing the legal and regulatory frameworks regulating space to their own advantage. However, Russia-China cooperation in space can lead to substantial benefits for both countries in the “Cislunar Economy” that has been estimated to be water-rich lunar in its south pole and can see both nations play a pivotal in formulation of rules of conduct and norm setting especially if the majority of Earth-Moon Lagrange points that have been called the “gateways of cislunar space” are controlled by Russia or China. (Clementine G. Starling, 2021)

Concerns emanating due to the Russia’s and China’s cooperation in space has led to countries participating in “preventive outer space diplomacy”. (Australian Government, 2018) Some of the reasons for this drastic and cost intensive actions pertains to the access to data and intelligence that Russia and China will have through their collaboration including the “China Russia Commission on Important Strategic Satellite Navigation Cooperation” for better “compatibility and interoperability, augmentation and station construction, monitoring and assessment, and joint applications.”

Additionally, Russia and China will benefit from ground-monitoring stations of the other. China has a finalized station in Argentina and contracts as part of its Belt and Road Initiative to build

ground stations in Iran, Thailand whereas Russia has ground stations in Brazil and South Africa and intends to invest in more in Brazil, Indonesia, India, and Angola. According to experts, these actions point towards increased confidence as ground stations are susceptible to “cyber espionage, exploitations, and attacks” as well as counterintelligence. (Carr, 2021)

## **Conclusion**

It has been said that “space is the final frontier in international diplomacy”. (Thorne, 2018) China and Russia are focused on creating and taking advantage of multilateral space initiatives such as the International Charter: Space and Major Disasters to enhance their influence, power and prestige. (Rome, 2021) Other areas of cooperation also include space debris mitigation, building-confidence and transparency measures. (Janardhan, 2018) However, it appears that Russia’s diplomatic leverage is intertwined with and backed by Chinese support. Space diplomacy has, in the current circumstances emerged as a bridge-building apparatus that has been designed at instituting confidence and common purpose.

Russia’s seclusion, its dearth of economic heft coupled with shrunken military might has made continued space diplomacy with China an imperative with the two nations sharing a “common vision”. Furthermore, Russia needs to have “major commercial and scientific achievements” to compete not only with various state actors but emerging private players as well in the space segment. (Vidal, 2021)

However, the relationship and as such, space diplomacy between the two countries remain weighted down by other concerns including perceptions and the shadow of future, seemingly inevitable competition as both countries work on “frontier technologies”, which cultivate a compulsion of restraint in terms of cooperation. Currently, the benefits of cooperation continue to outweigh the need for contention. Particularly, as China and Russia build more space infrastructure and aim to standardise their own norms and rules in space together that have major repercussions for the geopolitical future.

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