

Vol. 36, No. 2

Autumn / Winter 2023

The Journal of
EAST
ASIAN
AFFAIRS

Institute for National Security Strategy

The Journal of East Asian Affairs

Publisher: Han Sukhee, Ph.D. (Director, Institute for National Security Strategy)

Editor-in-Chief: Mason Richey, Ph.D.

Executive Editor: Joel Atkinson, Ph.D.

Deputy Editors: Yi Jisun, Ph.D.; Lim Sujin, Ph.D.; Chang Hyejong, M.A.

The Journal of East Asian Affairs, sponsored by the Institute for National Security Strategy (INSS), is a peer-reviewed biannual journal appearing since 1981. INSS is a non-profit organization founded in 1977 in Seoul, South Korea after restructuring from the predecessor Research Institute for International Affairs. Currently, INSS has a diverse group of resident analysts trained both in South Korea and across the globe.

The Journal of East Asian Affairs is dedicated to the development of both policy recommendations and theoretical frameworks regarding East Asian international relations and international security, emerging and nontraditional threats, geopolitics and geostrategy, political economy and economic security, inter-/intra-regional conflict and cooperation, cyber-security, human rights, climate change, international public health, and social and development issues. The journal also publishes work on inter-Korean relations. Contributors are encouraged to engage with their subject matter both theoretically and empirically. The journal does not adhere to any specific policy line, political ideology, theoretical approach, or methodology.

The Journal of East Asian Affairs has nearly 2,000 subscribers worldwide, including universities and research institutes, government agencies and bureaus, and media firms. The journal is available both in hard copy (for a subscription fee) and electronically through the INSS website (free access).

Opinions expressed in *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* are those of the individual contributors and do not represent the views of the publisher, editors, or the Institute for National Security Strategy. Permission to reproduce articles from the journal should be requested in written form from the Editor-in-Chief.

Annual Subscription Fee

Domestic: ₩30,000, Overseas: US \$30

ISSN 1010-1608; Printed in March 2024 in Seoul, Korea

Copyright by the Institute for National Security Strategy

Instopia Bldg., 120, Eonju-ro, Gangnam-gu,

Seoul 06295, Republic of Korea

Tel: +82-2-6191-1167

E-Mail: joeaa@inss.re.kr

Website: www.inss.re.kr

The Journal of
**EAST
ASIAN
AFFAIRS**

Vol. 36, No. 2

Autumn / Winter 2023

The Journal of East Asian Affairs

Vol. 36

Autumn / Winter 2023

No. 2

Contents

Militarization of COVID-19 Responses and Autocratization:
A Comparative Study of Eight Countries in Asia-Pacific and
Latin America 05

Aurel Croissant / David Kuehn / Ariam Macias-Weller / David Pion-Berlin

The Asianization of Regional Security in the Indo-Pacific 53

Felix Heiduk

Dangerous Europe Vs. Tolerant Asia: The Puzzling Survival
Patterns of Buffer States 95

Olena Guseinova

Peak Dictatorship: Mountain Climbing and the Charismatic
Politics of Russian and Chinese Dictators 145

Benjamin R. Young

The Economic Security Tightrope: EU Economic Security Strategy,
Friend-Shoring, and European Relations with Indo-Pacific States 169

Michael Reiterer / Lee Il Houg

Militarization of COVID-19 Responses and Autocratization: A Comparative Study of Eight Countries in Asia-Pacific and Latin America

Aurel Croissant

Heidelberg University and Ewha Womans University

David Kuehn

German Institute for Global Studies (GIGA), Hamburg

Ariam Macias-Weller

Heidelberg University

David Pion-Berlin

University of California, Riverside

Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between the militarization of COVID-19 state responses and autocratization in eight Asia-Pacific and Latin American countries. Utilizing a conceptual framework focusing on COVID-19-related military missions and operations, we present two key findings. First, our research demonstrates significant variation in the specific profile of military engagement in governments' COVID-19 responses; however, overall, all governments deployed their military, particularly in health service provision, logistics, and the production of COVID-19 goods. Meanwhile, soldiers were generally less involved in health bureaucracy and public security. Second, based on two rounds of an expert survey, we find that military deployments had a negative impact on democratic standards only in places where soldiers routinely conducted public security operations autonomously, without effective civilian oversight. Our study concludes that the pandemic did not induce autocratization or a collapse of civil-military relations. However, it did accentuate pre-existing conditions and issues in the democratic governance of the security sector. This “acceleration effect” was observable in democracies and autocracies experiencing autocratization prior to the pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19, civil-military relations, militarization, democratic backsliding, disaster response

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is widely perceived as a stress test for the resilience of democratic institutions and practices worldwide. The deployment of military troops to combat the pandemic has often been viewed as a threat to human rights, the rule of law, and democracy. Indeed, across the globe, the deployment of military troops to assist civilian authorities in addressing the pandemic's impact has been nearly universal in public policy and health security (Erickson et al. 2023; Gibson-Fall 2021; Dietrich et al. 2023). Military involvement in response to disease outbreaks predates the current pandemic; militaries have been repeatedly called upon to assist during natural disasters to the point that it is not considered controversial (Ratchev and Tagarev 2018, 141), such as the containment of Ebola and Zika transmissions, the 2002-2004 SARS outbreak, and the 2009 "Swine Flu" pandemic (Ventura 2016; Watterson and Kamradt-Scott 2016; Wenham 2019).

However, the scope and scale of military involvement in containing the COVID-19 pandemic were unprecedented (Erickson et al. 2023; Gibson-Fall 2021; Kalkman 2021; Dietrich et al. 2023). The securitization and militarization of pandemic responses have raised concerns about their consequences for democracy, especially in places already experiencing democratic erosion prior to the onset of COVID-19. This concern is heightened by the fact that the pandemic emerged during a time when democracy was under pressure worldwide (Edgell et al. 2021; Lewkowicz et al. 2022; Sorsa and Kivikoski 2023; Papada 2023).

Tracking military engagement in COVID-19 responses and its implications for democracy and civil-military relations requires reliable data. While research on this topic has flourished recently, comparative research remains limited in scope, and previous efforts to assess the implications for civil-military relations and democratic governance have focused primarily on democracies and on only a few countries within a single world region (Acácio et al. 2023; Erickson et al. 2023; Macias Herrera and Croissant 2022; Passos and Acácio 2020).

This study presents a systematic, cross-regional assessment of how militaries were utilized in state COVID-19 responses in 2020 and 2021, highlighting their implications for autocratization in eight democracies and autocracies in the Asia-Pacific and Latin America. Utilizing a conceptual framework focusing on COVID-19-related military missions and operations, we find that while military engagement as part of COVID-19 response profiles varied considerably, all governments deployed their militaries, particularly in the provision of health services, logistics, and the production of COVID-19 goods. Soldiers were generally less involved in health bureaucracy and public security. Based on two rounds of an expert survey, we then evaluate whether military pandemic deployments negatively affected democratic standards, particularly where soldiers routinely conducted public-security operations autonomously, without effective civilian oversight. We conclude that the pandemic has accentuated pre-existing conditions and problems in the democratic governance of the security sector, but is unlikely to have undermined established democracies that have proved resilient in the face of the pandemic.

While conventional predictors such as the robustness of public health sectors, the level of administrative capacity, regime type (democratic or autocratic), and the number of infections and deaths per capita may fail to explain differences in the timing or patterns of military deployment or its impact on civil liberties, rule of law, and civil–military relations, our findings suggest that path dependence in civil–military relations may play a powerful role even in critical junctures such as the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it remains to be seen if signs of erosion of democratic governance during the crisis may become more pronounced in civil–military relations in the longer run.

The study proceeds as follows: First, we present our conceptual framework, followed by the case selection and data collection. Next, we systematically compare military deployment in COVID-19 responses across eight countries, ranging from closed autocracies to liberal democracies: Cuba, Vietnam, Venezuela, the Philippines, Brazil, Sri Lanka, Uruguay,

and Taiwan. Subsequently, we assess the implications of how the military was used for autocratization and democratic resilience. Lastly, we present some tentative conclusions.

Conceptualizing the Militarization of State COVID-19 Responses

Our concept encompasses a spectrum of potential COVID-19-related military missions and operations during the response phase of the pandemic management cycle. Drawing on existing conceptualizations of military missions and operations (Pion-Berlin 2016), we define “military missions” as the primary and permanent roles of the military that are assigned by the state and generally codified into law. These missions define the military’s purpose and objectives, enabling soldiers to devise strategic and operational plans to achieve these aims. “Military operations,” on the other hand, are more specific and episodic campaigns that soldiers undertake, whether independently or at the behest of civilian authorities, to fulfill a particular mission. The degree of militarization of state responses to COVID-19 is determined by the extent to which the military is deployed to fulfill missions and operations as part of a given country’s response to the pandemic: the greater the number of missions and operations entrusted to the military, the higher the degree of militarization. We differentiate five types of potential military missions in a state’s COVID-19 response (see also Figure 1):

1. **Health bureaucracy:** This pertains to the military’s involvement in shaping the policy agenda regarding government responses to the pandemic. We assess this by determining whether military personnel served as the minister of health or were members of a national emergency response committee (NERC) explicitly tasked with advising the government on COVID-19 management

(Rajan et al. 2020).

2. **Military production:** This encompasses the mobilization of military industrial capacities to develop and produce medical supplies (such as vaccines, personal protective equipment, and similar items) to address gaps in civilian healthcare supply chains.
3. **Healthcare:** This involves the use of military capacities to assist overwhelmed or under-resourced civilian health systems, including the deployment of military resources to decontaminate public areas, disseminate COVID-19 information, conduct testing and screening, administer vaccines, and provide care for patients.
4. **Logistics:** This includes the military provision of logistical support beyond direct healthcare to complement civilian humanitarian efforts. Examples of this mission during the pandemic include soldiers constructing or managing isolation, quarantine, or healthcare facilities, distributing medical supplies to civilians, transporting civilian patients or medical personnel, and assisting in the repatriation of nationals.
5. **Public security:** This pertains to military mobilization for “public security” operations to enforce mandatory containment measures aimed at preventing the spread of the virus. Previous research indicates that military involvement in domestic law enforcement can pose risks of human rights violations under certain circumstances (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2021; Pion-Berlin 2016). During the pandemic, soldiers were frequently deployed to patrol streets, set up roadblocks, control international borders, and restrict movement (Kalkman 2021). Troops also controlled public gatherings, suppressed protests incited by COVID-19-related measures, and protected critical infrastructure associated with pandemic efforts (e.g., guarding hospitals and warehouses containing medical provisions or escorting vaccine transports).

Case Selection and Data Collection

We employ three principles for case selection to maximize variance on relevant variables and mitigate selection bias (Gerring 2016; Seawright 2016). First, we selected cases from the Asia-Pacific and Latin America, two regions where militaries traditionally fulfill a variety of missions and roles (Alagappa 2001; Jenne and Martínéz 2022), both of which were particularly hard-hit by the pandemic (CSSE 2022). Second, recognizing that the extent and implications of military deployment may vary across political systems, we included cases representing different regime types. Drawing on data from the Regimes of the World dataset (Lührmann et al. 2018), we sampled one closed autocracy, one electoral autocracy, one electoral democracy, and one liberal democracy from each region. Third, if a particular regime type was represented by multiple countries in the region, we randomly selected one case for our empirical analysis. The sample is summarized in Table 1 below. Eight cases provide a sufficiently large sample to capture intra- and cross-regional variance as well as differences across regime types, while also allowing for case-sensitive, qualitative within-case analyses.

Table 1

CASE SAMPLE.

Regime Type		Asia-Pacific	Latin America
Autocracies	Closed	Vietnam	Cuba
	Electoral	Philippines	Venezuela
Democracies	Electoral	Sri Lanka	Brazil
	Liberal	Taiwan	Uruguay

Note: Regime type as of 31 December 2019. Source: Authors' own compilation, based on Coppedge et al. (2022).

The eight countries not only vary in terms of regime type but also exhibit different patterns of civil–military relations and military roles prior

to the pandemic (see Croissant and Kuehn 2018; Croissant 2018; Pion-Berlin 2016; Jenne and Martínéz 2022). These differences can be summarized into three categories.

First, pre-pandemic Taiwan and Uruguay represented cases of well-institutionalized civilian supremacy and democratic governance in the security sector. In both cases, the armed forces played significant roles in politics and performed a wide range of missions other than war. Democratization in the 1980s (Uruguay) and 1990s (Taiwan) enabled democratic governments to reform the security sector and implement institutional controls to prevent the military from exerting strong influence (Kuehn and Croissant 2023).

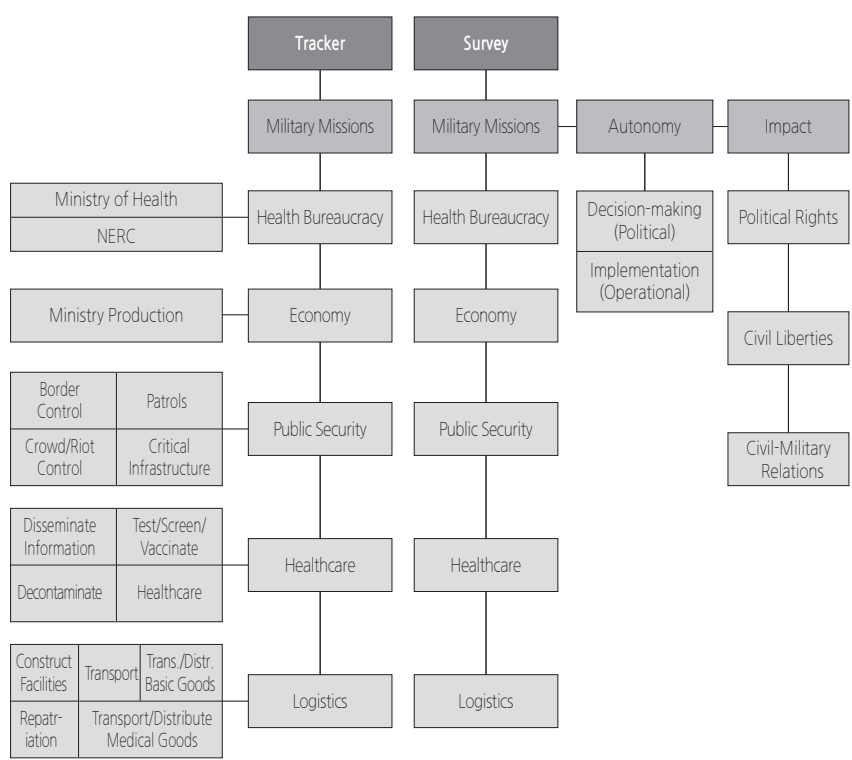
Second, Vietnam and Cuba exemplify socialist civil–military relations, where the people’s army, under the auspices of the party, performed various political, economic, societal, and defense-related roles.

Third, the Philippines, Venezuela, Sri Lanka, and Brazil qualify as cases of populist civil-military relations, where civilian populist presidents—such as Duterte in the Philippines, Maduro in Venezuela, Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil—sought to gain personal control of the military through personalist, communal, or ideological ties to military officers. Similar to the cases in the second category, the military traditionally played significant roles in various areas, including domestic security, public infrastructure, and the national economy. However, their strategy of personalizing civilian authority and populist control operated on precarious grounds due to institutional decay and the populist leaders' dependence on their ability to control access to positions of economic and political power (cf. Taş 2023).

The data collection process for this study involved two steps (see Figure 1 below). The first step systematically traced military operations across 16 indicators for the five types of military missions outlined above on a monthly basis from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2021. Drawing on a list of government, non-governmental, and media sources, a team of trained research assistants collected information on each indicator for each

of the eight countries. We compiled a set of guidelines with instructions for the data collectors and worded each indicator to minimize the role of subjective judgment. To ensure transparency, data collectors provided a written justification and complete record of sources for each indicator. Once the qualitative data was compiled, it was independently coded by two of this paper’s authors. To minimize the introduction of arbitrary thresholds, we utilized a simple dichotomous coding for each indicator, with “1” marking military involvement and “0” indicating the absence of military engagement. Disagreements between coders were discussed bilaterally until a consolidated final code was agreed upon.¹ The resulting dataset includes a total of 192 country–month observations.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework and Data Collection.



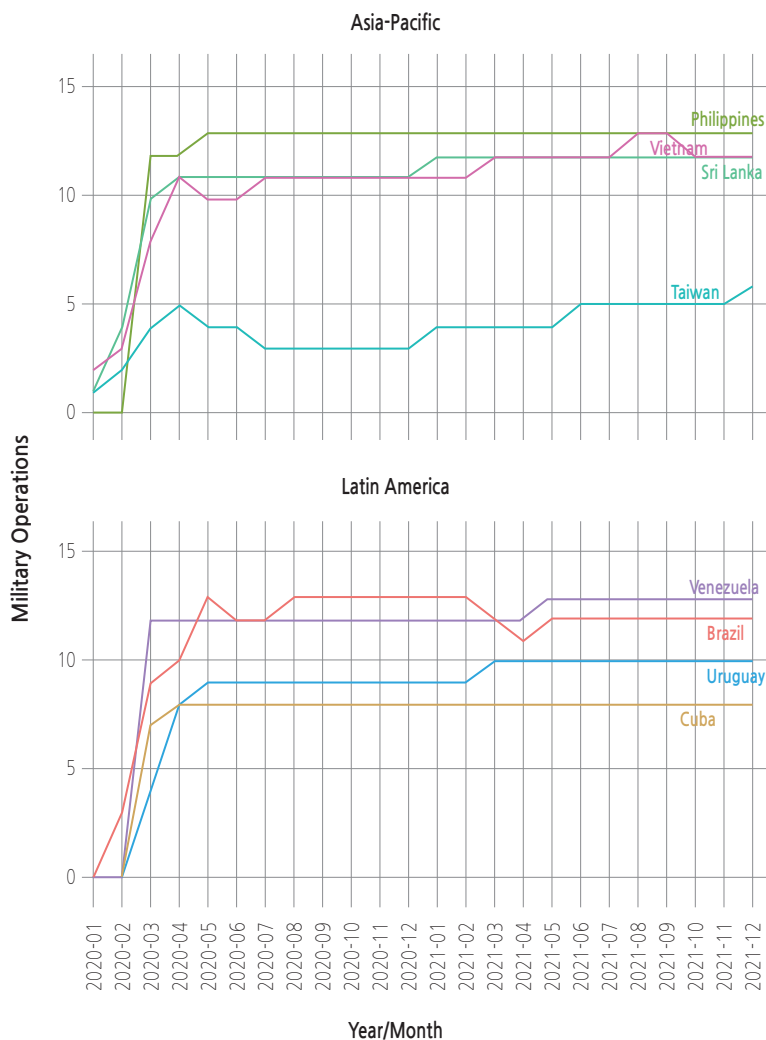
¹ Inter-coder reliability was very high, with Cohen’s kappa of 0.98.

The second step in the data collection process involved an expert survey. We recruited two experts for each country, and two survey waves were implemented. The first wave, conducted in late 2021, covered the year 2020, while the second wave, conducted in early 2022, covered the year 2021. Each survey included 10 questions on the military’s role in distinct missions as part of a given country’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These questions assessed the extent of military autonomy in implementing the respective missions and its political impact, if any, on political rights, civil liberties, and civil–military relations. Experts were asked to provide qualitative assessments for each question along with a numerical score. All numerical responses were ranked on a four-step ordinal scale from “0” (none) to “3” (high).

Tracking Military Missions as Part of State COVID-19 Responses

Figure 2 below tracks the cumulative trends in military operations across the five missions in each of the eight countries from January 2020 to December 2021. Five findings stand out. First, while there is considerable variance in the overall extent of military mobilization, there is a stronger degree of convergence in government responses to COVID-19 after the first months of the pandemic passed. Once the COVID-19 outbreak was declared a pandemic, governments quickly mobilized their militaries to meet the health emergency. By late March 2020, militaries in every country were deployed to join in the response efforts. Second, there are two groups of countries. Uruguay, Cuba, and Taiwan exhibit lower levels of military involvement, though it is only in Taiwan that soldiers played a minimal role in the government’s COVID-19 response. In the five countries of the second grouping, the pandemic confirmed the importance of the military as the state’s most versatile institution in responding to large-scale disasters and in supporting—sometimes also compensating for—deficient civilian capacities.

Figure 2. Military Operations per Country, 1 January 2020-31 December 2021.



Note : The line graphs represent the number of pandemic-related operations (ranging from 0 to 16) conducted by militaries in Asia-Pacific and Latin America per month and country. The line graphs depict the sum of individual operations in the five missions per month in each country. A score of zero indicates that the military in a particular country did not perform any of the 16 types of pandemic-related operations in any of the different missions described in the previous section of the paper. In contrast, a score of 16 would indicate that in a particular month, a particular military conducted all 16 operations. Source: Authors' own compilation. Contact corresponding author for any data clarification: aurel.croissant@ipw.uni-heidelberg.de

Third, once deployed for a specific mission, the military generally remained involved in that field for the remainder of the review period. From April 2020 to December 2021, the average number of military operations increased from eight to around 10. Most governments moved to a high level of military deployment with the mass roll-out of vaccines and the spread of new variants in late 2020 and early 2021.

Fourth, Asian militaries were involved earlier than their peers in Latin America. This is what one would expect given the geographic proximity of the countries in the region to China, where the first cases of infection were reported. Moreover, the Asian countries had prior experience with respiratory diseases, which incentivized a more rapid and comprehensive reaction, as seen in Taiwan and Vietnam.² However, Latin American militaries had a slightly broader mission profile—especially in the second half of 2020. Between May and December 2020, Latin American militaries performed, on average, two missions more than their Asian counterparts. Beginning in January 2021, the regional patterns began to converge as Asian militaries successively adopted broader mission portfolios, while Latin American militaries were not assigned additional operations.

Fifth, contrary to the widely held belief that autocratic governments have more extensively securitized the pandemic, we found that regime type per se was a weak predictor for the militarization of COVID-19 responses. While military participation tended to be low in the two liberal democracies, Taiwan and Uruguay, the closed autocracy of Cuba also conducted a small number of pandemic-related operations. The remaining five cases revealed very similar deployment patterns despite differing regime types: militaries in the two electoral democracies (Brazil and Sri Lanka), the two electoral autocracies (Philippines and Venezuela), and Vietnam (a closed autocracy) conducted a similar number of operations during much of the review period.

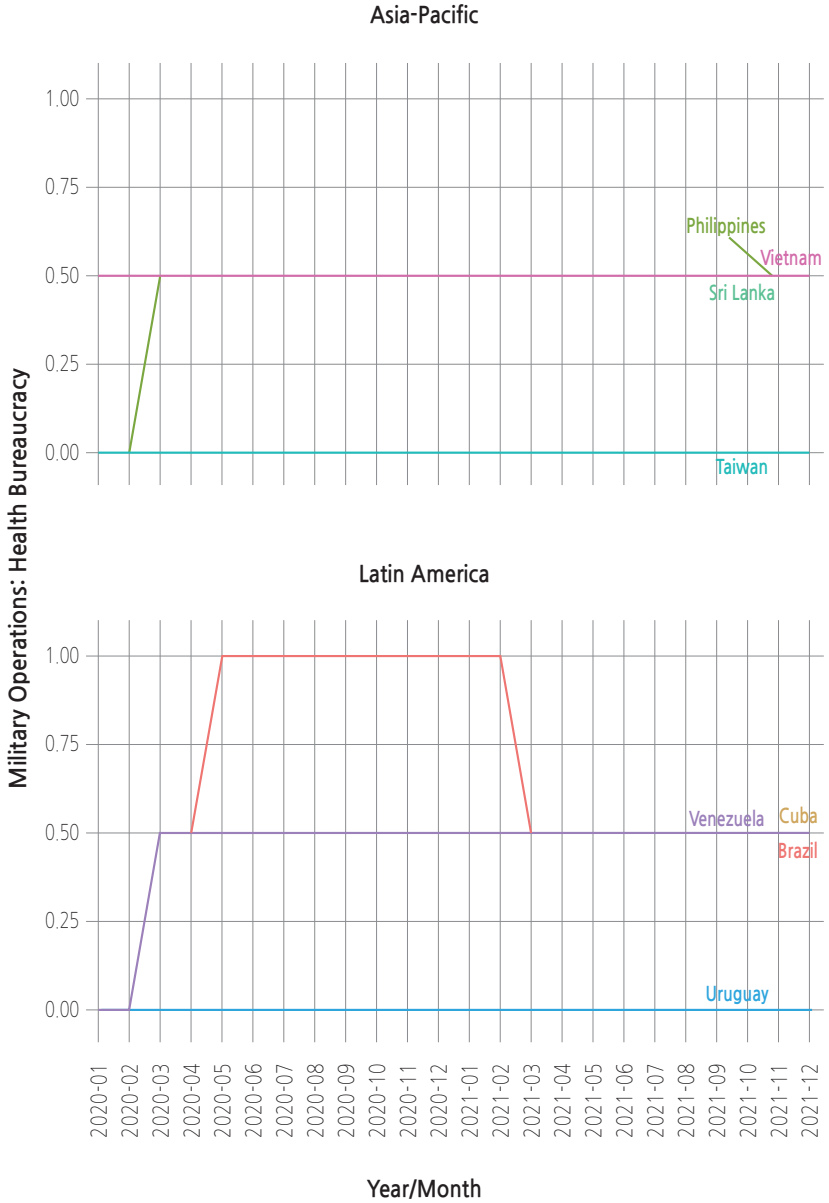
² For more detail, see the case studies in Croissant and Hellmann (2023).

Disaggregating Military Mission Profiles

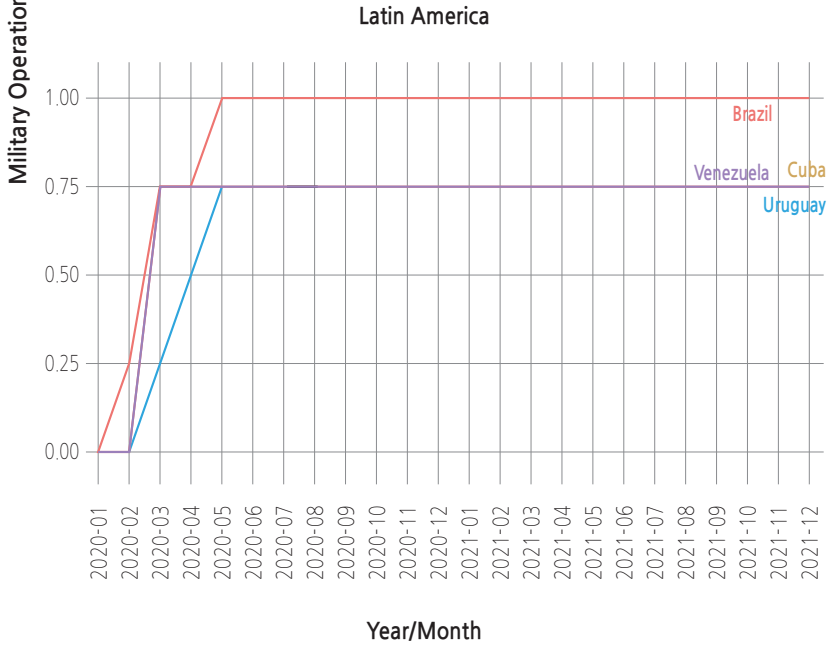
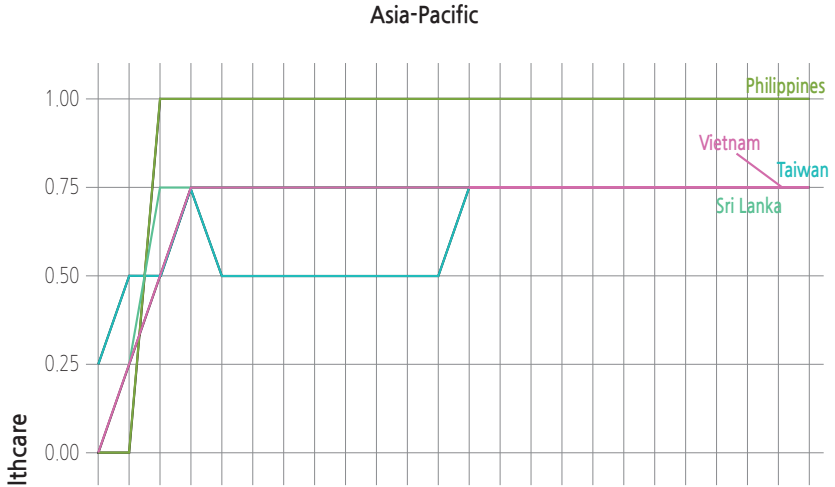
Beyond these general similarities and patterns, we found important differences in terms of the specific missions and operations that militaries were authorized to implement. This is summarized in Figure 3 below, which presents monthly data on military activities in health-related bureaucracy, production facilities, public security, healthcare, and logistics. For comparability, the graphs are normalized to a 0–1 scale, showing operations conducted by the military as a percentage of all operations that are part of one of the five missions. Reiterating the aggregate differences between the countries, with Taiwan’s military being involved in the fewest and Venezuela’s army conducting the most COVID-19-related operations, the disaggregation yields important insights into the concrete mission profiles.

Figure 3. Military Mission Profiles per Country, January 2020-December 2021.

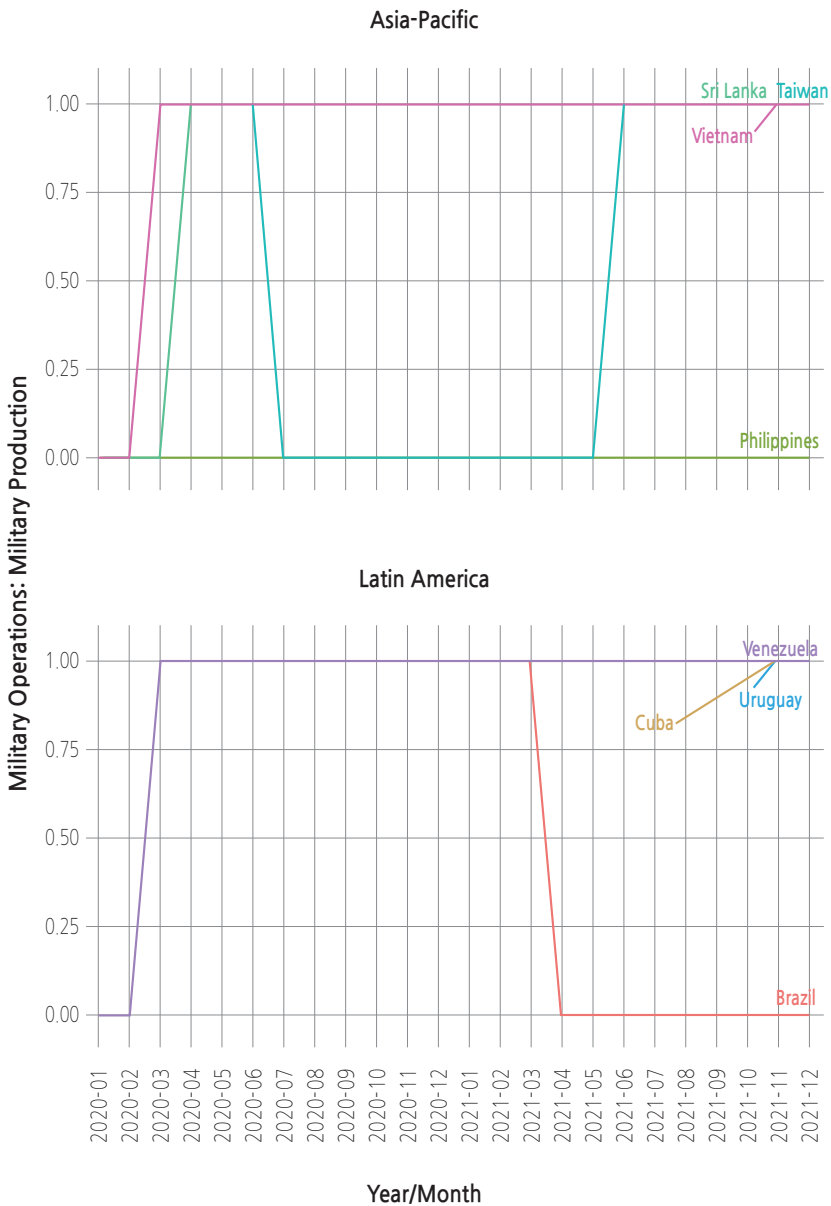
Health Bureaucracy



Healthcare

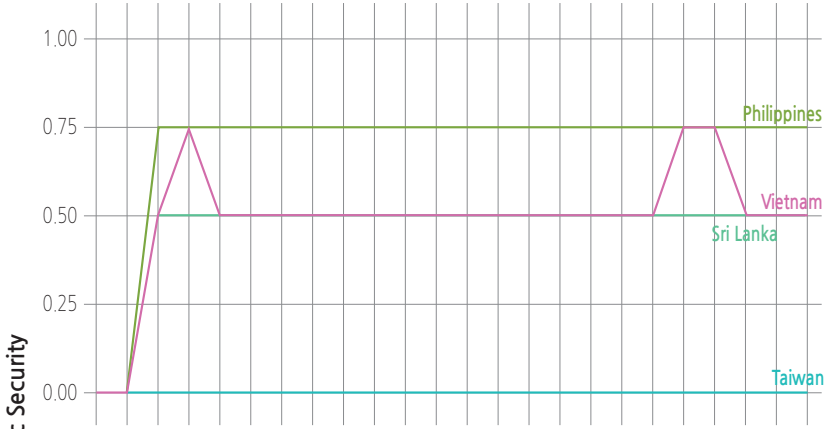


Military Production

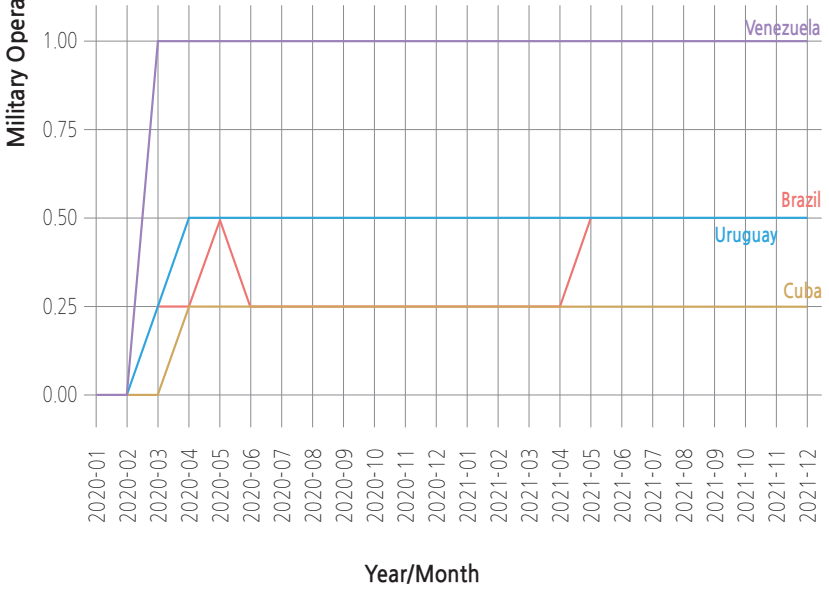


Public Security

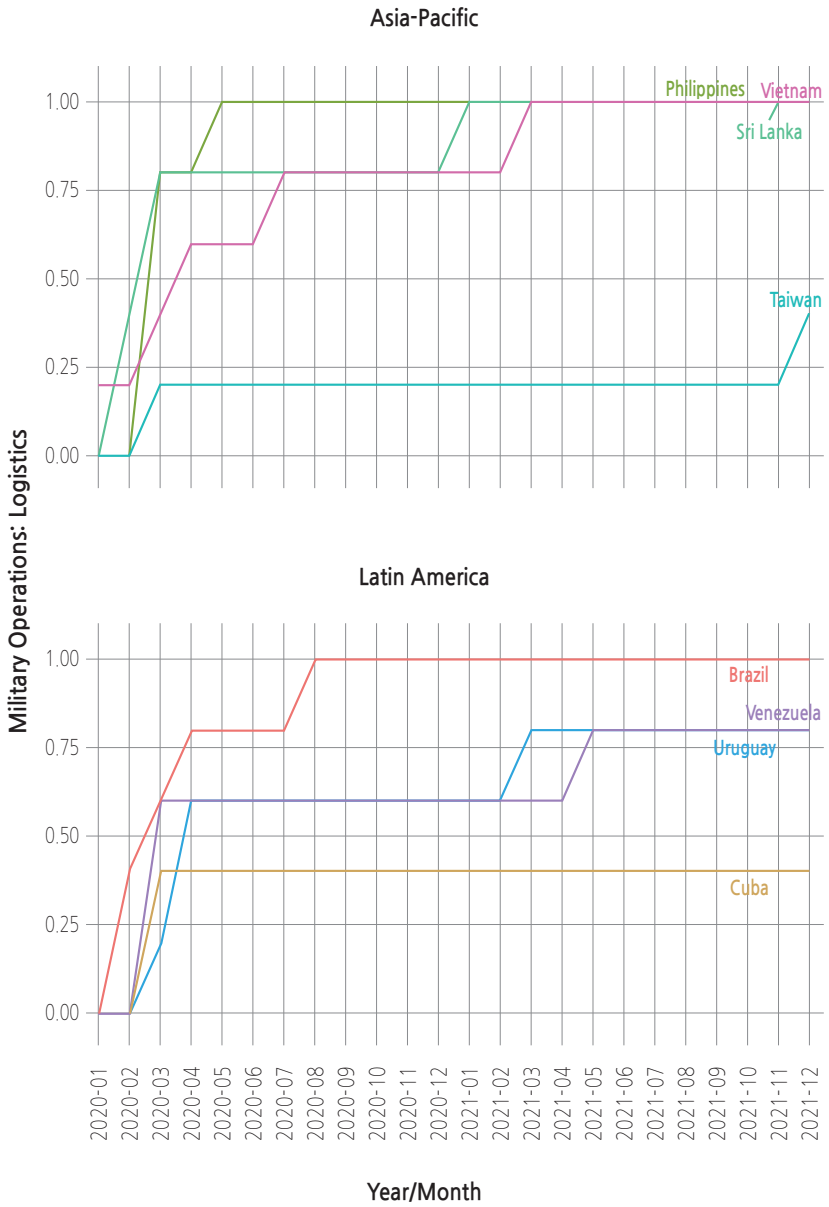
Asia-Pacific



Latin America



Logistics



Source: Authors' own compilations. Contact corresponding author for any data clarification: aurel.croissant@ipw.uni-heidelberg.de

First, all eight militaries were extensively involved in providing health services. In Brazil and the Philippines, the army supported or conducted the full range of COVID-19-related healthcare missions, including disseminating information, decontaminating public areas, as well as testing, vaccinating, and caring for patients. The Taiwanese, Uruguayan, and Vietnamese militaries were not involved in informing the public, while the Venezuelan military did not perform testing, screening, or vaccination duties.

Second, active-duty or recently retired military officers played a very prominent role or dominated the National Emergency Response Committee (NERC) in six of the eight cases. In Brazil, an active army general served as the Minister of Health from June 2020 to March 2021. Only in Taiwan and Uruguay were NERCs exclusively staffed by civilians.

Third, militaries also shouldered the burden in a host of logistical operations to support pandemic responses. In Brazil, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam, military personnel were involved in all five COVID-19-related logistical tasks: the construction and maintenance of healthcare facilities; the transportation or distribution of basic goods to vulnerable communities or civilian healthcare workers; the repatriation of nationals; the transport or distribution of medical products; and the transportation of patients or medical personnel. In Taiwan and Cuba, the government almost exclusively relied on civilian logistics, though soldiers maintained COVID-19 quarantine sites or helped transport/distribute medical supplies.

Fourth, by December 2021, militaries in all cases except Brazil and the Philippines supported the civilian production of COVID-19-related equipment. This included military institutions developing vaccines and building or assisting civilian factories in the production of medical supplies like masks, disinfectants, or ventilators.

Fifth, there was considerable variance in the militarization of public security operations. Interestingly, the differences here are not particularly stark between liberal democracies and closed autocracies. In both Cuba, a

closed autocracy, and Taiwan, a liberal democracy, the military was not extensively involved in public security operations. The Taiwanese military was not assigned domestic law and order functions, while in Cuba, soldiers were deployed solely to support the police in street patrols. In contrast, in the two electoral autocracies, the Philippines and Venezuela, militaries secured borders, patrolled streets, enforced curfews, and performed crowd- and riot-control functions. Soldiers also guarded critical infrastructure in Venezuela. In the electoral democracy of Brazil, public security mobilization was limited to border control, whereas in the electoral democracy of Sri Lanka, it extended to street patrols, similarly to the liberal democracy of Uruguay.

Figure 3 above suggests some noteworthy temporal dynamics. In Brazil, for instance, both the Ministry of Health and the “Crisis Committee for Supervision and Monitoring of COVID-19 Impacts” were headed by active-duty army generals: Eduardo Pazuello and Walter Braga Netto, respectively (Government of Brazil 2020). During Pazuello’s tenure, more than 20 officers replaced civilians in leadership, logistics, and finance posts within the Ministry of Health (Correio Braziliense 2020). Furthermore, Brazil and Vietnam saw significant changes in the use of military production facilities. For instance, in March 2020, the Vietnam Military Medical University designed COVID-19 test kits in cooperation with the Viet A Company (Vietnam Military Medical University 2020); in June 2021, the Vietnamese Military Medical University began conducting Phase 3 of clinical trials on a SARS-CoV-2 vaccine that was developed by a domestic biotech start-up (McBeth 2021).

These two countries also experienced changes in military mobilization as part of public security operations. In Brazil, the military’s public security function in the first pandemic year was mostly limited to border control. Starting in May 2021, its operations expanded to the provision of security for 24-hour vaccination stations. Still, the Brazilian military kept an overall low profile in public security. In Vietnam, along with controlling border areas and guarding critical infrastructure, troops also patrolled the streets to enforce government-decreed lockdowns in March and April 2020, doing

so again in August and September 2021 (Amnesty International 2021; Ebbighausen 2020). Only Taiwan's military saw significant changes in its healthcare operations after the initial mobilization phase. Besides supporting civilian agencies in COVID-19 testing and providing medical care, anti-chemical warfare units decontaminated cruise ships, repatriation flights, and public areas from February to April 2020, and then again throughout 2021 (National Defense Army Command 2021; Wang 2020).

Finally, in four cases, Figure 3 shows an almost parallel increase in military logistical operations in late 2020 and early 2021. In Uruguay and Venezuela, this was related to the military taking over the transportation and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in March and May 2021, respectively (Ministry of National Defense of Uruguay 2021; Redacción teleSUR 2021). In January 2021, the Sri Lankan military was charged with, *inter alia*, transporting COVID-19 patients; starting in March 2021, the Vietnamese People's Army began renewed repatriation activities (Antara Indonesian News Agency 2021; PTI 2021).

Militarized Pandemic Backsliding?

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged against the backdrop of a worldwide trend towards autocratization—with Asia-Pacific and Latin America being no exception (Polga-Hecimovich 2021; Lewkowicz et al. 2022; Sorsa and Kivikoski 2023; Croissant and Hellmann 2023; Papada et al. 2023).³ Initially, many observers worried that the militarization of pandemic relief would “fuel a crisis for democracy around the world” (Freedom House 2021). The data from the Varieties of Democracy

3 The term “autocratization” denotes a “substantial de-facto decline of core institutional requirements for electoral democracy” (Lührmann and Lindberg 2019: 1096). Substantially, “autocratization” encompasses the decline of democratic qualities of any democratic regime and the collapse of democracies, but also the decline of democratic characteristics in autocracies.

Table 2**DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING PRIOR TO AND DURING THE PANDEMIC.**

	Democratic backsliding (pre-2020)	PanDem (March 2020-June 2021)	PanBack (March 2020-June 2021)
Democracies			
Brazil	Yes	0.35	0.31
Sri Lanka	Yes	0.7	0.64
Taiwan	No	0	0
Uruguay	No	0.15	0.07
Autocracies			
Cuba	No	0.4	0.12
Philippines	Yes	0.4	0.33
Venezuela	Yes	0.65	0.16
Vietnam	No	0.15	0.07

Note. The Pandemic Violations of Democratic Standards Index (PanDem) measures the extent to which state emergency responses to COVID-19 violated democratic standards. Its scores range from low (0) to high (1), reflecting the sum of seven quarterly violation indices between March 2020 and June 2021. The Pandemic Backsliding Index's (PanBack) quarterly scores between March 2020 and June 2021 also range from low (0) to high (1). They capture the extent to which state COVID-19 responses undermined the overall quality of democracy within a given country. Sources: Maerz et al. (2021) and Edgell et al. (2022).

(V-Dem) project's Pandemic Backsliding database (Edgell et al. 2022; Maerz et al. 2021) indicate that the public policies made in response to COVID-19's onset and spread often further complicated democratic processes.⁴ However, the data in Table 2 below reveal important refinements. Among the eight countries under review, those that had already taken an authoritarian turn before the outbreak were at higher risk of suffering democratic erosion due to COVID-19-related government violations. The pandemic fostered democratic regression in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Brazil, and Venezuela. Cuba's democratic quality was weakly impacted given its already low democracy level.

⁴ For an overview of early studies, see Sorsa and Kivikoski (2023). For case study evidence from Asia, see Croissant and Hellmann (2023).

States' COVID-19 responses in the consolidated liberal democracies of Uruguay and Taiwan as well as in authoritarian Vietnam neither massively violated democratic standards for emergency responses nor did the existing level of democracy recede—albeit censorship and repression of critics continued in Vietnam (Chang and Lin 2021; Macias Herrera and Croissant 2022; Schuler 2021). It is, however, unclear whether pandemic backsliding was causally linked to the involvement of the military in the health emergency's management. In fact, the eponymous database provides little evidence of military involvement in pandemic backsliding, as only one indicator looks at whether soldiers enforced COVID-19 measures.

All four countries with pre-pandemic backsliding, as well as Cuba, had a PanDem score above the average of 0.20 (out of a maximum of 1.0) for the 144 countries included in the Pandemic Backsliding dataset, meaning about 20 percent of the maximum possible extent of violations. In fact, Sri Lanka, ranking 2nd in PanDem and 1st in PanBack, Brazil ranking 27th and 8th respectively, the Philippines ranking 22nd and 5th respectively, and Venezuela 3rd and 45th respectively, are among the 10 worst countries globally in terms of the extent to which these emergency measures violated democratic standards and/or undermined the overall quality of democracy within each country. Ranking 16th in PanDem, Cuba lags not far behind in this regard.

Our expert survey includes five questions addressing the implications of domestic COVID-19-related military deployment for democracy and civil–military relations: two concern the political and operational autonomy of the military, two cover potential impingements on civil liberties and political rights, and one addresses whether the military gained or lost influence in political decision-making or encroached on civilian authorities' decision-making power as a result of their involvement in state COVID-19 responses. We reproduce the questions in the Appendix. Table 3 below summarizes the results.

Table 3

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF MILITARY ENGAGEMENT IN STATES' COVID-19 RESPONSES.

	Military Autonomy				Political Rights and Civil Liberties				Civil-Military Balance	
	Decision-Making on Deployment		Autonomy from Oversight		Violation of Political Rights		Violation of Civil Liberties		Additional Military Influence	
	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021
Brazil	low	medium	high	medium	none	none	none	none	high	moderate
Cuba	medium	medium	medium	medium	high	high	low	low	moderate	moderate
Sri Lanka	medium	medium	medium	medium	none	none	low	none	high	decrease
Taiwan	none	none	none	none	none	none	none	none	unchanged	unchanged
Philippines	low	low	medium	low	low	none	medium	low	moderate	unchanged
Uruguay	none	none	low	low	none	none	none	low	unchanged	unchanged
Venezuela	medium	low	high	medium	low	none	high	medium	unchanged	unchanged
Vietnam	low	medium	none	none	low	none	none	low	unchanged	unchanged

Note. Source is Authors' own compilation from the expert survey. The two experts per country participated in both rounds of the survey (2020 and 2021).

Military Autonomy

A first crucial finding is that in half of the cases under analysis (Brazil, Cuba, Sri Lanka, and Venezuela), the military enjoyed medium to high autonomy in deciding on its COVID-19-related missions and operations with only sporadic or ineffective civilian oversight. In Cuba, the blurred boundaries between the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) and the government, which has characterized civil–military relations since 1959, persisted throughout the pandemic. Military personnel (mostly retired) in consultation with civilians, especially the president, made decisions on managing the pandemic and jointly decided to activate the National Defense Council, which has the authority to adopt general and mandatory provisions during exceptional situations. While the FAR has significant political influence, it did not act with complete autonomy as it either followed government instructions or made decisions regarding its COVID-19-related operations and missions in conjunction with members of the Communist Party (Expert 1 CU 2022; Expert 2 CU 2021).

In Brazil, President Jair Bolsonaro had sought to militarize the government even before the pandemic's onset. By the end of 2020, active and reserve officers occupied about half of his cabinet positions and there were over 6,000 placed within the federal administration (Hunter and Vega 2022). As the pandemic progressed, civilian oversight decreased and Bolsonaro's nonchalant stance on COVID-19 mitigation strategies enabled army generals to progressively gain more influence over the initiation, formulation, management, and termination of related military health-emergency missions (Expert BR 1 2022).

In Venezuela, military elites had also already possessed political decision-making authority before the onset of COVID-19. The militarization of the national government further intensified throughout the health crisis, as the number of both active and retired officers forming part of the Nicolás Maduro administration increased from eight to 11 between 2020 and 2021 (Altuve et al. 2021). Moreover, civilian oversight was limited as Maduro's regime is generally apathetic about how the Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana (FANB) carries out its missions (Expert VZ 2 2021, 2022). The government has long turned a blind eye to military excesses, abuses, and illicit activities, since the FANB is key to Maduro's survival in office (Trinkunas 2021).

The pandemic further enhanced the military's involvement in government affairs in Sri Lanka, where both serving and retired officers played a key role in President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's administration. Rajapaksa made the army commander the leader of the "National Operation Center for Prevention of the COVID-19 Outbreak" and appointed senior military officers as taskforce coordinators in all country districts. The government was heavily criticized for enabling officers instead of more competent medical experts to dictate public policies. Partly due to such criticism, in 2021 input from healthcare professionals was increasingly incorporated into the COVID-19 policy-making process and the military's role lessened as the year progressed. Despite sporadic and ineffective civilian oversight, civil society and the media closely monitored COVID-19-related programs and openly criticized some policies (Expert

LK 1 2021, 2022).

In the Philippines, the military was initially formally excluded from the relevant national decision-making body, the Inter Agency Task Force (IATF) on COVID-19, but later joined in March 2020. President Rodrigo Duterte's administration also appointed retired military officers to other key positions related to the pandemic, such as heading the vaccination program, and the military worked alongside the police, coastguard, and the Bureau of Fire Protection as part of the "security cluster" to decide on the allocation of public-security tasks. Moreover, in consultation with local authorities, the IATF commander decided on how many soldiers and what equipment to commit and withdraw from COVID-19-related operations. Beginning in 2021, however, military units on the ground had to disclose their activities in local IATF meetings in addition to reporting to the defense secretary, which conveyed military activities back to the IATF (Expert PH 1 2021, 2022).

In the remaining three cases, the military had little decision-making autonomy and could not conduct COVID-19-related operations free from civilian oversight. In Taiwan, the military was minimally involved in the pandemic response and merely carried out missions ordered by civilian authorities, especially the Central Epidemic Control Center (Expert TWN 1 2021; Expert TWN 2 2021, 2022). In Uruguay, similarly, military missions were exclusively decided on by the government and civilian authorities, though the armed forces did make operational decisions regarding how they would accomplish their assigned tasks (Macias Herrera and Croissant 2022). The Vietnamese People's Army did not assume decision-making authority, as the National Steering Committee for COVID-19 was headed by civilians (VNA 2020; Huong 2021). Officers did make up the Provincial People's Committee COVID-19 Response Boards; nevertheless, they had no decision-making power. All COVID-19-related missions and operations were monitored and overseen by the government and party officials (Expert VT 1 2021, 2022).

Political Rights and Civil Liberties

A second striking finding is that military deployment and autonomy, where it was of medium to high intensity, only had weak repercussions for political rights and civil liberties. This does not mean that there has been no deterioration in democracy or the rule of law during the pandemic. The data in Table 3 show there was such a deterioration, with corresponding reports from various democracy barometers (Freedom House 2021, 2022; Bertelsmann Stiftung 2022). However, public security affected the state of democracy much more than the other four types of military missions. This finding is consistent with the results of other studies about the negative influence of militarized law enforcement and military policing on the protection of civil liberties and physical integrity rights (Flores-Macías and Zarkin 2021; Bayer et al. 2023). Regarding the cases studied in this research, the Cuban National Brigade, an elite FAR group, was deployed in Havana in December 2020 to intimidate anti-government protestors (Rodríguez 2020). Demonstrations against the ruling Communist Party, strict pandemic lockdowns, and economic mismanagement continued into 2021 and were met with immediate military repression and arbitrary detentions (Tedesco & Diamint 2021). The mobilization of soldiers to enforce COVID-19 policies in Venezuela severely curtailed civil liberties. Maduro's Emergency Decree, first issued in mid-March 2020, authorized the security forces to carry out inspections of individuals under reasonable suspicion of violating COVID-19 measures. Moreover, military border surveillance specifically targeted citizens who returned to the country via illegal passages and were labeled "bio-terrorists (AF 2020). Under this stigma, the Venezuelan military reportedly harassed returnees and quarantined them in poor sanitary conditions (Human Rights Watch 2020).

In the Philippines, the involvement of the army in policing tasks and surveillance during the first pandemic year was also fraught with threats to civil liberties (Villar & Magnawa 2021). Soldiers were ordered to quell protests and other forms of political demonstration, and fully armed troops were stationed at checkpoints and performed curfew-enforcing patrols.

The presence of heavily armed soldiers constrained the political space, not least because the armed forces did not adapt their repressive rules of engagement to fit different mission types (Expert PH 1 2021, 2022; Expert PH 2 2022).

In Uruguay and Taiwan, in contrast, military operations did not significantly affect political rights or civil liberties due to the limited involvement of their respective armed forces in state COVID-19 responses. This was, however, also the case in Brazil and Sri Lanka, where the military was extensively involved in containing the pandemic. President Bolsonaro repeatedly stated that “my army is not going to force the people to stay at home,” and so the military withheld from engaging in coercive COVID-19-related operations (Acacio et al. 2022; CNN 2021). The Sri Lankan government’s COVID-19 responses did curb freedoms of expression, minority rights, and the rule of law (PEARL 2020), yet putting soldiers in charge of handling population control and manning curfew roadblocks did not contribute to widespread or systematic violations of political or human rights. Soldiers rarely clashed with civilians, unlike the police—who were at the forefront of disputes with protestors (Expert LK 1 2021, 2022). Finally, the Vietnamese government abstained from deploying the military to curtail civil liberties and political rights throughout the pandemic, instead continuing to use other organizations, particularly the gargantuan Ministry of Public Security, to wield its coercive power.

Civil–Military Balance of Power

As for overall civil–military power relations, in Brazil and Cuba the armed forces’ political power increased significantly due to COVID-19. In line with the penal populism and militarized law-and-order politics of the incumbent presidents in Sri Lanka and the Philippines, the military’s political power increased throughout 2020 in both countries—yet somewhat diminished during 2021, too (see Table 3 above). In the remaining four countries, pandemic-related military missions and operations did not significantly alter the civil–military balance of power. It should be noted, however, that in Venezuela the military already

wielded very strong political (and economic) influence prior to the health emergency.

Moreover, not all the changes that took place within civil–military relations were related to COVID-19. Although Brazil’s military gained political influence during the crisis, the militarization of political and social life there had started long before the novel coronavirus appeared and even before Bolsonaro’s election in 2018 (Harig 2021). Similarly, politics and society in Sri Lanka had seen escalating militarization since 2019 when Rajapaksa, a former career military officer and defense minister, was elected president in 2019.

Nevertheless, the pandemic helped legitimate the militarization that unfolded in 2020 and came at the expense of civilian authorities (Fonseka et al. 2021). In the Philippines, military engagement in the government’s COVID-19-related responses further normalized Duterte’s efforts to grant the military more non-traditional tasks domestically, including in areas where there is no armed rebellion or insurgency (Teehankee 2021). Similar to Brazil, this trend commenced prior to COVID-19 and even before Duterte’s 2016 election (Thompson 2021). In Cuba, the appointment of a former army colonel, Manuel Marrero, as prime minister in 2020 and the selection of other officers as vice-ministers to various departments during the pandemic are evidence of the military’s increasing political power and influence (Expert 1 CU 2021). In contrast, Taiwan, Uruguay, and Vietnam did not experience any significant changes in civil-military relations, which is unsurprising given the lack of military autonomy and the existence of effective civilian oversight in all three of these countries (Karalekas 2018; Macias Herrera and Croissant 2022; Croissant and Kuehn 2018).

Conclusion

This paper has provided a systematic assessment of military participation in government responses to COVID-19 and its consequences for the

robustness of democratic standards in eight countries in the Asia-Pacific and Latin America. Based on original monthly data collected for military operations from January 2020 to December 2021, we find that all governments relied on their armed forces to contain the pandemic, but the extent of military involvement therein varied considerably. In terms of mission profiles, we identified the provision of health services and supporting civilian logistical and production capacities as being the main tasks in the reviewed cases. Officers were also involved in planning and coordinating pandemic-response policy, typically through the participation in NERCs. Only in some cases did militaries also conduct public security operations, most prominently in the Philippines and Venezuela.

Based on two rounds of an expert survey, we then evaluated the implications of these military deployments for democratic standards in the eight cases. We found that there were different degrees and types of related impact in Brazil, Cuba, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Venezuela. First, the risk of democratic backsliding catalyzed by COVID-19-related military engagement was clearly linked to the pre-pandemic state of democracy. The militarization of pandemic responses did not “cause” democratic regression in the examined countries, but it likely accelerated pre-existing conditions and problems in the democratic governance of the security sector. This “acceleration effect” can be identified in democracies like Brazil and Sri Lanka, where military autonomy increased and the civil-military balance of power shifted in favor of the army. Interestingly, the expansion of military autonomy in these countries did not lead to an increase in violations of civil liberties or political rights. The acceleration effect was also observable in electoral autocracies like the Philippines and Venezuela, both of which experienced autocratization leading up to 2020.

Second, there is the less visible but still worrisome potential for what Smith and Cheeseman (2020) describe as the “ratchet effect”: the military’s enhanced role potentially outlasting the pandemic and thus being prone to future misuse by civilian authorities. This ratchet effect is well-documented in the literature on policymaking in times of crisis

(Posner and Vermeulen 2003). Political leaders may refrain from cutting back on responsibilities newly assigned to the military once an emergency has passed to be able to swiftly react to future crises. Moreover, there is the danger that propping up militaries instead of civilian agencies in pandemic management might have made civilians even more dependent on the armed forces' cooperation and capabilities in future disaster events.

Third, the pivotal role of the military in state COVID-19 responses did not necessarily erode political rights or civil-military relations in most countries. Nonetheless, the obedience of military officers certainly emboldened the authoritarian attitudes of populist-authoritarian civilian leaders like Jair Bolsonaro, Nicolas Maduro, Rodrigo Duterte, and Nandasena Gotabaya Rajapaksa, whose militarized responses to COVID-19's onset marked a continuation or even extension of their pre-pandemic penal populism. In other words, the militarization of pandemic relief reinforced the (semi-)authoritarian nature of governance in these respective countries.

Determining whether military efforts to contain the pandemic have proved problematic for democratic governance depends also on whether they were limited to policy implementation or if the military remained autonomous in deciding which roles it would adopt and how it would fulfil these (Passos and Acácio 2020). In all cases, military involvement was warranted; it was also initiated on behalf of civilian political leaders. However, the militarized administrations in Brazil, Cuba, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Venezuela were not only more likely to give their armed forces a larger role in fighting the pandemic but also attached less strings to it. Lastly, not all operations are the same and their implications depend on the context at hand. We expect that military COVID-19-related missions and operations are less likely to cause lasting damage to democracy and civil-military relations once the pandemic is over in those countries where military actors were not involved in the provision of public security and do not have a history of human rights abuses and political adventurism.

Our analysis did not aim at, and hence cannot explain, why different

states deployed their respective militaries for certain types of COVID-19-related operations. A recent study found that military participation could not be explained by differences across states in the health bureaucracy and health delivery systems, in administrative capacity, or whether regimes were democratic or autocratic (Erickson et al. 2023). Pandemic-related indicators such as infection rates or excess deaths associated with COVID-19 are also poor predictors because of data issues⁵ and problems of reverse causality. While Erickson et al. (2023) failed to detect a relationship between democracy and militarization of pandemic policies, Dietrich et al. (2023) found a statistically significant and robust relationship between elections in democracies and militarization of some pandemic-related missions. Still, the theoretical mechanism that underlies this relationship is unclear. Is it that autocrats are more hesitant to deploy the military because they fear a politically pivotal role of the military more than democratic leaders, as Dietrich et al. assume? Or, is it because democratic leaders who face an election are more concerned about the provision of public goods (including health) than political leaders who do not have to worry about the risk of losing an election, as some theories would predict (cf. Croissant & Hellmann 2023)?

Of course, our offered insights are only tentative, as the data on which our findings and conclusions are based are limited both geographically and temporally. For a deeper understanding of the military's role(s) in pandemic-management operations, it is necessary to expand the analysis on both axes. Only with longer time-series data for a larger number of country contexts across multiple world regions and additional, in-depth case studies can we learn about whether the pandemic-related expansion of military power and the further erosion of democratic standards that we documented for countries such as the Philippines and Venezuela were an acute flare-up or will turn into a chronic illness.

5 There was underreporting or missing data in some case in African countries with a versatile disease environment, and in particularly repressive regimes, for example North Korea, China, and Laos.

References

- Acácio, Igor, Anaís. M. Passos and David Pion-Berlin. 2023. "Military Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis in Latin America: Military Presence, Autonomy, and Human Rights Violations." *Armed Forces & Society* 49/2: 1–23.
- AFP. 2020. "Venezuela anuncia despliegue militar en pasos fronterizos ilegales ante covid-19. Semana." June 27, 2020. <https://www.semana.com/mundo/articulo/venezuela-anuncia-despliegue-militar-en-pasos-fronterizos-ilegales-ante-covid-19/682728/>
- Alagappa, Muthiah (ed.). 2001. *The Declining Political Role of the Military in Asia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Altuve, Joelys, Andrey Paredes, Daniela Ramírez, and Jessica Vivas (eds.). 2021. "Presencia Militar en el Estado Venezolano" [Report]. *Transparencia Venezuela*. <https://transparencia.org.ve/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Presencia-Militar-en-el-Estado-Venezolano.pdf>
- Amnesty International. 2021. Viet Nam: As Ho Chi Minh City extends Covid-19 restrictions, militarized response must respect human rights. September 13, 2021. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/09/viet-nam-as-ho-chi-minh-city-extends-covid-19-restrictions-militarized-response-must-respect-human-rights/>
- Antara Indonesian News Agency. 2021. "Military, police spearheading COVID-19 fight: Tjahjanto." Antara Indonesian News Agency. March 16, 2021. <https://en.antaranews.com/news/169321/military-police-spearheading-covid-19-fight-tjahjanto>
- Bayer, Markus, Aurel Croissant, Roya Izadi, and Nikitas Scheeder. 2023. "Multidimensional Measures of Militarization (M3) - A Global Dataset." *Armed Forces & Society*, DOI: 10.1177/0095327X231215295
- Bertelsmann Stiftung. 2022. *Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2022*. <https://bti-project.org/en/?&cb=00000>
- Cassani, Andrea and Luca Tomini. 2019. *Autocratization in post-Cold War political regimes*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Chang, Wen Chen and Chun-Yuan Lin. 2021. "Taiwan: Democracy, Technology, and Civil Society." In *Covid-19 in Asia. Law and Policy Contexts* (ed. Victor V. Ramraj). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cheeseman, Nic and Jeffrey Smith. 2020. "The pandemic is being used to erode democratic freedoms: Civil society must fight back." *Mail & Guardian*. April 17. <https://mg.co.za/article/2020-04-17-the-pandemic-is-being-used-to-erode-democratic-freedoms-civil-society-must-fight-back/>
- Coppedge, Michael et al. 2022. *V-Dem [Country–Year/Country–Date] Dataset v12*. <https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds22>.
- Correio Braziliense. 2020. "Mais dois militares são nomeados para assumir postos em saúde. Diario de Pernambuco." <https://www.correio-braziliense.com.br/app/noticia/brasil/2020/05/29/interna-brasil,859482/mais-dois-militares-sao-nomeados-para-assumir-postos-em-saude.shtml>
- Croissant, Aurel and Olli Hellmann (eds.). 2023. *Democracy, State Capacity and the Governance of COVID-19 in Asia-Oceania*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Croissant, Aurel and David Kuehn. 2018. "Military and Politics." In *Routledge Handbook of Asian Politics* (ed. Shiping Hua). New York and London: Routledge.
- Croissant, Aurel. 2018. *Civil-Military Relations in Southeast Asia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- CSSE. 2022. *COVID-19 Dashboard at the Johns Hopkins University*. Center for Systems Science and Engineering. <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>
- Dietrich, Nick, Kristina Eck K and Chiara Ruffa. 2023. "How governance shaped military responses to the COVID-19 pandemic." *European Political Science Review* 15/4: 628-640.
- Ebbighausen, Rodion. 2020. "Vietnam: How Vietnam is winning its "war" on coronavirus." *Deutsche Welle*. March 26. <https://p.dw.com/p/3a5V9>
- Edgell, Amanda B., Jean Lachapelle, Anna Lührmann, Seraphine F.

- Maerz. 2021. "Pandemic backsliding: Violations of democratic standards during Covid-19." *Social Science & Medicine* 285: 114244.
- Edgell, Amanda B., et al. 2022. *Pandemic backsliding: Democracy During Covid-19* (PanDem), Version 6. Varieties of democracy (V-Dem) Institute. <https://www.v-dem.net/en/our-work/research-projects/pandemic-backsliding/>
- Erickson, Peter, Marko Kljajić and Nadav Shelef, N. 2023. "Domestic Military Deployments in Response to COVID-19." *Armed Forces & Society* 49/2: 350-371.
- Flores-Macías, Gustavo A. and Jessica Zarkin. 2021. "The Militarization of Law Enforcement: Evidence from Latin America." *Perspectives on Politics* 19/2: 519–538.
- Fonseka, Bhavani, Luwie Ganesthasan and Asanga Welikala. 2021. "Sri Lanka: Pandemic-Catalyzed Democratic Backsliding." In *Covid-19 in Asia. Law and Policy Contexts* (ed. Victor V. Ramraj). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Freedom House. 2020. *Democracy under Lockdown. The Impact of COVID-19 on the Global Struggle for Freedom*. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/COVID-19_Special_Report_Final_.pdf
- Freedom House. 2021ff. *Freedom in the World*. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world>
- Gerring, John. 2016. *Case study research: principles and practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gibson-Fall, Fawzia. 2021. "Military responses to COVID-19, emerging trends in global civil-military engagements." *Review of International Studies* 47/2: 155–170.
- Government of Brazil. 2020. Presidente Jair Bolsonaro institui Comitê de Crise para Supervisão e Monitoramento dos Impactos da Covid-19. <https://www.gov.br/pt-br/noticias/financas-impuestos-e-gestao-publica/2020/03/presidente-jair-bolsonaro-institui-comite-de-crise-para-supervisao-e-monitoramento-dos-impactos-da-covid-19>

- Harig, Christoph. 2021. "Militarisation by Popular Demand? Explaining the Politics of Internal Military Roles in Brazil." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 41: 465-482. <https://doi.org/10.1111/blar.13289>
- Human Rights Watch. 2020. Venezuela: Abusive Treatment of Returnees. *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/13/venezuela-abusive-treatment-returnees>
- Hunter, Wendy and Diego Vega. 2022. "Populism and the military: symbiosis and tension in Bolsonaro's Brazil." *Democratization* 29/2: 337–359.
- Huong, Giang. 2021. Changes to National Steering Committee for COVID-19 Response. *PRIME MINISTER*. <https://primeminister.chinhphu.vn/changes-to-national-steering-committee-for-covid-19-response-11239608.htm>
- Jenne, Nicole and Rafael Martínéz. 2022. "Domestic military missions in Latin America: Civil-military relations and the perpetuation of democratic deficits." *European Journal of International Security* 7/1: 58-83. doi:10.1017/eis.2021.25
- Kalkman, Jori Pascal. 2021. "Military crisis responses to COVID-19." *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 29/1: 99–103.
- Karalekas, Dean (2018). *Civil-military relations in Taiwan: identity and transformation*. Singapore: Emerald Publishing.
- Kuehn, David and Aurel Croissant. 2023. *Routes to Reform. Civil-Military Relations and Democracy in the Third Wave*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lewkowicz, Jacek, Michal Woźniak and Michal Wrześciński. 2022. "COVID-19 and erosion of democracy." *Economic Modelling* 106: 105682. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econmod.2021.105682>
- Lührmann, Anna and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2019. "A third wave of autocratization is here: what is new about it?" *Democratization* 26/7: 1095–1113.
- Lührmann, Anna, Michael Tannenberg, Staffan I. Lindberg. 2018. "Regimes of the World (RoW): Opening New Avenues for the

- Comparative Study of Political Regimes.” *Politics and Governance* 6/1: 60–77.
- Macias Herrera, Ariam and Aurel Croissant. 2022. “Mapping Military Roles in COVID-19 Responses in Latin America—Contours, Causes and Consequences.” *Working Paper No. 2, Special Series 1* (Heidelberg Center for Ibero-American Studies). <https://journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/in-dex.php/hciaswp/article/view/84516/79158>
- Maerz, Seraphine F. et al. 2021. „ “A Framework for Understanding Regime Transformation: Introducing the ERT Dataset.” *Working Paper No. 113* (V-Dem Institute). <https://www.v-dem.net/media/publications/wp113.pdf>
- McBeth, John. 2020. “Indonesia deploys troops to enforce new viral normal.” *Asian Times-English*. May 28, 2020. <https://asiatimes.com/2020/05/indonesia-deploys-troops-to-enforce-new-viral-normal/>
- Ministry of National Defense of Uruguay. 2021. Fuerza Aérea y Ejército realizan distribución de la vacuna Pfizer, utilizando 500 efectivos, 7 aeronaves y 70 vehículos. <https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-defensa-nacional/comunicacion/noticias/fuerza-aerea-ejercito-realizan-distribucion-vacuna-pfizer-utilizando-500>
- National Defense Army Command. 2021. Large-scale disinfection chemical soldiers strengthen disinfection efforts after new year. <https://army.mnd.gov.tw/pages/NewD.aspx?pkid=9bb00274-d256-4b7c-b4b7-0007397d1aaf>
- Papada, Evie, David Altman, Fabio, Angiolillo, Lisa Gastaldi, Tamara Köhler, Martin Lundstedt, Natalia Natsika, Marina Nord, Yuko Sato, Felix Wiebrecht, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2023. *Defiance in the Face of Autocratization. Democracy Report 2023*. University of Gothenburg: Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-Dem Institute).
- Passos, Anaís M. and Igor Acácio. 2021. “The militarization of responses to COVID-19 in Democratic Latin America.” *Revista de Administração Pública* 55/1: 261–272.
- PEARL. 2020. *Militarisation of Government COVID-19 Response—OHCHR*. Colombo: People for Equality and Relief in Lanka

(PEARL).

- Pion-Berlin, D. 2016. *Military missions in democratic Latin America*. Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Polga-Hecimovich, John. 2021. "The Bureaucratic Perils of Presidentialism: Political Impediments to Good Governance in Latin America." *The Korean Journal of Policy Studies* 36/4: 1–14.
- Posner, Eric A. and Adrian Vermeule. 2003. "Accommodating Emergencies." *Stanford Law Review* 56/3: 605–644.
- PTI. 2020. "COVID-19: India sends medical assistance to five 'friendly' countries including Maldives, Mauritius." *The New Indian Express*. May 10. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/May/10/covid-19-india-sends-medical-assistance-to-five-friendly-countries-including-maldives-mauritius-2141543.html>
- Rajan, Dheepa, Kira Koch, Katja Rohrer, Csongor Bajnoczki, Anna Socha, Maike Voss, Marjonnaine Nicod, Valerie Ridde, and Justin Koonin. 2020. "Governance of the Covid-19 response: a call for more inclusive and transparent decision-making." *BMJ Global Health* 5/5: 1–8.
- Ratchev, Valeri and Todor Tagarev. 2018. "Policy and Legal Frameworks of Using Armed Forces for Domestic Disaster Response and Relief." *Information & Security: An International Journal* 40/2: 137–166.
- Redacción teleSUR. 2021. "Venezuela inicia nueva fase de vacunación contra el coronavirus." *TeleSUR*. <https://www.telesurtv.net/news/venezuela-nueva-fase-vacunacion-covid-20210529-0001.html>
- Rodríguez, Jorge E. 2020. "Militarización de La Habana: 'Es el pueblo, no terroristas invisibles, quien tiene miedo de salir a la calle'." *DIARIO DE CUBA*. https://diariodecuba.com/cuba/1607684126_27165.html
- Schuler, Paul. 2021. "Vietnam in 2020: Controlling COVID and Dissent." *Asian Survey* 61/1: 90–98.
- Seawright, Jason. 2016. *Multi-Method Social Science: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Tools*. Cambridge: Cambridge University

- Press.
- Sorsa, Ville-Pekka and Katja Kivikoski. 2023. "COVID-19 and democracy: a scoping review." *BMC Public Health* 23: 1668. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-16172-y>
- Taş, Hakki. 2024. "Populism and civil–military relations." *Democratization*, 31/1: 70-89.
- Tedesco, Laura and Rut Diamint. 2021. "The Cuban Crackdown." *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/cuba/2021-08-30/cuban-crackdown>
- Teehankee, Julio. C. 2022. "The Philippines in 2021." *Asian Survey* 62/1: 126–136.
- Thompson, Mark R. 2021. "Pushback after backsliding? Unconstrained executive aggrandizement in the Philippines versus contested military-monarchical rule in Thailand." *Democratization* 28/1: 124-141.
- Trinkunas, Harold A. 2021. "The transformation of the Venezuelan Bolivarian armed forces under Chávez and Maduro." In *The Routledge Handbook of Civil-Military Relations* (2nd ed.) (eds. Fiorina Cristina Matei, Carolyn Halladay and Thomas C. Bruneau). London and New York: Routledge.
- Ventura, Deisy de Freitas Lima. 2016. "Do Ebola ao Zika: as emergências internacionais e a securitização da saúde global." *Cadernos de Saúde Pública* 32/4. <https://www.scielo.br/j/csp/a/6pxxTsCbxR68xJps5f54BJp/?lang=pt#ModalTutors>
- Vietnam Military Medical University. 2020. Two clinical specimens from SARS-CoV-2 virus testing by the Vietnam Military Medical University have been granted the registration numbers by the Health Ministry. http://vmmu.edu.vn/Portal/BT3715-two_clinical_specimens_from_sars_cov_2_virus_testing_by_the_vietnam_military_medical_university_have_been_granted_the_registration_numbers_by_the_health_ministry.html
- Villar, Eula Bianca and John Pascual Magnawa. 2022. "Surveillance and pandemic governance in least–ideal contexts: The Philippine

- case.” *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management* 30/1: 22–31.
- VNA. 2020. “National steering committee for coronavirus prevention set up.” *VietnamPlus*. <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/national-steering-committee-for-coronavirus-prevention-set-up/167936.vnp>
- Wang, C. 2020. “The president directed the 33-unit army group to affirm the performance of officers and men in their mission.” *Voice of Han Broadcasting Network*. https://www.voh.com.tw/TW//News/ugC_News_Detail.aspx?NewsCatID=1&NewsID=683
- Watterson, Christopher and Adam Kamradt-Scott. 2016. “Fighting Flu: Securitization and the Military Role in Combating Influenza.” *Armed Forces & Society* 42/1: 145–168.
- Wenham, Claire. 2019. “The oversecuritization of global health: changing the terms of debate.” *International Affairs* 95/5: 1093–1110.

Appendix

In this appendix, we reproduce the segments of the expert survey that provide the empirical basis of the Section “Militarized Pandemic Backsliding.” In total, five questions were asked to assess the implications of domestic COVID-19-related military deployment for democracy and civil-military relations: two questions concern the political and operational autonomy of the military, two cover potential impingements on civil liberties and political rights, and one addresses whether the military gained or lost influence in political decision-making or encroached on civilian authorities’ decision-making power as a result of their involvement in pandemic responses.

Military Autonomy in COVID-19-Related Missions and Operations

We consider military autonomy as comprising two dimensions: autonomy in decision-making and autonomy from oversight. Autonomy in decision-making refers to the military’s de facto power to make decisions on its deployment and operations on its own. Autonomy from oversight means that, regardless of who makes the decision to deploy the military (the military itself or civilian authorities), the military can execute its COVID-19-related missions and operations without effective monitoring and steering by civilian authorities. Empirically, both dimensions tend to correlate in the sense that a high degree of military autonomy in decision-making is usually paralleled by a high degree of military autonomy from civilian oversight. However, it is quite possible that the military enjoys low degrees of decision-making autonomy (i.e., that civilian authorities decide on what the military is supposed to do), but that civilian authorities are unable or unwilling to effectively monitor the military’s conduct.

Autonomy in Decision-making: Did military personnel or civilian authorities make decisions on whether and how the military would be deployed as part of state responses to the COVID-19 pandemic between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2021?

Clarification: This question aims to capture the degree to which the military is able to decide on its COVID-19-related missions and operations. In other words, whether the military was the “decision-maker” or “decision-taker” in the context of its COVID-19-related response missions. If the “decision-maker,” then military personnel that are either active-duty or recently retired (within the past three years) initiate, formulate, manage, and terminate military COVID-19-related missions and operations. If the “decision-taker,” the armed forces merely accept or refuse the COVID-19-related missions they are ordered to undertake by civilian leadership. Here, we are interested in the formal, legal, and de jure aspects, as well as in the de facto situation. In the qualitative assessment, please consider whether a state of emergency exempted the military from civilian command and identify in which military COVID-19-related mission(s) or operation(s), if any, the armed forces were able to decide on autonomously from civilian authorities.

Scale: Ordinal (0–3)

- 3 (High) – The military had complete autonomy in making decisions on its missions, operations, or activities as part of state responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2 (Moderate) – The military made autonomous decisions on most of its missions, operations, or activities as part of state responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Civilian authorities made only a limited number of decisions on the military’s related activities.
- 1 (Low) – Civilian authorities made most decisions on military missions, operations, or activities as part of state responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Autonomous military decision-making was rare and sporadic.
- 0 (None) – Civilian authorities alone made decisions on the military’s missions, operations, or activities as part of state responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- N/A – The military was not involved in state COVID-19 responses.

Autonomy from Civilian Oversight: To what extent was the military able to conduct its COVID-19-related missions and operations between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2021 without effective oversight, monitoring, and steering by civilian authorities?

Clarification: Please detail here whether oversight and monitoring mechanisms are in place that allow civilian authorities to monitor military COVID-19-related missions and operations, and whether and how they are de facto implemented and effective. We understand effective implementation of oversight mechanisms to mean (1) that oversight and steering instruments exist and (2) that military personnel are in practice held accountable for their actions.

Scale: Ordinal (0–3)

3 (High) – The military conducted its COVID-19-related missions and operations free from effective oversight by civilian authorities.

2 (Moderate) – Effective oversight by civilian authorities over the military’s COVID-19-related missions and operations was sporadic and often not effectively implemented, or inconsequential.

1 (Low) – Effective oversight by civilian authorities over the military’s COVID-19-related missions and operations was for the most part effectively implemented.

0 (None) – The military’s COVID-19-related missions and operations were subject to effective oversight by civilian authorities.

N/A – The military was not involved in state COVID-19 responses.

Impact of Military COVID-19-Related Missions on Political Rights and Civil Liberties

Impact of the Military’s COVID-19 Missions and Operations on Political Rights: Did the armed forces impinge on citizens’ political rights when conducting COVID-19-related missions, operations, and activities between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2021?

Clarification: Here we are interested in whether the armed forces’ missions and operations led to violations of citizens’ political rights. “Political rights” refer to the ability of a country’s citizens to participate

in the political process and to hold political decision-makers accountable. We distinguish between three distinct types of political rights: (1) that the national executive and legislative are selected via regular, free, and fair elections in which the majority of adult citizens can participate without discrimination; (2) that citizens can meaningfully participate in the political arena due to the legally guaranteed and de facto freedoms of free speech, of the press and information, as well as of demonstration; and (3) that the legitimate government can operate effectively and free from undue influence of undemocratic actors.

When providing your qualitative assessment, please make sure to describe which political rights were violated, through which military mission(s) or operation(s), and to what extent.

Scale: Ordinal (0–3)

3 (High) – The military’s conducting of its COVID-19-related missions and operations led to the severe, widespread, and systematic restriction of citizens’ political rights.

2 (Moderate) – The military’s conducting of its COVID-19-related missions and operations occasionally restricted citizens’ political rights.

1 (Low) – The military’s conducting of its COVID-19-related missions and operations restricted citizens’ political rights only rarely and in isolated instances.

0 (None) – The military’s conducting of its COVID-19-related missions and operations did not impinge on citizens’ political rights.

N/A – The military was not involved in state COVID-19 responses.

Impact of the Military’s Missions and Operations on Civil Liberties:

Did the armed forces impinge on citizens’ civil liberties when conducting COVID-19-related missions and operations between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2021?

Clarification: This question asks whether the armed forces’ missions and operations led to violations of citizens’ civil liberties. “Civil liberties” refer to the legal provisions that ensure the protection of citizens from

state and third-party infringements on their human rights, and the equality of all citizens before the law. This includes: (1) citizens' fundamental human rights (e.g. to physical integrity, freedom of movement, right to own property, and equality of opportunity) being legally guaranteed; (2) an independent and effective judiciary exists ensuring the de facto realisation of these liberties.

When providing your qualitative assessment, please make sure to describe which civil liberties were violated, through which military mission(s) or operation(s), and to what extent.

Scale: Ordinal (0–3)

3 (High) – The military's conducting of its COVID-19-related missions and operations led to severe, widespread, and systematic violations of citizens' civil liberties.

2 (Moderate) – The military's conducting of its COVID-19-related missions and operations occasionally violated citizens' civil liberties.

1 (Low) – The military's conducting of its COVID-19-related missions and operations violated citizens' civil liberties only rarely and in isolated instances.

0 (None) – The military's conducting of its COVID-19-related missions and operations did not impinge on citizens' civil liberties.

N/A – The military was not involved in state COVID-19 responses.

Impact of Military COVID-19-Related Missions on Civil-Military Relations

Civil-Military Balance of Power: Did the military's political power change between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2021?

Clarification: Here we are interested in whether the armed forces gained or lost influence in political decision-making or encroached on civilian authorities' decision-making power.

In your qualitative assessment, please describe to what extent change in the distribution of civil-military power happened, how it materialised, and how enduring (temporally) it was.

Scale: Ordinal (0–3)

- 3 (High increase) – The military’s political power significantly increased between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2021.
- 2 (Moderate increase) – The military’s political power increased somewhat between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2021.
- 1 (Unchanged) – The military’s political power remained unchanged between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2021.
- 0 (Decrease) – The military’s political power was reduced between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2021.

- Article submitted 11/28/23, revised 1/17/24, accepted 2/8/24

The Asianization of Regional Security in the Indo-Pacific

Felix Heiduk

Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (German Institute for International and Security Affairs)

Abstract

This article seeks to analyze the changes within the US-led regional security architecture as a result of Chinese contestation. It finds that a number of changes are detectable and point to an Asianization of the regional architecture. Asianization is the result of a confluence of a set of empirical phenomena that is producing an incremental shift in power and agency in regional security from the US to Asian powers. These phenomena include, for example, a shift in strategic importance from the hub (the US) to the Asian spokes inside the US alliance system, increasing security cooperation between the spokes, and the growing strategic importance of Asian states outside the formal US alliance system. However, these phenomena bear little resemblance to China's stated aim of forming a regional security architecture "by Asians and for Asians." Quite to the contrary, alignment with the US is actually incrementally increasing as part of the Asianization of the regional security architecture. This is taking place despite divergent views of key stakeholders on the future of the US-led hub-and-spoke system and more generally on US pre-eminence in the region. It can be preliminarily inferred that it is Chinese assertiveness and contestation of the regional status quo, rather than a desire to upend or maintain US primacy, that at least in part drives the Asianization of regional security in the Indo-Pacific.

Keywords: Indo-Pacific, regional security, Asianization, hub-and-spoke system, minilateral

Introduction

Since the Korean War, the security architecture of the Indo-Pacific region¹ has been based on a US-led system of bilateral alliances—the so-called hub-and-spoke system. The US maintains these with Australia, the Philippines, Thailand, Japan, and South Korea. While not without its discontents, this particular security architecture with the US at the helm remained largely uncontested for decades (Bisley 2019). Throughout the last decade, however, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) under Xi Jinping has further developed its own ideas for reorganizing the regional security system. Xi Jinping described the US-led military alliance system as an outdated relic of the Cold War and called for a regional security architecture by Asians and for Asians (Xi 2014). Such a call, on the one hand, suggests Beijing’s negative attitudes towards Washington’s long-standing strategic presence in the region, specifically the continuation of its alliance network. On the other hand, it also reflects an aspiration to shape a new regional security architecture with China, rather than the US, at the center (Yang, 2021). To this end, the PRC has increased militarization of the South China Sea and further augmented the comprehensive armament of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). It has also expanded bilateral security partnerships with countries such as Russia, Iran, and Pakistan among others, and established its own multilateral security forums such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). If Beijing succeeds in substantially shifting the weight away from the US it would amount to what is referred to here as an “Asianization” of the regional security architecture. Heiduk (2022)

The open challenge, for the first time in decades, to the US-led regional security architecture prompts the question: How is the US-led

¹ The term “Indo-Pacific” or “Indo-Pacific region” is increasingly used as the new geographical and strategic nomenclature. As such, it has at least partially come to substitute for the previously widely used term “Asia-Pacific.”

security architecture changing in the face of contestation by China? This article seeks to explore key aspects of the changing regional security architecture at three analytical levels. First, the strategic level: How is regional security conceived in the Indo-Pacific, and what are the strategic goals behind it? Which norms and rules dominate, and who sets them? Second, the institutional level: What are the key institutions and structures? And third, the practical or operational level: What state practices and interactions in the field of regional security can be observed?

Following an actor-centric approach, four key regional actors are examined, all of which have developed their own Indo-Pacific strategies: the US as the central security actor in the region; Australia as one of the five US regional allies; India as a rising regional power with corresponding regional leadership claims, which, however, is traditionally quite critical of bilateral alliance systems; and Indonesia, *primus inter pares* of ASEAN and co-founder of the Non-Aligned Movement. While the US and Australia are both crucial actors in and of the hub-and-spokes system based on alliance treaties, India and Indonesia have traditionally been rather critical of formal alliance treaties and also traditionally distant towards American leadership as well as US propositions of closer alignment.

The article finds, firstly, that at first glance the US essentially has doubled down on the preservation of hegemony (“US primacy”) in the face of what it perceives as growing Chinese assertiveness. The “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP) can be seen as the main counter-strategy to a Chinese-dominated reorganization of the region. Beijing’s ideas regarding an Asian order by and for Asians are predominantly interpreted as an assault on what Washington perceives as a US-led rules-based regional order. However, upon closer examination, there is ample evidence that, in the context of the emergence of two competing visions for a future regional security order, a number of changes are detectable that indeed point to an Asianization of the regional architecture. Asianization is thus the result of a confluence of empirical phenomena that are producing an

incremental shift in power and agency in regional security from the US to Asian powers. These phenomena, for example, include a shift in strategic importance from the hub (the US) to the Asian spokes inside the US alliance system, increasing security cooperation between the spokes, as well as the growing strategic importance of Asian states outside the formal US alliance system. This is happening bilaterally as well as through the establishment of “minilaterals” like the Quad.

Secondly, this particular form of Asianization bears little resemblance to Xi Jinping’s idea of a regional security architecture “by Asians and for Asians.” Quite the contrary, the article finds that while Asian states, both within and outside of the US alliance system, play an increasingly important role in regional security affairs, this does not equate to regional states siding with China. Alignment with the US on security in the region, albeit often below the threshold of formal alliances, is actually incrementally increasing. Incremental alignment is even observable for traditional hedging states like Indonesia with long-standing foreign policy traditions of non-alignment.

Thirdly, the article finds that alignment with the US on regional security is not necessarily tantamount to a shared ideological affinity to “US primacy” and a “liberal, rules-based regional order.” Actually, it often takes place despite strong divergences in worldviews, norms, or policy preferences, including divergent views on the future of the US-led hub-and-spoke system and, more generally, on the concept of US primacy. Furthermore, it can be preliminarily inferred that it is Chinese assertiveness and its contestation of the status quo, rather than a desire to upend or maintain US primacy, that drives the empirically observable Asianization of regional security.

Beyond the US-led Hub-and-Spoke System?

Drawing eclectically on the works of Taylor and Tow, Bisley, and Yeo, among others, I define regional security architecture² as the overarching structure within a specified region that enables security actors, mostly but not necessarily exclusively states, to manage security issues in ways that prevent or at least limit the outbreak of armed conflict or even war. This rests on a set of worldviews and associated strategic outlooks and norms, a set of institutions, and a set of practices and interactions that make actors' behavior predictable and thus create stability. Hence, in a stable regional security architecture, the aforementioned strategic outlooks, institutions, and practices are widely agreed upon or even shared, or at least acquiesced to. However, especially in instances of regional rivalry and conflict, they tend to become contested, creating instability and uncertainty in return (Yeo 2019; Bisley 2019, 361-376; Tow and Taylor 2010, 95-116).

With regard to the Indo-Pacific region, that regional security architecture has long been described as a hierarchical, hegemonic system with the US at the top. As such, much analytical focus has been on the US and its bilateral alliances. This makes *prima facie* sense because, since the Korean War, the security architecture in the Asia-Pacific region has been based on the so-called hub-and-spoke system (also known as the “San Francisco system”). For decades, Asia's regional security architecture has been depicted as a wheel with the US in the center (as the hub) and its allies Australia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines as spokes. In contrast to Europe, where a multilateral system of collective defense emerged with NATO under the leadership of the US, the Asian security order has been based for decades on bilateral US-led alliances or security partnerships.

However, the durability of the system does not mean it has been static

² In the relevant literature, the terms security architecture, security order, and security system are often used synonymously. In this study, the term security architecture is used throughout. See Tow and Taylor (2010).

and monolithic. The way allies such as Japan, South Korea, or Thailand interact with it has often been influenced by endogenous factors (e.g., military coup in Thailand in 2014) as well as exogenous developments (e.g., global economic crisis in 2008). Moreover, multilateral fora such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Community (APEC), the East Asia Summit (EAS), or the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) were created after the end of the Cold War (Yeo 2019). The ASEAN-centered security forums ARF and EAS, in particular, subsequently attempted to contribute to confidence-building and thus to regional security through the inclusion of all major regional actors and regular security dialogues (Acharya 2000; Rüländ 2010; Ba 2014). Still, these multilateral organizations were limited in that they tended toward what critics have describe as mere “talk shops” (Beeson 2008; Weber 2013, 19-35; Narine 1997; Jones and Smith 2007; Jones and Jenne 2015). At best, they supplemented the hub-and-spoke system with discussion fora that included China and other regional actors, but at no time did they offer a functional alternative ordering structure.

While not without its discontents, for decades the hub-and-spoke system was never really contested and at least partially enabled a phenomenon often referred to as “Asia’s long peace,” that is, the absence of interstate warfare in the region since 1979 (Kivimäki 2016; Tonnesson 2017). The hub-and-spoke system was only really challenged in the context of the rise of the PRC.

As early as 2014, Xi Jinping presented his vision of an “Asian-led” regional security architecture (Xi 2014). Xi described the US-led military alliances as an outdated relic of the Cold War and questioned the future of the US-led hub-and-spoke system by calling for a regional security order “by Asians for Asians.”³ This suggests that the PRC perceives the security order as not (any longer) compatible with its own interests (Zhang 2019, 395-411). What is more, in recent years China’s lead-

3 In May 2022, Xi Jinping also published ideas for a (Chinese-dominated) reordering of the global security order (“Global Security Initiative”), which at least indirectly contradicts Indo-Pacific concepts of order.

ership has increasingly developed its own ideas for the reorganization of the regional security system and has also partially begun to implement them. In this way, Beijing is increasingly challenging the dominance of the US in the field of security policy (Pongsudhirak 2022).

What has remained unclear so far, however, is how a regional security system “by Asians for Asians” should be structured and what role China would play in it (Jakobson 2016; He and Li 2020). Some observers see the emergence of a second, Chinese-led alliance system in the region as plausible (Mearsheimer 2019) in reaction to the growing threat to Chinese security interests from the US-led hub-and-spoke system (Zhang 2012; Zhang 2018). Some even envision a strategic alliance between China and Russia in the making (Allison 2018). With a view to the observable foreign policy behavior of the PRC under Xi Jinping, it is noticeable, however, that China has not yet entered into any (further) formal alliances, and thus the development of a competing alliance system, if it was ever on the cards, has failed to materialize. However, it is also observable that the PRC has not only maintained its alliance with North Korea but also formed a number of new security partnerships or intensified existing partnerships in recent years. Bilateral partnerships with countries such as Cambodia, Laos, Pakistan, Iran, and Russia all increasingly include security policy elements, such as joint military exercises, dialogues, or arms procurements (Wei 2019). Parallel to the expansion of bilateral partnerships, Beijing has also established multilateral security fora and dialogue formats. These include, for example, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), and the Xiangshan Forum (Kim 2021; Morse and Keohane 2014; He 2020).

Hence, open contestation of the regional security architecture is currently observable in the Indo-Pacific. The region's state of affairs currently resembles an interregnum in the Gramscian sense, in which “the old is dying but the new cannot yet be born” (Heiduk, 2023, 36). The

crisis of authority that is part and parcel of any interregnum according to Gramsci is visible in the Indo-Pacific region by the relative loss of power of the US, the ascendance of China, and the (re-)emergence of regional powers such as India (and potentially others in the future).

The Changing Security Architecture of the Indo-Pacific

China's contestation of the prevailing regional security architecture has been the subject of much research and analysis. What is less clear, however, is how other regional states, US allies, and non-allies have responded to the contestation of US primacy by Beijing. To what extent has this contestation curtailed US primacy, and thus the long-standing US-led regional security architecture, in the eyes of key regional actors? And has open contestation by Beijing resulted in a detectable shift regarding the regional security architecture away from the US and towards Asian powers?

To be sure, various scholars have discussed US security cooperation with states outside the formal alliance system—both bilaterally (i.e., US security cooperation with states like Singapore, Malaysia, or Indonesia) (Laksmmana, 2021) as well as with regard to cooperation with states like India in minilateral settings such as the Quad (Rajagopalan, 2021). However, much of the focus has been on the US perspective and approach herein, particularly in response to the expansion of Chinese regional ambition and power (Richey 2019), with considerably less analytical focus given to the role and agency of US allies and partners (Dian and Meijer 2020). Paying closer attention to their role and agency, as well as their relationship to the US, however, is crucial for understanding change and continuity in regional security architectures because even in hegemonic orders, so-called secondary powers do not always respond to the hegemon by demonstrating incessant allegiance. They can, at least theoretically, exhibit a range of responses, ranging from endorsement to acquiescence

to contestation (Loke 2021, 1212; Crabtree 2022, 23-30). The following sub-sections seek to analyze the early contours of the currently evolving regional security architecture. To do so, the article examines the prevailing strategic concepts and norms related to regional security, its key structures and institutions, and observable security practices.

Security outlook and norms

To be sure, successive US administrations have declared the preservation of US hegemony (“US primacy”) and a corresponding balance of power vis-a-vis China to be a central strategic goal of US foreign policy. In this context, the Free and Open Indo-Pacific is regarded as the primary strategic response to a Chinese-led transformation of the region as well as a possible starting point for a new or reformed security architecture (Harold 2021; Tankel et al. 2012). Consecutive US administrations have identified the PRC as the main threat to regional security. Beijing is widely regarded as using military, political, and, above all, economic means of power with the aim of weakening US pre-eminence in the region. Interlinked with the strategic objective of maintaining US pre-eminence is a set of norms emphasized by US policymakers, including “respect for sovereignty,” “fair and reciprocal trade,” and “transparency and the rule of law” (US Department of Defense 2019), as well as free access to global public goods, above all the “freedom of navigation” (US Department of State 2019, 6). Under the Biden administration, this set of norms has been extended to “democratic governance” and “respect for human rights”—they are to form the normative foundation of a liberal, “rules-based” order and help push back the growing influence of authoritarian powers (Biden 2021). Against the backdrop of global rivalry between “free” and “repressive” concepts of international order, these values are in competition with those of “revisionist” powers such as China, which question the “free and open” Indo-Pacific in order to assert their particular interests at the expense of others, primarily the US (US Department of State 2019, 5).

Almost all traits of Washington's security outlook and threat perception are mirrored by Canberra. From Australia's perspective, the region is increasingly becoming a focal point for the great power rivalry between China and the US. It is primarily China's ambition to curtail US primacy which undermines regional stability and thus increasingly threatens Australia's strategic interests in the region. Regional security in the Indo-Pacific according to Canberra primarily rests on the (military) presence of the US in the region. Thus, it can be inferred that for Canberra the regional security order is essentially conceived as a hegemonic order with the US at the pinnacle (Australian Financial Review 2021). The overarching strategic objective, according to the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper, is to maintain a power balance in the Indo-Pacific favorable to the US and its allies with the US as the main guarantor of Australia's strategic interests (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2017). Australia's role in the regional security order is defined primarily as an ally of the USA; the bilateral alliance with Washington is the "past, present and future" of Australia's foreign and security policy (Morrison 2019). The regional security architecture is to be based on a set of liberal norms, including "political, economic and religious freedom, liberal democracy, the rule of law and equality" (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2017, 11). And these normative principles are being systematically undermined by some neighboring states, first and foremost China (Australian Department of Defence 2023, 23).

In debates on regional security, Delhi has a slightly different outlook. Foreign policymakers view the evolving regional security architecture as essentially multipolar, with India being one of the poles (The Hindu 2023). In Delhi's view, a multipolar regional order would reject great power politics, lack ideological rivalries, and hinge on inclusive cooperation. Alliances would make way for equal partnerships and multi-alignment, and the voices of the Global South, represented specifically by India, would be amplified vis-à-vis Western powers. In line with this, India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) envisages

an “open, inclusive” security architecture in which regional security is maintained through “dialogue, a rules-based order and the resolution of disputes based on international law” (Jaishankar 2021). According to Modi, “these rules and norms shall be based on the consent of all and not the power of a few states,” on which in turn “India’s belief in multilateralism and regionalism and our firm commitment to rule of law principles are based” (Modi 2018). There are also repeated positive normative references to ASEAN and its norms, such as territorial sovereignty, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and non-interference in the internal affairs of states.

Yet at the same time, in recent years India’s threat perception has markedly moved in the direction of that of the US and Australia. Increasingly, China is viewed as India’s primary security challenge and a permanent security threat. Sino-India border tensions following the Galwan Valley attack in 2020, in which 20 Indian soldiers were killed, have further worsened since the Tawang skirmish in December 2022. Delhi also views China’s infrastructure development in the Indian Ocean region—a maritime domain where it sees itself as the traditional security provider—as a threat to its national interests (Panda 2023). Limiting the growing Chinese influence in India’s neighborhood and the Indian Ocean is therefore now a clear strategic objective in India’s approach to the Indo-Pacific. Hence, observers increasingly describe India’s role in regional security as a “counterweight” to China, even if officially it continues to signal a willingness to cooperate with China and India continues to be a member of regional organizations such as the SCO or the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), in which China plays a key role (Heiduk and Wacker 2021, 24; Jaishankar 2021).

Indonesia’s outlook on regional security is rather different again. In the context of increasingly emerging Sino-American competition, Jakarta sees a need to prevent one of the two great powers from dominating the region. Stability, security, and prosperity in the region as well as finding “regional solutions to regional problems” are, from Indonesia’s perspective, closely linked to the promotion of multilateral

cooperation with ASEAN as the central cooperation mechanism (Weatherbee 2014). By calling for “ASEAN centrality” in a regional security order, Jakarta also wants to avert the perceived danger of the Indo-Pacific region slipping into zones of influence of competing great powers at the structural level. Regarding the normative foundations of an Indo-Pacific security order, Indonesian officials emphasize that a peaceful, secure Indo-Pacific cannot be guaranteed without respect for international law and the United Nations Charter (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia 2021; Natalegawa 2013). Principles of multilateral cooperation such as “peaceful cooperation” and “dialogue” are also mentioned in this context (Marsudi 2020). In addition, Indonesia’s post-colonial identity is also relevant in this normative context—especially the country’s leadership role within the Non-Aligned Movement. Norms related to non-alignment are of great importance from Jakarta’s point of view, such as the “Bandung Principles” of equality of all nations; preservation of territorial integrity and sovereignty; peaceful cooperation; prohibition of interference in the internal affairs of other states; and prohibition of joining collective defense alliances that serve great powers’ special interests (Marsudi 2021). Indonesian officials also repeatedly refer positively to the ASEAN norms (often referred to as the “ASEAN Way”), namely the renunciation of the threat and use of force and the imperatives of peaceful conflict resolution, regional cooperation, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states (Natalegawa 2013).

Indonesia’s idea of regional security therefore focuses on building a security community. The understanding of regional security is a cooperative and inclusive one, which does not exclude any regional actor. China is thus decidedly described as a “partner” and “participant” in a regional security community (Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia 2018). Indonesian officials repeatedly emphasize that regional security is indivisible, based on common interests and norms, and is decidedly not a zero-sum game (Ryacudu 2019). In particular, President Joko Widodo (known as “Jokowi”) cites growing economic

interdependence as a common interest that unites all regional stakeholders in attempts to preserve security and stability in the Indo-Pacific (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2021). At the same time, however, there is growing distrust towards China in Jakarta amid the country's maritime disputes with Beijing. Chinese claims over the vast majority of the South China Sea have brought it into conflict with Jakarta over the North Natuna Sea. Incursions by Chinese ships into Indonesian waters have led to frequent incidents, mainly involving fishing vessels, but have recently also taken place around Indonesian oil and gas fields north of Indonesia's Natuna islands. These incidents have sparked fears over China actively threatening Indonesian territory in the near future (Fitriani 2022, 39).

Security structures and institutions

For Washington, the core structural element of the regional security architecture is the hub-and-spokes system of bilateral alliances. From the US official point of view, the challenge is not to establish a new regional security structure, but rather to modernize and strengthen central structural elements of the existing one (Campbell and Doshi 2021). Three core elements are named in this context. First, the preservation of US military bases in the region while simultaneously expanding the asymmetric military capacities stationed there, such as combat drones, submarines, or long-range ballistic missiles. Second, the strengthening of US allies in the region. Together with its allies, the US wants to build a system of "integrated deterrence" in the Indo-Pacific, in which the allies are an integral part of the military deterrence of opponents of the US in areas of conventional, nuclear, cyber, and information warfare (The White House 2022, 12). Behind this is the realization in Washington that the US no longer has the military capabilities to dominate every region and operational space in the world, partly due to the massive armament of China and Russia. Strengthening or upgrading the capabilities of US allies is thus also becoming more important, since in Washington's view the system of integrated deterrence can only work if

Table 1

MINILATERAL SECURITY INSTITUTIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC WITH US PARTICIPATION.

Name	Members	Year	Areas of security cooperation	Institutions
Trilateral security partnership between Australia, the UK, and the US (AUKUS)	Australia, UK, US	2021	Maritime security, Technology transfer, Arms transfer	Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information Agreement (ENNPPIA), Senior officials' meetings, Joint steering groups, Working groups
Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) / Mekong-US Partnership (MUP)	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, US, Vietnam	2009 / 2020	Water and energy security, Countering transnational crime	Annual foreign ministers' meetings, Track 1.5 dialogue
North Pacific Coast Guard Forum (NPCGF)	Canada, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, US	2000	Combating illegal trafficking, Fishery enforcement, Combined operations, Emergency response, Maritime security, Information exchange	Bi-annual meetings of technical experts and principles
Pacific Security Cooperation Dialogue	Australia, New Zealand, US	2018	Security, prosperity and stability of the Pacific Island region	Annual meetings of civilian and military representatives
Quadrilateral Defense Coordination Group	Australia, France, New Zealand, US	1998	Fighting of IUU fishing in the Pacific Islands region, Assistance to Pacific Island nations	Joint patrols, Annual and bi-annual senior officials' meetings
Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)	Australia, India, Japan, US	2007-2009, 2017	Economic and health security, Combat climate change, Cybersecurity, Critical technologies, Space, Counterterrorism, Quality infrastructure investment, HA/DR, Maritime security	Leaders' summit, Foreign ministers' meetings, Senior officials' meetings, Joint working groups
Six-Party Talks	China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Russia, US	2003-2009	Nuclear non-proliferation	Senior officials' meetings
Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG)	Japan, South Korea, US	1999-2004	Nuclear non-proliferation	Deputy ministers' meetings
US-Japan-Australia Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD)	Australia, Japan, US	2005	Anti-terrorism, Non-proliferation (WMD), Defense, Maritime security, HA/DR, Peacekeeping, Cybersecurity	Foreign ministers' meetings
US-Japan-India Trilateral Dialogue	India, Japan, US	2011	Maritime security, Promotion of regional connectivity, Maritime capacity-building	Meetings on the director general level, Elevation to ministerial level in 2015
US-Japan-Korea Trilateral	Japan, South Korea, US	2010	Nuclear non-proliferation	Ministerial consultations
US-Japan-Philippines Trilateral Cooperation	Japan, Philippines, US	2022	Maritime security	Defense policy dialogue, Senior officials' meetings

Source: Author's own compilation.

the military capacities of the allies are expanded to reduce dependence on the large US military bases, which are seen as tactically vulnerable. Only in conjunction with allies and partners in the region will China's deterrence be possible in the future. The third element is the strengthening of security cooperation among US allies and partners. The "spokes" are to cooperate more closely with each other in the areas of intelligence and defense, instead of primarily with the hub (the US) as has been the case up to now (Campbell and Doshi 2021). The third element also includes the strengthening of minilateral institutions, predominantly but not exclusively (see Tables 1 and 2 below) the Quad and AUKUS. While Table 2 clearly shows that not all security minilaterals with US participation in the region have been formed as part of Washington's FOIP strategy, quite a few of them actually have been established, or, as has been the case with the Quad, revived in the context of the FOIP (Table 1). This includes, for example, the US-Japan-Philippines Trilateral Cooperation (2022) and also the Pacific Security Cooperation Dialogue (2018). Interestingly, the Quad is currently viewed less as a security institution than as a forum to coordinate the provision of public goods, be it vaccines, infrastructure, or combating climate change (Smith 2022). The bilateral US alliances thus remain the central structural instrument of a US-led security architecture in the region. Above all, they continue to play a central role in balancing China and maintaining a regional balance of power in favor of the US (US Department of Defense 2019).

For Australia, the structural cornerstone of the regional security architecture is the bilateral alliance with the US. It is the US-led hub-and-spoke system of bilateral alliances that, in Australia's view, has lent stability to the regional security order since the Korean War. Canberra sees regional security primarily secured through its ANZUS military alliance with the US (Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty) and treaties such as the Five Eyes Alliance for intelligence cooperation. At the same time, however, it is widely assumed that there are medium-term risks to the US being strong enough and (domestically) stable and reliable enough to permanently and effectively counter growing Chinese power claims

in the region. Therefore, a “network of partnerships” beyond the bilateral alliance with the US should be further consolidated. Priority is to be given to cooperation with Southeast Asian neighbors like Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore, as well as other regional powers like India, Japan, and South Korea (Dutton 2021a; Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2017, 26; Morrison 2021; Australian Department of Defence 2020, 24). The EU and its member states such as Germany and France, as well as NATO, are also mentioned in this context (Dutton 2021b). In addition, minilateral institutions, especially the Quad and AUKUS, are viewed as increasingly important as they bring together like-minded states in pragmatic, flexible, issue-centric institutional settings to respond to pressing regional security challenges. At the same time, they provide avenues to further institutionalize engagement with the US. However, Canberra has also begun to engage in various minilaterals that exist without participation or leadership by Washington. Examples include the Australia-France-India Trilateral Dialogue (2020) and the Australia-India-Indonesia Trilateral Dialogue (2017) (see Table 2). This shows that while some of the new security arrangements are becoming increasingly integrated into the hub-and-spoke system, others exist outside of it or are layered over it.

Regardless of its heightened China threat perception, in Indonesia’s official foreign policy discourse the central “cornerstone” (sokuguru) of regional security is ASEAN and ASEAN-led inclusive multilateral organizations such as the ARF, EAS, and ADMM+. The latter are considered especially central due to the involvement of the US and China (and a number of other external actors).⁴ Jakarta is thus trying to offer an inclusive, ASEAN-centered security architecture as an alternative to what it perceives as a deepening Sino-American bipolarity (Abbondanza 2022, 403-421).

4 These include, above all, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM-Plus).

However, the lack of effectiveness of the regional organization in developing a coherent position and policy with regard to the conflict over the South China Sea, among other things, has led to controversial debates about the effectiveness of multilateral institutions (Sukma 2019). Therefore in recent years minilateral cooperation formats have become part of Jakarta's regional security policy alongside ASEAN (although hardly mentioned in the official rhetoric regarding the Indo-Pacific).

These minilaterals include, for example, the trilateral Australia-India-Indonesia format, the Indomalphi (Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines Trilateral Maritime Patrol) joint patrols in the Sulu Sea, or the Malacca Straits Patrol (MSP) agreement between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, which conducts joint anti-piracy patrols in the Strait of Malacca (see Table 2). In Jakarta's view, the aforementioned minilateral formats function complementarily and not contrary to an ASEAN-centered security architecture. First, this is because they always refer to the "ASEAN Way" and "ASEAN Centrality" at the normative level. Secondly, it is because in Jakarta's view they bring together like-minded small and middle powers and thus correspond to traditional ASEAN foreign policy principles such as "strategic autonomy" and "equidistance" between the major powers. Indonesia's minilateral turn has recently even included the possibility of ASEAN partnering with the Quad and AUKUS (Connors 2023). Indonesia has also sought to intensify its bilateral relations with the US in recent years. For example, November 2023 saw both governments commit themselves to the elevation of the US-Indonesia relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. The joint statement notably also included the signing of a bilateral Work Plan on Maritime Security Cooperation with the stated aim of enhancing Indonesia's maritime security capabilities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia and The White House 2023).

Table 2

MINILATERAL SECURITY INSTITUTIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC WITHOUT US PARTICIPATION.

Name	Members	Year	Areas of security cooperation	Institutions
Australia-France-India Trilateral Dialogue	Australia, France, India	2020	Maritime safety and security, Marine and environmental cooperation	Ministerial dialogue, Senior officials, Working group, Track 1.5 dialogue
Australia-India-Indonesia Trilateral Dialogue	Australia, India, Indonesia	2017	Fighting IUU fishing, Anti-piracy	Ministerial level meetings
Australia-Japan-India Trilateral	Australia, India, Japan	2015	Maritime security, Anti-terrorism, Nuclear non-proliferation, Territorial disputes	Senior officials' meetings
India-Italy-Japan Trilateral	India, Italy, Japan	2021	Stability in the Indo-Pacific region	Senior officials' meetings
Malacca Strait Patrol (MSP)	Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand	2004	Maritime security, Anti-piracy	Regular working level Consultations, Information Fusion Centre, Coordinated patrols
Sulu-Sulawesi Trilateral Cooperation / Indomalphi	Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines	2016	Maritime security	Ministerial level meetings, Trilateral Cooperation Agreement (TCA), Coordinated patrols

Source: Author's own compilation

For India, the regional security architecture is to be based on multipolar structures, as according to PM Modi a “strong, multipolar order” is an important prerequisite for managing Sino-American rivalry, preventing bipolarity, and ensuring stability and security in the Indo-Pacific (Ministry of External Affairs of India /Modi 2019). Alongside the US and China, Russia and India are central poles of this multipolar order. In India's view, all are subject to Delhi's multi-alignment. Multipolarity as the structural framework of the Modi government's Indo-Pacific is primarily based on bilateral relations between the region's great and middle powers. This includes close relations with China (Modi 2018). Recently, this has also included strengthening bilateral security cooperation with the US and

Indonesia. Additionally, at the institutional level, India has recently invested much time and energy in bi-, tri-, and mini-lateral formats involving the US and its allies and partners. This includes, for example, Indian engagement in the Quad, in the India-Japan-Australia trilateral, and closer bilateral cooperation in the field of defense policy with states like France, Vietnam, and South Korea. The focus on minilaterals is due to the Modi government's pessimistic view of regional multilateral organizations, which are seen as cumbersome and inefficient. Minilaterals as "coalitions of the willing," on the other hand, appear to be a more flexible and goal-oriented alternative in terms of content and membership (see Tables 1 and 2).

India's positioning on the Quad, however, illustrates how it still tries to avoid the appearance of engaging in anti-China alliances by insisting that the Quad is not against any state (i.e., China) but rather for something (regional stability). To this end, and despite their aforementioned cumbersome nature, India also maintains active engagement in multilateral institutions. At the multilateral level, India is involved in regional organizations such as IORA, EAS, ARF, ADMM+, the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Co-operation (FIPIC), and BIMSTEC. India is also a member of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP). Furthermore, India is the only regional major power to have membership in organizations that are generally seen by the US and its allies as rival, if not adversarial, institutions—specifically, India's membership in BRICS and the SCO.

Security practices in the Indo-Pacific

In line with its strategic focus on maintaining regional primacy by modernizing the existing regional security architecture, US security practices in the region have been focused on strengthening existing alliances and other forms of bilateral security cooperation with partners in the region. The main emphasis here has been on the expansion of the security capacities of US allies in order to establish a system of

integrated deterrence (Biden 2021; Austin 2021). This includes, among other things, intensifying cooperation with Australia, where Washington intends to send fighter jets and bombers more frequently for longer periods in the future. Cooperation with partners outside the hub-and-spokes system, such as India and the ASEAN states (above all Singapore), has also gradually intensified. Here, the focus is on upgrading projects such as arms deliveries, joint maneuvers and training, and intelligence cooperation. This also includes providing continued military support to Taiwan (The White House 2022, 13).

Practicing integrated deterrence also includes security and defense cooperation in multilateral settings such as AUKUS and the Quad. With AUKUS, the main focus is on the delivery to Australia of nuclear-powered submarines with US and British technology. The intensification of cooperation with allies thus also includes technology transfers, not only with Australia, as in the framework of AUKUS, but also with Japan (semiconductors), for example. Meanwhile the Quad is increasingly becoming the prime format for coordinating a coalition of “like-minded” partners toward implementing US strategic objectives in the Indo-Pacific. The need to intensify security cooperation with non-allies such as India through the Quad, however, is an indication that Washington is no longer able to achieve its declared strategic goal of maintaining regional hegemony through the hub-and-spoke system alone. Regular Quad summits at the leadership level have taken place since 2021, and the Quad has become more strongly institutionalized at the working level, too. Permanent working groups now cover a wide range of policy areas, from the provision of Covid-19 vaccines to the governance of outer space. In contrast to the existing, predominantly bilateral military formats, the Quad intends to promote common regional interests. This set of broader interests, which is more oriented towards shaping rather than merely preserving the regional order and pertinent institutions and norms, includes securing regional sea lanes, expanding regional free trade and connectivity, promoting democracy, and protecting human rights. Furthermore, the strengthening of the Quad as well as its possible expansion as

an instrument of “military deterrence” remains high on the US agenda (Campbell and Doshi 2021). However, such attempts have largely stalled due to India effectively blocking efforts to develop the Quad into a stronger military-oriented grouping. In June 2023, the defense ministers of Japan, Australia, the Philippines, and the US founded another minilateral grouping with the aim of responding to China’s growing maritime assertiveness in the region. They are currently considering the start of joint maritime patrols to act as a deterrent towards China’s growing military presence in the South and East China Seas (Kyodo News 2023).

Australia has responded to the increasing instability in the Indo-Pacific primarily by expanding its alliance with the US, substantially increasing its defense budget and corresponding arms purchases, strategic partnerships, and minilateral cooperation fora. At the operational level, US Marines have been stationed near Darwin for a few months each year since 2012 to conduct joint training exercises with the Australian Defence Force (ADF). The size of the Marine Rotational Force-Darwin was increased from a few hundred to 2500 in 2021 (Mackay 2021). Joint naval maneuvers, such as the Malabar Exercise, also take place regularly. The US is also Australia’s largest arms supplier. Between 2012 and 2021, more than three-quarters of all Australian arms imports by value came from the US (SIPRI Arms Transfer Database). A combination of external pressure from Washington and the realization that the ADF is poorly trained and equipped for military confrontation led to a massive increase in the defence budget, reaching 2.1% of GDP in 2021, a 15% increase over 2020 (Wilkins 2021, 4). Furthermore, Canberra has expanded its minilateral cooperation, especially via AUKUS, the Five Eyes Alliance, and the Quad, as well as helped to launch the recently established minilateral with the US, Japan, and the Philippines. Since 2020, Australia has also participated in the Malabar naval exercises in the Indian Ocean, which had previously been conducted by the US, India and Japan.

But even Australia as the US’s closest regional ally has recently expanded cooperation to other bilateral partnerships below the threshold of formal alliances. Starting with the strategic partnerships with Japan

(2014) and Singapore (2015), Canberra then grew its privileged partnerships with France (2017), Indonesia (2018), Vietnam (2018), India (2020), Papua New Guinea (2020), Thailand (2020), Malaysia (2021), and Germany (2021). As expected, their form varies greatly. Bilateral cooperation with India, for example, includes joint naval maneuvers (PASSEX, AUSINDEX) and the mutual use of military bases for bunker stops (Singh and Saha 2022). Cooperation with Japan, for example, has so far focused on logistics (Koga 2022). Furthermore, new partnerships with regional organizations were launched, such as the ASEAN-Australian Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and cooperation with NATO. An increase in Australian initiatives in the Indo-Pacific, both quantitatively and qualitatively, can also be observed with regard to trilateral formats, such as the Australia-India-Japan trilateral, Australia-France-India trilateral, and Australia-India-Indonesia trilateral. In terms of content, these minilaterals have so far been focused on closer cooperation on the topics of maritime security and the rules-based international order.

Delhi has so far primarily increased its security and defense policy activities in its immediate neighborhood, in South Asia and the Indian Ocean. On the one hand, this includes the deepening of bilateral military relations with neighboring states such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Mauritius, and Bhutan, including joint military maneuvers, training, and capacity-building programs, as well as regular high-level dialogues. In 2021, for example, the Indian Navy conducted over 50 joint maneuvers with “friendly states” in the Indian Ocean (South China Morning Post 2022). India increasingly sees itself as a provider of security in its immediate neighborhood—be it through the expansion of radar stations in Indian Ocean littoral states or through Indian patrols to secure trade routes. This also includes India’s growing role as an arms exporter. Indian arms exports grew rapidly from \$130 million in 2012-2016 to \$302 million in 2017-2021. Key recipient countries of Indian arms exports in the last decade were Myanmar (\$196 million), Sri Lanka (\$74 million), Mauritius (\$66 million), Armenia (\$32 million), and the Seychelles (\$24 million). With the exception of Armenia, all are

neighboring countries of India (SIPRI Arms Transfer Database). Most recently Delhi made regional headlines with the sale of BrahMos missile systems to the Philippines, a long-standing US ally. Against the background of the territorial disputes between the Philippines and China in the South China Sea, the delivery of supersonic missiles, which could ultimately be used against China, has been interpreted in India itself as a “strategic statement” towards Beijing (Chaudhury and Pubby 2022).

Although Delhi’s central focus remains its neighborhood, it has become more active further afield. This includes the expansion of bilateral cooperation with the US, Japan, Australia, and some ASEAN states (Vietnam, Indonesia, Singapore) as well as France. Accordingly, India has focused on the purchase or sale of military equipment (e.g., from the US or France to India, or from India to Vietnam) and on joint military exercises. Delhi’s security cooperation with the US especially has increased rapidly over the last years in terms of arms sales, military-to-military engagements, and information sharing.

Indonesia’s security policies in the Indo-Pacific have so far largely focused on its immediate Southeast Asian neighborhood, with emphasis on ASEAN-centered multilateral cooperation (Subianto 2021). This includes, for example, negotiations with Beijing on an ASEAN-China “Code of Conduct in the South China Sea,” which have been ongoing for more than 20 years. The code of conduct is intended to establish mechanisms at the diplomatic level to manage conflicts over (artificial) islands, Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), fishing grounds, and natural resources. Indonesia also declared the validity of the 2016 arbitral award in a Note Verbale to the United Nations, setting out its position on the international maritime status of Indonesia’s Natuna Islands and the EEZs surrounding them, located on the southern border of the South China Sea. China disputes parts of these EEZs with Indonesia on the basis of “historical rights.” So far, the Code of Conduct has not been concluded due to divergent interests between China and ASEAN. The “High-Level Dialogue on Indo-Pacific Cooperation” initiated by

Jakarta in 2019 with the aim of strengthening dialogue in the region and thereby promoting confidence building was also centered on ASEAN. This is because the dialogue members corresponded exactly to the group of participants of the EAS (Antara News 2019).

At the operational level, however, much action took place in the form of minilateral, and increasingly also bilateral, security cooperation. For example, Indomalphi (Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines Trilateral Maritime Patrol), consisting of the three littoral states of the Sulu Sea, was established in response to the increased presence of IS-affiliated Islamist militancy and has been conducting joint patrols in the Sulu Sea since 2017, in addition to facilitating the exchange of intelligence information. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore have been conducting joint anti-piracy patrols in the Strait of Malacca since 2004 under the Malacca Straits Patrol Agreement (MSP). However, in line with the norms mentioned above, these minilaterals are not exclusive in nature. Thailand, for example, joined the MSP in 2006. Vietnam and Myanmar have observer status with the MSP, while Singapore, Brunei, and Thailand have observer status with Indomalphi (Guiang 2017). In addition, Jakarta initiated a first ASEAN meeting of coast guard representatives in 2021 to discuss possibilities for regional cooperation in the event of “disruptions” to regional security (Radio Free Asia 2021).

As of late, especially bilateral security cooperation with states like India, the US, Australia, and Japan has been expanded. For example, annual so-called “2+2” formats between the respective foreign and defense ministers have been established with Australia and Japan. To be sure, Indonesia has experience in bilateral security cooperation, but in the past it was often limited to areas labeled as “non-traditional security,” such as cooperation in disaster management, humanitarian aid, illegal fishing, or environmental protection (Sukma 2012, 3-21). With India, for example, an annual naval maneuver “Samudra Sakti” was established in 2018 to improve interoperability. The exercise involves cross deck landings, air defense serials, practice weapon firings,

replenishment approaches, and tactical maneuvers. Joint military maneuvers with the US under the name “Garuda Shield” have recently greatly expanded in size as well as the number of participants. As of 2022, 5,000 soldiers joined the combat exercises as part of “Super Garuda Shield” as the exercise is now referred to. The maneuver included 15 participating nations, among them Australia, Japan, and Singapore. And a large bilateral amphibious military exercise (Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training - CARAT) took place in Surabaya in December of 2022. Indonesia also ordered five US-manufactured C-130J-30 Super Hercules heavy transport aircraft and plans to buy F15 fighter jets from the US. However, Indonesia is the only one of the four countries examined for this analysis that still maintains defense relations with China. Despite repeated Chinese incursions into Indonesia’s EEZ near the Natuna islands (Siow and Yuniar 2023), the two countries still conduct (albeit infrequently) joint naval drills together, even if these drills are much smaller in terms of their mandate, size, and scope than the ones Indonesia conducts with the US and its allies. and are seen with more skepticism domestically (Grossman 2021; Zhou 2021; Fitriani 2022). This somewhat contradictory observation nonetheless fits with Indonesia’s long-standing tradition of following a foreign policy of non-alignment to avoid choosing sides in great power rivalries (Anwar 2023, 351-77).

Table 3

ASIANIZATION OF REGIONAL SECURITY IN THE INDO-PACIFIC (OVERVIEW).

Country	Ideas and strategic outlook	Institutions (selection)	Practices
Australia	US primacy, Networked security architecture, Increased security cooperation with like-minded partners, Worries over durability of US engagement	AUKUS QUAD Australia-France-India Trilateral Dialogue, Australia-India-Indonesia Trilateral Dialogue, Australia-Japan-India trilateral, Pacific Security Cooperation Dialogue, Quadrilateral Defence Coordination Group, US-Japan-Australia Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD)	Arms transfers Joint military exercises Joint trainings Joint patrols Intelligence sharing Information sharing
India	Multipolarity Inclusive, Cooperative security, Multi-alignment	QUAD Australia-France-India Trilateral Dialogue, Australia-India-Indonesia Trilateral Dialogue, Australia-Japan-India Trilateral India-Italy-Japan Trilateral, US-Japan-India Trilateral Dialogue, Indonesia-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, US-India Comprehensive and Global Strategic Partnership	Joint military exercises Joint military training Arms transfers Information sharing
Indonesia	Multipolarity, Inclusive, cooperative security, Non-alignment ASEAN-centrality	Australia-India-Indonesia Trilateral Dialogue, Indomalphi, Malacca Strait Patrol, US Indonesia strategic partnership, Indonesia-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, China-Indonesia Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation	Joint military exercises Coordinated patrols Arms transfers Joint trainings Information sharing

Country	Ideas and strategic outlook	Institutions (selection)	Practices
US	US primacy, Networked Security Architecture, Increased security cooperation with like- minded partners	AUKUS Pacific Security Cooperation Dialogue, Quad, US-Japan-Australia Trilateral Strategic Dialogue, US-Japan-India Trilateral Dialogue, US-Japan-Korea Trilateral, US-Japan-Philippines Trilateral, US-Japan-Australia Trilateral Strategic Dialogue, US-India Comprehensive and Global Strategic Partnership, US-Indonesia Strategic Partnership, US-Vietnam Comprehensive Strategic Partnership	Technology transfers Arms transfers Joint military exercises Joint trainings Joint patrols Intelligence sharing Information sharing

Source: Author's own compilation.

Conclusion: the Asianization of Regional Security

The findings presented in this article suggest that the regional security architecture is currently undergoing important changes with potential far-reaching implications for regional security and stability. Specifically, they alert us to a set of empirical phenomena indicating a process of Asianization of the regional security architecture. Asianization is detectable at all three analytical levels employed in this article: at the level of strategic outlook and ideas on regional security, at the institutional level, as well as the practical or operational level. These phenomena signal a shift in strategic importance and agency in regional security away from the US and towards Asian powers.

First, Asianization is detectable empirically at the strategic level in

that all states under study allocate growing strategic importance to Asian powers inside and outside the hub-and-spoke system. This might be somewhat obvious with regard to India and Indonesia, which have long-standing ideas of non-alignment and strategic autonomy. However, it also applies to the US, whose new strategic concept of a networked security architecture not only acknowledges the growing strategic importance of regional allies and partners but also actively endorses a greater role of regional allies and partners.

Second, Asianization is detectable empirically in terms of institutional changes through the proliferation of bi- and minilateral security frameworks in the Indo-Pacific that increasingly go beyond the established institutional parameters of the hub-and-spoke system. The Quad is the most prominent example here. Without the inclusion of India, the format would hardly have the same added value, as numerous other institutions to enhance US cooperation with Japan and Australia pre-dated the Quad. Not only that, in many ways India—perhaps more so than even the US—has been able to shape the Quad’s institutional development in line with its particular policy preferences over the last years. But there are other developments that point to greater Asianization at the institutional level, too. These include various other minilaterals, some involving the US but others without US participation. There are also numerous bilateral partnerships—touching on various aspects of security cooperation—between Asian powers themselves. Again, some are within the hub-and-spoke system, some outside of it.

Third, Asianization is also detectable empirically at the practical level. Asian powers are increasingly trying to vastly improve indigenous arms manufacturing through technological partnerships with the US and other partners, and Asian powers are also increasingly trading arms with each other. Asian powers are steadily trying to improve the interoperability of their respective armed forces, for example through joint training and maneuvers. Again, all of this is not exclusively tied to the US-led hub-and-spoke system, but even less is it intended to improve security cooperation with China.

To the contrary, this article finds that while Asian states, both within and outside of the US alliance system, play an increasingly important role in regional security affairs, this does not equate to regional states siding more closely with China. Alignment with the US on security in the region, albeit often below the threshold of formal alliances, is actually incrementally increasing. While alignment on regional security affairs with Washington is to be expected from a long-standing US ally like Australia, it is also observable for states with traditions of non-alignment in foreign policy and historically rather rocky bilateral relations with Washington, like India and Indonesia. This is despite the fact that both India and Indonesia still maintain strategic outlooks that emphasize norms and ideas like inclusivity, multilateral cooperation, and cooperative security. Yet in terms of their observable behavior, both states show signs of leaning towards the US and its allies to balance China. These empirical findings suggest that the process of Asianization currently detectable in regional security is far from Xi Jinping's idea of a regional order "by and for Asians."

Finally, a word of caution is in order. There is a risk of over-interpreting the findings in this article to suggest that the incremental alignment with the US on regional security by, for example, India, is the result of a wider strategic convergence regarding Washington's vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific and continuation of US regional primacy. Such strategic convergence is not demonstrated. The incremental alignment described here is happening despite strong divergences in regional strategic outlooks. That is, there is little evidence to suggest that India or Indonesia share the wider strategic objectives of the US in the region, or are converging with the US in this regard, but rather the incremental alignment that is part of the wider Asianization of the regional security architecture is occurring in response to China's perceived assertiveness and aggressive behavior.

References

- Abbondanza, Gabriele. 2022. "Whither the Indo-Pacific? Middle Power Strategies from Australia, South Korea and Indonesia." *International Affairs* 98/2: 403-421.
- Acharya, Amitav. 2000. *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order*. London: Routledge.
- Allison, Graham. 2018. "China and Russia: A Strategic Alliance in the Making." *The National Interest*. December, 14. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/china-and-russia-strategic-alliance-making-38727>
- Antara News. 2021. "Indonesia to Hold High-Level Dialogue on Indo-Pacific Cooperation." March 18. <https://en.antaranews.com/news/122780/indonesia-to-hold-high-level-dialogue-on-indo-pacific-cooperation>
- Anwar, Dewi Fortuna. 2023. "Indonesia's hedging plus policy in the face of China's rise and the US-China rivalry in the Indo-Pacific region." *The Pacific Review* 36/2: 351-77.
- Austin, Lloyd. 2021. Secretary of Defense Remarks at the 40th International Institute for Strategic Studies Fullerton Lecture. IISS Fullerton Lecture, Singapore. July 27. <https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech/Article/2708192/secretary-of-defense-remarks-at-the-40th-international-institute-for-strategic/>
- Australian Financial Review. 2021. "Inconceivable Australia Would Not Join US to Defend Taiwan." November 13. <https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/inconceivable-australia-would-not-join-us-to-defend-taiwan-20211113-p598mi>
- Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. 2017. 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper. Canberra, Australia. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-foreign-policy-white-paper.pdf>
- Australian Government, Department of Defence. 2023. Defence Strategic Review 2023. Canberra, Australia. <https://www.defence.gov.au/>

about/reviews-inquiries/defence-strategic-review

- Australian Government, Department of Defence. 2020. 2020 Defence Strategic Update. July 1. Canberra, Australia. <https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/2020-defence-strategic-update>
- Ba, Alice. 2014. "Institutional Divergence and Convergence in the Asia-Pacific? ASEAN in Practice and in Theory." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 27/2: 295-318.
- Beeson, Mark. 2008. *Institutions of the Asia-Pacific: ASEAN, APEC and Beyond*. London: Routledge.
- Biden, Joe. 2021. Remarks by President Biden on America's Place in the World. Washington, D.C., United States: The White House. February 4. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/04/remarks-by-president-biden-on-americas-place-in-the-world/>
- Biden, Joe. 2021. Remarks by President Biden in Press Conference. Washington, D.C., United States: The White House. March 25. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/03/25/remarks-by-president-biden-in-press-conference/>
- Bisley, Nick. 2019. "Asia's Regional Security Order: Rules, Power and Status." *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 65/3: 361-76.
- Cabinet Secretariat of the Republic of Indonesia. 2018. Indonesia Invites China to Join Indo-Pacific Cooperation. Jakarta. November 14. <https://setkab.go.id/en/indonesia-invites-china-to-join-indo-pacific-cooperation/>
- Campbell, Kurt M. and Rush Doshi. 2021. "How America Can Shore Up Asian Order." *Foreign Affairs*. January 12. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-01-12/how-america-can-shore-asian-order>
- Chaudhury, Dipanjan Roy and Manu Pubby. 2022. "In a First, India to Export BrahMos Missile to Philippines." *The Economic Times*. January 15. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/in-a-first-india-to-export-brahmos-missile-to-philippines/arti>

- clideshow/ 88908287.cms
- Connors, Emma. 2023. "Jokowi Softens Stance on AUKUS, the Quad." *Australian Financial Review*. May 9. <https://www.afr.com/world/asia/jokowi-softens-stance-on-aukus-the-quad-20230509-p5d702>
- Crabtree, James. 2022. "Indo-Pacific Dilemmas: The Like-minded and the Non-aligned." *Survival* 64/6: 23–30.
- Dian, Matteo, and Hugo Meijer. 2020. "Networking Hegemony: Alliance Dynamics in East Asia." *International Politics* 57/2: 131–49.
- Dutton, Peter. 2021a. Address to the American Chamber of Commerce in Australia. September 8, Canberra, Australia. <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/peter-dutton/speeches/address-american-chamber-commerce-australia>
- Dutton, Peter. 2021b. Address to Australian Strategic Policy Institute Conference, Canberra. June 10, Canberra, Australia. <https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/speeches/2021-06-10/address-australian-strategic-policy-institute-conference-canberra>
- Fitriani, Evi. 2022. "Indonesia's wary embrace of China in Beyond Blocs: Global views on China and US-China relations" (eds. Helena Legarda und Jacob Gunter). Berlin: Merics, 37–44. <https://merics.org/de/indonesias-wary-embrace-china>
- Grossman, Derek. 2021. "Indonesia Is Quietly Warming Up to China." *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/06/07/indonesia-china-jokowi-natuna-sea-military-bri-cooperation-biden-united-states/>
- Guiang, Grace. 2017. "Are Minilaterals the Future of ASEAN Security?" *East Asia Forum*. September 30. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2017/09/30/are-minilaterals-the-future-of-asean-security/>
- Harold, Scott W. 2021. "The Indo-Pacific Security Outlook: An American View." In *CSCAP Regional Security Outlook 2022* (ed. Ron Huisken). Canberra: Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific.
- He, Kai (ed.). 2020. *Contested Multilateralism 2.0 and Asian Security Dy-*

- namics*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- He, Kai and Mingjiang Li. 2020. "Understanding the Dynamics of the Indo-Pacific: US-China Strategic Competition, Regional Actors, and Beyond." *International Affairs* 96/1: 1-7.
- Heiduk, Felix. 2023. "Middle Powers in the Indo-Pacific Interregnum: The Case of Germany." *Global Asia* 18/3: 34-39.
- Heiduk, Felix. 2023. *Security in the Indo-Pacific*. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. Berlin.
- Heiduk, Felix and Gudrun Wacker. 2020. *From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific*. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. Berlin.
- Hindu, The. 2023. "Multipolar World Is Feasible Only by a Multipolar Asia: EAM Jaishankar." May 14. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/multipolar-world-is-feasible-only-by-a-multipolar-asia-eam-jaishankar/article66849480.ece>
- Jaishankar, Subrahmanyam. 2021. Address by External Affairs Minister at the 20th Meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government. 20th Meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government. November 25. https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/34532/Address_by_External_Affairs_Minister_at_the_20th_Meeting_of_the_SCO_Council_of_Heads_of_Government
- Jaishankar, Subrahmanyam. 2021. Remarks by External Affairs Minister at the 4th Indo-Pacific Business Forum. October 28. https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/34434/Remarks_by_External_Affairs_Minister_at_the_4th_IndoPacific_Business_Forum_October_28_2021
- Jakobson, Linda. 2016. "Reflections From China on Xi Jinping's 'Asia for Asians'." *Asian Politics & Policy* 8/1: 219-223.
- Jones, David Martin and Nicole Jenne. 2015. "Weak States' Regionalism: ASEAN and the Limits of Security Cooperation in Pacific Asia." *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 16/2: 209-240.
- Jones, David Martin and Michael L. R. Smith. 2007. "Making Process, Not Progress: ASEAN and the Evolving East Asian Regional Order." *International Security* 32/1: 148-184.

- Kim, Patricia M. 2021. "China's Search for Allies." *Foreign Affairs*. November 26. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-11-15/chinas-search-allies>
- Kivimäki, Timo. 2016. *The Long Peace of East Asia*. London: Routledge.
- Koga, Kei. 2022. "Japan and Australia Step up Defence Cooperation." East Asia Forum. March 7. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2022/03/08/japan-and-australia-step-up-defence-cooperation/>
- Kyodo News. 2023. "Japan, U.S., Australia, Philippines vow to boost defense cooperation." June 4. <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2023/06/eb7baee7ce7f-urgent-japan-us-australia-philippines-vow-to-boost-defense-cooperation.html>
- Laksmana, Evan A. 2021. "A Fragile Fulcrum: Indonesia-U.S. Military Relations in the Age of Great-Power Competition." *Asia Policy* 16/4: 106–14.
- Loke, Beverley. 2021. "The United States, China, and the Politics of Hege-
monic Ordering in East Asia." *International Studies Review* 23/4: 1208–29.
- Mackay, Melissa. 2021. "Marking 10 Years in Darwin, Top US Diplomat Signals Bigger US Marine Deployments in Top End." *ABC News*. October 9. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-10/ten-years-us-marines-top-end/100523120>
- Marsudi, Retno. 2021. Remarks at the High Level Commemorative Meeting to Mark the 60th Anniversary of the Non-Aligned Movement. October 14. <https://kemlu.go.id/portal/en/read/3038/pidato/remarks-minister-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-indonesia-at-the-high-level-commemorative-meeting-to-mark-the-60th-anniversary-of-the-non-aligned-movement>
- Marsudi, Retno. 2020. Remarks at the Ministerial Meeting of the Alliance for Multilateralism. Ministerial Meeting of the Alliance for Multilateralism. September 25. <https://kemlu.go.id/portal/en/read/1724/pidato/remarks-he-retno-lp-marsudi-minister-for-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-indonesia-ministerial-meeting-of-the-alliance-for-multi-lateralism-25-september-2020>

- Mearsheimer, John J. 2019. "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order." *International Security* 43/4: 7-50.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and The White House. 2023. Joint Statement from the Leaders of the United States and the Republic of Indonesia: Elevating Relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. November 13. <https://id.usembassy.gov/joint-statement-from-the-leaders-of-the-united-states-and-the-republic-of-indonesia-elevating-relations-to-a-comprehensive-strategic-partnership/>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. 2021. Jokowi Praises Fruitful Partnership between ASEAN and China. November 22. <https://kemlu.go.id/chicago/en/news/17526/jokowi-praises-fruitful-partnership-between-asean-and-china>
- Modi, Narendra. 2019. Prime Minister's Speech at the East Asia Summit. Ministry of External Affairs of India. November 4. https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/32171/Prime_Ministers_Speech_at_the_East_Asia_Summit_04_November_2019
- Modi, Narendra. 2018. Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue. June 1. <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/29943/Prime+Ministers+Keynote+Address+at+Shangri+La+Dialogue+June+01+2018>
- Morrison, Scott. 2021. Virtual Remarks to the United Nations General Assembly. September 24. <https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-43591>
- Morrison, Scott. 2019. The 2019 Lowy Lecture: Prime Minister Scott Morrison. *The Lowy Institute*. October 3. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/2019-lowy-lecture-prime-minister-scott-morrison>
- Morse, Julia C. and Robert O. Keohane. 2014. "Contested Multilateralism." *The Review of International Organizations* 9/4: 385-412.
- Narine, Shaun. 1997. "ASEAN and the ARF: The Limits of the 'ASEAN Way'." *Asian Survey* 37/10: 961-78.
- Natalegawa, Marty. 2013. An Indonesian Perspective on the Indo-Pacific:

- Keynote Address by His Excellency Dr. R. M. Marty M. Natalegawa, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Republic of Indonesia. Center for Strategic and International Studies. May 16. https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/attachments/130516_MartyNatalegawa_Speech.pdf
- Panda, Jagannath. 2023. "India in a World of Asymmetrical Multipolarity." *East Asia Forum*. March 20. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2023/03/20/india-in-a-world-of-asymmetrical-multipolarity/>
- Pongsudhirak, Thitinan. 2022. "Southeast Asia's New-Old Cold War." *Jordan Times*. February 13. <http://www.jordantimes.com/opinion/thitinan-pongsudhirak/southeast-asias-new-old-cold-war>
- Radio Free Asia. 2021. "Indonesia Seeks Cooperation among ASEAN Coast Guards." December 28. <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/vietnam/asean-indonesia-12282021132246.html>
- Rajagopalan, Rajeswari Pillai. 2021. Explaining the Rise of Minilaterals in the Indo-Pacific. Observer Research Foundation. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/explaining-the-rise-of-minilaterals-in-the-indo-pacific>
- Richey, Mason. 2019. "US-Led Alliances and Contemporary International Security Disorder: Comparative Responses of the Transatlantic and Asia-Pacific Alliance Systems." *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 6/3: 275–98.
- Rüland, Jürgen. 2011. "Southeast Asian Regionalism and Global Governance: 'Multilateral Utility' or 'Hedging Utility'?" *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 33/1. 83-112.
- Ryacudu, Ryamizard. 2019. Speech at the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 2019. June 2. <https://www.iiss.org/events/shangri-la-dialogue/shangri-la-dialogue-2019>
- Singh, Angad and Premesha Saha. 2022. Securing Two Oceans: Bolstering India-Australia Defence Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. Observer Research Foundation. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/securing-two-oceans-bolstering-india-australia-defence-cooperation-in->

the-indo-pacific

- Siow, Maria, and Resty Woro Yuniar. 2023. "China 'Sending a Signal' to Indonesia with Large Coastguard Ships near Island." *South China Morning Post*. January 12. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3206445/china-sending-signal-deploying-largest-coast-guard-vessels-near-indonesias-natunas>
- SIPRI Arms Transfer Database. <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>
- Smith, Sheila A. 2022. The Quad Is Getting More Ambitious in the Indo-Pacific. Council on Foreign Relations. February 27. <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/quad-getting-more-ambitious-indo-pacific>
- South China Morning Post*. 2022. "India Boosts Warship Patrols to Catch up with China but Funding Gap Remains." January 28. <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/south-asia/article/3165041/india-ramps-warship-patrols-indian-ocean-keep-pace-china>
- Subianto, Prabowo. 2021. Opening Address of the IISS Manama Dialogue. November 19. <https://www.iiss.org/globalassets/media-library--content--migration/files/manama-dialogue/2021/plenary-transcripts/opening-address/lieutenant-general-retd-prabowo-subianto-minister-of-defense-indonesia---as-delivered.pdf>
- Sukma, Rizal. 2019. Indonesia, ASEAN and the Indo-Pacific: Strategic Necessity or Norm-Setting Exercise?. CSIS Lecture Series on Regional Dynamics. August 28. <https://mail.csis.or.id/events/indonesia-asean-and-the-indo-pacific-strategic-necessities-or-norm-setting-exercise/>
- Sukma, Rizal. 2012. "Indonesia's Security Outlook and Defence Policy 2012." In *Security Outlook of the Asia Pacific Countries and Its Implications for the Defense Sector* (ed. Eiichi Katahara), 3–21. Tokyo: NIDS.
- Tankel, Stephen, Lisa Curtis, Joshua Fitt, and Coby Goldberg. 2021. Positive Visions, Powerful Partnerships: The Keys to Competing with China in a Post-Pandemic Indo-Pacific. Center for a New Ameri-

- can Security. <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/positive-visions-powerful-partnerships>
- Tonnesson, Stein. 2017. *Explaining the East Asian Peace: A Research Story*. Copenhagen, Denmark: NIAS Press.
- Tow, William T., and Brendan Taylor. 2010. "What is Asian security architecture?" *Review of International Studies* 36/1: 95–116.
- US Department of State. 2019. A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision. November 3. <https://www.state.gov/a-free-and-open-indo-pacific-advancing-a-shared-vision/>.
- US Department of Defense. 2019. Indo-Pacific Strategy Report. Department of Defense. June 1. <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF>
- The White House. 2022. Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>.
- Weatherbee, Donald. 2014. "Indonesia in ASEAN: Vision and Realit." Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Weber, Katja. 2013. "Recalibrating Sovereignty-Related Norms: Europe, Asia and Non-Traditional Security Challenges." *Journal of European Integration* 35/1: 19-35.
- Wei Fenghe, 2019. Speech at the 18th Shangri-La Dialogue June 2. http://eng.mod.gov.cn/leadership/2019-06/02/content_4842884.htm
- Wilkins, Thomas. 2021. Australian Strategic Approaches to the Indo-Pacific: National Resilience and Minilateral Cooperation. Centre for Security, Diplomacy, and Strategy. December 21. https://brussels-school.be/sites/default/files/CSDS%20Policy%20brief_2126.pdf
- Xi Jinping. 2014. Remarks at the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia. May 21. http://www.china.org.cn/world/2014-05/28/content_32511846.htm
- Yang Jiechi. 2021. Speech at the Dialogue with National Committee on

- U.S.-China Relations. February 02. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-02/02/c_139715299.htm
- Yeo, Andrew. 2019. *Asia's Regional Architecture: Alliances and Institutions in the Pacific Century*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Zhang, Feng. 2018. "Chinese Visions of the Asian Political-Security Order." *Asia Policy* 13/2: 13-18.
- Zhang, Feng. 2012. "China's New Thinking on Alliances." *Survival* 54/5: 129-148.
- Zhang, Zhixin. 2019. "How China Seeks to Foster an Asia-Pacific Security Community: Peace through Consultation, Cooperation and Co-Development." *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 65/3: 395-411.
- Zhou, Laura. 2021. "China, Indonesia Hold Joint Naval Exercises near Jakarta." *ABS-CBN News*. <https://news.abs-cbn.com/overseas/05/10/21/china-indonesia-hold-joint-naval-exercises-near-jakarta>

- Article submitted 6/17/23, revised 10/31/23, accepted 2/20/24

Dangerous Europe Vs. Tolerant Asia: The Puzzling Survival Patterns of Buffer States

Olena Guseinova

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

Abstract

This article explores the survival patterns of buffer states that were embroiled in the rivalry of various European and Asian power poles in the period between 1648 and 1995. The main determinant of the survival trends in this research is the performance of buffers during high-tension phases of great power competition. High-tension phases refer to episodes of escalation where opposing parties consider resolving the dispute through military means and may either proceed to violence or stop short, depending on strategic calculations. By tracing the performance of buffers through these high-tension phases, this study aims to achieve three goals: 1) assessing the average probability of buffer survival during exposure to immediate existential threats; 2) identifying factors most commonly affecting their survival chances; and 3) unveiling potential cross-regional variations in buffer outcomes, as well as divergences in the processes of their survival. The research yields several intriguing results. First, the examination of 256 escalations reveals that the survival rate of buffers during high-tension phases of great power rivalry is 72%. This finding challenges the pessimistic survival estimates that currently dominate the academic literature. Second, the survival rate of buffers located in Asia was much higher than the survival rate of buffers located in Europe. Third, adversaries struggling for control over buffers located in Asia were more reluctant to engage in war than their counterparts seeking to overrun buffers in Europe. In Asia, only 52% of escalations entailed military conflict, whereas in Europe this rate constituted 71%. Lastly, the study shows that the survival of buffers in Europe and Asia was affected by different factors.

Keywords: Great power competition, buffer states, state survival, security dilemma, international regimes

Introduction

A buffer is a relatively weak geopolitical entity located between two or more much stronger rival powers. By keeping the domains of opposing sides apart, buffers play an important role in the dynamics of interstate rivalries. Most commonly, buffers are preserved or created to serve as protective barriers. The role envisaged for them in the strategy of belligerents is usually threefold. First, their existence allows competing parties to avoid the formation of common borders, thereby reducing the likelihood of unintended clashes (Curzon 1907; Turmanidze 2009; Hensel and Goemans 2021). Second, their presence increases the costs of resolving the conflict by military means (Knudsen 1986; De Spiegeleire 1997). By blocking or delaying the advance of one side, the buffer gives the other side additional time to prepare against the upcoming attack, often turning the offensive into a protracted and financially draining undertaking. Third, the availability of a buffer space provides adversaries with the opportunity to wage war without bringing devastation to their own territories (Spykman 1942; Mathisen 1971). When military confrontation becomes inevitable, belligerents usually expect the buffer to bear the brunt of the hostilities by serving as a primary battlefield in their struggle for supremacy. Thus, while buffers contribute to the security of their neighbors, their own security is often at risk.

States in a buffer position typically face three unfortunate realities: their sovereignty inevitably diminishes, their national destiny is influenced from without, and their territorial integrity is neither fully respected nor sufficiently protected (even legally) from external encroachments (Ziring 1986: 153). This makes their survival challenging and often overly dependent on external conditions beyond their control. Despite such a hostile strategic environment, some buffers still manage to continue to exist, which raises the question of how they achieve survival.

The prevailing view holds that buffer survival becomes probable only if the dynamics of great power competition are mitigated by exceptional circumstances. While both opposing sides might wish to maintain a

dividing space between their domains to avoid conflict, the temptation to gain a strategic advantage over the opponent at the expense of the buffer usually remains strong throughout the rivalry. Thus, unless adversaries are constrained from acting on this temptation, the buffer is unlikely to escape invasion, occupation, or conquest (Fazal 2004, 2007).

Most commonly, antagonists abstain from resorting to violence out of the fear of facing retaliation exceeding their managerial or strategic capacity. This apprehension is typically driven by the intricacies of power distribution, the complexities of international security arrangements, peculiarities of socio-political dynamics, and other broader structural characteristics of the operational environment (Fazal 2007; Turmanidze 2009; Park 2016). The prospect of being drawn into a protracted conflict, stemming from certain intrinsic features of buffers such as difficult terrain, a strong sense of national identity, and robust defensive capabilities, often serves as an additional deterrent to international aggression (Spykman 1938; Wight 2004; Menon and Snyder 2017).

The mere existence of mitigating circumstances, however, does not ensure non-violent behavior, as adversaries may still choose to test the limits of their constraints. In such cases, the fate of buffers is usually determined by a complex interaction of factors and overlapping events that tend to change rapidly as the confrontation progresses. This turbulent survival dynamic implies that the parameters contributing to a successful outcome in one particular case may not necessarily guarantee success in another. Moreover, what provides positive results in one specific context, may lead to failure under different conditions. While experts consistently emphasize the importance of the state of balance between antagonists, the peculiarities of the geopolitical setting, and the inherent resilience capabilities of buffers, the exact range of factors responsible for variation in survival outcomes across the majority of cases thus remains a subject of scholarly debate.

Due to the lack of academic interest in the subject and inconclusiveness of findings in existing research, many aspects of the survival dynamics

of buffers are still inadequately understood. For instance, while it is commonly posited that buffers encounter existential threats more frequently than other actors in international relations, the extent of their vulnerability and the average probability of their survival remain unclear. The central question of whether buffers are more likely to survive or be eliminated is not convincingly addressed in the current body of literature. Furthermore, despite efforts to identify factors that determine the behavior of antagonists towards buffers, scholars still have not reached consensus on the underlying criteria guiding their strategic decision-making. The issue of why belligerents choose to resort to violence in some cases, while refraining from doing so in others still lacks convincing explanation. Finally, most studies on the subject assume the existence of a universal logic governing buffer survival. Historically, however, buffers in Europe and Asia operated in rather distinct strategic environments. The geopolitical landscape of Europe functioned on principles of territorial sovereignty and featured numerous independent states. The interaction between these multiple political entities was characterized by constant power struggles, shifting alliances, and frequent conflicts. In contrast, interstate dynamics in Asia were shaped by hierarchical order and complex tributary relations, where smaller peripheral states acknowledged the centripetal authority of major historical power centers—the Chinese, Ottoman, and Persian empires—in exchange for protection or trade privileges. These differences in geopolitical realities could potentially have contributed not only to cross-regional variations in buffer outcomes but also to divergences in the process of their survival. The impact of these differences on the performance of buffers, however, has never been fully investigated, prompting the question of whether a general survival model applicable to all cases truly exists.

In an attempt to address these issues, this article investigates the survival patterns of 72 states that served as buffers between various competing powers of Europe and Asia in the period from 1648 to 1995. The study pursues three goals. The first aim is to calculate the general

probability of buffer survival, irrespective of the specifics of their location and characteristics. The second objective is to identify factors that prove decisive in determining the outcome of buffers in the majority of instances. The third task involves conducting a comparative analysis to reveal potential cross-regional variations in buffer outcomes and possible divergences in the process of their survival.

This article is divided into five parts. The introduction is followed by a theoretical section surveying the literature on buffer states, with a focus on basic concepts, explanatory models of survival algorithms, and survival estimates. After reviewing the current theoretical framework, the research design of this study is introduced. This section focuses on the details of the sampling method, measurements, and statistical model. After covering the technical aspects, the article presents and interprets the analytical results. The stress in this section is on cross-regional differences in buffer survival. The final, concluding section offers general policy recommendations for buffer states and addresses the implications of the findings for Ukraine and North Korea, which are currently variously involved in the rivalry unfolding among the United States, Russia, and China.

Buffer States and Their Inconsistent Survival Patterns

A buffer state is usually defined as a geopolitical entity of small size, located between two rival or potentially hostile great powers, maintained or even created to inhibit international aggression (Curzon 1907; Pitman 1935; Spykman 1942). Sometimes adversaries can be separated by large bodies of water or land. In this case, a polity entrapped in their rivalry can be categorized as a quasi-buffer, provided that it lies in close geographical proximity to one of the opposing sides. Unlike traditional buffers, quasi-buffers function as a bulwark primarily for the opposing party geographically closest to the buffer (Mathisen 1971, 84; Turmanidze

2009, 8). Since the “weakness” of buffers is determined in relation to stronger parties, the power rank of interposed states can also vary depending on the status of geopolitical adversaries. This implies that the range of states eligible for buffer status includes not only weak/small states, but even middle powers (Turmanidze 2009, 27). For instance, Afghanistan, Persia, the Emirate of Bukhara, and the Ottoman Empire differed radically in terms of territory, population, military force, and economy, yet all of these countries served as buffers during the “Great Game” between Britain and Russia.

The existing understanding of buffer survival is somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, empirical data suggest that geographic location between rival great powers can actually increase the likelihood of buffer state survival (Wight 2004, 166), and even make it easier for them to acquire sovereignty in cases where their autonomy is limited. Historically, their existence helped not only to contain territorial expansion of competing powers, but also to prevent the opposing parties from gaining an advantage over each other, thus leading conflicts into stalemate (Curzon 1908; Spykman and Rollins 1939; Ross 1986). Considering that the majority of states in a buffer position were inherently weak both politically and militarily, ensuring their survival became a deliberate policy by rivals seeking to avoid open military confrontation. As occasional shifts in the distribution of power required adjustments in the lines of defense, antagonists found it necessary not only to maintain but also to create new polities along their borders. While this practice was initially intended to keep adversarial great powers apart, it actually paved the way for the survival and proliferation of states that would otherwise have been eradicated or would never have emerged in the conditions of a highly competitive interstate system. Bulgaria, Moldova, and Mongolia stand as notable examples of states that acquired sovereignty as a result of the rivalry among their powerful neighbors.

On the other hand, some studies indicate that, in the long-run, geopolitical competition between major powers inevitably exposes states in a buffer position to existential threats (Spykman and Rollins 1939;

Ziring 1986; Chay 1986; Fazal 2007). As a common site of nested conflicts, buffers have been found to be more prone to sovereignty loss than non-buffer states. This conclusion is based on both case studies (Bartov and Weitz 2013; Rieber 2014) and statistical analysis showing that the states situated in areas where the spheres of interest of hostile parties intertwine are more likely to suffer from conquest, occupation, or partition (Fazal 2007).

This contradiction in the evidence is usually explained by the security dilemma and its impact on the behavior of antagonists. When two relatively equal great powers engage in a rivalry, the vague chances of a decisive victory at the initial stages of the conflict motivate them to preserve a certain space between their respective realms to decrease the probability of unintended military clashes. As the competition for strategic advantage unfolds, the fear that the opponent may undermine the equilibrium by imposing political or physical control over the buffer grows. To mitigate geopolitical and security risks, belligerents first turn to non-violent measures, usually aimed at sustaining a friendly and compliant administration in their common borderland. Since a government that pleases one rival great power invariably dissatisfies the other, these attempts often lead to a deadlock. As the stakes get higher, adversaries are increasingly inclined either to agree on a dismemberment of the buffer to settle the issue or to attempt unilateral annexation to gain an upper hand in the competition. In this manner, the security dilemma creates a puzzling situation in which the buffers that great powers create or maintain to increase their own security have the highest risk of elimination (Fazal 2004, 2007). This paradox thus presents a fundamental issue. If the security dilemma inevitably puts buffers at risk of elimination, then how do some manage to survive?

Survival Under the Security Dilemma

There is no consensus among scholars as to which exact set of variables contributes more to the survival of buffers. For instance, in early work on buffers, emphasis is placed on the decisive role of

geographic characteristics such as topography, logistics, and location (Spykman 1938). In Cold War literature, more stress is placed on political aspects of buffers: political cohesion (Wight 2004), adherence to strict neutrality (Chay 1986), balanced foreign policy choices (Partem 1983), and alliance arrangements (Maila 1986). In contemporary discourse, some credit is given to structural factors, in particular to the pacifying effect of equal distribution of power at the regional and international levels (Turmanidze 2009), post-1945 anti-conquest norms (Fazal 2007), and political, religious, and civilizational ideologies discouraging international aggression (Park 2016).

Despite the differences in the range and combination of included secondary variables, the cores of most explanatory models are similar. The majority of experts believe that, ultimately, the only factor that affects the survival of buffers in a persistent and fundamental way is the rivalry dynamic (Spykman and Rollins 1939; Chay 1986; Ross 1986; Fazal 2004; Menon and Snyder 2017). The argument is that, in the long-run, neither individual characteristics of buffers (e.g., adherence to neutrality or difficult terrain) nor the peculiarities of international regimes (e.g., norms, rules, and principles of the conduct of interstate affairs) can discourage major rival powers from pursuing their political objectives. Given that neutrality can be violated, physical barriers overcome with the advantages of technology, and international laws manipulated or bypassed, it is claimed that buffer survival largely depends on the will of the belligerents. Other factors, it is maintained, can at best contain the offensive behavior of adversaries only temporarily (Spykman and Rollins 1939). Thus, when some buffers manage to outlive the rivalry without suffering elimination, their success is usually attributed to a specific set of circumstances that makes a partition or unilateral assault on the part of the belligerents infeasible. These circumstances are understood to be supposedly rare situations when both opponents are distracted by other conflicts of a regional or international scale, or when both parties consider an occupation of a buffer too risky or strategically disadvantageous (Fazal 2007). The matter of the number, type and value

of secondary variables that can mitigate the pressure exerted on a buffer is highly debated.

The issue of the behavior of rival power poles lies at the heart of most models of buffer state survival. All these models adopt a spiral structure, hinging on the notion that the security dilemma acts as a primary source of friction between antagonists, whereas the fluctuations in strategic balance between them play a role in determining the intensity of the conflict. In the context of buffer studies, the security dilemma is understood as a situation in which any action of one great power towards an interposed state is perceived by another great power as an attempt to undermine the status quo. A high level of mistrust contributes to the build-up of tension that can develop into a military confrontation. The likelihood of a conflict escalating into war depends on the balance maintained between the adversaries. The notion of balance in this case refers to three facets of the rivalry: the distribution of power (balance of power), the equivalence of the strategic value of the buffer for each side of the dispute (balance of interests), and the situational advantage of resorting to either offense or defense (offense–defense balance). From a theoretical perspective, the parity between opposing parties on each of these three aspects lowers the chance of an outbreak of war, while disequilibrium increases the probability of a direct military clash. Until recently, most models of buffer survival were structured around the concept of a balance of power, while balance of interests served as a complementary element sometimes employed to explain inconsistencies of the actions taken by adversaries. Currently this trend is changing due to findings pointing at destabilizing rather than pacifying effects of power parity (Kim 1992; Powell 1996; Reed 2003; Hegre 2008; Levy and Thomson 2010). For example, Menon and Snyder (2017) argue that the behavioral patterns of belligerents are too complicated to be reduced to one single determinant as simple as an aggregate of power. In their opinion, offense–defense balance theory serves as a better basis for description of the mechanisms of buffer survival because it provides a better insight into the mindset of antagonists.

Since the decision of adversaries to resort to war partially depends on the cost of conquest and occupation, apart from the aforementioned balances that determine the general trends in the dynamics of rivalry, some of the models take into account the individual characteristics of buffers. Most commonly scholars address three groups of variables related to internal stability, foreign policy choices, and defense capabilities (Knudsen 1986; Brooks 1999; Wight 2004; Menon and Snyder 2017). Thus, if a buffer is fragile and predisposed to domestic upheavals due to political factionalism or public disturbance, (or) if its international stance is ambiguous, (or) its army is weak and its terrain disadvantageous for defense, then the likelihood of survival is low(er). Conversely, if a buffer is politically and socially cohesive, if its foreign policy balanced, its military forces strong, and the landscape favorable for repelling an invasion, then the chances of its survival are high(er). Simply speaking, the weaker a buffer is, the fewer resources are required to invade and maintain control over it, and therefore the greater the temptation of belligerents to go on the offensive. On the contrary, the stronger a buffer is, the higher the likelihood of protracted and financially draining conflict, and therefore the greater the incentive for antagonists to remain on the defensive and refrain from aggressive action.

Theoretical Shortcomings

The existing theoretical framework for understanding buffer systems has two major shortcomings. First, the conclusions about the survival algorithms of buffers are drawn mostly from the practical experience of the post-Westphalian West. No serious attempts have been made to investigate the matter in a more comprehensive way, taking into account historical retrospective and cross-regional peculiarities. For example, only a minor segment of the research is devoted to buffers located in Asia. And even in this segment, the problem is examined mainly in the European context. For example, most studies related to the interposed position of Korea, Cambodia, Laos, or Himalayan kingdoms are focused on the period when these countries were contested by Western great

powers, whereas research on the local rivalries over the same polities is scarce. The lack of a comparative perspective on the state of affairs before and after the arrival of Europeans in the respective geographic area leaves unanswered the question of whether the strongest states of the East mirrored Western counterparts in dealing with buffers. Consequently, it remains unclear if the mainstream theoretical approach is applicable to the buffer systems that functioned outside of the Occidental world and its influence.

Second, despite wide acceptance, the current theoretical framework has never been subjected to rigorous verification through statistical controls. The preponderance of case studies in the field indicates that the predictive and explanatory power of the dominant hypotheses has been tested only on a limited number of instances. Since little statistical analysis has been performed, it cannot be strongly argued that the suggested algorithm for the survival of buffers is consistent with empirical data in the majority of cases. Due to selection bias owed to both Eurocentrism and the limitations of qualitative research, the ability of mainstream realist models to generate correct and reproducible projections, regardless of spatial and temporal details, cannot be unambiguously supported.

Moreover, no coherent steps have been undertaken to assess the accuracy of the theoretical representation of the real-world mechanisms accountable for buffer outcomes. The current paradigm is built on top-down logic, i.e., most works seek to explain the survival patterns of buffers by employing general theories of realism rather than independent hypotheses derived from factual data related to the phenomenon itself. Given that the role of the balance of power in the dynamics of the rivalry is uncertain, there may be other, overlooked processes that affect the behavior of belligerents towards buffers. This raises the question of whether the rivalry-centric survival models promoted by realists reflect the complexity of the algorithm of buffer survival only partially, making them suitable only for explaining a limited range of cases, or perhaps even whether the overall approach is fundamentally wrong and requires revision.

Research Design¹

In this article, a political entity is identified as a buffer if it meets four basic criteria. First, it is located between two or more rival powers (coded as a buffer) or is within range of attack of at least one of the opposing parties (coded as a quasi-buffer). Second, it is significantly weaker than any of its antagonistic neighbors. Third, it has at least limited autonomy. Fourth, its territory is considered strategically important by both opponents (coded as a buffer) or at least one of them (coded as a quasi-buffer). Given this definition, there were 72 geopolitical entities that acted as buffers between various power poles of Europe and Asia in the period from 1648 to 1995. Out of 72 buffers, 41 were in Europe and 31 in Asia (see Tables 1 and 2). The list of buffers represents a modified version of the compilations published by Ross (1986), Fazal (2004), and Valeriano and Van Benthuyzen (2012).

Unlike other works on the subject, buffers tout court are not the primary unit of analysis in this study. Instead, the focus is placed on instances when the survival of buffers is most at risk, that is, when the level of hostility between antagonists reaches a peak. These high-tension phases are understood as episodes of escalation when one or both opposing parties consider resolving the dispute through military means, and either proceed with offensive plans or decide to refrain from aggressive actions due to strategic considerations. Escalations pose an existential threat to buffers for two reasons. First, during high-tension phases belligerents are more inclined to resort to violence to resolve disputes. Second, it is during these periods of intense friction that adversaries are most tempted to seek a competitive advantage at the expense of buffers. Considering that most rivalries consist of high- and low-intensity phases that alternate until the dispute is settled, which can take decades, if not centuries, buffers are forced to exist in recurring crisis mode. Since even

¹ For further information on the model and data, the author can be contacted at: olena.guseinova.88@gmail.com.

the first high-tension phase of rivalry can become the last one for a buffer, the main marker of buffer viability in this study is survival per escalation, not survival per rivalry. This means that each buffer represents several cases, based on the number of rivalries it was involved in and the number of escalations it had to endure. Overall, this study investigates 256 escalations experienced by buffer states between 1648 and 1995, with the largest number of high-tension phases endured by one buffer being nine.

Table 1
LIST OF BUFFERS LOCATED IN ASIA, 1648-1995.

Buffer	Years as buffer	Associated rivalries	Status
Afghanistan	1828-1907	Russia-UK	Buffer
	1953-1989	USSR-US	Quasi-buffer
Bangladesh	1971-1991	China-India	Buffer
Bhutan	1950-1988	China-India	Buffer
Cambodia	1954-1992	Thailand-Vietnam*	Buffer
Emirate of Bukhara	1828-1868	Russia-UK	Buffer
Kingdom of Cambodia	1658-1845	Thai-Vietnam kingdoms	Buffer
Kingdom of Kartli	1721-1758	Persia-Ottoman empire	Buffer
Kingdom of Kakheti	1721-1758	Persia-Ottoman empire	Buffer
Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti	1762-1813	Persia-Ottoman empire	Buffer
Kingdom of Imereti	1768-1812	Persia-Ottoman empire	Buffer
Iran	1946-1989	USSR-US	Quasi-buffer
Jordan	1949-1979	Egypt-Israel	Buffer
	1979-1991	Iraq-Israel	Buffer
Khanate of Khiva	1828-1878	Russia-UK	Buffer
Khanate of Kokand	1828-1878	Russia-UK	Buffer
Joseon Korea	1876-1895	China-Japan	Quasi-buffer
	1895-1905	Russia-Japan	Quasi-buffer
North Korea	1949-1989	USSR-US	Quasi-buffer
South Korea	1949-1989	USSR-US	Quasi-buffer
Kingdom of Luang Prabang	1759-1812	Burmese-Thai kingdoms	Buffer
	1812-1834	Thai-Vietnam kingdoms	Buffer
Kingdom of Vientiane	1759-1776	Burmese-Thai kingdoms	Buffer
	1785-1834	Thai-Vietnam kingdoms	Buffer

Buffer	Years as buffer	Associated rivalries	Status
Kingdom of Champasak	1759-1776	Burmese-Thai kingdoms	Buffer
	1785-1834	Thai-Vietnam kingdoms	Buffer
Laos	1954-1989	Thailand-Vietnam*	Buffer
Lebanon	1948-1990	Syria-Israel	Buffer
Ottoman Empire	1833-1907	Russia-UK	Quasi-buffer
Manchukuo	1932-1945	Russia-Japan	Buffer
Mongolia	1904-1945	Russia-Japan	Buffer
	1949-1989	Russia-China	Buffer
Myanmar	1950-1988	China-India	Buffer
Nepal	1950-1988	China-India	Buffer
Persia	1828-1941	Russia-UK	Buffer
Siam	1847-1907	France-UK	Buffer
Sikkim	1769-1788	Nepal-Bhutan	Buffer
	1788-1792	Nepal-China	Buffer
	1792-1816	Nepal-UK	Buffer
	1861-1890	China-UK	Buffer
	1950-1988	China-India	Buffer
Tibet	1788-1856	Nepal-China	Buffer
	1895-1907	Russia-UK	Buffer

Source: Sorokin (1937), Chay (1986), Handel (1990), Dupuy (1993), Elman (1995), De Spiegeleire (1997), Ngaostvat and Ngaosvathn (1998), Kohn (1999), Cohen (2003), Sergeev (2003), Charney (2004), Fazal (2007), Clodfelter (2008), Valeriano and Van Benthuyssen (2012), Bartov and Weitz (2013), Kaplan (2013) Rieber (2014).

Table 2
LIST OF BUFFERS LOCATED IN EUROPE, 1648-1995.

Buffer	Years as buffer	Associated rivalries	Status
Albania	1914-1916	Italy-Austria-Hungary	Quasi-buffer
	1924-1939	Italy-Yugoslavia	Quasi-buffer
Austria	1919-1938	Italy-Germany	Buffer
	1955-1985	USSR-USA	Quasi-buffer
Baden	1834-1866	Austria-Prussia	Buffer
	1866-1871	France-Prussia	Buffer
Bavaria	1745-1792	Austria-Prussia	Buffer
	1792-1814	Austria-France	Buffer
	1834-1866	Austria-Prussia	Buffer
	1866-1871	France-Prussia	Buffer

Buffer	Years as buffer	Associated rivalries	Status
Belgium	1839-1871	France-Prussia	Buffer
	1871-1914	France-Germany	Buffer
	1919-1940	France-Germany	Buffera
Bulgaria	1878-1917	Russia-Ottoman empire - Austria-Hungary	Buffer
	1933-1945	USSR-Germany	Buffer
	1946-1985	USSR-USA	Quasi-buffer
Crimean Khanate	1686-1783	Russia-Ottoman empire	Quasi-buffer
Czechoslovakia	1933-1939	USSR-Germany	Buffer
Denmark	1834-1866	Austria-Prussia	Buffer
	1871-1940	UK-Germany	Quasi-buffer
	1949-1989	USSR-USA	Quasi-buffer
Duchy of Modena and Reggio	1792-1796	Austria-France	Buffer
	1848-1860	Austria-France	Buffer
Duchy of Parma	1792-1796	Austria-France	Buffer
	1848-1860	Austria-France	Buffer
Electorate of Hesse	1834-1866	Austria-Prussia	Buffer
Estonia	1933-1940	USSR-Germany	Buffer
Finland	1933-1945	USSR-Germany	Quasi-buffer
	1948-1989	USSR-USA	Quasi-buffer
German Democratic Republic	1949-1989	USSR-USA	Quasi-buffer
Grand Duchy of Hesse	1834-1871	Austria-Prussia	Buffer
Grand Duchy of Tuscany	1792-1801	Austria-France	Buffer
	1848-1860	Austria-France	Buffer
Greece	1812-1913	Russia-Ottoman empire	Quasi-buffer
	1914-1918	UK-Germany	Quasi-buffer
	1933-1941	UK-Germany-Italy	Quasi-buffer
Hanover	1740-1757	France-UK	Quasi-buffer
	1763-1801	France-UK-Prussia	Quasi-buffer
	1834-1866	Austria-Prussia	Buffer
Hungary	1933-1944	USSR-Germany	Buffer
	1949-1989	USSR-USA	Quasi-buffer

(continued)

Table 2
LIST OF BUFFERS LOCATED IN EUROPE, 1648-1995 (Continued).

Buffer	Years as buffer	Associated rivalries	Status
Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia	1792-1860	Austria-France	Buffer
Latvia	1933-1940	USSR-Germany	Buffer
Lithuania	1933-1940	USSR-Germany	Buffer
Luxemburg	1839-1914	France-Germany	Buffer
	1918-1940	France-Germany	Buffer
Mecklenburg-Schwerin	1834-1866	Austria-Prussia	Buffer
Moldavia	1700-1769	Russia-Ottoman empire	Buffer
	1774-1787	Russia-Ottoman empire	Buffer
	1792-1806	Russia-Ottoman empire	Buffer
	1812-1828	Russia-Ottoman empire	Buffer
	1834-1853	Russia-Ottoman empire	Buffer
Montenegro	1699-1913	Russia-Ottoman empire	Quasi-buffer
Netherlands	1839-1871	France-Germany	Buffer
	1871-1918	UK-Germany	Quasi-buffer
	1933-1940	UK-Germany	Quasi-buffer
Norway	1905-1918	UK-Germany	Quasi-buffer
	1933-1940	UK-Germany	Quasi-buffer
	1946-1989	USSR-USA	Quasi-buffer
Papal states	1791-1798	Austria-France	Buffer
	1830-1860	Austria-France	Buffer
Poland	1933-1939	USSR-Germany	Buffer
	1946-1989	USSR-USA	Quasi-buffer
Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth	1740-1795	Russia-Prussia-Austria	Buffer
Romania	1878-1917	Russia-Ottoman-Austrian empires	Buffer
	1933-1945	USSR-Germany	Buffer
	1947-1989	USSR-USA	Quasi-buffer
Saxony	1745-1756	Austria-Prussia	Buffer
	1763-1792	Austria-Prussia	Buffer
	1792-1814	Austria-France-Prussia	Buffer
	1834-1866	Austria-Prussia	Buffer

Buffer	Years as buffer	Associated rivalries	Status
Serbia	1816-1915	Russia-Ottoman-Austrian empires	Quasi-buffer
Sweden	1905-1918	Russia-Germany-UK	Quasi-buffer
	1933-1945	Russia-Germany-UK	Quasi-buffer
	1949-1989	USSR-USA	Quasi-buffer
Switzerland	1648-1798	Austria-Prussia	Buffer
	1816-1859	Austria-Prussia	Buffer
	1862-1918	France-Germany	Buffer
	1933-1940	France-Germany	Buffer
United Moldavia and Wallachia	1859-1877	Russia-Ottoman empire	Buffer
Wallachia	1690-1716	Russia-Ottoman-Austrian empires	Buffer
	1718-1768	Russia-Ottoman-Austrian empires	Buffer
	1774-1788	Russia-Ottoman-Austrian empires	Buffer

(continued)

Table 2
LIST OF BUFFERS LOCATED IN EUROPE, 1648-1995 (Continued).

Buffer	Years as buffer	Associated rivalries	Status
Wallachia	1792-1806	Russia-Ottoman empire	Buffer
	1812-1828	Russia-Ottoman empire	Buffer
	1834-1848	Russia-Ottoman empire	Buffer
Wuttemberg	1680-1814	Austria-France	Buffer
	1834-1866	Austria-Prussia	Buffer
	1866-1871	France-Prussia	Buffer
Yugoslavia	1933-1941	Italy-Germany	Buffer
	1946-1989	USSR-USA	Quasi-buffer

Source: Sorokin (1937), Chay (1986), Handel (1990), Dupuy (1993), Elman (1995), De Spiegeleire (1997), Ngaosivat and Ngaosyvathn (1998), Kohn (1999), Cohen (2003), Sergeev (2003), Charney (2004), Fazal (2007), Clodfelter (2008), Valeriano and Van Benthuyzen (2012), Bartov and Weitz (2013), Kaplan (2013) Rieber (2014).

This approach was chosen because the assessment of buffer survival is complicated by three factors. The first is the unprecedented frequency of exposure to existential threats. Once engaged in rivalry, buffers are subjected to external pressure of varying degrees continuously, until the conflict between their neighbors is settled. This means that, unlike other actors of international relations, buffers face elimination risks on a regular basis, in particular every time contention between adversaries reaches a climax. Since the majority of “near death/actual death” episodes are associated with high-tension phases of great power competition, the survival of buffer states is analyzed with regard to their performance during each escalation.

The second factor is the ambiguity of state death. State death is usually understood as the formal loss of foreign policymaking power to another state through invasion, occupation, or partition (Fazal 2004; Valeriano and Van Benthuyzen 2012). While it is not uncommon for buffers to fall victim to conquest, this can have a temporary or permanent character. The propensity of buffers to re-enter the international system after the loss of sovereignty is largely owed to the reverse effect of the security dilemma, that is, when belligerents seek to ensure the stability of their borders by re-creating a dividing space between their respective domains. This implies that during any given escalation, buffers face one of three possible outcomes: survival, temporary exit, or permanent elimination. Survival corresponds to a situation where a buffer manages to retain control over its domestic and foreign affairs and is able to enter the next phase of rivalry. Temporary exit refers to episodes in which a buffer loses control over its domestic and foreign affairs and falls under the temporary jurisdiction of one or more belligerents. Depending on the scale and nature of the conflict, the occupation can last from several months to ten years. After the end of hostilities, the settlement of the dispute usually entails the restoration of the buffer’s independence. Permanent elimination represents instances where a buffer is either partitioned or absorbed by one of the adversaries and fails to regain its sovereignty after the end of hostilities. Though there are cases where

buffers re-emerge on the political map more than a century after their elimination, such “resurrections” do not fall into the category of temporary exit because these new geopolitical entities tend to have little in common with their predecessors. Thus, if under normal circumstances survival is determined by the ability to continue existence for an extended period of time, in the case of buffer states it is determined by the ability to continue existence from one escalation to another.

The third factor is the situational dynamics of adversarial interaction. Put simply, when a crisis unfolds in real time, the decision of belligerents on whether to resort to aggression against buffers depends on the specific set of circumstances at that particular moment. The fact that adversaries are prone to attack buffers only during certain high-tension phases of rivalry suggests that some aspects of the strategic environment during other escalations have a constraining effect on their freedom of action. One way to identify and control for these factors is to monitor the behavior of antagonists at each stage of the rivalry.

The temporal scope of the analysis covers the years 1648 to 1995. The Peace of Westphalia is taken as a starting point for the dataset because it marks the advent of modern state sovereignty in Europe and aligns temporally with geopolitical changes occurring in East Asia, notably the establishment of the Qing Empire in 1636. The end of the Cold War is chosen as the dataset endpoint due to two considerations. First, the demise of the Soviet Union entailed the collapse of the existing system of rivalries in both Europe and Asia. As a consequence, there were no well-defined pairs of great power adversaries in the period between the early 1990s and the late 2000s. Second, the new conflict spiral between Russia, the US, and China is only in its initial stage. The fate of buffers involved in their competition is still not determined, and therefore no survival analysis can be performed.

Binary logistic regression is used to determine the circumstances under which the survival of buffer states is more likely. Binary logistic regression is a statistical model that predicts the log-odds (the logarithm of the odds) of one event (out of two alternatives) based on the values

of a set of independent variables. The obtained log-odds are transformed into probabilities with the help of the following equation (Eq. 1):

$$p = \frac{e^{(\beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \dots + \beta_n x_n)}}{1 + e^{(\beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \dots + \beta_n x_n)}} = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \dots + \beta_n x_n)}} \quad (1)$$

where β_0 is a constant, β_1 and β_2 are coefficients calculated by binary logistic regression (using SPSS software), x_1 and x_2 are values of independent variables, and e is Euler's number (2.72). In order to calculate the random probability of buffer survival, a simple formula (Eq. 2) is used:

$$P(s) = \frac{N(s)}{N(e)} \quad (2)$$

where $P(s)$ is the probability of survival during a high-tension phase of great power rivalry, $N(s)$ is the total number of survivals, and $N(e)$ is the total number of escalations. This formula estimates the overall chances of buffers to endure any given escalation without taking into account any individual circumstances. The equation does not include independent variables and does not control whether the elimination is temporary or permanent. Its main task is to provide a statistical figure showing whether the general risk of being occupied during a period of increased tension between adversaries is high, medium, or low.

Before introducing the set of variables to be used in the analysis, it is necessary to specify some basic rules for identifying the dates of acquisition and loss of buffer status, i.e., the dates by which one case is distinguished from another. It is worth noting right away that dates of entry into buffer status may vary depending on subjective assessments, because in most cases it is not possible to determine when exactly a certain state becomes a buffer, unless a "formal" buffer is created with a documented date. The dates of the beginning and the end of different phases of rivalry can also be subjective, as the choice of dates depends on what events are considered significant. Since in this study survival is not measured in relation to time, deviations in interpretations should not

constitute a problem. Dates are used merely as a tool to distinguish one phase of a rivalry from another. The beginning of a certain phase of a rivalry is counted from the year of the first signs of animosity between opposing parties.

For instance, 1828 is the year of Afghanistan's entry into buffer status, as well as the year of the beginning of the first phase of the Russian-British rivalry. This choice of year stems from Russia's active southward advance in early 1820s, followed by its defeat of Persia in 1828, which raised British concerns about Russia's growing influence in Central Asia. Concurrently with these events, Great Britain started to consider the idea of establishing control over the Emirate of Afghanistan. The year of the end of the first period of Russian-British rivalry is 1856, marked by the end of the Crimean War, and, as a result, the temporary withdrawal of Russia from Central Asia. Since not all escalations result in war, the end dates of some high-tension phases are determined by observable signs of reduced friction, such as negotiations and treaties, documented in diplomatic sources.

The dependent variable in this research is survival per escalation. In order to determine what factors affect the survival chances of buffers the most, this study tests 15 independent variables, grouped into the following three categories:

1. Buffer-centric: contiguity, logistics, topography, domestic stability, political cohesion, degree of sovereignty, foreign policy choices, military resistance, alliances.
2. Rivalry-centric: buffer origin, balance of power, balance of interest, war.
3. System-centric: regional/international interstate dynamics, regional/international order.

To measure the balance of power, this study uses the Correlates of War (COW) National Capabilities dataset. Considering that the COW indices do not account for factors such as technology, military training, corruption in the army etc., 20% difference in the distribution of power is accepted as a baseline. Thus, if the difference does not exceed 20%,

then such a condition is classified as a balance. Contrariwise, if the difference exceeds 20%, then such a condition is categorized as an imbalance. Since the COW does not provide power indices for the period from 1648 to 1816, they are calculated separately.

Apart from the balance of power, all variables of this research are categorical. This approach is chosen for three reasons. First, all data are descriptive. For example, there are no appropriate tools to measure the degree of sovereignty, the complexity of the terrain or the strength of military resistance to foreign encroachments. That is why to encode this information, either dichotomous or polytomous variables are employed. Thus, the contiguity variable consists of three categories: "none" for instances where buffers share no common frontiers with belligerents, "one" for cases where a buffer borders only one the antagonists, and "more than one" for situations where a buffer is adjacent to two or more adversaries. Sovereignty is represented by two categories: "independent" and "limited autonomy." The complexity of the terrain and logistics are expressed by the same categories. If the buffer has a plain landscape, or if it has well-developed infrastructure, it is coded as "passage state." If it is covered with deserts, mountains, or jungles, or if it has a poor network of railroads and highways, it is coded as "barrier state." The presence or absence of military resistance is encoded as "war" or "no war."

Second, the tools currently used to measure such factors as political and social cohesion are suitable only for modern nation-states. Accordingly, these characteristics are also encoded using dichotomous variables. If there are no rebellions, revolts, civil wars, etc., then such a condition is classified as "domestic stability." Conversely, if disturbance is common, then such a condition is categorized as "instability." Political cohesion is measured by the presence or absence of factionalism.

Third, categorical variables simplify the process of analysis due to their straightforwardness. The values of each variable are estimated on the basis of empirical evidence obtained from diplomatic correspondence, the works of contemporary historians, and analysis from modern experts.

While most variables are self-explanatory, some require more detailed description.

The buffer origin variable is introduced to test whether the initial circumstances under which states enter buffer status affect their future chances of survival. The origin variable has three categories: 1) deceleration, for instances where a polity becomes a buffer in the course of the territorial expansion of belligerents, 2) swing, for instances in which a buffer status is acquired through entanglement in emerging competition between power poles with fixed borders, and 3) compensation, for instances in which buffers are purposefully created by adversaries to keep their domains apart.

The order variable is used to monitor long-term trends in the behavior of belligerents and determine whether the level of aggression exhibited towards buffers varies depending on the type of dominant regional/international regime. Special attention is paid to changing concepts of territoriality, attributes of power, and norms associated with conflict resolution. If the order variable is used to detect the presence or absence of a correlation between the nature of international regimes and the overall propensity of antagonists to resort to violence, the interstate dynamics variable is employed to test whether the behavior of belligerents towards buffers is affected in any way by the actions of other major and middle players in the state system.

Analysis²

Before proceeding to the output of the binary logistic regression, it is worth taking a look at the basic survival statistics. Table 3 summarizes the key metrics on the performance of buffers during 256 escalations. The figures show that the buffer survival rate during high-tension phases

² For further information on the model and data, the author can be contacted at: olena.guseinova.88@gmail.com.

of rivalry is 72%, whereas the death rate, which includes both temporary exit and permanent elimination, is 28%. Further breakdown of the unfavorable outcomes shows that of all deaths, 17.5% are temporary and only 10.5% are permanent.

Table 3
FIGURES ON SURVIVAL PER ESCALATION.

Region	Survival	%	Death	%	Permanent Elimination	%	Restored	%	Escalations
Eurasia	184	72%	72	28%	27	10.5%	45	17.5%	256
Europe	105	66%	53	34%	18	11%	35	23%	158
Asia	79	81%	19	19%	9	9%	10	10%	98

Descriptive statistics also point to substantial cross-regional differences in the survival trends. The death rate in Europe is 34%, whereas in Asia it is only 19%. The calculation of the odds ratio for the death of buffers on both continents reveals that buffers located in Europe are twice more likely to be occupied or conquered during high-tension phases of rivalry than buffers located in Asia.

$$\text{Odds ratio for death} = \frac{\text{Odds of death in Europe}}{\text{Odds of death in Asia}} = \frac{53/105}{19/79} = \frac{0.5}{0.24} = 2.08$$

Out of 34% of escalations associated with the loss of sovereignty in Europe, 23% were instances of buffers re-entering the system after the end of the escalation phase, while 11% were permanent eliminations. In Asia, 10% of all deaths were temporary, and 9% were permanent. Thus, in terms of the probability of permanent elimination, no significant cross-regional variation is observed, as the average likelihood of irreversible death remains consistent across all examined groups of buffers, standing at approximately 10% (Eurasia—10.5%, Europe—11%, Asia—9%). This finding is significant because it challenges the

prevailing pessimistic perspective on the overall survivability of buffers.

Having established that the survival of buffers during high-tension phases of rivalry is more likely than death, binary logistic regression is used to determine which factors contribute the most to negative outcomes. First, the survival model for Eurasia is tested. To process the collected data, binary logistic regression compares two models: a null model that contains no independent variables so each buffer is given the same probability of survival, and a new model containing all selected predictors, the values of which are used to estimate the probability of survival under specific circumstances. According to the output, the predictive power of the model significantly increases when explanatory variables are included in the calculation. Based on the obtained figures, the overall predictive power of the survival model for Eurasia is 85.9%. Its prediction accuracy is 91.8% for instances of survival (specificity) and 70.8% for instances of death (sensitivity). Compared to the null model, the sensitivity of which is 0%, this is a large improvement. Keeping the null model as the baseline for comparison, the Omnibus and the Hosmer and Lemeshow tests were performed to determine whether the model for Eurasia adequately describes the data. Both tests show that the new model with all the predictors is significantly better than the baseline model (the Omnibus Tests, $\chi^2=137.162$, $df=21$, $p<.000$; Hosmer and Lemeshow test $p=0.961$ ($>.05$)). The model summary also indicates that 59.7% of the variation in outcome can be explained by the selected set of variables (Nagelkerke's R-square value is 0.597).

Table 4 presents the results of the binary logistic regression. It shows that only five variables are statistically significant. Among the predictors highly associated with death are international order, the circumstances under which a state enters buffer status (origin), war, buffer topography, and international interstate dynamics. The order variable has five categories: Westphalian System, Concert of Europe, interwar period 1914-1945, Cold War, and the mixed system of Southeast Asian Mandala and Chinese hierarchical order, with the latter serving as the reference category. The overall effect of the order predictor is meaningfully

significant (Wald=11.508, df=4, p=0.021). This means that the behavior of antagonists towards buffers varies depending on the peculiarities of the system within which they operate. Thus, if the resolution of disputes by violent means is legitimate under the acting regime and the exit or elimination of a buffer does not undermine the position of other major players, then belligerents are prone to behave more aggressively. Contrariwise, if the international order condemns the implementation of sovereignty changes through military force and the existence of a buffer is important for maintaining the status quo system, then antagonists are more likely to take a less offensive stance. The more the local power poles are committed to preserving the existing status quo, the more difficult it becomes to break the rules and the more likely it is for a buffer to retain its place on the political map. The lesser this commitment, the more unstable the order becomes and the lower the survival chances of buffers.

Table 4
SURVIVAL MODEL FOR EURASIA, 1648-1995.

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I.	
						Lower	Upper
Order			11.416	0.022			
Westphalia	0.402	0.715	0.316	0.574	1.494	0.368	6.065
Concert of Europe	0.827	0.804	1,058	0.304	2.286	0.473	11,056
Interperiod. 1914-1945	3.328	1.112	8,954	0.003	27.884	3.152	246.647
Cold War	1.070	1.220	0.768	0.381	2.915	0.266	31.898
Mandala (Southeast Asia) and Chinese hierarchical order (East Asia)*	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Origin			8.415	0.015			
Deceleration	1.197	0.574	4.352	0.037	3.312	1.075	10.200
Swing	-1.351	0.981	1.896	0.169	0.259	0.038	1.772
Compensation*	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Contiguity			0.099	0.952			
Borders(1)	0.072	0.607	0.014	0.906	1.074	0.327	3.530
Borders(>1)	0.183	0.630	0.084	0.772	1.201	0.349	4.129
Borders (<1)*	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I.	
						Lower	Upper
Logistics	18.375	8230.855	0.000	0.998	0.000	0.000	
Topography	0.985	0.461	4.558	0.033	2.677	1.084	6.612
Domestic stability	0.193	0.501	0.149	0.699	1.213	0.455	3.239
Political cohesion	0.507	0.513	0.977	0.323	1.660	0.608	4.537
Degree of sovereignty	0.063	0.579	0.012	0.913	1.065	0.342	3.315
Military resistance	-0.503	0.485	1.074	0.300	0.605	0.234	1.566
Foreign policy			3.733	0.155			
Maneuvering	1.270	0.805	2.488	0.115	3.561	0.735	17.259
Leaning	1.748	0.905	3.729	0.053	5.743	0.974	33.850
Neutrality*	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Alliance	-0.376	0.443	0.719	0.397	0.687	0.288	1.637
Balance of interest	-0.189	0.454	0.173	0.677	0.828	0.340	2.015
Interstate dynamics	2.449	0.433	31.989	0.000	11.572	4.953	27.035
War between rivals	1.735	0.606	8.186	0.004	5.667	1.727	18.594
Balance of power	0.011	0.011	1.006	0.316	1.011	0.990	1.033
Constant	-25.357	8230.855	0.000	0.998	0.000		

Note: Dependent variable is exit or elimination. Significance at the 0.05 level (≤ 0.05). *Reference category, i.e. the baseline for comparison.

The above interpretation of the effects of international order on the behavior of antagonists is consistent with the high statistical significance exhibited by the interwar variable ($p=0.003$, $OR=27.884$, with a 95% CI of [3.15, 246.64]). According to the data, the odds of being occupied or conquered between 1914 and 1945 were 27 times higher than between 1648 and 1856 under the mixed system of Southeast Asian Mandala and Chinese hierarchical order. Descriptive statistics confirm that the death rate for the respective periods were 72% and 29%. The interwar period was the most unfortunate for buffers in terms of survival, because it was characterized by systemic under-balancing and a lack of agreed-upon norms for conducting international relations. As the general consensus among great powers to maintain the existing balance of power collapsed at the end of the 19th century, no new ground rules for interstate interaction were established. While collective

security, peace, and self-determination of nations were nominally promoted, in reality none of the major powers was committed to these newly proclaimed values. Consequently, competition prevailed over cooperation, while balancing strategies were replaced by appeasement and buck-passing, leading to elimination or exit of multiple small states across the globe.

The under-balancing and relative chaos of the transitional interwar period were not characteristic of well-established regimes like the one that existed in pre-colonial Southeast Asia. There, local powers maintained balance through tributary relations with China and the unique Mandala principles of interstate interaction. The stabilizing role of China was threefold: 1) imperial recognition was vital for Southeast Asian states to acquire political legitimacy; 2) trade relations with Beijing were critical to the steady inflow of financial resources that provided means to conduct war; 3) weaker political entities had the right to turn to China for arbitration and protection in disputes with stronger neighbors (Shu 2012a). Another factor was the indigenous principle of shared sovereignty (Shu 2012b). Since the recognition of superiority was much more important than the establishment of direct control over the claimed land, situations in which the same territory fell under the nominal authority of various competing parties were common. While this peculiarity did not help buffers avoid invasion, it did allow them to retain their place in the system.

Another predictor that exhibits statistical significance is the origin variable (Wald=8.415, df=2, p=0.015). The origin variable is introduced into this study to test whether the initial circumstances under which states enter buffer status affect their future chances of survival. The statistical output indicates that states that become buffers due to their geographical disposition between two rivals seeking territorial expansion are three times more likely to suffer state death than buffers that are initially created to separate the territories of opposing parties (deceleration variable, p=0.037, OR=3.312, with a 95% CI of [1.07, 10.2], compensation variable serving as the reference category). The b coefficient for

instances in which a buffer status is acquired through entanglement in emerging competition between powers with fixed borders is negative (swing variable, $b=-1.351$), meaning that the predictor is more associated with survival than with elimination or exit. Given the overall statistical significance of the origin variable, it can be concluded that the level of satisfaction with territorial status is one of the factors determining the behavior of belligerents towards buffers. Consequently, the proximity to powers seeking to reverse their territorial losses is the most unfortunate for buffers.

Among individual characteristics of buffers, topography is the only one showing any substantial effect on the likelihood of survival ($p=0.033$, $OR=2.677$, with a 95% CI of [1.08, 6.61]). The output of the binary logistic regression indicates that buffers with flat terrain and no natural obstacles to troop movement are twice as likely to be eliminated or face exit than buffers covered with mountains, deserts, or jungles. These results are in accord with the descriptive statistics that show that buffers with difficult terrain are subjected to occupation in only 19% of the instances, while for buffers with plain terrain this figure is 39%. This implies that the survival chances of buffers are determined more by their geographical features than by their political behavior.

A variable that draws special attention is interstate dynamics. It has the highest chi-square score and the highest significance (Wald=31,989, $df=1$, $p<.000$, $OR=11.572$, with a 95% CI of [4.95, 27.03]). This predictor was intended to control for structural effects that are not covered by the order variable. In particular, it was designed to monitor cooperative and competitive interactions between other members of the system in order to operationalize their influence on the dynamics of rivalries and the survival of buffers. Accounting mostly for random events, such as unintended consequences of diplomatic intrigues, conflict spillovers, shifts in alliances, etc., the main task of this predictor was to determine the extent to which structural processes beyond the control of dyadic competitors affected the outcomes of buffers. The results demonstrate that the odds of loss of sovereignty or occupation are 11

times higher when events unfolding in the background of the rivalry play out in favor of adversaries. In other words, the elimination of buffers is much more likely when there are few external factors restraining the aggressive behavior of antagonists. The circumstances that strengthen the position of belligerents include appeasement policies, lack of balancing on the part of other major powers (due to their preoccupation with other domestic and foreign issues), collapse of alliance systems, etc. According to the descriptive statistics, in the instances in which conditions of the international environment have a restraining effect on the freedom of action of the opposing parties, the death rate of buffers constitutes only 9%, whereas in the instances where no such effect is present, the death rate is as high as 60%.

Based on this evidence, the behavior of antagonists towards buffers is shaped not by the dyadic but rather the regional state of balance. In many cases, competing parties share geographical space with other major states whose ultimate objective is to prevent a hegemon from arising. Since in the event of the annexation of a buffer the power of one rival increases not only in relation to the opponent, but also in relation to other actors, the creation, survival, death, and resurrection of buffers usually become regional issues, which, as a rule, cannot be solved by a unilateral decision of adversaries. The more incentives other major players have to assist buffers in their struggle for survival, the lower the likelihood of their exit or elimination.

The last on the list to show statistical significance is the war variable ($p=0.004$, $OR=5,667$, with a 95% CI of [1.72, 18.59]). The results of the binary logistics regression indicate that buffers are five times more likely to lose their sovereignty when adversaries decide to go to war. Indeed, 88% of all deaths—temporary and permanent—are associated with military confrontation between belligerents. Yet the outbreak of war does not automatically entail buffer death, as data shows that in 26% of escalations, buffers successfully managed to avoid direct involvement in armed conflicts between their neighbors. Interestingly, in Europe high-tension phases resulted in war in 71% of

instances, with buffers demonstrating a survival rate of 55%, whereas in Asia, only 52% of escalations lead to war, correlating with a significantly higher survival rate of 73%. This means not only that opposing powers in Asia were more reluctant to engage in aggression but also that they were less prone to permanently or temporarily expel buffers from the state system.

In order to verify the significance and consistency of the results, the effects of the selected variables are tested separately for buffers located in Europe and Asia. As can be seen in Table 5, the survival model for Europe shows higher-quality statistical output than the general model for Eurasia. First, the model covering European cases more adequately fits the data and exhibits more statistical significance than the baseline model (the Omnibus Tests, $\chi^2=137.447$, $df=19$, $p<.000$, the Hosmer and Lemeshow test $p=0.997$ ($>.05$)). Second, it explains 80.6% of the variance in survival (Nagelkerke's R-square value is 0.806), surpassing the explanatory power of the Eurasian model (Nagelkerke's R-square value for the Eurasian model is 0.597). Third, its overall predictive accuracy is 89.9% with a specificity of 94.3% and a sensitivity of 81.1%. Fourth, eight variables in the model exhibit significance, whereas in the Eurasian model only five variables are statistically important. Among the predictors highly associated with exit or elimination are order ($p=0.018$), the interwar period ($p=0.004$), interstate dynamics ($p<.000$), war ($p=0.021$), and various individual characteristics of buffers, such as topography ($p=0.003$), political cohesion ($p=0.037$), degree of sovereignty ($p=0.031$), military resistance ($p=0.044$), and alliances ($p=0.036$). Despite the overall good performance of the model, the odds ratios, as well as the confidence intervals, present a problem. The decrease in sample size from 256 to 158 (the number of escalations involving buffers located in Europe) is the likely reason for the large odds ratios and large confidence intervals.

Table 5
SURVIVAL MODEL FOR EUROPE, 1648-1995.

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
						Lower	Upper
Order			10.119	0.018			
Concert of Europe	1.321	1.018	1.683	0.195	3.746	0.509	27.548
Interwar	5.949	2.047	8.443	0.004	383.403	6.933	21203.425
Cold War	-3.3617	2.116	2.523	0.112	0.035	0.001	2.195
Westphalia*	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Origin			0.289	0.866			
Deceleration	0.613	1.141	0.289	0.591	1.846	0.197	17.281
Swing	-26.052	5227.878	0.000	0.996	0.000	0.000	.
Compensation*	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Borders			1.431	0.489			
Borders(1)	-1.364	1.142	1.425	0.233	0.256	0.027	2.399
Borders(>1)	-1.114	1.311	0.722	0.395	0.328	0.025	4.287
Borders(<1)*	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Topography	3.298	1.105	8.903	0.003	27.070	3.101	236.292
DomStab	-0.264	0.895	0.087	0.768	0.768	0.133	4.435
PolCoh	2.351	1.127	4.348	0.037	10.491	1.152	95.575
Sovereignty	2.497	1.156	4.667	0.031	12.152	1.261	117.137
Resistance	-1.940	0.962	4.068	0.044	0.144	0.022	0.947
FP			0.483	0.786			
Maneuvering	0.832	1.428	0.340	0.560	2.298	0.140	37.726
Leaning	1.067	1.537	0.482	0.488	2.907	0.143	59.179
Neutrality*	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Alliance	2.121	1.014	4.380	0.036	8.340	1.144	60.798
Balance of interest	-0.318	0.850	0.140	0.709	0.728	0.137	3.853
Interstate dynamics	5.856	1.334	19.262	0.000	349.352	25.556	4775.731
War	3.994	1.730	5.329	0.021	54.245	1.827	1610.386
Balance of power	-0.004	0.023	0.036	0.850	0.996	0.952	1.041
Constant	-11.858	3.624	10.707	0.001	0.000		

Note: Dependent variable is exit or elimination. Significance at the 0.05 level (≤ 0.05). *Reference category, i.e. the baseline for comparison.

While this does not mean that the results are wrong, it does complicate interpretation of the output. The one conclusion that can be drawn from this form of the data is that there are at least four variables whose influence remain constant in both models. These are order, interstate dynamics, war, and topography. As for political cohesion, degree of sovereignty, military resistance, and alliances, these predictors can only be analyzed in terms of whether their impact on the survival of buffers is positive or negative.

Thus, according to these results, extreme forms of political factionalism and limited autonomy make buffers more vulnerable to existential threats, reducing their chances for survival, whereas the readiness to take up arms to defend territorial integrity decreases the probability of temporary exit or permanent elimination. The weaker and more unstable the buffer is, the less incentive belligerents and other major players have to assist it in its struggle for survival, and hence the greater risk of its exit or elimination.

The most interesting finding of the model examining buffers located in Europe is that alliances are associated with elimination or exit, not survival. The issue of the effectiveness of alliances has long been debated in the academic literature. Some posit that the existence of a relatively impartial third-party guarantor of security for the buffer can increase the survival chances of the latter, as it helps to mitigate the security dilemma between competing parties (Park 2016). Others disagree with this assumption, arguing that a third-party guarantor is likely to refuse to fulfill its obligations if it decides that the protection of the buffer involves too many risks for its own security (Spykman and Rollins 1939, 410; Rothstein 1968, 118; Handel 1990, 128). Some work also asserts that, in terms of foreign policy, there are no safe options for buffers, since any line of behavior is likely to be associated with risks (Maila 1986; Partem 1983). For instance, an alliance with one of the belligerents is likely to entail a reduction in sovereignty, since the stronger party is bound to seek consolidation of its control over the internal and external affairs of the buffer. Yet, in such an alliance, the senior partner usually

sees the territory of the junior partner as an extension of its own, and therefore any attempt by the enemy to regain control of the buffer is likely to be met with fierce military resistance. Provided that the belligerent chooses to form an alliance rather than simply absorb the buffer, such a relationship reduces the likelihood of the latter being permanently eliminated from the system.

There can be two explanations for why alliances are associated with exit or elimination in this study. First, the alliance variable included any formal agreements existing between buffers and other states concerning security. The predictor was not intended to distinguish between different types of alliances, since its main purpose was to determine whether any kind of defense cooperation contributed in any way to the overall survival chances of buffers. Consequently the results only indicate that the general effectiveness of security pacts is low, without specifying whether particular types of alliances are more or less reliable. Thus, more studies are required to establish if there is significant difference in the effectiveness of alliances concluded with third parties versus those concluded with belligerents. Second, the results might correctly represent an assumption about real-world patterns: that buffers cannot rely on security guarantees of other actors to ensure their own survival in the international arena, insofar as via alliance with third parties they face a high risk of abandonment, whereas via alliance with one of the rivals they have to deal with a high risk of entrapment. In either case the probability of their survival decreases.

As can be observed in Table 6, the survival model for buffers located in Asia demonstrates comparatively unexpected results. While it adequately describes the data (the Omnibus Tests, $\chi^2=46.324$, $df=21$, $p<.001$, the Hosmer and Lemeshow test $p=0.970$ ($>.05$)), its explanatory power is only 60.2% (Nagelkerke's R-square value is 0.602), which is significantly lower than that of the European model (80.6%) and only slightly higher than that of the Eurasian model (59.7%). Its predictive accuracy is also lower compared

to other models. The overall correct percentage prediction rate is 84.7% with a specificity of 94.9% and a sensitivity of only 42.1%. The most striking difference, however, is that only one predictor—the interstate dynamics variable—exhibits statistical significance ($p=0.039$, $OR=6$, with a 95% CI of [1.10, 42.22]).

Judging by the figures obtained, the exit or elimination of buffers in Asia was six times more likely in the absence of external factors restraining the aggressive behavior of antagonists. Initially, the lack of correlations with other predictors was associated with a decrease in sample size, which was thought to prevent binary logistic regression from producing reliable output. To meet the criterion of minimum 10 observations per predictor (Hosmer, Lemeshow, and Sturdivant 2013), all variables were divided into three groups (buffer-centric, rivalry-centric and system-centric) to be tested separately. After several regressions were run, it turned out that the interstate dynamics variable was indeed the only factor that appears to influence the survival of buffers in Asia.

Thus, two conclusions can be drawn. First, the results of the Asian model require additional verification using a larger sample size. In the absence of additional data, it is impossible to determine with certainty whether the problem lies with the set of selected variables, which do not fit the Asian realities, or with the number of cases, which is smaller than in the European model. Second, the effect of the interstate dynamics variable appears to be the strongest and the most consistent as it dominates all three models. This indicates that the survival chances of buffers are determined by constant competitive and cooperative interactions taking place between and among all members of the system.

Table 6
SURVIVAL MODEL FOR ASIA, 1648-1995.

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I.	
						Lower	Upper
Order			1.869	0.760			
Westphalia	-0.747	1.421	0.276	0.599	0.474	0.029	7.672
Concert of Europe	-2.395	1.775	1.821	0.177	0.091	0.003	2.956
Interperiod. 1914-1945	54.131	13233.415	0.000	0.997	0.000	0.000	.
Cold War	17.558	8859.604	0.000	0.998	0.000	0.000	.
Mandala (Southeast Asia) and Chinese hierarchical order (East Asia)*	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Origin			0.000	1.000			
Deceleration	35.219	11746.536	0.000	0.998	0.000	0.000	.
Swing	15.119	7712.883	0.000	0.998	0.000	0.000	.
Compensation*	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Borders			0.312	0.856			
Borders(1)	0.522	1.341	0.151	0.697	1.685	0.122	23.322
Borders(>1)	0.065	1.440	0.002	0.964	1.067	0.063	17.936
Borders(<1)*	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Logistics	35.945	9012.885	0.000	0.997	0.000	0.000	.
Topography	0.129	0.956	0.018	0.892	1.138	0.175	7.405
DomStab	1.049	1.082	0.940	0.332	2.855	0.343	23.786
PolCoh	1.198	1.200	0.998	0.318	3.315	0.316	34.805
Sovereignty	-1.786	1.735	1.059	0.303	0.168	0.006	5.030
Resistance	0.540	0.915	0.348	0.555	1.716	0.286	10.314
FP			1.729	0.421			
Maneuvering	18.488	10804.046	0.000	0.999	0.000	0.000	.
Leaning	19,941	10804,046	0.000	0.999	0.000	0.000	.
Neutrality*	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Alliance	-1.765	1.083	2.652	0.103	0.171	0.020	1.432
Balance of interests	-0.357	0.948	0.142	0.706	0.700	0.109	4.489
Interstate dynamics	1.922	0.929	4.278	0.039	6.834	1.106	42.222
War	0.755	0.937	0.648	0.421	2.127	0.339	13.346
Balance of power	0.029	0.022	1.703	0.192	1.029	0.986	1.075
Constant	-93.087	18328.683	0.000	0.996	0.000		

Note: Dependent variable is exit or elimination. Significance at the 0.05 level (≤ 0.05). *Reference category, i.e. the baseline for comparison.

The data obtained during the analysis suggest that the survival of buffers depends on complex processes that unfold simultaneously at three levels: at the micro-level of buffers, the meso-level of rivalry, and the macro-level of the system of states. The findings of the research challenge the established postulate of realists that the fate of buffers is determined by the will of great powers and the state of balance between them. Not only are buffers not impotent actors, as it is often claimed, but major state belligerents are not omnipotent either, as they demonstrate clear constraints by broader regional and international processes that develop against the backdrop of rivalry.

Discussion and Policy Implications

The data presented in this article are congruent with the conjecture that political elites of buffers often do not realize the full danger of the position of their states until it is too late. In most cases, the inability to recognize and adequately respond to changes occurring in the external strategic environment is associated with two factors: 1) bad governance and 2) unstable rivalry dynamics. Put simply, buffers suffer from shortsighted policy-making not only because of internal issues, such as corruption, political instability, and poor economic management, but also because of a lack of understanding or misinterpretation of the processes unfolding in their immediate neighborhood. That being said, the misreading of the geopolitical situation does not always happen simply because the government is dysfunctional. While general backwardness does hinder the ability of buffers to react appropriately to external challenges, the more fundamental problem usually lies in the complex and protracted character of great power competition.

All rivalries consist of low- and high-intensity phases that alternate continuously until the dispute is settled either by diplomatic or military means. While episodes of high tension pose the greatest existential threat to buffers, it is during low-intensity phases of rivalry that buffers develop

a false sense of security, which ultimately leads to bad decision-making. The problem is that the tension between competing powers tends to build up gradually before growing into acute confrontation. As periods of relative stability can last for several decades, it is often hard to tell when exactly the rivalry started, and, most importantly, whether it ended. This low-key dynamic is most typical for the initial stages of competition and intervals between escalations. Though adversaries do not display overtly hostile behavior during these periods, it does not mean that they do not seek to challenge each other's positions by other means. Thus, in order to gain a strategic advantage and tip the balance in their favor, belligerents tend to compete for influence over a small state (or states) separating their domains. Considering that the buffer space is usually troubled and underdeveloped, adversaries start by offering their assistance in the implementation of various projects related to infrastructure, logistics, and financial and social institutions. Since opposing sides make first steps in approaching the buffer long before their relations take on a more aggressive form, it usually seems that they act solely out of commercial interests. For this reason, buffers often perceive the undertakings on the part of their neighbors as an opportunity rather than a threat. The reality, however, is that belligerents, anticipating a future conflict with each other, tend to invest only in those projects that can strengthen their position in the event of an open military confrontation. For instance, when building a railroad or an expressway, the great power in charge of the construction is likely to make sure that its adversary will not be able to take advantage of that infrastructure in case of war. In this manner, due to a misinterpretation of the intentions of their neighbors, governments of buffers unknowingly help to turn the territory of their states into a highway for invasion.

If at the initial stages of great power competition states in a buffer position are often simply unaware of their buffer status due to the low level of hostility between opposing sides, buffers with a long history of interaction with adversarial dyads tend to mistake a pause in the rivalry for its end when the conflict enters protracted, low-intensity phases. The

longer the interval between escalations, the less clear it becomes whether the animosity between belligerents has indeed faded away or whether one of the parties is still dissatisfied with the outcome of the dispute and is likely to seek revenge. The ambiguity of the status of adversaries during these phases creates a false sense of security, inducing the political elites of buffers to lower their vigilance towards their neighbors. In the absence of immediate external threats, at some point the governments start to doubt the need for maintaining military spending, which later results in reduced military personnel, an underfunded military, and decreased defensive capability. Without a well-equipped and well-trained military, the chance of successful resistance drops significantly, making any buffer an easy target for invasion.

Another reason to remain wary during low-tension phases of rivalry is that it is during these periods that adversaries attempt to maximize their political, economic, and social influence over the buffer. Through bribery and lobbying of various institutions, belligerents are able not only to advance their own agenda within the buffer, but also to dominate certain sectors of its economy and social life. The more control adversaries gain, the easier it is for them to manipulate domestic opinion. With such power at hand, they can orchestrate internal crises by paralyzing the work of the government. Ironically, due to widespread corruption, the political elites of buffers frequently become the main facilitators of this silent infiltration.

Buffers are less likely to survive the peaks of hostilities between belligerents if they perform poorly during low-tension phases of rivalry, i.e. neglect the military, allow foreign agents to compromise internal political and social resilience, welcome the construction of infrastructure that jeopardizes territorial integrity, etc. The weaker and more troubled the buffer is, the more it resembles a failed state. Such an image does not benefit the political entity struggling to continue to exist. On the one hand, this posture creates additional incentives for opposing great powers to eliminate such a buffer. On the other hand, such a buffer cannot expect any assistance on the part of third parties, as most powers are

usually disinclined to commit resources to a lost cause. According to the evidence, the likelihood of international intervention in favor of a buffer increases only if the latter demonstrates signs of assertive resistance. Strictly speaking, by making efforts to repel foreign invasion, a buffer gives third parties time to determine their stance on the issue, which is important since buffers often insufficiently invest resources in building their international image. Considering that a favorable international environment is crucial to the survival of buffers, it is in the interest of the latter to start forming a positive international reputation early in the rivalry.

Thus buffers can increase their chances of survival if they adhere to certain policies, both domestically and internationally. First of all, the governments of buffers must be concerned about the dynamics of interaction between their neighbors, always keeping in mind that even periods of relative stability can pose a serious risk to their sovereignty. Second, defense capabilities must be constantly modernized even in the absence of an immediate external threat. While it is true that buffers cannot win a war against a great power, a well-trained and well-equipped army can help organize effective resistance, which is sometimes enough to thwart expansionist plans of the aggressor. Third, attempts by adversaries to increase their political, economic, and social influence must be constantly monitored by the political elites of buffers. This requires first solving the problem of corruption. Fourth, buffers should invest sufficiently in building their international image. Active engagement in regional and global affairs can contribute to a better reputation, as well as a better awareness by other actors about the specifics of the geopolitical situation concerning the buffer.

Lastly, the results of this study indicate the low effectiveness of alliances in preventing the elimination or exit of buffers. Security arrangements with a third party or one of the opposing sides, which might have a deterrent effect, nevertheless do not guarantee buffer survival. As the outcome of abandonment can be just as devastating as entrapment, the foreign policy strategy of buffers should be more

diversified, aimed at widening the space for maneuvering in a regional and international environment. By increasing their strategic importance to other major players in the system, buffers can improve their prospects for survival.

The issue of the survival of buffer states takes on particular importance in the context of the geopolitical competition currently unfolding between the United States and its allies versus Russia, China, and associated states such as North Korea. Given that buffers are usually used by adversaries to balance each other, the elimination of even one of them can entail the collapse of a part of the international order. The 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine—a classic buffer state—has already shaken the main pillars of post-Cold War security arrangements. Should a crisis break out on the Korean Peninsula—which has historically functioned as a buffer between China and Japan, and which is currently a buffer between the US and China—there could be a domino effect incentivizing an opportunistic Beijing to follow the Kremlin’s lead and annex Taiwan by force. In theory, this scenario could escalate to World War III.

That said, considering that the return of great power rivalry is unfolding in a modernized nuclear age, and thus the threat of nuclear escalation is real, there is a high probability that opposing parties will seek to avoid direct confrontation unless they have no other choice. This will put extra pressure on smaller states separating the domains of belligerents, as the buffer space these small states form will become an important platform where rival powers can seek strategic advantage over each other without direct risk of escalation to nuclear weapon use. These tendencies are already manifesting themselves in the dynamics of the Ukrainian crisis and the situation around the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan. As the US, Russia, and China continue to hedge regarding their unwillingness to engage in direct conflict, the question arises as to how much the burden of the current rivalry will be borne by smaller states located between them.

Interestingly, the reluctance of great powers to involve themselves

in direct confrontation carries divergent implications for Ukraine and North Korea, two buffer states located at opposite ends of Eurasia. In the case of Ukraine, Washington's calibrated response to Moscow's aggressive behavior raises an alarming prospect—the potential entrenchment of the conflict on Russian terms, with Crimea, Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts being permanently detached from the administration in Kyiv. The data used and analyzed in this article suggest that such a scenario would entail heightened risk of another conflict within the next 20-30 years unless the remaining part of Ukraine is fully integrated into the security structures of the European Union and NATO.

By contrast, the same dynamic creates a favorable strategic environment for North Korea, allowing Pyongyang to adopt a more assertive stance and enhance its position by exploiting East Asian geopolitics. Amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, the increasing demand from Moscow for Pyongyang's armaments presents North Korea with a unique opportunity for political and financial gain. Given Russia's isolation on the global stage, concerns are mounting that Moscow might be inclined to transfer advanced technology to North Korea and potentially engage in negotiations for the relaxation of international sanctions on its behalf, in exchange for a continued supply of weapons. The resurgence of diplomatic ties with Russia could provide Pyongyang with a perceived sense of increased political and strategic support, emboldening the regime to test the limits of international constraints through more frequent and audacious provocations. The scenario where North Korea may be inclined to carry out a more substantial attack on South Korea, assuming that Washington would pressure Seoul to abstain from retaliation out of fear of outbreak of a nuclear war, remains plausible, provided that both Russia and China are interested in probing the boundaries of US red lines. The central question revolves around whether Moscow and Beijing align on the role of Pyongyang in the unfolding power struggle. While Russia may have an interest in destabilizing the situation around the Korean Peninsula to distract the US from European affairs, China might be wary of the prospect of instability or, worse, a nuclear war in its own backyard.

Regardless of whether the interests of Moscow and Beijing coincide, Pyongyang is likely to be at an advantage. The discord between the two provides an opportunity for the Kim regime to strategically play them one against the other, bolstering its own position. In case of alignment, North Korea could leverage this unity to amplify its international standing vis-à-vis the US through deliberate and active provocations, potentially receiving support from both sides. The case of North Korea, however, is an exception rather than the rule, as the survival of its regime is ensured by nuclear weapons. Pyongyang's scenario of survival is unlikely to be replicated by other buffer states in the region.

References

- Bartov, Omer and Eric D. Weitz. 2013. *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Charney, Michael W. 2004. *Southeast Asian Warfare, 1300-1900*. Leiden: Brill.
- Chay, John and Thomas E. Ross (eds.). 1986. *Buffer States in World politics*. Boulder and London: Westview Press.
- Childs, John. 1982. *Armies and Warfare in Europe, 1648-1789*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Clodfelter, Micheal (eds.). 2008. *Warfare and armed conflicts: a statistical encyclopedia of casualty and other figures, 1494-2007*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Cohen, Saul Bernard. 2003. *Geopolitics of the World System*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Curzon, George Nathaniel. 1907. *The Romanes Lecture, Frontiers*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- De Spiegeleire, Stephan. 1997. "Of Buffers and Bridges: Some Geodetic Thoughts on the European Security Landscape." In *Zwischeneuropa: Historic Experiences and Security Alternatives. Interim Report*, 54-69. Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs.
- Diehl, Paul F. and Garry Goertz. 2001. *War and Peace in International Rivalry*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Dupuy, R. Ernest and Trevor N. Dupuy (eds.). 1993. *The Harper Encyclopedia of Military History: from 3500 BC to the Present*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Elman, Miriam Fendius. 1995. "The Foreign Policies of Small States: Challenging Neorealism in Its Own Backyard." *British Journal of Political Science* 25/2: 171-217.
- Fazal, Tanisha M. 2004. "State Death in the International System." *International Organization* 58/2: 311-44.
- Fazal, Tanisha M. 2007. *State Death: The Politics and Geography of*

- Conquest, Occupation, and Annexation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Gartzke, Erik and Alex Braithwaite. 2011. "Power, Parity and Proximity: How Distance and Uncertainty Condition the Balance of Power" Working Paper. September 29. University of California. https://pages.ucsd.edu/~egartzke/papers/parity_power_place_0929_2011.pdf
- Gibler, Douglas M. 2008. *International Military Alliances, 1648-2008*. New York: SAGE.
- Glaser, Charles L. and Chaim Kaufmann. 1998. "What is the Offense-Defense Balance and Can We Measure It?" *International Security* 22 /4: 44–82.
- Goettlich, Kerry. 2019. "The rise of linear borders in world politics." *European Journal of International Relations* 25/1: 203–28.
- Hafeznia, Mohammad Reza. 2013. "Explanation of the Structural and Functional Characteristics of Geographical Buffer Spaces." *Geopolitics Quarterly* 8/4: 1-40.
- Handel, Michael I. 1990. *Weak States in the International System*. London: Frank Class.
- Hegre, Havard. 2008. "Gravitating Toward War: Preponderance May Pacify, But Power Kills." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52/4: 566-89.
- Hensel, Paul. R. and Hein Goemans. 2021. "Territory and Contentious Issues." In *What Do We Know about War?* (eds. Sara McLaughlin Mitchell and John A. Vasques). Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Jervis, Robert. 1978. "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma." *World Politics* 30/2: 167–214.
- Kaplan, Robert D. 2013. *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate*. New York: Random House.
- Kim, Bongjin. 2002. "Rethinking of The Pre-Modern East Asian Region Order." *Journal of East Asian Studies* 2/2: 67–101.

- Kim, Woosang. 1992. "Power Transitions and Great Power War from Westphalia to Waterloo." *World Politics* 45/1: 153–72.
- Kim, Woosang. 2002. "Power Parity, Alliance, Dissatisfaction, and Wars in East Asia, 1860-1993." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46/5: 654-71.
- Knudsen, Olav F. 1988. "Of Lambs and Lions: Relations Between Great Powers and Their Smaller Neighbors." *Cooperation and Conflict* 23/2: 111-22.
- Knudsen, Olav F. 1993. "The Foreign Policies of Baltic States: Interwar Years and Restoration." *Cooperation and Conflict* 28/1: 47-72.
- Kohn, George C. 1999. *Dictionary of Wars*. New York: Facts On File Inc.
- Levy, Jack S. 1981. "Alliance Formation and War Behavior: An Analysis of the Great Powers, 1495-1975." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 25/4: 581-613.
- Levy, Jack S. and William R. Thomson, 2010. *Causes of War*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Mathisen, Trygve. 1971. *The Function of Small States in the Strategies of the Great Powers*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Menon, Rajan and Jack L. Snyder. 2017. "Buffer zones: Anachronism, power vacuum, or confidence builder?" *Review of International Studies* 43/5: 962-86.
- Ngaosīvat, Mayurī and Pheuiphanh Ngaosyvathn. 1998. *Paths to Conflagration: Fifty Years of Diplomacy and Warfare in Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, 1778-1828*. New York: Cornell University.
- Nilsson, Marco. 2012. "Offense—Defense Balance, War Duration, and the Security Dilemma." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56/2: 467–89.
- Park, Sungtae. 2016. Securing strategic buffer space: lessons from the past and implications for today. Center for the National Interest. Nov. 7. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/securing-strategic-buffer-space-case-studies-and-implications-us-global-strategy>
- Partem, Michael. 1983. "The Buffer System in International Relations." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 27/1: 3-26.

- Pitman, Pitman B. 1935. "Buffer State in Seugman. In *Encyclopedia of Social Science*, vol. 3-4 (eds. Edwin and Alvin Johnson). New York: Macmillan.
- Powell, Robert. 1996. "Stability and the Distribution of Power." *World Politics* 48/2: 239–67.
- Reed, William. 2003. "Information, Power, and War." *American Political Science Review* 97/4: 633–641.
- Rieber, Alfred. 2014. *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands: From The Rise Of Early Modern Empires To The End Of The First World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rothstein, Robert. 1968. *Alliances and Small Powers*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Sergeev, Evgeny. 2013. *The Great Game 1856–1907: Russo–British Relations in Central and East Asia*. Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center and Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Shu, Min. 2012a. "Balancing in a Hierarchical System: Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia and the Tribute System." *Waseda Global Forum* 8: 227-56.
- Shu, Min. 2012b. "Hegemon and Instability: Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia under the Tribute System." *WIAS Research Bulletin* 4: 45-62.
- Snyder, Glenn H. 1984. "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics." *World Politics* 36/4: 461-95.
- Solomon, Robert L. 1969. *Boundary Concepts and Practices in Southeast Asia*. Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation.
- Sorokin, Pitrim A. (ed.). 1937. *Fluctuations of Social Relationships, War and Revolution. Social and Cultural Dynamics*. New York: American Book Company.
- Spykman, Nicholas J. 1938. "Geography and Foreign Policy, II." *American Political Science Review* 32/2: 213-36.
- Spykman, Nicholas J. 1939. "Geography and Foreign Policy, I." *American Political Science Review* 32/1: 28-50.
- Spykman, Nicholas J. 1942. "Frontiers, Security and International Organization. *Geographical review* 32/3: 436-447.

- Spykman, Nicholas J. and Abbie A. Rollins. 1939. "Geographic Objectives in Foreign Policy, I. *American Political Science Review* 33/3: 391-410.
- Stinnett, Douglas M. et al. 2002. The Correlates of War Project direct contiguity data, Version 3. *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 19/2: 58-66.
- Turmanidze, Tornike. 2009. *Buffer states: Power policies, foreign policies and concepts*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
- Valeriano Brandon and John Van Benthuyzen. 2012. "When States Die: Geographic and Territorial Pathways to State Death." *Third World Quarterly* 33/7: 1165-1189.
- Vasquez, John A. 1995. "Why Do Neighbors Fight? Proximity, Interaction, or Territoriality." *Journal of Peace Research* 32/3: 277-93.
- Wade, Geoff. 2014. *Asian Expansions: The Historical Experiences of Polity Expansion in Asia*. London: Routledge.
- Wight, Martin. 2014. *Power Politics*. London: Continuum.

- Article submitted 12/13/23, revised 1/11/24, accepted 2/13/24

Peak Dictatorship: Mountain Climbing and the Charismatic Politics of Russian and Chinese Dictators

Benjamin R. Young

Virginia Commonwealth University

Abstract

This scholarly article examines the intricate relationship between charismatic politics, mountains, and authoritarianism in Russian and Chinese dictatorships. Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong were presented to their citizens as god-like figures, and mountains provided a fitting backdrop for their charismatic projects. Mountaineers solidified the socialist experiments by placing portrait busts on the tallest peaks and renaming them after the leaders. Mountaineering also became a metaphorical expression of revolutionary struggles and aspirations. State-run media emphasized the rural periphery and multi-ethnic enterprise, portraying the regime's strength. The study draws on the emerging field of Soviet and Chinese mountaineering history, highlighting key scholars' contributions, and bringing it into the present by comparing the personality cults of Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. By examining state-controlled media sources, the article demonstrates how mountaineering served as a tool to bolster charismatic images domestically and internationally, symbolizing the metaphorical heights attainable under these leaders' guidance. Ultimately, the appropriation of alpine landscapes reinforced the dictators' immense authority and shaped the narratives of their regimes.

Keywords : Mountaineering, autocracy, charismatic politics, Mao Zedong, Joseph Stalin

Introduction

Vladimir Lenin was a lover of the mountains. Prior to the Russian Revolution, the exiled Lenin and his wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya, hiked the mountains of Switzerland and the High Tatras of Poland and Slovakia. Revolutionaries who visited Lenin abroad often struggled to keep up with his hiking pace on the mountain paths. Lenin particularly adored the mountainside village of Poronin, located in the foothills of the Polish Tatras. Krupskaya once noted to her mother that Lenin “is very fond of Poronin and particularly likes scrambling up the mountains” (Elwood 2011, 164). However, mountain hiking and climbing was not a mere hobby for the Russian revolutionary. It informed how he saw the natural world and the revolutionary potential of humanity. On March 15, 1917, the day that Tsar Nicholas II abdicated his throne, Lenin climbed to Zurichberg peak in Switzerland. As Carter Elwood explains, “[t]he fact that he should choose to climb a mountain, albeit a small mountain, on a crucial day of the February Revolution was not inconsistent with Lenin’s character” (Elwood 2011, 155).

Lenin’s global status as the builder of the international communist movement and the founding leader of the Soviet Union makes his fondness of mountains particularly noteworthy. It also set a trend. After Lenin, other major communist leaders saw the political potential of mountains. Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and Chinese leader Mao Zedong invested heavily in their nation’s mountain climbing expeditions and emphasized mountaineering as a symbol of revolutionary will. Stalinist Russia and Maoist China each used mountaineering as a form of charismatic politics. Notably, Vladimir Putin in Russia and Xi Jinping have carried on this legacy and have continued to use mountaineering for their own personality cults.

Nineteenth century German sociologist Max Weber (1968a, 215) emphasized that charismatic politics depended upon “devotion to a specific sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person and of the normative pattern or order revealed by him.” As Weber (1947,

358) expressed it, charisma is “a certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural powers.” For Weber (1968b, 18-19), the charismatic leader has an immediate and direct relationship with the masses. The charismatic leader mobilizes his people with heroic superhuman traits, not through acts of chivalry or compassion. In fact, some of the most charismatic leaders tend to be the most oppressive.

Authoritarian regimes, and especially those featuring strongman personality cults, treat their leaders as all-powerful, god-like figures that can neither be questioned nor matched in strength or resolve. Thus, mountains, with their awe-inspiring size and seemingly supernatural beauty paired well with the charismatic political projects of Stalin and Mao. By placing portrait busts at the summit of the country’s tallest mountains, mountaineers legitimized the socialist experiments of these revolutionary leaderships and provided a symbolic backdrop to the heights that these societies could metaphorically reach under the guiding hand of their respective leaders. Moreover, these mountaineers often renamed the highest peaks in their countries after the leader. This personal signature upon the mountainous landscape reified the immense power that these dictatorial leaders wielded in their respective territories. The current autocrats in Russia and China, Putin and Xi, have likewise used mountain photo-ops to bolster their own domestic legitimacy. Captured engaging in mountain climbing or hiking amidst alpine terrain, both Putin and Xi strategically leverage this challenging environment to enhance their charismatic personas as masculine and physically fit strongmen.

For the Soviets and Chinese, arduous mountain climbing represented the hardships and sacrifices of their compatriots who often gave their lives for the sake of the revolution in unforgiving terrain. By ascending the highest peaks and being depicted in this rugged terrain in official state-run media, climbers legitimized the revolutionary traditions of their respective party-state that was once metaphorically forged in a similarly politically forbidding landscape. Mountaineering, which often took place

in the rural hinterlands of these states, also brought the periphery into the focus of these revolutionary projects. The centering of these alpine landscapes in state-run media presented the socialist experiment as a rural, multi-ethnic enterprise.

Mountain climbing—also called mountaineering or alpinism—is a relatively new subject of inquiry for Soviet and Chinese historians. Russian historian Eva Maurer’s extensive work on Soviet mountaineering is a foundational part of this growing literature (Maurer 2006, 142-148; Maurer 2009, 484-500; Maurer 2010a, 159-178; Maurer 2010b). French travel writer Cedric Gras recently published a French-language book detailing the exploits of two top Soviet mountaineers, the Abalakov brothers, who climbed numerous peaks in the USSR during Stalin’s reign (Gras 2020). Maggie Greene’s article on Chinese expeditions to Mount Everest from 1958 to 1968 looks at the critical role that the images of Chinese mountaineers played in the building of Maoist socialism (Greene 2019, 63-72). Mountaineering is a burgeoning area of historical inquiry and scholarship. However, as Thomas Simpson explains, more work remains for historians “to consider mountains in global contexts and to come to terms with our continued entanglement in modern ways of understanding and acting in high places” (Simpson 2019, 553). This essay seeks to answer that call as it examines mountains in a comparative global perspective and within the framework of Eurasian autocratic leadership and its intersection with the sport of mountain climbing.

Based primarily on state-run media sources from Chinese and Soviet (now Russian) governments, this article explores the intersection of charismatic politics, mountaineering, and authoritarianism. Mao and Stalin used mountaineering as a means of bolstering their own charismatic images for both domestic and international audiences. The scaling of mountain summits was both a monumental physical feat as well as a reflection of the supposed heights that the masses could reach under their charismatic rule. By funding and advocating mountaineering, these dictators appropriated these awe-inspiring alpine landscapes into the official representations of socialist construction.

This article proceeds as follows. After this introduction section, the next section covers Stalinist mountaineering in terms of the intersection of Soviet ideology and Stalin's endorsement of mountain climbing. The third section argues that Mao appropriated mountaineering and the ascent of Mount Everest into his revolutionary project, while section four puts the previous discussions in a contemporary context featuring Xi and Putin. Finally, the conclusion finishes by arguing that charismatic autocrats in Russia and China have historically used mountain climbing for their own agendas and legitimacies.

Stalinist Mountaineering

Despite limited financial resources, Stalin's Soviet Union heavily invested in mountaineering expeditions for its top climbers out of ideological motivations. As Eva Maurer (2009, 485-486) explains:

[s]killfully latching onto broader trends in discourse, iconography and public culture, mountaineers presented themselves as cultural ambassadors to the periphery, helping to build socialism during the first Five-Year-Plan (1928–32), then switched to a more heroic iconography during the mid-1930s and depicted the mountains as another theatre where Soviet men successfully fought against natural obstacles.

Mountaineering's emphasis on collectivism and teamwork resonated with Soviet values. It was also a way to legitimize and promote the expansiveness of the Soviet frontier.

Soviet mentality towards non-Russian peoples on the periphery of the nation-state included stereotypes and myths about mountain societies. For example, those from the Central Asian and Caucasian highlands, such as Chechens, Dargins, and the Avars, were seen as inherently violent and hostile to Sovietization. According to a Russian interviewee from Harvard University's project on the early Soviet social system, "[t]he Chechentsi, the Avartsy, the Akushintsy—those people

who live in the mountains. They do not yield so much to the Soviet propaganda, and they are brought up in a more religious spirit.” The interviewee added that “[i]n the mountains themselves, Soviet propaganda and agitation does not penetrate; if a Russian even goes there, they will die.”¹ According to Leah Feldman, “Russian orientalists referred to Muslims of the Caucasus as Caucasian (*kavkazets*) or mountaineers (*gortsy*) to emphasize a connection between the physical topography of the Caucasus and the character of its people” (Feldman 2018, 10). Soviet stereotypes portrayed Central Asia and the Caucasus as a wild and untamed frontier that produced people with counter-revolutionary beliefs and anti-state rebelliousness. Thus, mountain climbing was important in bringing the periphery of the USSR into the Soviet socialist imaginary.

Named after its charismatic dictator, Peak Stalin in the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic (now *Pik Ismoil Somoni* in the Republic of Tajikistan) was the highest mountain in all of the Soviet Union, standing at 7,495 meters. In 1933, a group of experienced Soviet mountaineers and explorers attempted to climb Peak Stalin for the first time. As Tajikistan had only become a Soviet Socialist Republic four years earlier, this expeditionary group was also tasked with surveying the Pamirs for natural resources and placing a meteorological station on top (Horsman 2002, 199-206). Accompanied by Moscow-based journalist Michael Romm, the expedition scaled the peak. However, two members of the team died during the month-long ascent and only two of the climbers reached the crest of Peak Stalin (Horsman 2009, 1151-1166). Eugene Abalakov, who would go on to lead Soviet alpine military units in World War II, was the lone climber to reach the top (Shevchenko 2017).

In 1956, a Soviet representative explained the success of the 1933 Peak Stalin ascent to members of the British Alpine Club: “by its nature, mountaineering is not a sport of individuals joining in a single combat

¹ Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System. Schedule A, Vol. 13, Case 159 (interviewer R.F., type A4). Male, 40, Avarets, Tractor driver (December 1950). Widener Library, Harvard University, pg. 27. [https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:5249866\\$1i](https://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:5249866$1i)

against the summits. It is only a mighty and collective fight that can count on victory” (Beletsky 1956, 326). The act of discovering the tallest mountain peak in the nascent USSR, renaming it after Stalin, and doing so in a newly established Soviet republic on the frontier made the 1933 expedition more ideological and politically symbolic than scientifically motivated. The communal character of mountaineering teams intersected with Soviet ideology and the tenets of Stalinism. Discipline and absolute devotion to the revolutionary cause produced both a worthy communist as well as a vigorous mountain climber. Despite the importance of mountain climbing to the Soviet project, many of its members were later purged and executed in Stalin’s “red terror” (Shevchenko 2017). In fact, compared to the rest of Soviet society, the mountain climbing community was more heavily targeted in Stalin’s purges (Bamberger 2019, 194). Not even elite climbers could escape the violence and brutality of Stalin’s rule.

Eva Maurer argues that the Soviet Union sought to promote mountain climbing to the working class, but it was primarily middle-class engineers, intellectuals, and students who took up the sport (Maurer 2010a). During the late Stalinist period, the concept of “proletarian touring” gained traction in the Soviet Union. In a 1941 English-language book promoting the public health benefits of Soviet “democracy,” a member of the USSR Academy of the Sciences, Sergei Sobolev, wrote that “[t]housands of young workers and collective farmers are taking to tourism and mountain climbing. Young Soviet mountain climbers have scaled the highest peaks of the Caucasian mountain range and Central Asia” (Sobolev 1941). The fact that the scaling of mountain peaks made it into this foreign-oriented book reflects the importance of this activity for the building of Soviet socialism. Mountaineering was branded as a uniquely Bolshevik sport that merged elements of discipline, collectivism, and Stalin’s cult of personality. Mountain climbing in the USSR was also advertised as a tourist activity and holiday getaway for sympathetic foreigners. O.A Watts, a British expat living in the USSR in the late 1940s wrote in a pro-Soviet British journal about tourism in the USSR:

“[t]he Soviet Union is such a vast land that the choice is almost unlimited. There are the mountains for climbing or for resting; or the holiday maker can take a trip on a river by steamer, or go on a hunting or fishing expedition” (Watts 1949, 32-34). The Soviet Union was presented to foreign audiences as a land ripe for physical fitness and recreational leisure.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Stalin’s cult of personality occupied a central space in Soviet everyday life and public culture. Cultish leader worship of Stalin became obligatory and even mountains played a role in this phenomenon. The 1933 expedition team carried a Stalin bust with them up Peak Stalin in 1933 and placed it at the summit. This heavy bust almost certainly slowed the team down. In the same year, Soviet artist Evgeny Katsman met Stalin at his dacha and described him in mountain-themed charismatic terms. Katsman exclaimed: “What a colossal man! To me he seems as huge and beautiful as nature. I was on the top of Mount Tupik in Dagestan at sunset. The mountains radiated like bright gems, I couldn’t take my eyes off this, and wanted to remember everything for the rest of my life.” Katsman continued: “Stalin is just like that: I looked at him, wanted to look at him forever and couldn’t... But Stalin is the peak of nature—Stalin is the oceans, mountains, forests, clouds, coupled with a powerful mind for the leadership of humanity” (Plamper 2012, 92). In 1939, Kazakh poet Dzambul wrote that “[t]he dazzling snowy peaks are singing the praises of Stalin” (Horsman 2002, 200). Mountains, with their beauty and vastness, resonated with the charismatic politics of Stalin’s reign.

Stalin’s Soviet Union saw mountaineering as an opportunity to showcase socialist ideals and highlight multi-ethnic cooperation among its citizens. Soviet climbers were depicted as pioneers in the exploration and development of their vast frontiers. Through mountaineering, Stalin aimed to project an image of strength, ambition, and harmony, reinforcing the USSR’s position as a global superpower. Additionally, mountain climbing played a significant role in solidifying support for Stalinism and reinforcing his personality cult within the Soviet Union.

The expeditions to conquer mountains were presented as heroic undertakings led by Stalin's chosen climbers, further elevating his status as a revered leader. The challenging and dangerous nature of mountaineering was harnessed to portray him as a strong and fearless figure, capable of conquering any obstacle. By associating Stalin with the triumphs of mountaineering, the Soviet regime sought to instill a sense of awe, loyalty, and admiration among the population, further cementing his authority and consolidating his power.

Maoist Mountaineering

On May 25, 1960, three Chinese mountaineers scaled the slopes of Mount Everest (known in Tibetan as Jolmo Langma) and reached the world's highest peak from the north side for the first time ever. During the ascent, one of the climbers reportedly said, "[t]o climb up to the summit is a task entrusted [to] us by the Party. We'll press on even without oxygen!"² At the summit, one of the climbers took the PRC flag and a small plaster statue of Mao Zedong out of his bag. He secured the Mao portrait with some stones and the mountaineers also collected nine rock specimens to later present to the "Great Helmsman" himself (Shi 1961, 34-35). During a particularly grueling climb on the ice wall of the North Col, the leader of the expedition Shi Chan-Chun told his comrades, "[f]or heroic Chinese mountaineers, steeled fighters of Mao Zedong's era, there is only one slogan: Forward! Always forward! The North Col can't stop us; Jolmo Langma can't hold us back! We're out to win and we shall!"³

The snowstorms, winds, and ice of Mount Everest were metaphorically the Party's foes while the three climbers represented the Chinese masses rising up in a wave of revolutionary fervor against the imperialist forces.

² "The Final Assault on the World's Highest Peak," *Peking Review* (June 7, 1960), 21.

³ "The Climb to the Top of the Earth," *Peking Review* (June 7, 1960), 26.

At a base camp 5,120 meters above sea level, the climbers put up a symbolic arch decorated with pieces of red cloth and propaganda slogans, such as “[t]he peak of Jolmo Langma soars taller than heavens, but it can’t daunt the will of heroes! Across the snow and ice and over sheer cliffs, we vow to plant the red flag atop the summit!”⁴ The scaling of Mount Everest was not only a physical achievement for the Chinese nation. It was also a metaphor for Chairman Mao’s supposed greatness and the utopian heights that the Chinese people could collectively reach under CCP rule. On June 2, 1960, Chun personally presented the nine rock specimens to Mao, “the great leader of the Chinese people,” in Beijing.⁵ Chun owed the conquest of the Chinese mountaineering expedition “to the fact that we had followed the strategic thinking of Mao Zedong, that is to scorn difficulties strategically, while paying full attention to them tactically” (Shi 1961, 35). Nature was to be conquered and collected akin to that of the CCP’s enemies. Mountains were a metaphorical and ideological battleground for Mao’s mobilization campaigns in the nascent PRC.

The Chinese climbers later reflected on their trek up Mount Everest, “[s]umming up our conquest of Everest, we must in the first place attribute our victory to the leadership of the Communist Party and the unrivalled superiority of the socialist system of our country.” The climbers continued, “[w]ithout all this, we, the ordinary workers, peasants, and soldiers could never have succeeding in climbing the world’s highest peak” (Shi 1961, 34-35). In the Chinese state-run media, the climbers were celebrated as writing “a new and brilliant page in the annals of mountaineering” and for having “brought honor to their motherland.”⁶ In 1961, Chinese revolutionary artists produced a propaganda poster celebrating the achievement of the Mount Everest

4 “The Climb to the Top of the Earth,” *Peking Review* (June 7, 1960), 23.

5 “Report by Leader of Expedition,” Source: Peking, New China News Agency (NCNA) June 1960 found in DAILY REPORT Foreign Radio Broadcasts (FBIS-FRB-60-108) Date: June 3, 1960.

6 “Chinese Climbers Atop World’s Highest Peak,” *Peking Review* (May 31, 1960), 4.

expedition. The poster featured the slogan *Xionghuai zuguo pandeng gaofeng* [Care about the nation, scale the highest peaks] and depicted the three Chinese mountaineers ascending Everest with one proudly holding the PRC national flag at the summit.⁷ The ascent was not merely a physical feat for the climbers but a statement of their commitment to the Chinese revolution. This depiction of their ascent of Mount Everest as a “victory” for all of the PRC’s proletarians reflected the regime’s collectivist mentality and the ways in which Maoism militarized Chinese official discourse on nature.

Official PRC rhetoric regarding the 1960 Chinese ascent of Mount Everest reveals Beijing’s coercion of the “superstitious” periphery into the Party’s revolutionary discourse. Chinese state-run media proclaimed that “[t]his unprecedented feat shows that the great Chinese people have, under the guidance of the Chinese Communist Party and Chairman Mao, emancipated their ideology and smashed their superstition.”⁸ One of the climbers was a People’s Liberation Army soldier of Tibetan ethnicity named Gongbu. As the only non-Han Chinese in the expedition group, Gongbu was spotlighted in PRC state-run media as a “first grade sportsman” and, more importantly, a loyal and devout follower of Mao Zedong. According to the *Peking Review*, he was the one who placed the five-star national flag of the PRC at the summit and secured the bust of the “Great Helmsman.” The leader of the expedition Shi Chan-chun told a national conference after the ascent that their success could be attributed “to the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party and the support and help given [to] them by the Tibetans and the people of the whole nation.”⁹ The state-media highlighted the support of “the newly emancipated Tibetan serfs” who cheered on the expedition. In addition to the climbers, the expedition also included a large contingent

7 “Care about the nation, scale the highest peaks,” December 1961, *Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe*, Accessed at <https://chinese posters.net/posters/e37-3>

8 “Conference Congratulates Mountaineers,” Source: Peking, Chinese Home Service, June 2, 1960 found in Daily Report: Foreign Radio Broadcasts (FBIS-FRB-60-108), Date: 03 June 1960.

9 “Jolmo Lungma Heroes Greeted,” *Peking Review* (June 7, 1960), 3.

of “workers, peasants, P.L.A. men, serfs who had just been freed from serfdom in Tibet, teachers, students, scientific researchers, medical workers and government functionaries from various parts of the country” (Shi 1961, 28). In representing the ascent as a “victory” for all of the nation’s peoples, China’s state-run media attempted to co-opt Tibet, the state’s southwestern frontier, into the PRC’s revolutionary multi-ethnic community.

In Maoist China’s revolutionary worldview, mountains perfectly embodied the physical strength, resilience, and patriotic vigor of the Chinese masses. Mao himself maintained an exercise regimen that included mountain climbing (Lu and Benson 2017, 31-32). The mythology and imagery of mountains permeated Mao’s charismatic politics. Mountain climbing also became a way of implementing physical fitness and a martial spirit among the Chinese masses. Mao explained: “[p]hysical education for national defense, such as swimming, mountain climbing, shooting, etc., will be greatly developed so that gradually every youth or adult over fifteen years of age will have a range of enemy-killing abilities. All the people are soldiers, always prepared to annihilate the invading enemy” (Mao 1979, 627). Mao’s brand of charismatic politics paired mountain climbing with revolutionary zeal. Mountain climbing was a means of bolstering “revolutionary physical culture” as well as strengthening national defense.¹⁰

In May 1975, the northern side of Mount Everest was once again scaled by a Chinese expedition team. Eight of the nine mountaineers were Tibetan and this team also included the first-ever woman climber to successfully ascend Mount Everest. Chinese state-run media celebrated this “tremendous victory” and credited the mountaineers’ success to the “kind attention of Chairman Mao and the Party Central Committee.” State-run media also noted that this mountaineering team,

¹⁰ “Growth of Physical Culture in PRC Promotes Health, Defense,” Source: Peking NCNA International Service, June 10, 1971 found in DAILY REPORT (FBIS-FRB-71-113) Date: 11 June 1971.

with its sole woman climber, revealed the “invincible revolutionary spirit of Chinese women after repudiating the reactionary fallacy of ‘man being superior to woman’ preached by Lin Biao and his master Confucius.”¹¹ At the end of the chaotic Cultural Revolution in 1975, Chinese propagandists used the achievements of this mountaineering expedition to condemn “counter-revolutionary” forces, such as the purged defense minister Lin Biao. The Chinese propaganda apparatus used the exploits of its female climbers as a political tool against what they viewed as the backwards anti-egalitarian tendencies of Lin Biao. The inclusion of Tibetan climbers in this expedition also helped to legitimize Party rule in the Tibetan Autonomous Region. Chinese media said that the “Chinese climbers, with lofty aspirations to win honor for the great leader Chairman Mao and the great socialist motherland, defied hardships and death...”¹²

On June 8, 1975 more than 30,000 people gathered in Lhasa, the capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region, to celebrate the second PRC ascent of Mount Everest. In a “jubilant atmosphere of festivity,” Party cadres, People’s Liberation Army soldiers, and Tibetan peasant-workers gathered to revel in the success of the climbers. At the rally, a huge portrait of Mao was shown as well as many red flags of the Chinese revolution. The Tibetan woman climber of the expedition, Phanthong, spoke at the rally and declared that “[t]hrough only nine of us ascended the peak, it is a triumphant song of united struggle of the people of all nationalities. We owe our achievements to the Party and the people.”¹³ The selection of Tibetans for this expedition was likely not accidental but rather an intentional decision from leading Party members to represent this as a multi-ethnic triumph.

¹¹ “Mountain Climbers Conquer World’s Highest Peak,” Source: Peking NCNA, May 27, 1975 found in DAILY REPORT: People’s Republic of China (FBIS-CHI-75-103) Date: 28 May 1975

¹² “Mountain Climbers Conquer World’s Highest Peak,” Source: Peking NCNA, May 27, 1975.

¹³ “Lhasa Rally Hails Mountaineers,” Source: Peking NCNA, June 8, 1975 found in DAILY REPORT: People’s Republic of China (FBIS-CHI-75-111) Date: June 9, 1975.

Chinese propagandists specifically highlighted Phanthong in its coverage of the expedition. For example, in a propaganda poster celebrating the achievements of the 1975 Everest expedition, a darker-skinned woman, likely representing Phanthong, was positioned at the forefront with the slogan *Xionghuai geming zhuangzhi yongpan shijie gaofeng* [Bravely climbing the world's highest peak with revolutionary ideals in the heart] written next to the climbing team.¹⁴ As the deputy leader of the climbing team and the only Tibetan woman in the expedition, Phanthong represented the pinnacle of gender equality that was promised in “new” China. An English-language magazine, *China Reconstructs*, described the backwardness of pre-liberation Tibetan serf owners. For example, an article noted that these serf owners severely oppressed and discriminated against women, believing that nine out of ten were demons.¹⁵ Phanthong was highlighted in Chinese state-run media as a supreme example of what can happen to Tibetan women under the guidance of Mao’s revolutionary line. “I have seen from my own experience,” Phanthong said, “that only socialism opens the broad road to complete emancipation for us, the working women of all nationalities.”¹⁶ Finally, Phanthong’s ascent gave credence to Mao’s famous line that women hold up half the sky. The article concluded, “[w]e have lived up to our pledge: Chinese women have a strong will, difficulties can’t stop us. We climbed the highest peak in the world. We really hold up half the sky.”¹⁷

China Reconstructs dedicated a large section of its September 1975 issue to the second ascent of Mount Everest, detailing the backgrounds and livelihoods of all nine climbers. With a focus on their “emancipation” from feudal serfdom and rural impoverishment, the article noted that many of these Tibetan mountaineers came from poor herder families but

14 “Bravely climbing the world’s highest peak with revolutionary ideals in the heart,” July 1975, *Renmin tiyu chubanshe*, Accessed at <https://chinese posters.net/posters/e15-681>

15 “The Woman Who Made the Final Ascent,” *China Reconstructs* (September 1975), 34.

16 “The Woman Who Made the Final Ascent,” 34.

17 “The Woman Who Made the Final Ascent,” 35.

were liberated by the Chinese revolution. The article attributed the success of the expedition to the supposed benevolence of the Party. The article noted that the Party Central Committee had even sent the expedition a load of fresh fruits and vegetables via a special plane. During their rest stops up the mountain, the climbers supposedly studied Marxism-Leninism by reading *People's Daily* editorials. As Phanthong approached the summit in brutal conditions, the article explained, “[c]limbing with the team she had only one thought: to live up to the expectations of the Party Central Committee, Chairman Mao and the people of the country, to win honor for the socialist motherland and Chinese women.”¹⁸ Once they reached the peak, cheers of “Long live Chairman Mao!” and “Long live the Chinese Communist Party!” erupted.¹⁹ These representations and images can be situated within Weber’s notion of “dictatorship resting on the exploitation of mass emotionality” (Weber 1946, 107).

The two ascents of Mount Everest offered an opportunity for Party propagandists to promote the success of women’s liberation and Tibetan emancipation in the “new” China. While ostensibly scientific in scope, the expeditions were primarily ideologically motivated. The Party Central Committee understood that reaching the world’s highest point would be important for consolidating Party rule in China’s southwestern frontier as well as depicting the PRC as an emerging sports powerhouse. These ascents served as a powerful symbol of China’s strength and progress, bolstering its international image and reinforcing the narrative of the Communist Party’s ability to lead and radically transform the nation. By conquering Everest, the Party sought to demonstrate its superiority over Western capitalist societies and inspire national unity among the multi-ethnic Chinese nation.

¹⁸ “Chinese Expedition Again Ascends World’s Highest Peak,” *China Reconstructs* (September 1975), 39.

¹⁹ “Chinese Expedition Again Ascends World’s Highest Peak,” *China Reconstructs* (September 1975), 39.

The Mountain Escapades of Putin and Xi

In October 2019, Vladimir Putin marked his 67th birthday by engaging in mountain climbing and foraging for wild mushrooms in southern Siberia. This display of physical prowess and vitality was intended to reaffirm to the Russian populace that, despite his advanced age, Putin remained a resilient and physically capable leader. “We are high above the clouds,” Putin said at a mountain peak during his climb in the Taiga forest (VOA News 2019). During the COVID-19 pandemic, Putin was once again photographed for Russian state media hiking the mountains of Siberia (Jackson 2021). During a time when Putin’s isolation was particularly notable, this insight into his physical well-being aimed to indicate to the Russian public his sustained robustness amidst a global public health crisis. Putin’s cultivation of a hyper-masculine image is nothing new. In 2009, he famously rode a horse bare-chested in Siberia. As Elizabeth A. Wood explains, “Putin creates a muscular equation of himself and the Russian state, so that he dominates both the internal and the external landscape by mobilizing language and imagery that carry deeply masculine overtones in the Russian political world” (Wood 2016, 330).

While both Stalin and Putin cultivated images of themselves as macho figures, Putin has departed from Stalin’s personality cult in that he himself “conquered” the mountains, not his revolutionary surrogates. This direct insertion into the environment is representative of Putin’s virile persona and attempt to reinvigorate an image of Russian manliness after the Yeltsin era, which Russians largely interpret as a period of national ineptitude. As Amy Randall (2020, 860) puts it, “[w]hether co-piloting a jet fighter plane, sporting a muscular bare chest while fishing in southern Siberia, or demonstrating judo moves in public, Putin has served as an icon of renewed Russian masculinity.” Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, Russian influence still permeates the mountains of Central Asia. In 2011, a year after a Russia-backed coup, the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan renamed one of their

country's tallest mountains Vladimir Putin Peak (Kutueva 2011). At Putin Peak's summit, Russian and Kyrgyz flags fly together. This display of deference reinforces the Kremlin-supported image of Putin as a ruler of not only Russian territory but the entire Russian-speaking world as well. After Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine in 2022, an unknown climber placed a Ukrainian flag atop Putin Peak (The Moscow Times 2022). Cited as "hooliganism" by Kyrgyz authorities, this protest represents the convergence of mountains and contemporary political issues.

Less well known for his physical prowess and displays of ostensible manliness, Chinese leader Xi Jinping has also strategically used mountains for his political goals. Under the rubric of "clear waters and green mountains are as valuable as gold mountains and silver mountains," Xi has deployed an eco-friendly vision of Chinese progress and development (Young 2022). Unlike Putin's physical climbing of mountains, Xi has primarily used mountains in political slogans and official discourse. In using this mountain imagery, Xi is building on the popular Maoist-era maxim that a Chinese revolutionary must topple the "three great mountains" of imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucratic capitalism. He also referenced the "three great mountains" challenge in several of his speeches. Nonetheless, Xi is also personally fond of hiking and was once named as honorary chairman of his provincial hiking club in 2002 (Li 2014).

Xi's actions echo how Mao used acts of physical fitness to enhance his personality cult. Most famously, Mao swam the Yangtze River in 1966, which symbolized the start of the Cultural Revolution. Shuk-Wah Poon explains, "[s]wimming was a means for Mao to mobilize mass support for his political authority and a venue for the masses to practice and perform Maoism" (Poon 2019, 1450). Moreover, for the 70th anniversary of the founding of the PRC, a film titled "The Climbers" was released in China that was based on the 1960 climbing of Mount Everest's north slope by Chinese climbers (Hongtu and Cai 2020, 1). It seems that the symbolic power of mountaineering has not been forgotten in the contemporary PRC. While Mao's personality cult was grandiose,

cultish leader worship of Xi has deepened and reflects the authoritarian streak of contemporary Chinese leadership.

Conclusion

By harnessing the inherent awe and reverence associated with their country's tallest peaks, Stalin and Mao sought to create a sense of shared purpose, resilience, and determination among their citizens. The mountains served as both physical and metaphorical landscapes for these charismatic leaders to project their revolutionary visions and rally their followers around the Party doctrine. This tradition of mountain-infused charismatic politics has been carried into the contemporary period with both Putin and Xi using mountains for their political agendas.

According to Max Weber, charismatic authority relies upon the personal magnetism and heroic abilities of the leader. Scaling the tallest summits reflected the supposed visionary qualities of these leaders and fit into their charismatic politics. By positioning the climbing of the country's tallest peaks as a national endeavor, mountaineering bolstered national unity and patriotic fervor. Finally, mountain climbing symbolized the ascent of these leader's revolutionary projects towards supposed greatness. These revolutionary projects ultimately failed and became cruel stains in each nation's history. Established as social experiments that aimed to uplift humanity to the heights of their countries' tallest mountains, the revolutions of these leaderships killed millions of innocent people and ended in tragedy for many citizens.

References

- Bamberger, Benjamin. 2019. "Mountains of Discontent: Georgian Alpinism and The Limits of Soviet Equality, 1923-1955." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Beletsky, E. 1956. "Mountaineering in the U.S.S.R." *Alpine Journal* 61: 310-329. https://www.alpinejournal.org.uk/Contents/Contents_1956_files/AJ61%201956%20310-329%20Beletsky%20USSR.pdf
- Elwood, Carter. 2011. *The Non-Geometric Lenin: Essays on the Development of the Bolshevik Party, 1910–1914*. London and New York: Anthem.
- Feldman, Leah. 2018. *On the Threshold of Eurasia: Revolutionary Poetics in the Caucasus*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Gras, Cedric. 2020. *Les Alpinistes de Staline [The Alpinists of Stalin]*. Paris, France: Stock.
- Greene, Maggie. 2019. "Performing Socialism at Altitude: Chinese Expeditions to Mount Everest, 1958-1968." *Performance Research* 24/2: 63-72.
- Hongtu, Cui and Zhao Cai. 2020. "'The Climbers': Climbing the Everest for the Country, Never Yielding an Inch of Ground." *Frontiers in Art Research* 2/3: 1-5.
- Horsman, Stuart. 2002. "Peaks, Politics and Purges: The First Ascent of Pik Stalin." *Alpine Journal* 107/1: 199-206.
- Horsman, Stuart. 2009. "Michael Romm's Ascent of Mount Stalin: A Soviet Landscape?" *Europe-Asia Studies* 61/7: 1151-1166.
- Jackson, Siba. 2021. "Vladimir Putin pictured fishing and hiking on Siberian forest holiday." *Sky News*. September 26. <https://news.sky.com/story/vladimir-putin-pictured-fishing-and-hiking-on-siberian-forest-holiday-12418769>
- Kutueva, Aizada. 2011. "Парламент Кыргызстана одобрил присвоение одному из горных пиков Чуйской области имени Владимира Путина" ["The Parliament of Kyrgyzstan approved the naming

- of one of the mountain peaks in the Chui region after Vladimir Putin”]. 24kg. February 21. <http://www.24kg.org/oficial/88476-soobshhaet-press-sluzhba-prezidenta-kr.html>
- Li, Amy. 2014. “Did Xi Jinping’s hiking jaunts boost outdoor apparel firm’s stocks?” *South China Morning Post*. January 15. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china-insider/article/1406085/did-xi-jinpings-hiking-jaunts-boost-outdoor-apparel-firms-stocks> Accessed March 2, 2024
- Lu, Xing and Thomas W. Benson. 2017. *The Rhetoric of Mao Zedong: Transforming China and Its People*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Mao, Zedong. 1979. “One Hundred Items for Destroying the Old.” In *The People’s Republic of China: A Documentary History of Revolutionary Change* (ed. Mark Selden). New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Maurer, Eva. 2006. “Alpinizm as mass sport and elite recreation: Soviet mountaineering camps under Stalin.” In *Turizm: the Russian and East European tourist under capitalism and socialism* (eds. Anne E. Gorsuch and Diane P. Koenker). Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Maurer, Eva. 2009. “Cold War, ‘Thaw,’ and ‘Everlasting Friendship’: Soviet Mountaineers and Mount Everest, 1953-1960.” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 26/4: 484-500.
- Maurer, Eva. 2010a. “An Academic Escape to the Periphery? The Social and Cultural Milieu of Soviet Mountaineering from the 1920s to 1960s.” In *Euphoria and Exhaustion: Modern Sport in Soviet Culture and Society* (eds. Nikolaus Katzer, Sandra Budy, Alexandra Köhring, and Manfred Zeller). Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.
- Maurer, Eva. 2010b. *Wege zum Pik Stalin: Sowjetische Alpinisten, 1928-1953 [Roads to Peak Stalin: Soviet Alpinists, 1928-1953]*. Zurich: Chronos.
- Plamper, Jan. 2012. *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Poon, Shuk-Wah. 2019. “Embodying Maoism: The Swimming Craze, the

- Mao Cult, and Body Politics in Communist China, 1950s–1970s.” *Modern Asian Studies* 53/5: 1450–1485.
- Randall, Amy E. 2020. “Soviet and Russian Masculinities: Rethinking Soviet Fatherhood after Stalin and Renewing Virility in the Russian Nation under Putin.” *The Journal of Modern History* 92/4: 859–598.
- Shevchenko, Nikolay. 2017. “Why Were Pioneering Soviet Alpinists Killed after They Survived a Death Climb.” *Russia Beyond*. September 27. <https://www.rbth.com/history/326263-soviet-alpinists-stalin-peak-terror>
- Shi, Chan-Chun. 1961. “The Conquest of Mount Everest by the Chinese Mountaineering Team.” *Alpine Journal* 66: 28–41.
- Simpson, Thomas. 2019. “Modern Mountains from the Enlightenment to the Anthropocene.” *The Historical Journal* 62/2: 553–81.
- Sobolev, S. 1941. “Soviet Youth at Work and Play.” *The USSR Speaks for Itself: Number 3, Democracy in Practice*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- The Moscow Times. 2022. “Kyrgyz Police Probe Ukraine Flag on Mountain Named for Putin.” *Moscow Times*. May 26. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/05/26/kyrgyz-police-probe-ukraine-flag-on-mountain-named-for-putin-a77815>
- VOA News. 2019. “Putin Takes Birthday Hike in Siberian Mountains.” *VOA News*. October 7. https://www.voanews.com/a/europe_putin-takes-birthday-hike-siberian-mountains/6177228.html
- Watts, O.A. 1949. “Holidays in the U.S.S.R.” *The Anglo-Soviet Journal*: 32–34.
- Weber, Max. 1946. “Politics as a Vocation.” In *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weber, Max. 1947. *Max Weber: The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York: Collier-Macmillan Limited.
- Weber, Max. 1968a. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. New York: Bedminster Press.

- Weber, Max. 1968b. *On Charisma and Institution Building*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wood, Elizabeth A. 2016. "Hypermasculinity as a Scenario of Power." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 18/3: 329-350.
- Young, Benjamin R. 2022. "Why Xi Jinping Has Lofty Visions of Green Mountains." *Foreign Policy*. May 25. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/05/25/xi-jinping-green-mountains-china-environmental-policy-rhetoric/>

- Article submitted 12/20/23, revised 2/29/24, accepted 3/5/24

The Economic Security Tightrope: EU Economic Security Strategy, Friend-Shoring, and European Relations with Indo-Pacific States

Michael Reiterer

Distinguished Professor, Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy,
Brussels School of Governance, VUB

Lee Il Hong

Advisor, Monetary Policy Board, Bank of Korea

Abstract

Economic security and like-mindedness often go together without analyzing costs and risks, which allows populists to advocate simple solutions. While there are valid strategic and security reasons to re-organize supply-, production-, and value-chains, there is a need for close cooperation between the private and public sector to find the right policy mix. Otherwise, industrial policy and protectionism may go hand-in-hand in a problematic way, and across the board application of security induced measures may create unnecessary costs and lead to subsidy wars on top of trade wars. Rules have become even more important to avoid creating a situation in which might is right. It is in this context that this paper provides an analysis of the European conceptualization of economic security in terms of the reorganization of supply and production chains, investment policies, impact on trade policy, and measures designed to increase the resilience of economies, all meant to contribute to security by economic means. That is, we address how to deal with a political constellation in which security considerations overshadow economic gains, in which traditionally grown supply and production chains and relationships are altered. Of special interest is the analysis of “friend-shoring.” We also examine the impact all this has on EU diplomacy vis-à-vis the Indo-Pacific, notably in comparison to the same impact in its trans-Atlantic dimension.

Keywords: Economic security strategy, friend-shoring, derisking, supply chains, Indo-Pacific

Introduction

The European Union (EU) usually champions open, rules-based trade, embodied in the multilateral framework of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). However, as the Strategic Compass, the EU's security strategy, puts it, "after three decades of strong economic interdependence that was supposed to decrease tensions, the return to power politics and even armed aggression is the most significant change in international relations" (EEAS 2022a). Global trade and economics are increasingly affected by security concerns, and the EU is no exception to this development.

This is especially true in terms of EU trade/economic relations with the Indo-Pacific. To wit, geopolitics significantly impacts the EU's relations with the Indo-Pacific for two reasons. First, the EU is part of the Indo-Pacific through France's overseas territories, which means that the dynamics of security and power politics directly affect one of the EU's major member states. Second, size matters: the three-fifths of the world's population living in the Indo-Pacific produces 60% of global GDP, with trade between the EU and Indo-Pacific countries outperforming all other regions of the world, with annual commercial relations reaching €1.5 trillion. This translates into 2000 vessels transporting goods daily across the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea to and from Europe (Borrell 2023a), relying on the safety of essential maritime transport routes. Furthermore, the Indo-Pacific has caught up to (and in some cases outpaces) the US in the digital economy and the production of high-end semiconductors, the lifeblood of emerging technologies critical for Europe (Thadani and Allen, 2023).

Consequently, growing geopolitical tensions and greater geostrategic and geoeconomic competition, as well as the shocks to global supply chains amplified by the COVID pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, have brought to the fore the serious risks inherent in certain economic dependencies. This has moved the EU to address geoeconomic risks by proposing the 2023 EU *Strategy on Economic*

Security (Eurolex 2023).

Hence also the main question/puzzle of this article: What happens when security trumps economics, and how can we understand a political constellation in which security considerations overshadow economic gains and in which traditionally grown supply and production chains and relationships are altered? Additionally, this paper deals with a specific corollary to the previous question: How are Europe and selected Indo-Pacific states (such as South Korea and Japan) responding to these changes, especially as they navigate Sino-US great power competition that has prompted the US to promulgate economic security measures that are perceived as unilateral and arguably protectionist.

To this end, this paper provides an analysis of the European conceptualization of economic security in terms of the reorganization of supply and production chains, investment policies, impact on trade policy, and measures designed to increase the resilience of economies, all meant to contribute to security by economic means. That is, we address how to deal with a political constellation in which security considerations overshadow economic gains, in which traditionally grown supply and production chains and relationships are altered. Of special interest is the analysis of “friend-shoring,” a particularly tempting version of re- or near-shoring that securitizes trade and production while inducing economic costs because of inevitable associated efficiency losses. Macroeconomic effects of the above measures will be analyzed in addition to political and security considerations. The primordial impact of technological progress in general on the security of critical infrastructure, and in particular for the treatment of dual use goods, is also evaluated. We also examine the impact all this has on EU diplomacy vis-à-vis the Indo-Pacific, notably in comparison to the same impact in its trans-Atlantic dimension. Finally, we consider the need to redress the increasingly confrontational relationship with the Global South and enhance cooperation with developing states.

Europe and Contemporary Economic Security

As the world has become more contested and geopolitical, economic security has moved to center stage. Responding to this, the EU's *Strategy on Economic Security* aims to make sure that the EU does not fall prey to economic coercion or blackmail that would undermine broader security objectives.

Specifically, the following four areas are identified as part of a risk assessment:

- resilience of supply chains, including energy security;
- physical and cyber security of critical infrastructure;
- technology security and technology leakage;
- weaponization of economic dependencies or economic coercion.

This includes the essential lifeblood of today's economies: data, high-end technologies (e.g., semiconductors), new raw materials like rare earths and minerals critical to emerging technologies, and (still crucial) energy.

Political failure to address these risks jeopardizes economic production, social functioning, and the overall strategic interest of political entities and their ability to act and counteract. This is as true for the EU as it is for states. Indeed, it is especially so, as the EU is a major global actor (EC 2023a). Thus, the EU has taken significant measures to achieve more strategic autonomy: the 2020 EU foreign investment screening mechanism, the 2021 anti-coercion instrument, the updated 2021 European industrial strategy focusing on climate neutrality and digital transformation, the 2022 European Chip Act, the 2022 European supply chain draft law (Hilpert 2022) and the above-mentioned proposed 2023 *Strategy on Economic Security*.

To alleviate the risks listed above, the *Strategy on Economic Security* suggests a three-pronged approach:

- i. Promoting EU competitiveness by strengthening the Single Market, supporting a strong and resilient economy, investing in skills and

- fostering EU research, and its technological and industrial base;
- ii. Protecting EU economic security through a range of existing policies and tools, and consideration of new ones to address possible gaps. This is to be done in a proportionate and precise way that limits negative unintended spillover effects on the European and global economy;
 - iii. Cooperating with the broadest possible range of partners to strengthen economic security, including through furthering and finalizing trade agreements, reinforcing other partnerships, strengthening the international rules-based economic order and multilateral institutions (such as the WTO), and investing in sustainable development through the Global Gateway.

New actions to support this approach include:

- Developing with member states a framework for assessing risks affecting EU economic security; this includes establishing a list of technologies which are critical to economic security and assessing their risks with a view to devising appropriate mitigating measures¹;
- Engaging in a structured dialogue with the private sector to develop a collective understanding of economic security and encourage firms to conduct due diligence and risk management in light of economic security concerns;
- Furthering support of EU technological sovereignty and resilience of EU value chains, including by developing critical technologies through the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP);
- Reviewing the Foreign Direct Investment Screening Regulation;
- Exploring options to ensure adequate targeted support for research and development of dual-use technologies;
- Fully implementing the EU's export control regulation on dual-use items and making a proposal to ensure its effectiveness and

¹ A first list was published by the European Commission on October 3, 2023 (see below).

- efficiency;
- Examining, together with member states, what security risks result from outbound investments and on this basis propose an initiative by the end of 2024;
 - Proposing measures to improve research security ensuring a systematic and rigorous enforcement of the existing tools and identifying and addressing gaps;
 - Exploring targeted use of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) instruments to enhance EU economic security including Hybrid and Cyber Diplomacy toolboxes and the Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) toolbox;
 - Instructing the EU Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC) (EEAS 2022b) to work specifically on the detection of possible threats to EU economic security;
 - Ensuring that the protection and promotion of EU economic security is fully integrated into EU external action and intensifying cooperation with third countries on economic security issues. (EC 2023a)

In light of the objectives just listed, the *Economic Security Strategy* aims at fulfilling two tasks simultaneously. First, it seeks to defend critical infrastructure and access to essentials like energy, raw materials, and inputs in shared production processes (which is linked to market access issues). Second, if necessary, it permits counteroffensive action with appropriately leveraged measures, but with the hope that this strategy will deter states from adopting coercive/restrictive measures in the first place.

The EU has stressed that this approach does not imply an economic security strategy that serves protectionism or isolationism, as this would defeat the very purpose of such a strategy. The urgency of the matter is demonstrated by a quick series of follow-up initiatives by the European Commission: in addition to its *Recommendation on critical technology areas for the EU's economic security* of October 3, 2023 (details below), the Commission presented a package of five initiatives in January 2024: a

legislative proposal for the revision of the EU Foreign Direct Investment Screening Regulation to improve its effectiveness and efficiency; a proposal for a Council Recommendation on enhancing research security; and three white papers. Of the latter, the first launches a process to identify potential security risks linked to EU investment in third countries (outbound investment). A second focuses on making EU controls more effective for export of goods with civilian-military use (dual-use goods), in the interest of upholding international security and safeguarding EU security interests in the context of growing geopolitical tensions. The third works at enhancing support for research and development involving technologies with dual-use potential (EC 2024a). As these are mixed competencies the Commission needs to seek the cooperation of member states, hence the white papers to build consensus. It is also worth noting that in all areas covered Indo-Pacific countries are essential players.

However, based on the experience with the implementation of the 5G toolbox, the treatment of Tik-Tok use for official purposes, the lack of a common definition of critical infrastructure, and varying opinions on the need to control outbound investment by member states, the process of finding a common understanding on the scope of the *Economic Security Strategy* is expected to require time and intensive negotiations (Nikkei 2023a).

As part of economic diplomacy, the golden rule also applies here: foreign policy starts at home. This necessitates a robust economy anchored in leadership of critical emerging technologies, especially at the intersection of civil and military security (with cybersecurity a prime example). This also includes financial stability as part of a strong Single Market. Attempts to renationalize under the banner of “effectiveness” and quicker decision-making, or to accommodate national industrial policy, are not only counterproductive but even dangerous for the EU.

Economic security is not a static concept, e.g., it cannot be built on preserving the status quo. On the contrary, it is anticipative, forward-looking, and innovative in nature. This follows analytically from the term “emerging technologies,” which necessitate change in research, its financing, and in the end adaptations of the EU’s policy making system,

as well as reforms to keep a level playing field with competitors. The perennial question of whether or to what extent industrial policy can be in line with the four freedoms of the EU Single Market² will thus surely surface again. This impacts the crucial question of financing, as neither reforms nor a possible industrial policy in general are cost free. Costs in this context are, for instance, investments functioning as either direct inputs to promote change or remedies to soften transformation costs, if they cannot be borne by the private sector.

However, not all member states are in favor of such fundamental changes. While competence considerations among EU institutions and the member states play an important role, as many member states are reluctant to transfer more competences to the European level, others harbor reservations about the policy line. They do not want to antagonize China (Puglierin and Zerka 2023) further and/or want to keep a certain distance from US policy towards China, which is perceived as unnecessarily hawkish and focused primarily on US interests.

As a policy paper, the EU *Economic Strategy* is formulated in general terms—especially when compared to national ones—and foregoes shaming or naming, though allusions to China are evident. At the G7 foreign ministers meeting, where Europe has a major voice, the US also had to subscribe to a more tempered approach compared to its rather hawkish national policy towards China. The G7 foreign ministers (which included the EU’s Josep Borrell) stated that “[o]ur policy approaches are not designed to harm China, nor do we seek to thwart China’s economic progress and development. We are not decoupling or turning inwards. At the same time, we recognize that economic resilience requires de-risking and diversifying. With a view to enabling sustainable economic relations with China, and strengthening the international trading system, we will continue to push for a level playing field for our workers and companies” (G7 2023a).

² The Single Market of the EU is built on the four pillars of freedom of movement of persons, goods, capital and services.

When speaking at Peking University, Borrell raised a concern that boosting de-risking could do “far more than is good, as public opinion will increase its pressure on political leaders to disengage more from China” (Borrell 2023b). This in part reflects non-security-related concerns about the ever-widening trade deficit that politicians (who are sensitive to their constituencies’ worries) feel pressured to address. Yet even in this non-security domain of international trade and economics, security looms, as behind the widening trade deficit lingers the more fundamental problem of China not playing by rules it exhorts others to respect. This contradiction stokes discussion of the need to securitize the relationship and is one element confirming the “systemic rival” status of China, as opposed to partner and competitor.

European Economic Security and Relations with the Global South and Indo-Pacific Strategic Partners

Global South

In terms of diplomacy, “partnering” as defined in the draft *Strategy* is particularly important, covering measures to bolster research cooperation, strengthen trade relations, and diversify supply chains. As China and Russia have demonstrated, a trading relationship, even if intensive like with China and backed by China’s WTO membership, does not create political change, which means politics as it must be factored into policy design.

Given the criticism by the Global South of the Liberal International Order and the geopolitical competition among the rival powers to get Global South support, or at least avoid its opposition or joining the illiberal camp, it is essential for the North’s outreach and trust-building to offer a real and realistic perspective and demonstrate readiness to reform the international order. This is true for the EU, which otherwise risks losing the battle of narratives. An ECFR poll, for example, has shown that the Global South no longer regards the EU as the clear defender of the

rules-based order, but rather “sees a world of sanctions, export controls, investment screening, and protectionist measures detrimental to their [Global South] growth and interests” (Torreblanca 2023).

Reducing risks and dependencies to increase security and resilience are legitimate goals. Choosing appropriately applied, judicious means to meet these ends is the art of statecraft aiming to avoid the “Ds” of de-globalization, de-coupling, or de-linking. Deglobalization—the retrenchment of trade and investment—has already gotten some traction, “not least as policymakers lost sight of its adverse distributional consequences. Many communities and countries were left behind, contributing to a widespread sense of marginalization and alienation” (El-Erian 2023). As globalization has slowed down and economic rivalry between global powers has grown, the involved security risks, as well as the complaints of those who were left behind, in terms of adverse distribution effects, were not appropriately addressed. Consequently, the Global South demands change. Added to this is Brexit, “America First” ethos, the use of trade tools in the conflict with China, and consumer resistance against environmental and human rights violators—the deglobalization cocktail is ready to be served with populists as the bar tenders.

Sanction regimes, the most severe against Russia because of the Ukraine war, but also against China, Iran, Myanmar, and North Korea inter alia, demonstrate the capability of weaponization of trade and finance for political purposes. Yet these measures may not always have the desired political effects, as non-participants may undermine their effectiveness and allow redirecting of flows, thereby fragmenting the trading system further. A wide range of sanctions is undermining a core principle of the multilateral trading system, the most-favored nation principle. Diversification through re-, near-, and friend-shoring, to maintain the production of critical inputs and sensitive exports within the realm of trusted partners, adds to this trend.

Strategic Partners

Japan and South Korea are the two Indo-Pacific strategic partners of

the EU with whom policy coordination is most crucial. Maintaining, even increasing, comprehensive security (including economic security) with such partners is an important part of the European foreign policy agenda. This applies to India as well, also a strategic partner, which is ascending but seeking a third way (in leading the Global South) in the EU, China, US triangle.

Japan: Japan's 2022 Economic Security Protection Act (NSS Japan 2022) takes a similar approach like as the EU, striving, under the auspices of a minister in charge of economic security, to ensure stable supplies of critical materials, the functioning of critical infrastructure, fostering of the rapid development of critical technologies, and protection of intellectual property rights. In an extra budget for fiscal 2022/23, about ¥1 trillion (approximately €7.2 billion), was allocated to promote these goals (EP Research Service 2023). Japan also designated eleven items as “strategically critical materials” to strengthen supply chains and gain more independence from China. Tokyo had, like Seoul, experienced Chinese coercive statecraft on various occasions when politically motivated export embargoes hit not only production chains but also the medical sector (Nikkei 2022). The security relevance of this was also highlighted in establishing a well-staffed Economic Division in the National Security Secretariat, with the task of coordinating corresponding cells in MOFA, METI, and the Ministry of Defence (Igata 2022).

Economic security is also a guiding principle in Japan's concept of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP), advocated by late Prime Minister Abe during his first term in a 2007 speech to the Indian Parliament. Cybersecurity, intelligent infrastructure, digital projects, and disaster mitigation are areas at the intersection of technology, security, and development. The proposal to amend the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement to allow for free cross-border flow of data is an important step to increase data security (Council 2024a). Special attention has been paid to the indispensable private sector when it comes to maintaining a lead in emerging technologies. “Strategic indispensability” is a demanding

Japanese project as it signifies holding a technological edge in such a manner that others cannot bypass a country because of its technological prowess. As technology often has a civilian-military dual-use character, granting security clearance to experts working in the civilian sector could facilitate R&D. Finalizing speedily the talks for Japan becoming an associate member of Horizon Europe would facilitate cooperation in this essential area. The decision by the EU Foreign Affairs Council to start negotiations for an EU-Japan Security and Defence Partnership is an important step to complement the existing network of agreements (Council 2024b).

South Korea: Despite the potential cost, and acknowledging the geopolitical risk from North Korea, the Yoon Suk Yeol government promulgated a National Security Strategy centred on strengthening collaboration with the international community to safeguard universal values such as freedom, human rights, and the rule of law (ONS Korea 2023). It focuses on establishing a cooperative network with strategic partners—e.g., the US, Japan, the EU, and Australia—and active participation in economic security mechanisms such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). To reduce risks in its supply chains from external shocks, it set up the Center for Economic Security and Foreign Affairs (CESFA) in May 2022. Furthermore, three major laws on technological security—the Foreign Trade Act, the Act on Prevention of Divulgence and Protection of Industrial Technology, and the Foreign Investment Promotion Act—are under review. All this dovetails with European concepts of economic security. To wit, at the first bilateral Digital Council meeting in June 2023, both sides agreed to cooperate on emerging technologies as outlined in the Economic Security Strategy. To this end, a joint Forum for Semiconductor Researchers, cooperation in High-Performance Computing, and a Quantum expert group were established (EC 2023b).

India: India is moving up the ladder of importance for the EU with FTA negotiations resumed, negotiations for an investment agreement started, a Connectivity Partnership concluded, and a Trade and Technology

Council operational, as well as signalling interest to cooperate in security matters like joint naval exercises and port calls (Reiterer 2023a). Nevertheless, unlike the two other strategic partners, India pursues a policy of “multi-alignment” inspired by the previous non-aligned movement, and is striving for leadership of the Global South. All this poses limits to cooperation as shown in India’s stance on Russia’s war against Ukraine.

As cybersecurity is an integral part of economic security, the three strategic partners in the Indo-Pacific have a strong interest in cooperating on cybersecurity, which in turn is linked to foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) as well as industrial espionage. Therefore, cyber diplomacy, which plays a crucial role in securing the political, economic, and technical aspects of critical infrastructure (Reiterer 2022), is an important common denominator, a low-hanging fruit for enhanced cooperation also in relation to capacity building in third countries, as cybersecurity depends on the weakest link of the security chain.

Friend-Shoring

As part of an economic strategy of de-risking, the EU and its member states have an ambivalent relationship to the concept of “friend-shoring.” Friend-shoring entails focusing supply and production chains and investment on politically like-minded partners or networks thereof. This definition, which includes investment, goes beyond the one proposed by Attinasi et al. (2023), which defines “friend-shoring” as “sourcing inputs from suppliers in allied countries,” while “reshoring” has a more neutral connotation, “bringing production home”—in both cases “to secure access to critical production inputs.”

In terms of politics, friend-shoring deepens relationships with partners and allies. In terms of economics, as an instrument of industrial policy, it is interventionist. Re-organizing supply and production chains and incentivizing investment by governments presupposes that governments

(e.g., officials) access better information and make better decisions than the private sector. Furthermore, it presupposes that the private sector is uninterested in taking measures that interrupt production processes or disrupt export markets. Both assumptions are not in line with a policy based on market principles: government-run economies have turned out to be less efficient than market economies, and are not consonant with contemporary European political thinking, as well as that of some of Europe's strategic partners, such as Japan and South Korea.

This does not mean that security concerns are irrelevant—that would be highly irresponsible. But economic security measures must be well-defined, transparent in terms of costs incurred, and targeted as opposed to across the board. Interventionist measures should only be applied to “sensitive” sectors, a term open to interpretation and misuse, and therefore political control should be foreseen, for instance by parliaments. Sunset or rendezvous clauses could prevent petrification and abuse for protectionist purposes. Strategic and sensitive goods and services (many of which are dual-use goods and services at the intersection of commercial and military use), as well as incoming or outgoing investment, should be narrowly and transparently defined. As COVID-19 has shown, goods and services can change their nature in times of an acute crisis—simple low-tech masks turned into a strategic item overnight. Therefore, contingency plans for political or health related crises, including natural and person-made disasters, need to be ready.

Friend-Shoring—But Who Are the Friends, and What Are the Risks?

Interdependence, grown during years of globalization, renders de-risking costly and de-coupling partly impossible. Bavarez, Fabry, and Köhler-Suzuki (2023) show the high degree of trade dependence between China and the EU. While China is more dependent on exports to the EU than vice versa by a factor of two, the EU in turn is more dependent on imports from China by a factor of two to three (ibid.). Friend-shoring ostensibly covers the middle ground between de-coupling and de-risking,

incorporating elements of both concepts. While de-coupling is the more radical approach, severing relationships and building up new ones to reduce dependencies, de-risking is a more gradual process mitigating risks through broadening relationships, whether on the import, export or investment side.³ Seen one way, friend-shoring attempts to accelerate some of the gains of de-risking by growing already existing relationships with partners/allies; seen the other, friend-shoring gets some of the benefit of de-coupling in recalibrating the security-economic balance more toward security, but in a way that is less punishing in terms of economic dislocation.

At first glance, friend-shoring seems clearly appealing—sourcing from and producing in partner countries sharing political ideas and reflecting like-mindedness to mitigate supply chain disturbances. It is thus a form of de-risking that brings security through trust. The same thinking motivates President Biden’s Summit for Democracy (US State Department 2022) and the idea of the democratic peace theory.

But the concept is in fact tricky. A primary problem is how to define a friend. For example, according to which criteria would a transfer of production facilities from China to Vietnam qualify as friend-shoring, if seen from a value-inspired foreign policy? Vietnam is undoubtedly less powerful than China, and thus represents less risk to the interests of Europe, the US, South Korea, Japan, etc. But Vietnam is also hardly like-minded, sharing little in political values with democracies.

A second issue is how to consider friend-shoring if friendship ends or interests change. The leader of a friendly nation in principle may take “unfriendly” measures that impact the interests of a partner, as the EU had to learn when the US presidency changed from Barack Obama to

³ “Decoupling refers to a complete separation of ties between two or more economies. It involves dismantling existing trade and investment relationships, severing supply chains, and establishing new economic partnerships elsewhere. De-risking, on the other hand, is a more nuanced and gradual approach that focuses on mitigating specific risks associated with economic engagement with a particular country. It involves diversifying supply chains, identifying alternative sources of goods and services, and implementing measures to reduce exposure to potential disruptions.” (Capri 2023)

Donald Trump. President Joe Biden has redressed the situation only to a certain degree, as EU Commissioner Thierry Breton has pointed out: “[w]e have also learned that our supply chains are vulnerable to actions by even our closest allies. Remember when in 2021, in the name of the *America First* principle, the Biden administration started to block access to some of the most crucial ingredients for producing vaccines: we had to weigh in with our export control mechanism to rebalance our relation and restore the vaccine supply chain across the Atlantic” (Breton 2024). A friend is not above suspicion; no friendship is eternal. Thus, the Inflation Reduction Act, which negatively impacts Asian and European car manufacturers, was enacted by a friendly administration and without consultation. Whether this was a designed effect or collateral damage, the situation contributed to accelerating the work on the EU’s *Economic Security Strategy* and prompted serious questions about the direction of the US by Indo-Pacific partner states. The possible return of Donald Trump to office only reinforces the observation that “national friendships” are fickle and national character can change (Stangarone 2023).

Third, friend-shoring is more effective when applied within an integration process, as in the EU. The strong political and economic ties among EU countries reduce the risk of selecting the wrong “friend” for inclusion in supply chains or selective discriminatory actions among members. But this means that friend-shoring will have significant differential effects. For example, the advantage of integration does not exist in the Indo-Pacific, where there is no comparable regional integration association like the EU. Instead, there is a sub-variant of friend-shoring—alliance-shoring—which can be observed in the Indo-Pacific; alliances are built on shared interests, which implies a certain degree of like-mindedness. After two decades China lost its number one position for Korean exports in December 2023 through a two-pronged development: while Korean exports to the US increased in 2023 by 5%, those to China declined by 20%, creating for the first time in three decades a huge trade deficit with China and a surplus with the US (Glosserman 2024). While de-risking and strengthening of the alliance play a role, other factors—

like China's push for self-reliance, the oversized role of the export of semi-conductors and macroeconomic differences between the US and China—play an important role. It is also worth noting that it was China that started, in 2015, a major de-risking policy called “Made in China 2025,” motivated by geo-political considerations of gaining more autonomy and thereby freedom of maneuver. South Korea's traumatic experience with Chinese statecraft in reply to the stationing of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) also contributed to de-risking efforts (Zelleke and Tilley 2019).

Another obvious flaw of friend-shoring is that friends will not be able to provide all goods and services needed. Moreover, the cooperation of “non-friends” will be required to achieve certain goals like climate change and green transition, or procuring necessary raw materials or inputs in production processes. Although creating the appearance of hypocrisy, efforts to win over as many “non-friends” as possible will eventually pay off in terms of security, access to critical raw materials, market access, and influence in general (Rizzi 2023a).

Furthermore, there are limits to friend-shoring inherent in a system based on free and fair competition, augmented through an industrial policy in which governments intervene in the market to achieve security related goals. The spirit of competition entrenched among market players can induce substitution. If import of products from a country is banned for political reasons, another country or the businesses of another country often step in. For example, when China barred Australian wine (Forbes 2021), European and Chilean wine makers stepped in and gained market share. When Japan imposed trade restrictions on products needed for the semiconductor industry in South Korea, South Korean companies substituted other sources for Japanese products (Ryo and Zhang 2023) and successfully increased national production. When China banned Taiwanese mangos (Nikkei 2023b), traders from other countries, like Japan (Taipei Times 2022), stepped in.

Ultimately, the limits of friend-shoring for security reasons will usually derive in some measure from partner suspicions that it is driven by ulterior

motives. This is demonstrated by Biden administration opposition to Nippon Steel buying US Steel for \$14.9 billion, “given the company’s core role in U.S. steel production that is critical to national security” (Reuters 2023a). The Japan Times Editorial Board countered in its weekly editorial that it was “[a] steel deal that’s good for both Japan and the US,” hinting that the US response was likely protectionist and nationalist (Japan Times 2023a). The US Chamber of Commerce also objected, calling Biden “foolhardy,” “inappropriate and counterproductive” to politicize the CFIUS review of the deal in order to try to kill it (Boak 2024). If a staunch ally and friend of the US like Japan is threatened by the killing argument in economic policy—national security—this does not augur well for the more general operability of the concept of friend-shoring. *The Economist* has warned that free markets may wither if “homeland economics, a protectionist, high subsidy, intervention-heavy ideology administered by an ambitious state” is pursued, leaving behind the presumption of open markets and limited government (The Economist 2023). Obviously, this does not mean that this presumption was always truly adhered to by all parties, but limited government is possible only to the extent that the underlying market regulations are transparent and applied fairly, and that is at risk by some aspects of friend-shoring.

Paralysing the WTO adds to the tensions and plays against rule-following states, including in Europe and the US, the main culprit for the paralysis following Washington’s refusal to permit a quorum on the Appellate Body for trade dispute adjudication. To take one recent example, a WTO panel ruled in favor of the US in a conflict with China concerning the application of the security clause of Art. XXI (Kerstensand and Reinsch 2023), the “nuclear bomb” of trade policy. However, as China is entitled to appeal to the de facto defunct Appellate Body, China may continue to apply the measures deemed illegal, thereby profiting from a situation the US has created. This confirms the EU’s mantra that the WTO in general and its dispute settlement in particular urgently need reform to become functional again. This would also contribute to resisting trade protectionism and fostering multilateralism to counter (US) unilateralism (Defraigne and

Pitakdumrongkit 2021).

It is worth remembering that the trade policies of the 1920-30s, based on perceived national interest without concern for the effects on others, helped lead to the Great Depression and prepared the atmosphere for World War II. The lesson learned from this catastrophic sequencing was to enshrine the principles of non-discrimination and most-favored nation in the GATT, which provisionally replaced the International Trade Organisation, blocked at the time by US Congress. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is quite clear in its warning: “geopolitical tensions and disruptions to global value chains have led policy makers to re-evaluate their approach to globalisation. Many countries are considering regionalisation and friend-shoring—trading primarily with countries sharing similar values—as a way of minimizing exposure to weaponisation of trade and securing access to critical inputs. If followed through, this process has the potential to reverse the global economic integration of recent decades. Thus, although friend-shoring may provide insurance against extreme disruptions and increase the security of the supply of vital inputs, it would come at a significant cost” (Javorcik et al. 2022). These are costs that not every state is either willing or able to bear.

Friend-Shoring Costs

Friend-shoring costs include risks ranging from geopolitical problems to economic drag. A simulation study by the WTO predicts large welfare losses through a splitting of the world economy into antagonistic blocs leading to decoupling. Not surprisingly the countries of the Global South would bear the highest costs: “[f]irst, the current system with global trade rules guaranteeing open and free trade between all major players is especially important for the lowest income regions. Second, if geopolitical considerations would lead to a split of the big players into two blocs, it would be important that an institutional framework remains in place for smaller countries to keep open trade relations with both blocs, in particular for the lowest income regions” (WTO 2022). Also not surprisingly, a return to “might is right” would be another negative effect for smaller and

middle-sized powers.

UNCTAD Secretary General Rebeca Grynspan draws similar conclusions and warns that cutting out a part of the world, like China, would “create a huge disruption” to the complex trade system (Jones 2023). The president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, recognized costs involved in reducing energy dependencies in citing the example of the Baltic States in her 2022 State of the Union Speech: “Our friends in the Baltics have worked hard to end their dependency on Russia. They have invested in renewable energy, in LNG terminals, and in interconnectors. This costs a lot. But dependency on Russian fossil fuels comes at a much higher price. We have to get rid of this dependency all over Europe” (EC 2022).

Beyond these geopolitical costs, placing excessive weight on security and resilience will lead to further efficiency loss. Governments may create additional national security induced costs like incentivizing or imposing changes of suppliers, closing of export markets, and investment diversion, all examples of actions a company would not have taken from a business perspective. Such measures seem justified if they correct a situation endangering national economic security, but this will not always be easy to determine. However, this is crucial as it would impact on which side, private or public, should bear the cost of reconfiguration. If the corporate sector’s existing supply chain does not affect national security, then the government will need to cover the bill for requests of reconfiguration. Providing reshoring incentives to domestic corporations operating assembly plants in a “friendly” country, for example, is a case in point.

The total bill will also be increased by augmenting subsidies, which in turn requires a change in competition law (anti-dumping, anti-subsidy), whether nationally, regionally (in the case of the EU), or internationally at the WTO. The risk that the richer outperform or “out-subsidize” the poor is evident, and consumers will at the end foot the bill. This is aggravated by the unlikelihood of a fair distribution of costs, again to the detriment of the Global South.

More generally, the ongoing changes in international trade from the

private sector's point of view reflect its response to the rising cost of environmental damage, disruptions from geopolitical tensions, and government efforts to address adverse distribution effects. On the environment, the rising cost reflects government policies aiming to reduce social costs associated with negative externalities of depletion/destruction of the earth's natural resources. As to geopolitical tensions, the cost captures the rising risk of foreseeable disruptions in supply chains extended over regions with different political orientations. Finally, concerning adverse distribution effects, the cost is associated with changes in the business environment induced by policies that aim to counter rising wealth inequality and markups among multilateral corporations.

All three cases are commercial risks in international business that will be reflected in higher consumer prices. The higher cost structure will imply a new equilibrium accompanied by slower economic growth during the transition, but which is eventually more sustainable. Moving production closer to the consumer can also be part of greening of production cycles, reducing transport costs and increasing sustainability—a sort of “green-shoring.”

There are other developments that induce a fundamental reform of supply chains, i.e., digitalization in combination with modularization of supply chains and rising labor costs. Through the use, *inter alia*, of platforms for modular coordination within each ecosystem, these developments are setting new standards for efficiency gains. This is clear in mobile phones, in which, for instance, Apple uses a platform providing software developers an application programming interface allowing access to the iPhone Operating System. Modularity facilitates organizing the production of modern mobile phones that have 2,530 components, e.g., Huawei's Mate 20X (Thun et al. 2022). Moreover, rising input prices and labor costs globally are leaving companies no choice but to fundamentally reformulate their supply chains.

Against these developments and triggered by COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and rising Sino-US tensions have led 53% of industrial companies globally to prepare re-shoring operations between 2021-22, and 62% have

made significant changes to their supplier base (Knizek et al. 2022). The shares are higher among Chinese companies than among US or EU correspondents. In the case of China, this change may reflect more its internal industrial policy (for instance for job creation) but also strategic considerations, e.g., de-risking from US or European suppliers. On friend-shoring, the 2023 Economist Impact Survey (Bhagat et al. 2023) shows an 18 percentage point increase in near-/re-shoring since 2021. At the same time, in line with increased “just-in-case” trends (a measure of business environment uncertainty) companies are increasing their inventory buffers (e.g., 10.2 weeks in 2022 relative to 8.9 weeks in 2021).

As a parallel effort in the upstream sector, companies are setting up long-term agreements with suppliers of critical minerals. This is not surprising when considering that technology cannot be put into commercial use without basic minerals. For example, China accounts for 77% of the global electric vehicles (EVs) market (mining, material processing, cell components, battery cells), but it only has a majority share in graphite, with smaller or almost negligible shares in lithium, nickel, and cobalt, the key four main mining sectors for EVs (IEA 2022). As production arrangements that assure access to minerals are essential, so is the ability to maintain access to high-tech innovation through being a part of front-line research networks. Assuring access to basic minerals and high-tech innovation networks will outweigh short-term gains from cost-saving supply chains (e.g., the semiconductor industry is a case in point).

The commercial life of a new product is 4½ years for an electronic product, and according to the S&P 500 (Viguerie et al. 2021) an average corporation’s expected life span has shrunk from 60 years in the 1950s to 20 years, and in the case of web-enabled services to only 1½ years. Of the four stages of semiconductor industry, i.e., R&D, fabless, foundry, and the Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly & Test (OSAT), survival will depend on who holds the key to R&D and fabless, followed by foundry, i.e., semiconductor manufacturing equipment. This in turn will depend on which trading bloc has the necessary capacity and internal synergy among

members to move ahead. As of now, the US (39%) and its allies (e.g., Europe, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan: 53%) account for a large share of the global semiconductor market. In particular, the US leads in most segments, especially in R&D, and the Asian allies lead in wafers and assembly, as well as in foundries. Europe specializes in semiconductor manufacturing equipment, materials, and core IP (Khan and Peterson 2021).

The challenge is moving from the status quo to the new steady state position with minimum disruption, especially since assessment of risks by governments and private corporations may differ, with the latter taking a more myopic and purely commercially oriented view. Regulatory changes would be needed to prevent corporate decisions that could culminate beyond economic issues and raise security concerns. The cost, including subsidies, for facilitating a smooth transition to the new steady state position will fall on national governments. These transitional subsidies could be treated like other demand management policies in which the return of stable growth outweighs the cost of stabilization. To the extent that subsidies will entail negative spillover to trading partners, potential unfair practices among “friends” could be dealt with through bilateral or plurilateral agreement. It is true that these subsidies among advanced economies would not have arisen in the spirit of multilateralism, but the latter would only work in the absence of security-related geopolitical risks—which as for now seems to be out of reach.

Indo-Pacific or Europe: Who Will Be Hit Most?

The degree of exposure to geopolitical risk is partly determined by a country’s political positioning. Countries like Poland and Hungary in Europe, and Vietnam in Asia are, for example, countries that could benefit from the spillover of the political divide. Vietnam will likely attract supply chains to the extent that it takes a more neutral and pragmatic stance on geopolitical developments and does not pose security concerns. With a relatively productive labor force, it is becoming an attractive alternative to China. Poland and Hungary might benefit from investors eyeing the EU as

their final destination and thus moving their supply chains away from Asia.

South Korea is most exposed in the short run, potentially facing a very high cost of supply-chain restructuring due to its deep trade connection with China. About 16% of manufacturing inputs, 30% of semiconductors (from its Chinese subsidiaries), and 88% of lithium battery materials (e.g., lithium hydroxide and lithium oxide) in 2022 were from China (Herh 2023). In the medium term, however, it could become an alternative to China for more high-tech companies wishing to have a base in Asia. More generally, countries more exposed to geopolitical risks are those with extensive supply chains spread between the two trade blocs. Even with a detailed map of individual countries' supply chains, which would be difficult to construct, if not impossible, assessing the impact of friend-shoring would be a formidable task. There are too many parallel developments, some of which are noted above, and the trade divide is not uniform across technology. For example, near complete separation for high-tech (dual-use) products in contrast to no fragmentation for low-end electrical products and upstream-downstream sectors. Still, the above-mentioned useful attempts by the WTO and EBRD estimate the cost of friend-shoring to be 4.6% to 5.0% of global GDP. Both studies introduce costs (or tariffs) as trade barriers between two blocs that could lead to fragmentation of the global trading system.

However, these studies are static exercises that do not capture ongoing trends, e.g., average backward participation (the ratio of the foreign value-added content of exports) has reversed since the global financial crisis for many countries. Moreover, China's import share of partner countries has changed rapidly during COVID-19, e.g., a sharp drop from South Korea, Japan, and the Eurozone, and a corresponding increase from emerging Asian economies. The reality will resemble a repeated game, rather than a static zero-sum game, where outcomes will be dependent on who leads in innovation. Lastly, supply chain reshaping is already in full swing, as explained above, due to digitalization and modularization, and through moving closer to consumers (Baumgartner et al. 2020).

Against this background, a more descriptive approach helps provide

a sense of how friend-shoring would affect key economies in Asia relative to EU countries. Since supply chains are stickier for manufactured products (they include larger sunk costs), those with a larger manufacturing base are likely more exposed. In Europe, Germany and some Eastern European countries, such as Poland and Hungary, are cases in point with their shares hovering around 20% of GDP (2021-22). This is about the same as in Japan, but smaller than East Asian economies such as China, Korea, and Vietnam (OECD 2024).

More pertinent is domestic value-added in gross exports (TiVA 2021) (see Table 1). Although the latest available reliable data is from 2016-2018, by this measure South Korea stands out at 68% (i.e., 32% of its exports are foreign made). This is exceeded only by Vietnam with 53% (a decline from 60% in 2006-08). The EU27 is more self-contained at 84%. Moreover, the cost of EU friend-shoring will be both lower and stable over time due to the stronger political ties (and hence lower security risks) among the main supply chain European partners—an element that China-centric Asian trading partners lack.

Table 1
VARIOUS MEASURES OF EXPORT DEPENDENCES ON PARTNER COUNTRIES’ INTERMEDIARY GOODS.

	Domestic value added in gross exports			Total manufacturing output as input to foreign manufactured products(% of GDP)			Total electronic / electric output as input to foreign manufactured products(% of GDP)		
	1995-97	2006-08	2016-18	1995-97	2006-08	2016-18	1995-97	2006-08	2016-18
DEU	83.7	77.0	76.6	16.1	16.6	16.3	2.1	2.1	2.0
ITA	82.2	75.0	76.2	14.4	12.0	11.8	1.0	0.9	0.9
JPN	90.7	83.4	83.3	15.4	14.3	13.3	3.4	2.8	2.0
KOR	72.4	62.9	67.6	17.9	17.8	18.0	3.6	4.7	6.3
POL	79.2	70.0	68.9	14.4	12.3	13.1	0.9	0.8	0.8
GBR	82.8	82.7	82.7	11.0	6.8	6.4	1.3	0.6	0.5
USA	89.0	86.6	89.7	11.5	8.8	7.8	2.2	1.6	1.3
CHN	83.2	75.4	80.2	19.6	20.1	16.6	3.1	3.6	2.7
IND	87.6	79.2	81.5	13.4	12.5	12.4	0.6	1.0	0.9
VNM	74.1	59.5	53.0	14.0	14.5	16.5	1.3	1.9	2.4
ASEAN	73.0	68.9	70.9	17.3	17.0	16.4	3.6	3.5	2.7
EU27	89.8	84.8	83.9	13.5	11.9	11.8	1.5	1.3	1.2

Source: OECD TiVA at <https://data.oecd.org/natincome/value-added-by-activity.htm> (accessed 4 January 2024)

Asia scores high by the measure of originating countries' manufacturing output used as input for manufactured products in partner countries, e.g., 17% of GDP (2016-18) for China and ASEAN economies, and 18% of GDP for South Korea (see Table 1). China shows a decline from 20% of GDP in 2006-08, reflecting its ongoing effort to nurture local suppliers. In Europe, only Germany is on par with Northeast Asian countries, while the EU27 stands lower at 12% of GDP, a stable ratio relative to 2006-08. Korea's high exposure is more evident when narrowed down to electronic and electrical output used as input for other countries' manufactured products, as discussed below.

In Asia, many countries are dependent on trade both with China and the US, and to a lesser extent with the EU. According to the Direction of Trade statistics (DOTS 2024), 26% of Korea's exports are shipped to China followed by Japan and Vietnam at 19% and 15% respectively (i.e., an average share of 20% by these three countries). This broadly compares with an average share of exports of 18% to the US by these three countries, and an average share of 11% to the EU27. These three Asian countries jointly account for 8% of US exports, 2% of EU27 exports, and 14% of China's exports. A division of trade into US/EU27 and China blocks would hit South Korea most by these measures, followed by Japan and Vietnam. Among the big three, China would be most exposed, with almost half of its exports currently being shipped to the US/EU27, South Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.

Looking at the value added from gross exports (i.e., both intermediate and final products) offers another, even more convincing explanation (see Table 2). China's value added of exports to South Korea, Japan, and Vietnam jointly account for 2.5% of its GDP. The US and the UE27 together account also for about 5.25% China's GDP (2016-18). These shares show diversification efforts by China since 2006-08, at 4% from Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam, and 10% from the US+EU27. By the same measure, South Korea's value-added gains from its exports to China account for 9% of its GDP, reflecting the extensive supply chain network. The corresponding figures are 3% for Japan and 7% for Vietnam.

Table 2**DOMESTIC VALUE ADDED CONTENT OF EXPORT TO PARTNER COUNTRIES
(% OF EXPORT COUNTRY'S GDP) 2016-18.**

Exporting ↓	Importing →								Sum
	DEU	JPN	KOR	USA	CHN	VNM	EU27	ROW	
DEU		0.67	0.51	2.90	2.31	0.09	13.76	1.72	21.97
JPN	0.41		0.96	2.49	2.93	0.25	1.60	0.89	9.51
KOR	0.50	1.64		3.60	8.94	1.24	2.32	1.96	20.19
USA	0.42	0.58	0.35		1.04	0.05	2.03	0.83	5.31
CHN	0.56	1.20	0.75	3.06		0.36	2.14	1.41	9.48
VNM	1.06	3.96	2.58	7.37	7.23		4.07	2.04	28.31
EU27	0.00	0.61	0.39	2.94	1.75	0.09		2.37	8.15
ROW	0.57	0.55	0.57	1.37	2.06	0.11	2.93		8.17
Sum	3.52	9.21	6.12	23.74	26.25	2.18	28.85	11.22	

Source: OECD TIVA at <https://data.oecd.org/natincome/value-added-by-activity.htm> (accessed 4 January 2024)

South Korea's export value added would fall most, followed by Vietnam and Japan to a lesser extent, from friend-shoring represented by a divide into the two blocks. However, China would also be adversely affected by a divide from these three Asian countries, and much more so with the US and EU27. The trade integration of China, Japan, and South Korea is particularly notable in the input share (in value added terms) of their respective exports in electronics/electrical products. For example, 4% of South Korea's manufactured exports of electronics/electrical products contain imports from China. This figure is somewhat lower for Japan at 3%, but similar for the EU27 at 4%. China in turn relies on South Korea's input for 7% of its exports, Japan for 3%, and the EU27 for 2%. These shares are broadly similar when measured by total manufactured products. For example, value added input from China for South Korea's manufactured exports accounts for 5%, for Japan 3%, and the EU27 2%. The input share from South Korea of Chinese export manufactured products is 3%, Japan 2%, and the EU27 2%.

In an extreme scenario where the divide into blocs would mean high trade barriers on the electronic sector between China and others (i.e., US,

EU27, Japan, and South Korea), China will be most affected, followed closely by the EU27 and South Korea. In other scenarios, depending on the nature of trade restrictions, China stands to lose most among the countries considered here, since others will be able to retain relatively more of their current trade relations. South Korea would follow due to its large, though steadily declining exposure to China.

Control of, or Exclusion from, Technology?

Competition for technological supremacy has vigorously entered trade policies—“chip wars” informally denotes this development, which is generally linked to emerging technologies (Miller 2022). The semiconductors underlying the chip wars necessitate a different natural resource base than previous technologies: rare earths and rare metals often have different suppliers, and many share with fossil fuel suppliers the lack of democratic credentials. Therefore, the shift from suppliers of fossil fuels to suppliers of the new raw materials may lead to a different dependence but with no gain in security through de-risking.

This leads to an action-reaction game. Empowered by a near monopoly situation, China now produces 60% of the world’s rare earths and processes nearly 90% (i.e., using imported rare earths). China reacted to US sanctions and export controls with a “ban of rare earth extraction and separation technologies on December 21, 2023. This has significant implications for US national, economic, and rare earth security” (Baskaran 2024). A situation of mutual susceptibility to blackmail is rather lose-lose than win-win.

The current friend-shoring trend is skewed toward technology, i.e., excluding others from state-of-the-art sensitive technology, limiting access to “friends” through export controls and restrictions on investment, whether in- or out-bound. This may create a disadvantage for further research and development and lead to a substitution effect and lost market share. Stopping previously legal trade and investment also poses a legal problem and can impact negatively on the trustworthiness of a country as an investment destination and reliable, “friendly” trader. While the cost

will be high, the Ukraine war has illustrated the critical importance of safeguarding dual-use technology:

“Imports of dual-use goods decreased by almost 29%, which is evidence of the success of export control measures if they are properly applied and enforced. However, in 2023 imports of military goods to the Russian Federation almost completely recovered after the introduction of restrictions and amounted to 90% of the volume before the full-scale invasion.” (Insight EU Monitoring 2024).

A recent example of friend-shoring by the EU is the Commission Recommendation on critical technology areas for the EU’s economic security of October 3, 2023, for further risk assessment with member states:

This Recommendation relates to the assessment of one of four types of risks in that comprehensive approach, namely technology risk and technology leakage. The risk assessment will be objective in character, and neither its results nor any follow-up measures can be anticipated at this stage. In the Recommendation, the Commission puts forward a list of ten critical technology areas. These technology areas were selected based on the following criteria:

- *Enabling and transformative nature of the technology: the technologies’ potential and relevance for driving significant increases of performance and efficiency and/or radical changes for sectors, capabilities, etc.*
- *The risk of civil and military fusion: the technologies’ relevance for both the civil and military sectors and its potential to advance both domains, as well as risk of uses of certain technologies to undermine peace and security.*
- *The risk the technology could be used in violation of human rights: the technologies’ potential misuse in violation of human rights, including restricting fundamental freedoms (Defence EC 2023).*

Out of the ten critical technology areas, the Recommendations

identifies four technology areas that are considered highly likely to present the most sensitive and immediate risks related to technology security and technology leakage:

- Advanced semiconductor technologies (microelectronics, photonics, high frequency chips, semiconductor manufacturing equipment);
- Artificial Intelligence technologies (high performance computing, cloud and edge computing, data analytics, computer vision, language processing, object recognition);
- Quantum technologies (quantum computing, quantum cryptography, quantum communications, quantum sensing and radar);
- Biotechnologies (techniques of genetic modification, new genomic techniques, gene-drive, synthetic biology).

(Defence EC 2023)

The Commission recommends that member states, together with the Commission, initially conduct collective risk assessments of these four areas by the end of 2024. The Recommendation includes some guiding principles to structure the collective risk assessments, including consultation with the private sector and protection of confidentiality.

In deciding on proposals for further collective risk assessments with member states on one or more of the listed additional technology areas, or subsets thereof, the Commission will take into account ongoing or planned actions to promote or partner in the technology area under consideration. More generally, the Commission will bear in mind that measures taken to enhance the competitiveness of the EU in the relevant areas can contribute to reducing certain technology risks (EC 2023c).

As part of the January 2024 implementation package, the European Commission proposed measures on enhancing research security through a comprehensive risk appraisal (EC 2024b). The discussion, however, has moved on already: installing an economic security commissioner in the incoming Commission, setting up of an economic security council and a supporting European agency in order to improve governance structures

are on the table (Fabry et al 2024). However, as long as security remains the prerogative of member states, taking away the coordinating function from the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, who also acts as Vice President of the Commission, looks like duplication and not the establishment of the required policy fix that would also allow better instrumentalization of the EU's main asset, the Single Market.

Sanctions, as an effort to deprive a certain country of technologies or products, often boost national production or development, which, although perhaps economically more costly, nonetheless helps fill a security lacuna created. This effect, as well as the loss of export opportunities, needs to be factored into devising policy. This would also extend to export controls, where the US pushes partners, including South Korea, to establish a quicker and more efficient system than existing regimes, especially the Wassenaar Arrangement. Applied to new technologies like quantum computing, the system, which was construed to promote responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods to prevent the acquisition of those items by terrorists, is not apt to proceed at the speed of technological shifts (Yonhap 2023).

Conclusion

Trade without rules, or with only weak rules, lowers the benefits of international commerce and hurts the vulnerable. In the long run, this risks the viability of international trade. In this regard, there are divergences between the US and the EU, which is more inclined to follow WTO rules. As David Henig puts it, “while the US will only offer some special dispensations from the domestic measures they are taking, the EU is trying to balance these with greater respect for established WTO principles such as non-discrimination” (Henig 2023). The EU's approach is broadly more in line with the views of South Korea and Japan, which could become a powerful partnership for reform. And while human rights, the rule of law, and democracy rightly are important features of a value-driven foreign and

commercial policy, stable international trade requires that these factors are applied in a measured manner, weighing them against economic interests which might be at stake.

Thus, taken altogether, there are inherent limits to “free but secure trade” and friend-shoring as general principles. Calibrated actions to secure particularly sensitive production lines and development of technologies may be warranted in terms of national (including EU-wide) security. COVID-19 taught the lesson that even low-tech products like face masks can turn into strategic goods. Nonetheless, contingency planning can mitigate negative effects and help avoid resorting to drastic measures like export bans. The latter can serve a positive purpose as demonstrated at the US-China Summit in San Francisco. In its attempt to curb health risks created by fentanyl, the US has sought cooperation from China to curb the export of items related to fentanyl production, a leading cause of drug overdoses in the United States (Reuters 2023).

Systemic competition is also a critical factor in international economics. Although the Chinese system is criticised from various angles, especially for its opacity and oppressiveness, China has developed rapidly, and many countries depend on China in terms of trade and/or raw materials. Rare minerals needed for emerging technologies grant China an additional strategic advantage. Economic security therefore means diversification of trade, investment, and resourcing as far as possible by enticing others to cooperate to collectively heighten security. This is a more feasible approach than attempted isolation. De-risking and to a far lesser degree friend-shoring can be useful tools if they are applied in a targeted manner on security-sensitive technology and based on a thorough analysis that weighs the economic, technological, and political advantages and disadvantages in relation to security gained. As shown above, the EU is following a sectoral approach in choosing four sensitive technological areas; other areas could be critical raw materials, sustainable agriculture, and mature renewables technology (Rizzi 2023b).

Executed in the environment of an integration process or as part of an alliance policy, friend-shoring has a better chance of success than in

the competitive or even hostile environment of a fragmented world. Furthermore, geography matters. Vietnam, endowed with favourable production factors like a skilled and motivated labor force, and membership in ASEAN (an institution built on cooperation, and without hegemonic ambition) profits from its position in the Indo-Pacific. In the Americas, Mexico, party to the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement is in a comparable situation. Japan and South Korea excel in many parts of emerging technologies, profit from like-mindedness, and add the alliance factor to securing value and production chains.

Thus, its application needs to be carefully executed to avoid unintended negative spill-over effects on companies and partners. This makes prime targets of genuine dual-use goods and investment in highly sensitive areas, such as energy grids and maritime transport infrastructure including ports and the defense industry. Due to rapid technological progress, in particular AI and IoT, the dual-use content of products will increase significantly, potentially rendering this policy tool unworkable, or, worse, prone to use for protectionism. Finding a solution would be a formidable task for a reformed WTO taking up again one of its core functions: rule-making.

Given the extensive network of supply chains, all countries are bound to lose if trade restrictions would lead to a division of the trade system into China and “Western” (US/EU, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Taiwan) blocs. While much will depend on how friend-shoring will cut through the various manufactured products, trade barriers on high-tech products will likely affect China most among countries considered here, followed by the EU27 and South Korea. This is because the Western bloc will be able to retain a larger share of their existing trade relations among themselves even though individually some are exposed to China.

An untargeted and broad use of economic security measures would risk what the measures try to avoid or pre-empt economic damage and weakening of the market economies in their competition with managed economies. US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, who coined the term friend-shoring, grasped the risks inherent in this policy if not carefully

executed: “The United States has no desire to decouple from China: a full separation of our economies would be economically disastrous for both our countries and for the world” (Japan Times 2023b). Creating a market with fewer choices impacts on the organization of supply chains, limits competition, and thereby raises prices, which ultimately always hit the consumer. Setting in motion a spiral of action and counteraction would lead to an intensification of trade and thereby political tensions. To increase accuracy of measures and not to destroy “friendships,” geolocation approved by governments for real time control and auto-destruction in case of attempts to dismantle the system is not science fiction, but an idea advanced by Chris Miller, author of *Chip Wars* (Miller and Schneider 2023).

Moving away from the post-World War II liberal order has been underway for some time, weakening multilateralism and opening the door to a power-driven, national security inspired order that risks degenerating into a power “order” without sufficient rules. While the combination of an industrial policy with an open and fair-trade policy is a challenge, the focus on security policy is a further strain on the existing order and the maintenance of a level playing field. To this end, rules of the road are necessary. However, the recent focus on subsidies in the US and the EU to achieve (for instance) green transition goals is a systemic change, which, if further pursued, requires not only adaptation of rules but also supportive measures for those in the Global South who cannot afford to enter this expensive competition.

Reforming the present system into a more collaborative *inclusive* international order (Reiterer 2023b) in which nobody is left behind, either rhetorically or in deeds, is the task to master. Re-invigorating the WTO, as the G7 trade ministers underlined several times in their statement, would be a first important step. The dilemma to solve is walking the fine line between market and economic reality and the return of state intervention and geopolitical competition. The situation is further aggravated by costs induced for military preparedness or actions in the various high-risk theatres.

Remaining faithful to a values driven foreign policy and an open economy, if security considerations override economic gains, e.g., when security trumps economics, will only work when realism is paired with pragmatism. This will also result in a redesign of economic governance, internally and externally. Remaining within the framework of a collaborative liberal international order will help avoid getting into a negative spiral of measures and countermeasures while keeping focused on overall interests. Developing a positive agenda for cooperation is necessary. As Defraigne and Pitakdumrongkit (2021) conclude in their analysis, the potential of natural convergence for cooperation between EU and groups of Asian countries is rather limited when measured in terms of external dependency on raw materials, market access, governance in trade liberalization, and aid conditionality.

Finally, when considering friend-shoring, it is worth recalling Lord Palmerston's famous dictum about 19th C. Britain: "We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow." In today's language—hard security and essential economic interests will prevail, not only vis-à-vis rivals but also friends.

References

- Attinasi, Maria-Grazia, Lukas Boeckelmann, and Baptiste Meunier. 2023. “Friend-shoring global value chains: a model-based assessment.” *European Central Bank Economic Bulletin*—Issue 2/2023. https://www.ecb.europa.eu/pub/economicbulletin/focus/2023/html/ecb.ebbox202302_03~d4063f8791.en.html
- Baumgartner, T., Y. Malik, Y., and A. Padhi. 2020. *Reimagining industrial supply chains*. McKinsey & Company. August 11. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/industrials-and-electronics/our-insights/reimagining-industrial-supply-chains#/>
- Baskaran, Gracelin. 2024. “What China’s Ban on Rare Earths Processing Technology Exports Means.” CSIS Commentary. January 8. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-chinas-ban-rare-earths-processing-technology-exports-means>
- Bavarez, David, Fabry Elvire, and Nicolas Köhler-Suzuki. 2023. “Rebalancing trade dependency on China: de-risking scenarios by 2035.” In *EU and China between De-risking and Cooperation: Scenarios by 2035, Report 126* (Jacques Delors Institute). <https://institutdelors.eu/en/publications/eu-and-china-between-de-risking-and-cooperation-scenarios-by-2035/>
- Bhagat, L. K. et al. 2023. *Trade in Transition 2023: Economist Impact Global Report*. https://impact.economist.com/projects/trade-in-transition/pdfs/Trade_in_Transition_Global_Report_2023.pdf
- Boak, Josh. 2024. “Biden opposes plan to sell US Steel to a Japanese firm, citing the need for ‘American steel workers.’” *Associated Press*. March 15. <https://apnews.com/article/biden-steel-nippon-kishida-merger-purchase-201b3d5719bcf77067cb81d181442afb>
- Borrell, Josep. 2023a. Speech by HR/VP Borrell at Shangri La Dialogue. June 3. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/singapore-speech-hrvp-borrell-shangri-la-dialogue_en
- Borrell, Josep. 2023b. Speech at Peking University. October 13. <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/china-speech-high-representa->

- tivevice-president-josep-borrell-pekings-university_en
- Breton, Thierry. 2024. A Europe that protects its citizens, transforms its economy, and projects itself as a global power: Keynote speech at the European Policy Centre. January 10. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_24_124
- Capri, Alex. 2023. "China decoupling versus de-risking: What's the difference?" Hinrich Foundation, 12 December, <https://www.hinrichfoundation.com/research/article/trade-and-geopolitics/china-decoupling-vs-de-risking/>
- Council of the European Union. 2024a. EU-Japan economic partnership agreement: EU and Japan sign protocol to include cross-border data flows. Press release. January 31. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/01/31/eu-japan-economic-partnership-agreement-eu-and-japan-sign-protocol-to-include-cross-border-data-flows/#:~:text=On%2029%20January%202024%2C%20the,the%20Parliament%20for%20its%20approval>
- Council of the European Union 2024b. Main Results. February 19. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2024/02/19/>
- Defence EC. 2023. Commission recommendation on critical technology areas for the EU's economic security for further risk assessment with Member States. October 3. https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-10/C_2023_6689_1_EN_ACT_part1_v8.pdf
- Defraigne, Jean-Christophe and K.K. Pitakdumrongkit. 2021. "Economic Security." *In The European Union's Security Relations with Asian Partners* (eds. Thomas Christiansen, Emil Kirchner, See Seng Tan). London: Palgrave.
- Direction of Trade Statistics (DOTS). 2023, IMF Data. <https://data.imf.org/?sk=9d6028d4-f14a-464c-a2f2-59b2cd424b85&sid=1409151240976>
- The Economist. 2023. "Are free markets history?" *The Economist*. October 7.
- EEAS 2022a. A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence. <https://www.>

- eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en_3_web.pdf
- EEAS. 2022b. Memo Questions and answers: Threat Analysis—a background for the Strategic Compass. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020_11_20_memo_questions_and_answers_-_threat_analysis_-_copy.pdf
- El-Erian, Mohamed. 2023. “From near-shoring to friend-shoring: the changing face of globalisation.” *The Guardian*. March 9. <https://amp.theguardian.com/business/2023/mar/09/from-near-shoring-to-friend-shoring-the-changing-face-of-globalisation>
- European Commission. 2022. State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_22_5493
- European Commission. 2023a. An EU approach to enhance economic security. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_3358
- European Commission. 2023b. EU and Republic of Korea Digital Partnership: strengthening our economic resilience. Press release. June 30. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_3607
- European Commission. 2023c. Commission recommends carrying out risk assessments on four critical technology areas: advanced semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum, biotechnologies. Press Release. October 3. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_23_4735
- European Commission. 2024a. Commission proposes new initiatives to strengthen economic security. Press release. January 24. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_24_363
- European Commission. 2024b. Proposal for a Council Recommendation on enhancing research security. January 24. https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2024-01/ec_rtd_council-recommendation-research-security.pdf
- European Commission. 2024c. Commission approves €902 million Ger-

- man State aid measure to support Northvolt in the construction of an electric vehicle battery production plant to foster the transition to a net-zero economy. Press Release. January 8. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/jp_23_6823
- European Parliamentary Research Service. 2023. Japan's economic security legislation. July. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/751417/EPRS_ATA\(2023\)751417_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/751417/EPRS_ATA(2023)751417_EN.pdf)
- Fabry, Elvire, Nicolas Köhler-Suzuki, Pascal Lamy, and Marco Sibona. 2024. "Shields Up: How China, Europe, Japan and the United States Shape the World through Economic Security." *Europe in the World—Policy Paper*. February. https://institutdelors.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/PP298_Comparing_Economic_Security_Strategies_Fabry_Kohler-Suzuk_Lamy_Sibona_EN.pdf
- Forbes. 2021. "European and Chilean Wines Gain as Anti-Dumping Duties Hit Australia's Sales to China." *Forbes*. August 14. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/russellflannery/2021/08/14/european-and-chilean-wines-gain-as-anti-dumping-duties-hit-australias-sales-to-china/?sh=2142af1832fa>
- G7. 2023a. 2023 Foreign Ministers' Statement. November 8. https://www.mofa.go.jp/ms/g7tm/page22e_001061.html
- G7. 2023b. Trade Ministers' Statement Osaka-Sakai. October 29. <https://www.meti.go.jp/press/2023/10/20231029001/20231029001-a.pdf>
- Glosserman, Brad. 2024. "From 'Hyperglobalization' to a new 'thin globalism.'" *Japan Times*. January 24. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/commentary/2024/01/23/world/globalism-global-economy/#:~:text=The%20transformation%20of%20global%20trade,with%20those%20with%20ideological%20differences>.
- Henig, David. 2023. "Perspectives: Friend-shoring is no substitute for having global trade rules." *Borderlex*. October 5. <https://borderlex.net/2023/05/10/perspectives-friend-shoring-is-no-substitute-for-having-global-trade-rules/>
- Herh, Michael. 2023. "Korea Depends More Heavily on Battery Raw Ma-

- materials from China.” BusinessKorea. January 1. <https://www.businesskorea.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=108225>
- Hilpert, Hans. 2022. “Sea Change in EU Trade Policy.” SWP Comment (No. 59). October. <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2022C59/>
- IEA. 2022. Global Supply Chains of EV Batteries. July. <https://www.iea.org/reports/global-supply-chains-of-ev-batteries>
- Igata, Akira. 2022. “Japan’s burgeoning economic security strategy: Navigating amidst US-China competition.” Robert Schuman Centre—Policy Paper 2022/07. <https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/74537>
- Insight EU Monitoring. 2024. Yermak-McFaul Group unveils research on Russian sanctions circumvention. January 17. https://ieu-monitoring.com/editorial/yermak-mcfaul-sanctions-group-unveils-research-on-russias-export-control-circumvention/425930?utm_source=ieu-portal
- Japan Times. 2023a. “A steel deal that’s good for Japan and the U.S.” *The Japan Times*. December 23. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/editorials/2023/12/22/japan-us-steel-deal/>
- Japan Times. 2023b. “Yellen seeking ‘substantive’ talks with Chinese vice premier.” *The Japan Times*. November 11. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2023/11/10/world/politics/yellen-he-lifeng-talks/>
- Javorcik, Beata, Lucas Kitzmueller, Helena Schweiger, and Muhamed Yıldırım. 2022. “Economic Costs of Friend-Shoring.” December. EBRD Working Paper No. 274. <file:///C:/Users/hufs/Downloads/session-2-paper-1-economic-cost-of-friend-shoring.pdf>
- Joint Communication to the European Parliament, European Council and the Council. 2023. European Economic Security Strategy. June 20. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023JC0020&qid=1687525961309>
- Jones, Alexander. 2023. “Can friend-shoring prove effective in solving global supply-chain challenges?” *The Banker*. March 30. <https://internationalbanker.com/finance/can-friend-shoring-prove-effective-in-solving-global-supply-chain-challenges/>

- Kerstensand, Emilie and William Reinsch. 2023. “The WTO Panel Report on Chinese Tariffs: Consequences of a Broken Appellate Body.” CSIS. August 25. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/wto-panel-report-chinese-tariffs-consequences-broken-appellate-body>
- Khan Saif, Alexander Mann, and Dahila Peterson. 2021. “The Semiconductor Supply Chain: Assessing National Competitiveness.” CSET Issue Brief. January. <https://cset.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/The-Semiconductor-Supply-Chain-Issue-Brief.pdf>
- Knizek Claudio, Jade Rodysill, and Sven Dharmani. 2022. “Why global industrial supply chains are decoupling.” Ernest & Young. June 13. https://www.ey.com/en_iq/automotive-transportation/why-global-industrial-supply-chains-are-decoupling
- Miller, Chris and Jordan Schneider. 2023. “How to stop US high-tech equipment from arming both Russia and China.” *The New York Times*. December 30. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/29/opinion/chips-semiconductor-china-russia-military.html>
- Miller, Chris. 2022. *Chip War: The Fight for the World's Most Critical Technology*. New York: Scribner.
- National Security Strategy of Japan. 2022. <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryoku/221216anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf>
- Nikkei Asia. 2022. “Japan seeks to release rare earths, 10 other critical items from China's grip.” *Nikkei Asia*. December 21. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Supply-Chain/Japan-seeks-to-release-rare-earths-10-other-critical-items-from-China-s-grip>
- Nikkei Asia. 2023a. “EU struggles to limit China’s involvement in sensitive tech areas.” *Nikkei Asia*. October 11. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Trade-war/EU-struggles-to-limit-China-s-involvement-in-sensitive-tech-areas>
- Nikkei Asia. 2023b. “China squeezes Taiwan with military drills, trade threats, mango ban” *Nikkei Asia*. August 24. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Taiwan-tensions/China-squeezes-Taiwan-with-military-drills-trade-threats-mango-ban>
- OECD. 2024. Value added by activity. <https://data.oecd.org/natincome/>

- value-added-by-activity.htm
- OECD. TiVA. 2021. Trade in Value Added. <https://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx?queryid=106160> https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=TIVA_2022_C1#
- Office of National Security. 2023. The Yoon Suk Yeol Administration's National Security Strategy. June. <https://www.president.go.kr/download/648037c2bf5e7>
- Puglierin, Jana and Pawel Zerka. 2023. "Keeping America Close, Russia Down, and China Far Away: How Europeans navigate a competitive world." ECFR Policy Brief. June. <https://ecfr.eu/podcasts/episode/keeping-america-close-russia-down-and-china-far-away-how-europeans-navigate-a-competitive-world/>
- Reiterer, Michael. 2022. "EU Cyber Diplomacy: Value- and Interest-Driven Foreign Policy with New Focus on the Indo-Pacific." In *Cybersecurity Policy in the EU and South Korea from Consultation to Action. Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives* (eds. Gertjan Boulet, Michael Reiterer, Ramon Pacheco Pardo). London: Palgrave.
- Reiterer, Michael. 2023a. "The European Union in Asia and the Indo-Pacific." Fondation Jean Monnet Pour l'Europe—Debates and Documents Collection, No. 31. December. <https://jean-monnet.ch/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/23-12-eu-asia-indopacific-m-reiterer-cdd-31.pdf>
- Reiterer, Michael. 2023b. "From Connectivity to Global Gateway, from Asia to the Indo-Pacific—building an Inclusive Liberal International Order." In *Connecting Europe and Asia: Security, Economy and Mobility* (eds. Sihong Kim and Michael Reiterer). HUFs Press.
- Reuters. 2023a. "White House: Nippon-U.S. Steel deal deserves 'serious scrutiny'." *Reuters*. December 22. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/deals/nippon-us-steel-deal-deserves-serious-scrutiny-white-house-says-2023-12-21/>
- Reuters. 2023b. "Biden, Xi's 'blunt' talks yield deals on military, fentanyl." *Reuters*. November 17. <https://www.reuters.com/world/biden-xi->

- meet-us-china-military-economic-tensions-grind-2023-11-15/
- Rizzi, Alberto. 2023. “Give and take: How the EU’s friend-shoring can improve its relations with the global south.” European Council on Foreign Relations—Commentary. August 3. <https://ecfr.eu/article/give-and-take-how-the-eus-friend-shoring-can-improve-its-relations-with-the-global-south/>
- Ryo, Makikoka and Hongyong Zhang. 2023. “The impact of export controls on international trade: Evidence from the Japan–Korea trade dispute in the semiconductor industry.” RIETI. April 27. https://www.rieti.go.jp/en/columns/v01_0201.html
- Stangarone, Troy. 2023. “US-Korea economic ties and vote: 2nd Trump presidency to be more challenging than 1st.” *The Korea Times*. December 14. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/opinion/2023/12/137_365038.html
- Taipei Times. 2022. “Japanese schools get taste of mangoes from Taiwan.” Taipei Times. July 17. <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2022/07/17/2003781901>
- Thadani, Akhil and Gregory Allen. 2023. “Mapping the Semiconductor Supply Chain: The Critical Role of the Indo-Pacific Region.” CSIS Brief. May 20. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/mapping-semiconductor-supply-chain-critical-role-indo-pacific-region>
- Thun, Eric, Daria Taglioni, Timothy Sturgeon, and Mark Dallas. 2022. “Massive Modularity: Understanding Industry Organization in the Digital Age—The case of Mobile Phone Handsets.” World Bank—Policy Research Working Paper. September 6. <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099506109062231415/idu0d48d91a80b1a50484809e1d0ce3d0b9fc07f>
- Torreblanca, Jose Ignacio. 2023. “Onwards and outwards: Why the EU needs to move from strategic autonomy to strategic interdependence.” ECFR Commentary. August 24. <https://ecfr.eu/article/onwards-and-outwards-why-the-eu-needs-to-move-from-strategic-autonomy-to-strategic-interdependence/>

- US State Department. 2022. The Summit for Democracy. <https://www.state.gov/summit-for-democracy/>
- Viguerie, S. Patrick, Ned Calder, and Brian Hindo. 2021. "Corporate Longevity Forecast." Innosight. May. <https://www.innosight.com/insight/creative-destruction/#:~:text=Our%20latest%20analysis%20shows%20the,or%20acquisition%20by%20larger%20companies>
- WTO. 2022. "The Impact of Geopolitical Conflicts on Trade, Growth and Innovation." Staff Working Papers—ERSD. September. https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/reser_e/ersd202209_e.pdf
- Yonhap News. 2023. "U.S., S. Korea, other allies in 'preliminary' talks over new export control regime on key technologies." *Yonhap News*. December 12. <https://m-en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20231213000500315?section=national/diplomacy>
- Zelleke, Andy and Brian Tilley. 2019. In the Eye of a Geopolitical Storm: South Korea's Lotte Group, China and the U.S. THAAD Missile Defense System." Harvard Business School Case 318-022. December 2017.

— Article submitted 1/15/24, revised 2/13/24, accepted 3/17/24

Contributors

Aurel Croissant

Aurel Croissant is Professor of Political Science at Heidelberg University (Germany) and Visiting Professor at GSIS, Ewha Womans University (South Korea). He is editor-in-chief of the journal *Democratization*. His research focuses on comparative democratization, modern authoritarianism, civil-military relations, and Asian politics. His recent books are: *Routes to Reform. Civil-Military Relations and Democracy in the Third Wave* (Oxford University Press, 2023, with David Kuehn) and *The Dictator's Endgame. Coups, Repressions and Military Loyalty Shifts in Anti-Incumbent Mass Protest* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming, with Tanja Eschenauer-Engler and David Kuehn). His articles have appeared in such journals as *Armed Forces and Society*, *Asian Survey*, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, *Electoral Studies*, *Democratization*, *Pacific Review*, *Party Politics*, *Journal of Democracy*, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, and others. His current research focuses on democratic regressions and resilience in Asia-Pacific.

David Kuehn

Dr. David Kuehn is Senior Research Fellow at the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Hamburg, Germany. His research focuses on issues of civil-military relations, democratization, authoritarianism, and research methods. His research has appeared in such journals as *Democratization*, *Sociological Methods and Research*, *Journal of Democracy*, *European Political Science Review*, and others. His recent publications include *Routes to Reform. Civil-Military Relations and Democracy in the Third Wave* (Oxford University Press, 2023, with Aurel

Croissant) and *The Dictator's Endgame. Coups, Repressions and Military Loyalty Shifts in Anti-Incumbent Mass Protest* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming, with Aurel Croissant and Tanja Eschenauer-Engler). His current research focuses on political personalization.

Ariam Macias-Weller

Ariam Macias-Weller is a doctoral researcher at the Institute of Political Science at Heidelberg University and a research fellow in the project "(Un-) healthy Civil-Military Relations? Militarization of State Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Latin America and Asia-Pacific," funded by the Volkswagen Stiftung. Her research interests extend into the topics of civil-military relations, comparative politics, autocratization, democratization, security sector reform, and political violence with a primary focus on Latin America.

David Pion-Berlin

David Pion-Berlin is a Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Riverside. He is a Latin Americanist who researches civil-military relations, defense, security, and human rights. He is the author of *Soldiers, Politicians, and Civilians: Reforming Civil-Military Relations in Latin America* (Cambridge University Press, 2017, with Rafael Martinez). His articles have appeared in such journals as *Comparative Politics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Democratization*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *The Journal of Democracy*, *The Latin American Research Review*, *Latin American Politics and Society*, *Armed Forces and Society*, *The Human Rights Quarterly*, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, and others. He is the recipient of the 2019 *Alfred Stepan Lifetime Achievement Award* in Defense, Public Security and Democracy

by the Latin American Studies Association, for his significant scholarly contributions to the study of civil military relations.

Felix Heiduk

Felix Heiduk is the head of the Asia Research Division at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (German Institute for Foreign and Security Affairs) in Berlin. His main research focus is on international politics and security affairs in Southeast Asia, specifically geopolitics, interstate and intrastate conflict, civil-military relations, and regional integration. Dr. Heiduk received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the Free University, Berlin. Prior to joining Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, he was a visiting scholar at the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University and taught International Studies at the University of Birmingham.

Olena Guseinova

Dr. Guseinova is currently a Lecturer at the Graduate School of International and Area Studies, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS), Seoul, South Korea. Concurrently, she is a Nonresident Vasey Fellow at Pacific Forum and serves as a research assistant for the journal *Comparative Connections*. Her areas of interest include geopolitics, state survival, rivalry formation, and international security, with a specific focus on East Asia and Europe. Additionally, she specializes in analyzing the foreign policy of Russia, the nuclear strategy of the DPRK, and inter-Korean relations. Her current research focuses on investigating the behavior of rival powers in Asia and their interactions with buffer states amid rising geopolitical tensions.

Benjamin R. Young

Benjamin R. Young is an assistant professor of homeland security and emergency preparedness at Virginia Commonwealth University. He is the author of the book *Guns, Guerillas, and the Great Leader: North Korea and the Third World* (Stanford University Press, 2021). Previously, he taught at Dakota State University and the U.S. Naval War College. He has published more than a dozen peer-reviewed articles on various aspects of North Korean history, international security, and US-Asia relations. He was a 2018-2019 CSIS/USC NextGen US-Korea Scholar and has also written media pieces for *The Washington Post*, *The Diplomat*, *Nikkei Asia*, *The National Interest*, and *NKNews.org*. In August 2024, he will be a Stanton Foundation Nuclear Security Fellow at the RAND Corporation.

Michael Reiterer

Dr. Michael Reiterer, Distinguished Professor at the Centre for Strategy, Diplomacy and Security of the Brussels School of Governance, pursued a diplomatic and academic career in parallel. Before retirement, he served as Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Korea, and held earlier posts including Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein, Deputy Head of the EU Mission to Japan, and ASEM Counsellor. He teaches at various universities in Asia (Ritsumeikan, Asia Pacific University, Kobe, Keio) and Europe (Innsbruck, Webster Vienna, LUISS Rome). He is senior advisor to various think tanks: Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy, Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Jean Monnet Foundation for Europe (Lausanne), Centre for Asia Pacific Strategy (Washington). His research interests include EU foreign policy, security policy, cyber security, and the Indo-Pacific.

Lee Il Houg

Dr. Lee, formerly a Board Member of the Monetary Policy Board, Bank of Korea, is now serving, upon retirement, as an advisor to the Board. Prior to that, he was the President of the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy and the Ambassador for International Cooperation and G20 Sherpa for the Republic of Korea. He spent 24 years at the IMF, including as the Senior Resident Representative in China. He also served as the Chair of the Korean Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, and as a member of the Trade Strategy and Promotion Committee at the Ministry of Trade and Commerce. His research interests include macroeconomics, international finance and trade, and income inequality.

International Journal of Korean Unification Studies

For over 20 years, KNU's International Journal of Korean Unification Studies (ISSN 1229-6902) has promoted active exchange of ideas and information among scholars and experts at home and abroad, sharing knowledge and perspectives on North Korea, unification of the Korean Peninsula and issues of international relations.

Registered with the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF) as of January 1, 2009, the Journal welcomes submission of manuscripts relevant to the issues of inter-Korean relations, North Korea, Northeast Asian security, and unification of the Korean Peninsula.

Submission of a paper will be held to the assumption that it contains original unpublished works and is not being submitted for publication elsewhere. All articles published in the Journal are subject to peer-review by relevant experts in the field before they are accepted for publication.

We provide honorarium for the articles that have been chosen for publication.

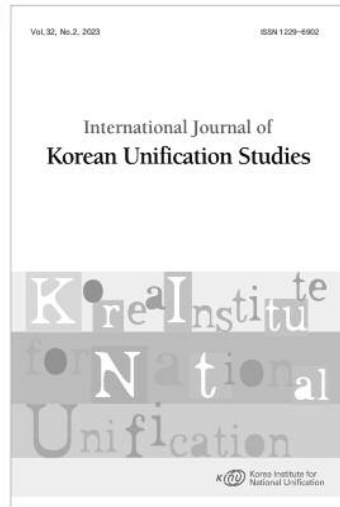
American-English should be used as a standard format, manuscripts should be double-spaced and footnoted with a full list of bibliography specified at the end of the article. The length required for articles should be 6,000-10,000 words in 12-font size in MS word in compliance with the Chicago style. The deadlines for manuscript submission are April 21 for the summer issue (published on June 30) and October 21 for the winter issue (published on December 31).

Vol. 32, No. 2, 2023

Stable Peninsula in the Unstable World: Why Russia's Invasion of Ukraine Increases Security on the Korean Peninsula *Sunwoo Paek*

Tackling Cross-Strait Paradox: Economic Dependence, Foreign Policy, and Domestic Split *Seungjoon Paik*

A Roadmap for ROK-US-Japan Trilateral Security Cooperation *Sooheon Lee*



Please submit your manuscripts via online submission site JAMS at < <https://kinu.jams.or.kr> > and send inquiries to the e-mail address below:

Korea Institute for National Unification

217, Banpo-daero (Banpo-dong) Seocho-gu, Seoul 06578, Korea

(Tel) (82-2) 2023-8211 (Fax) (82-2) 2023-8298

(Submission) <https://kinu.jams.or.kr> (E-Mail) kinujournal@kinu.or.kr (Webpage) <http://www.kinu.or.kr>

The Korean Journal of Security Affairs

ISSN: 1229-3601
KCI registered since 2010



The *Korean Journal of Security Affairs (KJSA)*, launched in 1996, is an academic journal which is published by the Research Institute for National Security Affairs (RINSA), Korea National Defense University (KNDU), Republic of Korea. It is published biannually in English: June and December. The *KJSA* has been indexed and abstracted in the Korean Citation Index (KCI) since 2010 and widely circulated to institutions, scholars and analysts who are interested in research on national, regional and global security and defense affairs. It is devoted to delivering quality articles that address and analyze timely and significant security issues including national security, military and defense affairs, civil-military relations, and global/regional security issues.

The *KJSA* appreciates your continued support and interest.

Contact

For detailed information about manuscript criteria or online submission, please contact:

Research Institute for National Security Affairs,
Korea National Defense University

Tel: +82-41-831-6414

E-mail: rinsakj@kndu.ac.kr

Online Submission: <http://rinsa.jams.or.kr>

Call for Papers

The RINSA welcomes articles, book reviews, and conference reports addressing national and international security environment in, yet not limited to, the Korean Peninsula, East Asia and Asia-Pacific.

Contributors are considered for publication only on the understanding that they have not been published previously, that they are not currently under consideration elsewhere for publication, and that any previous form of publication and any current consideration in English and other languages are disclosed. To read the individual papers and learn more about the series, please refer to the RINSA *KJSA* website: https://www.kndu.ac.kr/erinsa/bbs/data/list.do?menu_idx=603

Please note that an Honorarium is granted per-paper(vs. per-author) selected upon completion of the editorial process.

Submission Procedure:

This journal uses Journal Article & Management System (JAMS) to peer review manuscript submissions. Hence, your manuscript should be submitted electronically to JAMS (<http://rinsa.jams.or.kr>). Please read the guide for JAMS as well as *KJSA* before making a submission. Complete guidelines for preparing and submitting your manuscript to the *KJSA* are provided below.

Articles submitted to the *KJSA* will be reviewed on a rolling basis. However, the dates below can serve as a general point of reference for submission.

- By April 30 (June Issue)
- By October 30 (December Issue)

The Journal of East Asian Affairs Call for Papers

The Journal of East Asian Affairs welcomes manuscript submissions that provide innovative analyses of contemporary issues and policies in East Asian international relations. The Journal, which is published biannually, aims to present a diversity of views on policy issues to promote debate and offer novel solutions to regional problems. It covers a broad range of topics related, but not limited to inter-/intra-regional conflict and cooperation; emerging security issues, including climate change, threats to public health, human rights, terrorism, and cyber-crimes; geopolitical transformation in the region; economic security, such as supply chains and energy competition; and inter-Korean relations. Authors are encouraged to engage both theoretically and empirically with their subject material and employ rigorous methodologies to establish sustainable conflict resolution for global society.



The submission deadline is June 15, 2024.

■ Guidelines

Manuscripts should:

- Be written in English
- Be 5,000-11,000 words in length (including all references)
- Include an abstract of 150-200 words and 3-5 keywords
- Be double-spaced, written in 12-point Times New Roman font, and submitted as two Word documents (no PDF or HWP files), one of which is formatted for anonymous review
- Follow the Chicago Manual of Style for all citations:
https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html
- Authors should also include a BRIEF CV with contact information
- The submission deadline is June 15, 2024, but manuscripts will also be accepted on a rolling basis

Manuscripts should not have been published previously and should not be under consideration for publication elsewhere. An honorarium will be provided for articles selected for publication, with the exception of research directly funded by other sources.

All manuscripts, together with the author's CV should be submitted via email. Please send inquiries and manuscripts to the following email address: joeaa@inss.re.kr

INSS
INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY
국가안보전략연구원

Instopia Bldg., 120, Eonju-ro, Gangnam-gu,
Seoul 06295, Republic of Korea
Tel: +82-2-6191-1167 Fax: +82-2-6191-1111
E-mail: joeaa@inss.re.kr
Website: www.inss.re.kr

**Militarization of COVID-19 Responses and Autocratization:
A Comparative Study of Eight Countries in Asia-Pacific and Latin America**
Aurel Croissant / David Kuehn / Ariam Macias-Weller / David Pion-Berlin

The Asianization of Regional Security in the Indo-Pacific
Felix Heiduk

**Dangerous Europe Vs. Tolerant Asia:
The Puzzling Survival Patterns of Buffer States**
Olena Guseinova

**Peak Dictatorship: Mountain Climbing and the Charismatic
Politics of Russian and Chinese Dictators**
Benjamin R. Young

**The Economic Security Tightrope: EU Economic Security Strategy,
Friend-Shoring, and European Relations with Indo-Pacific States**
Michael Reiterer / Lee Il Houg