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PREFACE

Journal "Asian Issues", which eighth issue is in front of you, is the product of common aspiration and eagerness of researchers gathered in the Institute for Asian Studies, whose aim is to get Asia – that is more and more important and strong globally – closer to our academic and general public.

Editorial Board's program orientation is based on studying of Asia that could lead to better understanding of the plenty of its models of political and economic organization, different cultures, ethnic, religious and other identities of its peoples, as well of numerous mechanisms that connect Asian states and societies through different frameworks of co-operation – in trade, environmental protection, culture, political and others, including security. Economic rise of some of the biggest Asian states, their ever more intense mutual cooperation, by strength of their separate and combined size, but also by their cultural and political influence - change regional, and global institutions, processes, relations and manners, and by doing that they influence our lives.

Our view on Asia is view "within" as we try to study, understand, accept and present Asia to the interested parties by measuring its achievements, reality and potentials by Asian merits, with having starting point in Asian culture, tradition, interests and need of the region's communities, as we believe that is the proper way to understand this, by many parameters, the most dynamic world region.

ПРЕДГОВОР

Часопис „Азијске свеске“, чија је осма свеска пред вама, резултат је заједничких хтења и ентузијазма истраживача окупљених у Институту за азијске студије, чији је циљ да регион Азије, све важнији и снажнији у глобалним размерама, приближи нашој академској и широј јавности.

Програмско опредељење Уредништва темељи се на изучавању Азије са циљем бољег разумевања богатства њених облика политичког и економског уређења, различитих културних, етничких, верских идентитета народа који је насељавају, као и бројних механизма којима су државе и друштва Азије међусобно повезани у разноврсне облике сарадње - од трговинске, еколошке, културне, политичке и бројних других, све до безбедоносне. Економски успон неких од највећих азијских држава, њихова све интензивнија сарадња, снагом своје појединачне и удружене величине, али и културног и политичког утицаја, мењају регионалне, али и глобалне институције, процесе, односе и начине и тиме утичу и на животе сваког од нас.

Наш поглед на Азију је поглед „изнутра“, јер настојимо да Азију проучавамо, разумемо, прихватимо и представимо заинтересованима мерећи њена достигнућа, њену стварност и потенцијале азијским мерилима, полазећи од тамошње културе, традиције, интереса и потреба локалних заједница верујући да је то најбољи начин за разумевање овог, по многим параметрима, најдинамичнијег светског региона.

Matteo Marconi*
Francesco Barbaro

The Geopolitical Divisions of the Mediterranean and China's Impact on Them * *

Abstract

The main research question this paper sought to answer is formulated as it follows: Is the Chinese presence going to increase or decrease the geopolitical divisions in the Mediterranean? The Chinese foray into the Mediterranean is the final element of the New Silk Roads and Beijing's projection towards the Mediterranean is a fact that cannot be merely denied or welcomed. The Mediterranean is neither politically nor economically united: many reasons for division prevail in the numerous regions. However, Mare Nostrum is also characterized by some particular forms of cohesion. Concerning the Chinese objectives and impacts on Mediterranean geopolitics, scholars' views are extremely varied and opposing. It is difficult to give a clear answer about what the economic impacts of Chinese investments are and whether these favour unity or divisions in the Mediterranean area. For the purposes of this paper, the Mediterranean is considered as a geopolitical region. For this reason, the paper is structured in such a way that it first deals with the geopolitics of the Mediterranean and with the existence of the multiple and different spaces of the Mediterranean and finally with the Chinese projection and its impact on Mediterranean spaces.

Keywords: Mediterranean area, geopolitical divisions, China, BRI

1. The geopolitical region of the "Enlarged Mediterranean"

The new logic of global competition has led China to redefine its interests at the international level, going beyond its regional area. Beijing's projection towards the Mediterranean is a fact that cannot be merely denied or welcomed. Globalization has made clear-cut open or closed positions impossible. This means that every player, at the same time, has more room for manoeuvre.

Is the Chinese presence going to increase or decrease the geopolitical divisions in the Mediterranean? To answer this question, the Mediterranean should be considered a geopolitical region. 'Mare Nostrum', the cradle of the first organized civilizations, has witnessed remarkable cultural phenomena over four millennia. Despite

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many internal differences, intellectuals have considered this basin as a cohesive region for centuries. However, after the geographical discoveries of the sixteenth century and the imposition of the oceanic powers, the Mediterranean has gradually lost its centrality to the benefit of the Atlantic Ocean. During the twentieth century, many supported the idea of a Mediterranean marginality¹. The failed attempts to address the regional geopolitical issues show this interpretation has limits. As a matter of fact, crises have increased rather than decreased: some examples are the conflicts in Libya and Syria, the terroristic threat, the uncontrolled migration flows, etc.

The confusion was further worsened by a lack of assertiveness by the EU. The EU left room for states' national interests, even for those outside the Mediterranean area, such as China, leading the European countries to support the United States as part of the Atlantic Alliance. And yet, the multiplicity of the Mediterranean problems had already been acknowledged in 2011 by Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the then Secretary-General of NATO, as evidenced by his speech on the Arab Spring at the *Forum for New Diplomacy*². Nevertheless, a wide-ranging response was lacking. The internal divisions prevented NATO from taking a comprehensive approach to address the southern Mediterranean crisis mentioned above.

The fragmentation of the Mediterranean region was highlighted by the theory of the Greater Middle East, adopted by the United States under the presidency of George W Bush. Mirroring Washington's economic and energy interests, the theory reduces Mare Nostrum to a mere passageway between two oceans – the Atlantic and the Indian one – and a dividing line between Europe and the countries of the southern shore. The grouping of North Africa and the Middle East under the so-called MENA area derives from a vision that considers the Islamic religion as the driving force behind a "clash of civilizations"³ between Westerners and Muslims.

The Greater Middle East theory is in contrast with a vision of the unity of the Mediterranean according to which, in the words of Fernand Braudel, it "speaks with many voices; it is a sum of individual histories"⁴. In the 1930s, Francesco Bertinelli, *Capitano di Vascello* of the *Regia Marina* elaborated a notion of the Mediterranean which focused on the management of bottlenecks, supplies and trade routes⁵. In the early 1980s, thanks to the research job of the Livorno's *Istituto di Guerra Marittima*, the Italian *Marina Militare* resumed Bertinelli's observations, elaborating the notion of an Enlarged Mediterranean⁶, recognizing that the flows of goods and the

1 See A. Hess, *The Forgotten Frontier: A History of the Sixteenth Century Ibero-African Frontier*, University Chicago Press, Chicago 1978; A. Koyré, *Dal mondo del pressappoco all'universo della precisione*, Einaudi, Torino 2000.

2 A. F. Rasmussen, *NATO and the Arab Spring*, Speech by the NATO Secretary-General during the Forum for New Diplomacy hosted by Carnegie Europe, Brussels, June 1, 2011.

3 See S. P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon & Schuster, New York 1996

4 F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, University of California Press, Berkeley e Los Angeles 1995.

5 F. Bertinelli, *Il nostro mare: studio della situazione politica militare dell'Italia nel Mediterraneo*, R. Bemporad & Figlio editori, Firenze 1930.

6 See P. P. Ramoino, "Fondamenti di strategia navale", *Edizioni Forum Relazioni Internazionali*, Roma 1999. See also P. P. Ramoino, "La NATO e il "Mediterraneo allargato": primavera araba, intervento in Libia", partnerships, in *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche*.

raw materials which pass through the region are affected by both local issues and global interests.

Apparently, the Mediterranean is neither politically nor economically united: many reasons for division prevail in the numerous regions. However, Mare Nostrum is also characterized by some particular forms of cohesion which can be explained by two criteria already featured in Bertonelli's work. First of all, besides being a "transit route between the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean", the Mediterranean is "an inner sea which has its own independent problems (...) of economic competition and political supremacy"⁷. This is a proximity criterion: as an enclosed sea, players tend to compete for control over the area, and everything which affects this space cannot be ignored: the proof of this lies in the local conflicts which involve both regional and international players.

Further quoting Bertonelli, there is another criterion that highlights the Mediterranean cohesion:

it is necessary to guarantee, in peace and war, communications with the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, and with the Black Sea; that is, the gates of the Mediterranean mustn't be exclusively under the sway of powers which may have hostile interests to the Italian ones⁸.

The necessity to keep bottlenecks open and operating has the objective to ensure the correct and crucial flow of supplies. This is an issue that still affects all the players in the area today if one given that – only as far as energy is concerned – "30% of the oil and almost 75% of all the other energy resources pass through this basin"⁹ and "about 9% of the world oil trade by sea and 9% of global LNG trade" pass through the Suez Canal alone¹⁰.

2. The multiple and different spaces of the Mediterranean

The reasons for division dominate the multiple political spaces of the Mediterranean: in this regard, it is necessary to mention, first and foremost, the division and the loss of power of the Arab world¹¹.

Università del Sacro Cuore", 4, pp. 73-84; G. Giorgerini, R. Nassigh, "La relatività delle forze nell'area del Mediterraneo Allargato", in C. M. Santoro (ed.), *Il XXI Secolo*, Centro Militare di Studi Strategici, Milano 2002.

⁷ See F. Bertonelli, *Il nostro mare...*, p. 16.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁹ "SRM, MED & Italian Energy Report. Risorse, flussi e strategie energetiche dell'Italia tra Europa e Mediterraneo", *1° Rapporto Annuale*, 2019.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ See S. Capasso, "Introduzione. I paesi del Mediterraneo tra disuguaglianza e convergenza: sviluppo economico, sostenibilità e migrazioni", in E. Ferragina (ed.), *Rapporto sulle economie del Mediterraneo. Edizione 2018*, Istituto di Studi sulle Società del Mediterraneo, Roma 2018; R. Aliboni, "L'evoluzione geopolitica nel Medioriente", in E. Ferragina (ed.), *Rapporto sulle economie del Mediterraneo. Edizione 2018*, Istituto di Studi sulle Società del Mediterraneo, Roma 2018.

Ten years later, North Africa and the Middle East are still suffering the effects of the so-called “Arab Spring”: this journalistic expression was used to describe the protests and the unrest which involved many countries in the area between the first and the second decade of the twenty-first century, considering that “the governments of the area, in office after the end of the colonial regimes in recent decades, ended up losing their political legitimacy and popular support because of the fading away of ideologies and nationalistic pressures and of the effects of “socialistic” policies”¹². After the end of the dream of a socialist and secular Arabism, a political Islamism, which considers Western political and economic solutions and, more in general, its modernizing culture as foreign, has found fertile ground in the traditionalist public opinion. It took the shape of movements that were also militarily organized, often resulting in clandestine activity. Ruling leaderships responded with violent repression, with the connivance of Western countries, because they guaranteed stability which was perceived as even more necessary after the September 11 attacks¹³.

In the last few years, the defeat of the Islamic State (Isis) in Syria and Iraq in 2017 was the main novelty. In Baghdad, the situation is still unstable, in part because of the heterogeneity of the players who fought against Isis. In Syria, the situation is even more complicated: the Damascus government regained the upper hand over the opposition and the confusion among Russia, Iran and Turkey could extend conflicts and instability. Libya’s case is different, also because ISIS jihadism has failed to break through the country. The conflict between Sarraj’s Government of National Accord – supported by the UN – and the Tobruk government headed by General Haftar could be seemingly resolved through a pacification process which only started in 2020 and whose outcomes are still uncertain¹⁴

To understand the opportunities that foreign players like China have in the Mediterranean, the poor results of European policies in the region should be taken into account. Brussels never lost interest in the area: as early as in the 1960s, the European Economic Community (EEC) started bilateral negotiations with the countries of the southern shore, finalizing a series of trade agreements¹⁵. The 1972 Paris Summit promoted a “global Mediterranean policy”, and efforts were made for it to be continued even after the oil shock of the following year, all to no avail¹⁶. Something new was only seen with the Redirected Mediterranean Policy of 1990 and, at the

12 C. Almirante, “Considerazioni interlocutorie su uno stimolante convegno internazionale”, in G. D’Ignazio, N. Fiorita, S. Gambino, F. Raniolo, A. Ventura (ed.), *Transizioni e democrazia nei Paesi del Mediterraneo e del vicino Oriente*, Edizioni Periferia, Cosenza 2014, pp. 401-411. See also A. Ventura, “Le Rivoluzioni prevedibili. Per una analisi storica delle “Primavere arabe”, in G. D’Ignazio, N. Fiorita, S. Gambino, F. Raniolo, A. Ventura (ed.), *Transizioni e democrazia nei Paesi del Mediterraneo e del vicino Oriente*, Edizioni Periferia, Cosenza 2014, pp. 333-344.

13 See A. Ventura, *Le Rivoluzioni prevedibili...*

14 See R. Aliboni, *L’evoluzione geopolitica...*

15 See G. Laschi, “La Cee e il Mediterraneo: l’avvio delle politiche verso i paesi terzi della sponda sud” in S. Cruciani, M. Ridolfi (ed.), *L’Unione Europea e il Mediterraneo. Relazioni internazionali, crisi politiche e regionali (1947-2016)*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2017, pp. 89-110.

16 See M. Trentin, “Le Comunità Europee e gli Stati arabi nei “lunghi anni settanta”: economia, politica e potere” in S. Cruciani, M. Ridolfi (ed.), *L’Unione Europea e il Mediterraneo...*, pp. 129-148; A. Isoni, “Da Barcellona a Marsiglia. Le politiche dell’Unione europea nel Mediterraneo in S. Cafaro (ed.), *Le relazioni euro-mediterranee. Dai primi accordi all’Unione per il Mediterraneo*, ESI, Napoli 2013, p. 1 et seq.

end of the decade, with The Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements, which were "characterized by greater wealth of content and institutional complexity"¹⁷. The Euro-Mediterranean partnership, launched by the Barcelona Conference in 1995, was the chance for a turning point. The goal of the conference was "the creation of a multilateral reference framework, aimed at overcoming the multiplicity of bilateral economic agreements"¹⁸. However, expectations were not met, as the goals announced in Barcelona remained largely unfulfilled due to various problems, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the "war on terror" which broke out after September 11¹⁹. In 2003 the EU returned to the attack and introduced the European neighbourhood policy (ENP), with which it granted the benefits of the internal market to a circle of "friend" countries (without allowing them to join the Union). Finally, in 2008 the French President Sarkozy proposed the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). Unlike the ENP, the UfM minimizes the attempts at a political dialogue, rendered difficult by the instability of the area, and it focuses on practical and economic initiatives instead²⁰. Brussels tried to update those projects after the outbreak of the Arab Spring with a "more for more" principle, depending on economic and social reforms of the individual countries²¹; this ended up being a weakness and resulted in the countries of the southern shore being willing to consider offers from other players.

The Turkish and Russian activism in the Enlarged Mediterranean has increasingly grown. Looking back on the centuries-old Ottoman Empire, Ankara has tried to regain its influence over the area after a period of absence²². Starting from 2005, the freezing of the accession to the European Union led Ankara to start to turn its gaze back to the Middle East. This idea was reinvigorated in 2009 when the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu started to propose his theory of "strategic depth": the theory is based on the aim of taking advantage of the country's geographic position in the Mediterranean and its mixed identity – European and Muslim – to present itself as a bridge between the West and the East²³. Turkey has therefore supported Serraj in Libya, as it was aligned with the Islamist Sunni regimes, the oppo-

17 S. Cafaro, "La dimensione mediterranea nelle relazioni esterne dell'Unione dopo la primavera araba" in *Cultura giuridica e diritto vivente*, I, 1, 2014, pp. 1-18. See also D. Marciànò, "Gli accordi di associazione euro-mediterranei: caratteri e funzioni" in S. Cafaro (ed.), *Le relazioni euro-mediterranee...*, p. 67 et seq.

18 M. E. Guasconi, "La politica mediterranea dell'Unione Europea: l'occasione perduta del partenariato euro-mediterraneo" in S. Cruciani, M. Ridolfi (a cura di), *L'Unione Europea e il Mediterraneo. Relazioni internazionali, crisi politiche e regionali (1947-2016)*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2017, pp. 199-212.

19 See M. E. Guasconi, *La politica mediterranea...*

20 See S. Cafaro, "L'Unione per il Mediterraneo", in *Studi sull'integrazione europea*, V, 1, 2010, p. 105-128.

21 See S. Panebianco, "L'Unione Europea nel Mediterraneo: oltre la primavera araba" in G. D'Ignazio, N. Fiorita, S. Gambino, F. Raniolo, A. Ventura (ed.), *Transizioni e democrazia nei Paesi del Mediterraneo e del vicino Oriente*, Edizioni Periferia, Cosenza 2014, pp. 287-310. See also S. Cafaro, *La dimensione mediterranea...*

22 See J. Jabbour, "Le retour de la Turquie en Méditerranée: la "profondeur stratégique" turque en Méditerranée préet post-printemps arabe" in *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, XLV, 89, 2014, pp. 45-56; M. Ceccorulli, *La dimensione marittima dell'Unione Europea nel Mediterraneo allargato. Opportunità, rischi e prospettive*, CeMiSS, Roma 2016, pp. 52-53; G. Gagliano, "Mediterraneo orientale: una disputa geo-economica e geopolitica", in *Rivista marittima*, CLIV, 2, 2021, pp. 48-55.

23 See A. F. Carlucci, *La Turchia...cit*; A. Irkhin, O. Moskalenko, "Russia's Foreign Policy in the Great Mediterranean: Prospects and Constraints", *Geopolitics Quarterly*, XV, 4, 2020, pp. 110-121.

sition in Syria (against the Kurds), and the refugee inflow. Moreover, as it proposed itself as a moderate (and stable) Islamist regime, it has used its *soft power* to bond ties with the North African countries and the Near East, trying to carve out some spaces in the Sahel²⁴. Finally, the thorny issue of its Exclusive Economic Zone leads to continuous tensions with Athens²⁵.

The Russian *engagement*²⁶ has been just as strong, especially after the annexation of Crimea in 2014, fostered by the United States' gradual disengagement in the area. The effects were first seen during the Syrian conflict: Putin intervened in the civil war in September 2015 at the request of President Bashar al-Assad which relied on the good relations between the two countries since the USSR era²⁷. The Russian intervention was officially justified by the aim of countering international terrorism. However, many underlined that Moscow had two military bases to protect (Tartus e Hmeimim)²⁸. Taking advantage of the freezing of US economic aid, Moscow resumed relations with Egypt focusing on the political and military cooperation and the sale of its weapon systems to Cairo. For Russia, Egypt represents the gateway to North Africa, especially concerning Libya (where it supported Haftar), due to the military bases located in the western part of the country near the border. Broadly speaking, Moscow has tried to create its *Russian balance*²⁹, promoting an image of itself as a good and reliable mediator, and by committing to the fight against terrorism. The Kremlin's efforts to maintain relations with Israel should be considered from this perspective³⁰. If one considers Moscow has resumed its attempts to influence the Balkans – even indirectly – to keep them away from the EU, most notably from NATO, it is clear that Russia is returning to the Mediterranean in the round, in line with its old goals (*mutatis mutandis*) already seen during the Cold War³¹.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar are among the actors who play an important role in the Enlarged Mediterranean. In particular, the Saudi Kingdom is engaged in a confrontation with Iran. Within the countries of the area, this confrontation results in conflicts between the factions which are allies of the two rivals. Especially under the Trump administration, the United States supported all of Prince Mohammed bin Salman's moves. However, apart from the diplomatic success of the re-engage-

24 See G. Gagliano, *Mediterraneo orientale...*

25 See F. Merz, "Trouble with Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean", *CSS Analyses in Security Policy*, 275, CSS ETH Zürich, December 2020, pp. 1-4; A. M. Delvecchio, "Grecia e Turchia in competizione nel Mediterraneo orientale: il caso emblematico di Cipro", *Cultura giuridica e diritto vivente*, VII, 3, 2020, pp. 1-10.

26 See A. Irkhin, O. Moskalenko, *Russia's Foreign Policy...*; M. Sidqi, "Russia's return to Middle Eastern and Mediterranean geopolitics and implications for West-Russia relations", in A. Futter (ed.), *Threats to Euro-Atlantic Security: a Collection of Essays from Members of the Young Generation Leaders Network on Euro-Atlantic Security*, Palgrave Macmillan, Londra 2019.

27 See F. Cirillo, "Interessi russi nel Mediterraneo Orientale, in the Mediterranean Sea: Current Trends and Future Challenges", *Geopolitical Report*, Association of Studies, Research and Internationalization in Eurasia and Africa,, III, 4, 2018, pp. 69-82.

28 See C. Lovotti, "La Russia in Medio Oriente. Una presenza destinata a durare?", *Osservatorio di politica internazionale*, 79, 2018.

29 See A. Irkhin, O. Moskalenko, *Russia's Foreign Policy...*, p. 120.

30 See H. Frisch, "Why Russia Needs Israel", *BESA*, Center Perspectives Paper, 895, 2018; H. Frisch, "Have Putin and Netanyahu Struck a Grand Bargain?", *BESA*, Center Perspectives Paper, 896, 2018.

31 See F. Cirillo, *Interessi russi...*, pp. 76-80.

ment with Iraq, other Saudi initiatives had very little success. The war on Yemen was a total military and political failure "which diverted Saudi Arabia from the theatre of conflict in Syria, where it left free rein to Iran and to its hegemony plans on the regional framework"³². The same was true for the attempts to interfere in Lebanon's politics, putting pressure on the prime Minister-designate Hariri to force him to step down, and trying to isolate Hezbollah. Salman also tried to isolate Qatar but he had the opposite effect, that is, pushing it closer to Tehran. Doha has supported the opponents of Bashar al-Assad in Syria and, more in general, the various Sunni movements in the area, in line with its "traditionalist" policy interests³³.

The division between the northern and the southern shore is also reflected in the political culture, especially in the predominant political models: there is a clear, huge difference between the liberal democratic and secular model which took hold in the northern Mediterranean and the authoritarianism of the southern coasts. The extent to which the authoritarian culture is widespread both in the governments of the Middle East area and in the movements behind the Arab spring was also seen. The Islamist groups which were able to stir up the protests succeeded in overshadowing the ideas of freedom and rights, focusing more on the need for progress and better living conditions for the population³⁴.

The European Union has always stated its will to protect liberal-democratic values. However, its initiatives to promote democracy and its attitudes towards the situation on the southern shore have been fluctuating, to say the least³⁵. Nevertheless, both before and after the Arab Spring, the EU pursued its efforts for the democratization of the southern shore, often combining them with the initiatives related to migration and the development of the region, achieving better results in countries like Tunisia and worse results in Egypt³⁶.

Religion is another cultural element that highlights the divisions in the Mediterranean region. The context is set out by post-secularism, with religion regaining centrality on both shores. Apart from the northern shore, where the secular model is still strong, one of the most important keys to understanding the Islamic divisions in the countries of North Africa and of the Near East lies undoubtedly on the division between Sunnis and Shiites. The lack of a strong legitimacy of power plays a key role in the instability of countries with a Sunni majority and scales down their ambitions: this can be

32 See S. Capasso, *Introduzione. I paesi del Mediterraneo...*, p. 10.

33 See A. Cantaro, "Da dove vengono e dove vanno le "primavere arabe". Ermeneutica dei conflitti", in G. D'Ignazio, N. Fiorita, S. Gambino, F. Raniolo, A. Ventura (ed.), *Transizioni e democrazia...*cit, pp. 149-164.; G. Dentice, *Arabia Saudita-Qatar: i nodi di una crisi annunciata*, ISPI, 2017.

34 See V. Colombo, "Il pensiero liberale arabo: alternativa politica o chimera? Tentativo di una definizione" in G. D'Ignazio, N. Fiorita, S. Gambino, F. Raniolo, A. Ventura (ed.), *Transizioni e democrazia...*, pp. 345-350.

35 See A. Dandashly, "Promoting Democracy in the Southern Mediterranean: Perceptions and Expectations" in *Euromed Survey*, IX, 1 January 24, 2019, pp. 110-116; M. A. Harwood, "Democratisation without Coercion: Parliamentary Bodies as Democracy Promoters in the Mediterranean", *Parliamentary Affairs*, LXXIII, 4, 2020, pp. 790-807.

36 See L. Faustini-Torres, "Another nexus? Exploring narratives on the linkage between EU external migration policies and the democratization of the southern Mediterranean neighbourhood", *Comparative Migration Studies*, VIII, 1, 2020, pp. 1-22; A. Dandashly, "EU democracy promotion and the dominance of the security-stability nexus", *Mediterranean Politics*, XXIII, 1, 2017, pp. 62-82.

seen in the case of Egypt, which could benefit from its population, and Saudi Arabia, which also has an advantage – its wealth. There are two strong Sunni centres of power which are an exception, that is, Turkey, for the abovementioned reasons, and Morocco, where the king benefits from being a member of the Prophet's family. Most Shiites live in Iran, where they account for 90% of the population. Another two important ramifications are Lebanon and Iraq (in the capital cities and the southern part of the two countries)³⁷ Since the Iranian revolution of 1979, the Shiite regional policy has gained strength thanks to a strong mix of civil and religious power as well as to a series of strategic presences: the Amal and Hezbollah movements in Lebanon, the Houthi in Yemen, the Hazaras in Afghanistan and the Alawites in Syria. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that, despite being a minority, the Shiites live near the largest oil reserves in Saudi Arabia and within the Persian Gulf region.

For historical reasons, there are many Christian Churches in Middle Eastern Arab countries "inaccurately grouped under the expression "Christians of the East"³⁸; the truth is ecclesiastical traditions are very different from each other and it is hard to compare them. Historically, countries with a Muslim majority have been tolerant towards Christians. However, for centuries Christians and Jews have been included (in some cases they still are) in the *dhimma*, a series of restrictive legal provisions required by *Sharia*. Finally, a problem that is still relevant and which reflects the religious division is represented by the persecutions of Christians in various countries in the area.

In the Mediterranean, divisions are numerous and relevant also in the economic sphere, with a historic gap present on the southern shore compared to the north one. Actually, since 2000 the income gap between the rich countries of the North and the poorest countries of North Africa has narrowed, mainly due to the GDP growth rates of the Euro-Mediterranean area, which are now quite low³⁹ Between 1996 and 2016 the countries of the southern shore had stronger growth, thanks to an ever-increasing flow of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) as well as an increase in manufacturing activities⁴⁰. Despite the positive trends, the gap between Euro-Mediterranean countries and North African countries is still large and difficult to narrow. One of the main problems, as is well known, is the unequal exchange between the two areas. The abovementioned European initiatives were essentially economic ones and they proposed the creation of an open market. However, they asked the countries of the southern shore to open up to industrial products from the northern shore but kept the internal European market closed to their agricultural products,

37 See V. Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York 2016.

38 A. Courban, "Essere cristiani in Medio Oriente", *Aggiornamenti sociali*, LXVII, 1, 2016, pp. 28-38. See also B. Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens au Proche-Orient*, Payot et Rivages, Parigi 2013.

39 See S. Makdisi, "Sulle disparità economiche e politiche prevalenti e sulle prospettive di una stretta integrazione di una regione euro-mediterranea", in E. Ferragina (ed.), *Rapporto sulle economie del Mediterraneo. Edizione 2018*, Istituto di Studi sulle Società del Mediterraneo, Roma 2018.

40 See L. Forte, G. Canitano, M. R. Carli, "Crescita economica, produzione manifatturiera e commercio estero nei paesi del Mediterraneo: differenze e complementarità tra paesi euromediterranei e paesi della sponda sud ed est del Bacino" in E. Ferragina (ed.), *Rapporto...*

with a heavy trade deficit⁴¹.

North African countries have several different forms of mutual inequalities. Populations are concentrated along the coasts and rivers; in general, there is a very high concentration of inhabitants in small areas. The degree of urbanisation is very heterogeneous, with a high urban concentration and rural exodus, as well as an increase in unemployment given that newcomers do not have sufficient skills to enter the job market. There are large internal gaps that affect access to health and education⁴². The Mediterranean countries have different high rates of demographic growth, although they are mainly high. Combined with environmental problems caused by worsening climate conditions and water scarcity, these rates have exacerbated economic problems⁴³. This results in an increase in migration flows which is difficult for the European countries to manage. In recent years, bilateral agreements have changed focus, from selecting immigration to trying to contain it⁴⁴. The fall of Gaddafi in 2011 and the civil war in Libya drastically reduced the ability to control irregular flows, pushing the EU (and Italy) to enhance their policy: the securitarian approach lies at the basis of the latest European initiatives (Mare Nostrum, Triton, Frontex etc.) and of the MoU between Italy and Libya of February 2, 2017, going in the same direction⁴⁵.

3. The Chinese projection and its impact on Mediterranean spaces

The Chinese foray into the Mediterranean is the final element of the New Silk Roads which were announced for the first time by President Xi Jinping in 2013. They consist of a northern land corridor (*Silk Road Economic Belt*) and a series of sea routes between China and Europe (*21st Century Maritime Silk Road* or *MSR*). The name *One Belt One Road* (OBOR), unveiled by Xi in 2014 in front of the EU heads of government, was subsequently replaced by the alternative *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI). The BRI now includes dozens of countries, which account for more than half of the global GDP and represent the owners of 75% of the world's energy reserves.

The BRI's original goal was to connect China to the European markets through infrastructures. Since then, it has developed further ramifications, from Africa to Latin America. Over the years, its development has not been limited to logistics and trade but it has also included energy, finance and more. To confirm this, suffice it to say that

41 See L. Forte, G. Canitano, M. R. Carli, *Crescita economica...*

42 See A. M. Ferragina, G. Nunziante, "Disparità e ineguaglianze tra i territori all'interno dell'area Mediterranea" in E. Ferragina (ed.), *Rapporto...*

43 See E. Ferragina, D. A. L. Quagliarotti, "Stabilità e sicurezza nel Mediterraneo tra vincoli ambientali e divari socio-economici" in E. Ferragina (ed.), *Rapporto...*

44 See M. Colucci, "Accordi bilaterali in campo migratorio tra Italia, Europa e Mediterraneo: l'evoluzione dal secondo dopoguerra a oggi" in E. Ferragina (ed.), *Rapporto...*

45 See S. Gallo, "Le migrazioni interne nel Maghreb mediterraneo, dalla decolonizzazione al nuovo millennio" in E. Ferragina (ed.), *Rapporto...*; A. M. Morone, "Migranti e politiche di contenimento: il caso della Libia" in E. Ferragina (ed.), *Rapporto...*

the transport networks receive only 24% of the total funds, while 32% of them are allocated to the energy sector⁴⁶: as is well known, China is an energy-intensive country; therefore, one of the objectives is to ensure enough supplies for domestic needs.

Apart from the activities carried out in industry forums, the most direct form of participation is represented by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to join the BRI. Among the G7 countries, Italy was the only one to sign an MoU with China in March 2019. The peninsula is a potential strategic point for the BRI in the Mediterranean, offering a convenient way for Chinese goods to enter Europe. Beijing has mainly focused on the northern Adriatic, as there are no particular difficulties in creating logistical lines with the hinterland (which, on the other hand, is the case for the ports of the Tyrrhenian Sea), and as it allows Mediterranean trade to connect with countries such as Germany, Austria, Hungary and Poland, a part of Europe's industrial and commercial engine⁴⁷. The investments at stake in the northern Adriatic follow the acquisition of Piraeus, which allowed China to manage the main European transshipment port. China also started building a railway line to reach Budapest via Skopje and Belgrade (saving 5 to 10 days)⁴⁸. However, the real Mediterranean bottleneck is still represented by Suez, which has received China's main investments for the development and the modernization of its port area through the launch of the Suez Canal Corridor Area Project (SCZone) and the introduction of a China-Egypt Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone.⁴⁹

Concerning the Chinese objectives and impacts on Mediterranean geopolitics, scholars' views are extremely varied and opposing. Some mentioned an "Asian century" specifying, however, that Beijing does not aspire to global political hegemony but rather to a leading and driving position in the international economic development⁵⁰. Others, on the other hand, went so far as to condemn the New Silk Roads as a "global invasion project"⁵¹, sensing clear imperialist ambitions carried forward also thanks to a specific use of financial resources⁵². It is important to underline that the Chinese companies and funds involved in the BRI investments are mostly structurally led, directly or indirectly, by the Beijing government. This could pose risks of undue influence on countries whose development depends heavily on aid from the Asian power. An example is the episode of the forced return of the Uyghurs from Egypt to China in 2016-2017 – following a cooperation agreement between the two countries for the suppression of Islamic terrorism – carried out with the help

46 See A. Amighini, G. Sciorati, *Fact Checking: BRI, la nuova via della seta*, ISPI, 2019.

47 See P. Sellari, *Scenari euroasiatici. Le Vie della Seta e la proiezione imperiale cinese*, Edizioni Nuova Cultura, Roma 2020; D. D'Amelio, "Il risveglio del porto di Trieste fra Mitteleuropa e Cina" in *Limes*, XXVII, 10, 2019, pp. 263-272.

48 See. Huang Shan, "China-Europe Maritime and Terrestrial Express Lines in Smooth Progress", *CRI*, May 13, 2017.

49 See AA.VV., "The Suez Canal after the expansion. Analysis of traffic, competitiveness indicators, the challenges of the BRI and the role of the Free Zone, SRM e AlexBank, 2018.

50 See P. Khanna, *The Future is Asian: Commerce, Conflict and Culture in the 21st Century*, Simon & Schuster, New York 2019.

51 See A. Selvatici, *La Cina e la Nuova Via della Seta. Progetto per un'invasione globale*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli 2018.

52 See J. Pomfret, "China's debt traps around the world are a trademark of its imperialist ambitions", *The Washington Post*, August 27, 2019.

of the Egyptian security forces⁵³. It is no coincidence that Greece and Egypt itself, among the main recipients of Chinese investments in the region, have openly supported Beijing against international actions in defence of human rights⁵⁴. The BRI aspires not only to fulfil economic ambitions but also to support Beijing's aim – which is functional to the economic matter – of increasing its geopolitical influence at the international level, without excluding *hard power*. In particular, there's a clear link between the project and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Chinese Navy (PLA Navy), whose deployment allows Beijing to have a geostrategic influence on the areas where the BRI has created strong commercial interests. Think, for example, of the naval base of Doraleh (Djibouti), whose construction began in 2016 and which allows China to have a stable presence in the Red Sea⁵⁵.

All these elements would suggest that the Chinese foray, linked to the logic of bilateral relations and the objective of actively protecting its interests in the area, has the effect of increasing the division within the Mediterranean. This hypothesis is also confirmed by the cultural elements of the Chinese policies in the area. Beijing is known to devote remarkable energies and resources to initiatives based on *soft power*, trying to leverage above all the attractiveness of its culture⁵⁶. The aim is to offer a positive image of China abroad, going beyond the accusations of being a threat to other countries and proposing itself as a useful and reliable partner. To do so, PRC has funded a considerable number of programs to spread the Chinese language and culture, as well as a vast network of Confucius Institutes. However, there are serious inconsistencies too: one of the most obvious is that Chinese companies abroad basically employ only their citizens, even in the Mediterranean countries. Moreover, they are in no way encouraged to settle in and fit into the new societies, in contrast with the attempts at exchanges and other cultural integration initiatives. Furthermore, the Chinese clearly show that they are indifferent to the human rights issue. The case of the forced return of the Uyghurs from Egypt is just one example of how *soft power*, which is influenced by economic interests and justifications such as the fight against terrorism, can be used by Beijing to push other countries to adopt authoritarian and oppressive policies, paving the way for new divisions.

It is more difficult to give a clear answer about what the economic impacts of Chinese investments are and whether these favour unity or divisions in the Mediterranean area. Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and their effects on the economies of developing countries have divided scholars. Some of them have argued that they strongly favour the economic development of the host countries, increasing their

53 See "Egypt: Don't Deport Uyghurs to China", *Human Rights Watch*, July 2017.

54 See P. Tonchev, "Le relazioni sino-greche: contesto e prospettive", *OrizzonteCina*, IX, 3, pp. 16-20; G. Sciorati, *Cina: la questione uigura nello Xinjiang*, ISPI, 2019.

55 See AA.VV., "The Suez Canal after the expansion. Analysis of traffic, competitiveness indicators, the challenges of the BRI and the role of the Free Zone, SRM e AlexBank, 2018.

56 See A. Dugué-Nevers, "China and Soft Power: Building Relations and Cooperation", *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal*, III, 1, 2017, pp. 71-101; M. Yağci, "Rethinking Soft Power in Light of China's Belt and Road Initiative", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, LVII, 5, 2018, pp. 67-78.

capital and bringing new technologies and best practices – for the Mediterranean and African countries, with tangible results especially at the turn of the 2008 crisis⁵⁷. However, other scholars, noting that the financial aspect is the most innovative and effective one of the BRI⁵⁸, have focused on the possible negative effects of FDI. One risk is that only investors will benefit from them and that they won't hire local workers or will prevent the local economy from accessing new technologies. Many have identified the risk that countries will give their raw materials away without gaining enough benefits, as China can also take advantage of local corruption and often unstable governments⁵⁹. Some analysts have pointed out that the African countries do not leverage their abundance in raw materials to have sufficient negotiating power and that so far not even the African Union (AU) has offered adequate coordination to achieve better results⁶⁰.

Another potential problem is the "debt trap". As explained in a 2012 *GDC Policy Paper*:

When government borrowing is not accompanied by enough economic growth and revenue generation to fully service the debt, it can generate a downward spiral that inevitably ends in the need for debt restructuring or reduction⁶¹.

However, the actual risks depend on the total amount of debt and the debt that the individual states owe to China. Such risks concern specifically countries in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the exceptional case of Montenegro in the Euro-Mediterranean area⁶².

While acknowledging the concerns arising from the Chinese presence concerning democracy and security, Alice Ekman highlights a series of elements showing Beijing could seemingly benefit from more unity in the Mediterranean⁶³. First of all, Chinese investment programs concern both the southern and northern shores, as evidenced by the acquisition of the Port of Piraeus which is still one of the main interventions in the region to this day. This operation also thanks to the railway line designed to connect the Piraeus to Budapest, has allowed the port to compete with northern European ports such as Antwerp, Hamburg and Rotterdam. In particular, the latter managed to secure an important contract with the American company Hewlett-Packard (HP), thus becoming its distribution centre for central and southern Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and Russia. This is another example of how

57 See I. Doku, J. Akuma, J. Owusu-Afriyie, "Effect of Chinese foreign direct investment on economic growth in Africa", in *Journal of Chinese Economic and Foreign Trade Studies*, X, 2, 2017, pp. 162-17; J. Whalley, A. Weisbrod, "The Contribution of Chinese FDI to Africa's Pre Crisis Growth Surge", *Global Economy Journal*, XII, 4, 2012, pp. 1-26.

58 See A. Amighini, *Finanza e potere lungo le Nuove Vie della Seta*, Università Bocconi Editore, Milano 2021.

59 See M. Busse, S. Gröning, "The resource curse revisited: governance and natural resources", in *Public Choice*, CXIV, 1, 2013, pp. 1-20.

60 See T. Ayodele, O. Sotola, "China in Africa: An Evaluation of Chinese Investment", *Working Paper*, IPPA, 2014.

61 See J. Hurley, S. Morris, G. Portelance, "Examining the Debt Implications of the Belt and Road Initiative from a Policy Perspective", *CGD Policy Paper*, Center for Global Development, Washington 2018.

62 See J. Garlik, *The Impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative. From Asia to Europe*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2020.

63 See A. Ekman, "China in the Mediterranean: An Emerging Presence", *Notes de l'Ifrri*, Ifri, February 2018.

such investments can favour the Mediterranean compared to other areas and make it more economically united. Ekman has identified another element that is even more relevant, namely, the Chinese all-out policy, based on flexible, multilateral and sector-specific cooperation mechanisms. In particular, based on the experience of the "17 + 1" forum with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Beijing has repeatedly proposed this model on both shores of the Mediterranean, thus fostering cohesion thanks to a "group co-operation diplomacy"⁶⁴.

In addition to the attempts made with other European ports, this form of cooperation has been promoted primarily in North Africa and the Middle East, where China has established the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) and the Forum on China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF) respectively⁶⁵.

The main weak point of this interpretation is that to support the thesis of a decrease in the rift between the two shores, it relies solely on the opportunities for economic development in the region through Chinese investments, minimizing remarks on possible negative geopolitical impacts.

This interpretation contrasts with another one: according to Christina Müller-Markus, China has decided to put aside its non-interference principle to protect its interests in the region, where the EU is "a military uninfluential, politically divided actor"⁶⁶. The agreements with Athens would have a great strategic value. As a matter of fact, "Greece's geographical and diplomatic proximity – with Europe and NATO on one side and the Middle East on the other – makes it an attractive ally to China"⁶⁷. Beijing would try to increase divisions also using *hard power*, for example with the presence of its army in support of the Arab states, as envisaged by the first *Arab Policy Paper* of 2016⁶⁸ – as well as with the naval base in Djibouti⁶⁹. More recently, Nadia Schadow remarked that Beijing, also thanks to internal tensions within NATO and the European Union, has created a new *status quo*: "China's presence and active investments have divided friends and given them alternatives to the EU and to the United States"⁷⁰.

Overall, this second interpretation has the merit of being able to highlight the prevalence of division elements that are accentuated by the Chinese foray into the Mediterranean. However, a limit can be identified in this case too, that is, the choice of emphasising (perhaps excessively) the *hard power* aspects of the Chinese policies in the region – especially the military ones – with the Dragon's preference for *soft*

64 See H. Dawei, "Analysis of the Group Cooperation Diplomacy of China, with Discussion of China-CEEC Cooperation", *China International Studies*, XI, 6, 2015, pp. 40-57.

65 See K.W. Sidlo, "The Chinese Belt and Road Project in the Middle East and North Africa", *IEMed Mediterranean Yearbook 2020*, IEMed, Barcellona 2020, pp. 272-275.

66 C. Müller-Markus, "China Moors in the Mediterranean: A Sea of Opportunities for Europe?", *Notes Internacionales*, VIII, 156, pp. 1-4.

67 Ibid.

68 People's Republic of China, *Arab Policy Paper*, Pechino, 2016.

69 A. Amighini, G. Sciorati, *Fact-Checking...*cit.

70 N. Schadow, "China in the Mediterranean and Implications for the United States and Europe", *Strategika*, VIII, 62, 2020, pp. 31-33.

power and economic win-win agreements almost overshadowed. Moving on to the economic level, as we have seen, the “debt trap” is also a concern that affects a small number of countries, while the debt amount of the North African and Middle Eastern states is not so high as to run such a risk.

Therefore, we consider the position of Adel A. Ghafar and Anna L. Jacobs⁷¹ as more balanced. Although they do not underestimate the aspects of *hard power* and the geostrategic consequences, they provide useful insights to the thesis of the division while restoring the centrality of *soft power*. Focusing on Beijing’s bilateral agreements with Morocco, Algeria and Egypt, they underline their primarily economic and trade nature: the accusation of “debt book diplomacy” is a stereotype; actually, the Chinese influence is given by the fact that the states on the southern shore consider it as a valid alternative to the US and the European countries. By taking advantage of the Westerners’ mistakes and indecisiveness, the Dragon has successfully introduced a new practical and flexible development model whose advantage is it does not require any democratic reforms, thus sticking to the non-interference principle. The result is that North African and Middle Eastern countries getting closer to China concerning diplomacy and security is just a next step, derived from an effective and advantageous development model. Beijing does not intend to confront the US from a military or political point of view: it would base its entry in the Mediterranean on a “balance of power” which is solely useful to its interests in the region.

Along the same line, Jon B. Alterman has discussed its interesting view of the Chinese policies as part of testimony in front of a US House Subcommittee⁷². According to the American scholar, China has no interest in replacing the United States in the Middle East from a political point of view. On the contrary, Beijing is glad that the United States (as a power cable to support them) incurs the costs to keep order in the region, while China can “content itself” with the benefits that derive from this, as it is free to promote its relations with the countries in the area, notably the ones on the southern shore, which consider China as a new partner, the advantage being it was not their colonizer. The Dragon offers them “à la carte” agreements which only include commitments with their full consent, devoid of the obligations required especially by the European Union. Beijing does not affect the traditions of those countries and it is also welcomed by local populations. Alterman defines this as “Imperialism 3.0 (or perhaps Mercantilism 2.0)”⁷³ as China manages to make its partners dependent in an indirect way. This is a strategy in which digital technology plays a central role, as evidenced by the 5G affair. Alterman concluded that the Dragon questions US certainties, refusing the challenge for hegemony and “seeking ways to compete without becoming a rival”⁷⁴.

71 A.A. Ghafar, A.L. Jacobs, *China in the Mediterranean: Implications of expanding Sino-North Africa relations*, Brookings Institution, Washington 2020.

72 See J.B. Alterman, “Chinese and Russian Influence in the Middle East”, *Middle East Policy*, XXVI, 2, 2019, pp. 129-136. It is the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and International Terrorism.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

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Матео Маркони
Франческо Барбаро

Геополитичке поделе Медитерана и утицај Кине на њих

Главно истраживачко питање на које овај рад покушава да одговори је формулисано на следећи начин: Да ли ће кинеско присуство повећати или смањити геополитичке поделе на Медитерану? Кинески продор на Медитеран је завршни елемент Новог Пута свиле, а пројекција Пекинга ка Медитерану је чињеница која се не може само порећи или поздравити. Медитеран није ни политички ни економски уједињен: многи разлози за поделе преовлађују у бројним регионима. Међутим, Медитеран такође карактеришу и посебни облици кохезије. Што се тиче кинеских циљева и утицаја на геополитику Медитерана, ставови многих аутора су изузетно различити и супротстављени. Тешко је дати јасан одговор о томе какви су економски утицаји кинеских инвестиција и да ли оне иду у прилог јединству или поделама на подручју Медитерана. За потребе овог рада, Медитеран се сматра геополитичким регионом. Из тог разлога, рад је структуриран тако да се прво бави геополитиком Медитерана и постојањем вишеструких и различитих простора Медитерана и на крају пројекцијом кинеске моћи и њеним утицајем на те медитеранске просторе.

Кључне речи: Медитеран, геополитичке поделе, Кина, БРИ

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Live Online Streaming Sales and the Supply Chain Model in China - A Case Study of Taobao Live Online Streaming Platform****

Abstract

Since 2016 live online streaming has emerged as a new sales model in China's online sales market, and after six years of development, it has now formed a complete sales channel. Live online streaming has become an important sales channel for retailers because of its large coverage radius and wide audience, and it has greatly promoted China's trade and economic development. But also because of the characteristics of live online streaming sales, which asks the higher requirements on the supply chain. The supply chain needs to adapt to this marketing method to improve the efficiency of live sales. This paper uses mainly qualitative research methods. It uses documentary research to analyses the characteristics of live sales and its impact on Chinese regional economic development, and a case study to analyses the supply chain changes made by the head platform for this sales model. It is hoped that this article can provide lessons for other live economy and supply chain development.

Keywords: Live Online Streaming, Supply Chain Model, Regional economic development

1. Introduction

The widespread existence of poverty is a serious impediment to the full realization and enjoyment of human rights. The alleviation and elimination of poverty is an important element of human rights protection. Over the years, the Chinese government has insisted on eradicating poverty, improving people's living standard and

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gradually achieving common prosperity. Besides, Chinese government has continued to carry out poverty reduction actions centred on rural poverty alleviation and development, which in an effort to achieve poverty alleviation and prosperity. China's poverty reduction actions cover a wide range of areas, including the construction of rural agricultural infrastructure and raising the income levels of the poor, as well as the provision of social security and public services such as health, education, and culture.

The Covid-19 epidemic has had varying degrees of adverse impact on economies around the world, and China is no exception. Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic, it has become a top priority for the Chinese government to solve the problem of unmarketable agricultural products. The stability of agriculture during an epidemic, even if the growth of crops is not affected by the epidemic, is still a challenge for the marketing of agricultural products. As a new sales model, "e-commerce + live streaming" has opened up new horizons for the e-commerce industry and has helped to market agricultural products. The essence of live e-commerce is to rely on the accumulated traffic and social relations of e-commerce platforms or social platforms, and to transform the fans accumulated on social platforms into consumers of products and their trust into consumption power with the appeal and influence of the network of celebrities. The e-commerce live-streaming boom should have started in 2016 with Mogu Inc¹, which reconstructed the traditional e-commerce value chain, explored and utilized the value of weblebrities and opened up the platform's live-streaming function.

Subsequently, Taobao², Tmall³, Suning.com Co.,LTD⁴, the mainstream e-commerce platforms, have also used the live streaming function, setting off a wave of live streaming to sell goods. There are two main forms of live streaming with goods: one is dependent on the e-commerce platform, such as Taobao, Tmall live. Another one is a short video social form of live, such as Douyin⁵, Kuaishou⁶, and so on. Live combined with e-commerce and short video in the process of deep integration of continuous innovation.

1 It is an e-commerce website focused on fashionable female consumers, which was established in 2011 in China.

2 Taobao is the larger online retail, business community in the Asia Pacific region and was founded by Alibaba Group in May 2003.

3 Tmall is a brand new B2C (Business-to-Consumer) integrated shopping platform created by Jack Ma on Taobao, which established in December of 2012.

4 The company was founded on 26 December 1990 and is headquartered in Nanjing. The company is a leading Chinese commercial enterprise, operating in a comprehensive range of products including traditional home appliances, consumer electronics, department stores, daily necessities, books and virtual products.

5 Douyin is a short video social software for creative music incubated by ByteDance. It was launched on 20 September 2016 and is a short video community platform for all ages, through which users can choose songs and shoot music to form their own compositions.

6 Kuaishou is a product of Beijing kuaishou Technology Co. kuaishou's predecessor, called "GIFkuaishou", which was born in March 2011. In November 2012, it was transformed from a purely tool-based application into a short video community, a platform for users to record and share their production and life.

2. Analysis of the development of live e-commerce in China

2.1 The Current Development of Live streaming in China

The live streaming industry continues to grow in user size. Digital revolution has a significant impact on media consumption habits of people as well (Madlenak – Madlenakova, 2015). In 2020, while the epidemic is hitting China's economy, it is also creating opportunities for the growth of the live streaming industry. It has become a craze for merchants and webcelebrities to sell their goods through live webcasting, and the live-streaming industry is becoming increasingly large in terms of users. The Chinese live streaming market covers a wide range of industry sectors. From the established industries to the emerging blue ocean industries, all have joined the live e-commerce industry. As of 2020, many companies engaged in education, finance, automotive, healthcare, IT Internet, media, real estate and many other industries have joined the ranks of corporate live e-commerce services. The size of China's live streaming web users in 2020 reaches 616.85 million, with a usage rate of 62.4%⁷. The size of China's live streaming web users in 2021 is 637.69 million, with a usage rate of 63.1%⁸. The number of live streaming users has been increasing in recent years and is growing.

Live e-commerce becomes a trillion market with considerable growth rate. China's live e-commerce market size reached 1.2 trillion yuan in 2020, with an annual growth rate of 197.0%. live streaming has become a normal marketing method and sales channel in the e-commerce market⁹. Live e-commerce has also seen rapid penetration in the consumer goods and online shopping markets, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that in 2021, national online retail sales reached 13.1 trillion yuan, up 14.1% year-on-year, with the growth rate accelerating by 3.2 percentage points over the previous year. Among them, the online retail sales of physical goods reached 10.8 trillion yuan, surpassing 10 trillion yuan for the first time, up 12.0% year-on-year, accounting for 24.5% of the total retail sales of consumer goods, and contributing 23.6% to the growth of total retail sales of consumer goods.¹⁰

7 "Report on the Development of China's Online Copyright Industry (2020)", *Xinhua News* [online], Available at: <https://www.ncac.gov.cn/chinacopyright/upload/files/2021/6/9205f5df4b67ed4.pdf> (Accessed 2 February 2022).

8 Wang, M., "Analysis of the number of live e-commerce users, turnover and number of companies in China in 2021", *China Live Streaming E-Commerce Industry Market Operation Trend and Investment Opportunity Analysis Report from 2022 to 2028*, 2022, pp. 1-25.

9 Sun, Y., Shao, X., Li, X.T., Guo, Y., Nie, K., "A 2020 perspective on "How live streaming influences purchase intentions T in social commerce: An IT affordance perspective", *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 40, 2020, pp.1-2.; Apiradee, W., Nassim, D., Nuttapol, A., "Live streaming commerce from the sellers' perspective: implications for online relationship marketing", *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36(5-6), 2020, pp. 488-518.

10 Wang, K., "National online retail sales to grow 14.1% year-on-year in 2021", *The People's Daily*, 2022, Available at: http://www.gov.cn/shuju/2022-03/22/content_5680356.htm (Accessed 5 April 2022).

2.2 Analysis of the factors contributing to the development of the live streaming market in China

Based on Internet technology and private domain traffic own user stickiness and other characteristics, using live streaming to sell goods has become an important part of helping to resume work and production and feed the real economy¹¹. The emphasis on the development of the digital economy is also one of the important factors contributing to the development of China's live e-commerce market¹³. The Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee adopted the "Recommendations of the CPC Central Committee on Formulating the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the 2035 Visionary Goals", which proposed to "develop the digital economy and promote the deep integration of the digital economy and the real economy". The digital economy is an economic form in which people can identify, select, filter, store and use digital knowledge and information in order to guide the rapid and optimal allocation and regeneration of resources and achieve high-quality economic development¹⁴.

Live e-commerce user penetration continues to grow, with nearly 40% of netizens being live e-commerce audiences. By the end of 2020, the scale of live streaming users had reached 617 million RMB, accounting for 62.4% of the overall netizens¹⁵. Among them, live e-commerce by the rapid development has become the largest user scale in the network live streaming category. The scale of live e-commerce users reached 388 million, an increase of 123 million from March 2020, accounting for nearly 40% of the overall Internet users. Live streaming order users accounted for 66.2% of users watching live streaming. There were nearly two-thirds of users had made purchases after watching live streaming¹⁶. As the size of China's Internet population further expands, consumers' awareness of the interactive, social, and entertaining nature of live streaming deepens. In addition, live selling offers viewers better prices and more intuitive presentations. This has led to a higher level of trust in the products among viewers. User acceptance of live streaming and live e-commerce is gradually increasing. The average length of time users watch live streaming per day continues to increase. The share of live e-commerce users in the overall internet users has increased significantly, with more and more people recognizing the

11 Wang, J.X., Qu, Q.Y., Qiu, Y.X., "How do Venture Enterprises Implement the Platform Embedding Strategy in the Digital Ecosystem?", *Foreign Economic and Management*, 43(9), 2021, pp.24-39.

12 Gyenge, B., Máté, Z., Vida, I., Bilan, Y., Vasa, L. "A New Strategic Marketing Management Model for the Specificities of E-Commerce in the Supply Chain", *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research* 16:4, pp. 1136-1149.

13 Zhang, W., Zhao, S.Q., Wan, X.Y., Yao, Y., "Study on the effect of digital economy on high-quality economic development in China", *PLoS ONE*, 16(9), 2021.

14 Carlsson, B., "The Digital Economy: what is new and what is not?", *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics*, 15(3), 2004, pp. 245-264.; Bukht, R., Heeks, R., "Defining, Conceptualising and Measuring the Digital Economy", *Development Informatics Working Paper no. 68*, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3431732> (Accessed 2 February 2022).

15 "Report on the Development of China's Online Copyright Industry", *Xinhua News*, Available at: <https://www.ncac.gov.cn/chinacopyright/upload/files/2021/6/9205f5df4b67ed4.pdf> (Accessed 2 February 2022).

16 "The 48th China statistic report on internet development Cyberspace", *Administration of China*, Available at: <https://n2.sinaimg.cn/finance/a2d36afe/20210827/Fujian1.pdf> (Accessed 2 February 2022).

consumption method of watching live broadcasts and then shopping for products.

Live e-commerce experienced three years of sedimentation from 2016-2018 and ushered in an explosive period in 2019, with live streaming becoming a popular way for platforms to extend user hours and improve marketing conversion. This popularity quickly cultivated a new type of ecosystem, and the industry quickly transitioned from pure traffic dividend mining to dividend mining of the entire ecology, especially through refined operations and supply chain penetration to achieve new incremental volumes. This is demonstrated by the rapid growth in the number of live e-commerce service companies and practitioners in 2020. Enterprise data shows that, by the end of 2020. There are 6,939 related business registrations and 8,862 cumulative registrations, with 360.8% growth in 2019-2020¹⁷. The number of anchors in the live e-commerce industry is also growing, with the number of anchors in the industry having reached 1,234,000 by the end of 2020. The prosperity of the ecology also means fierce competition, which drives the industry chain to continue to export more value, especially the value of the supply chain and operations.

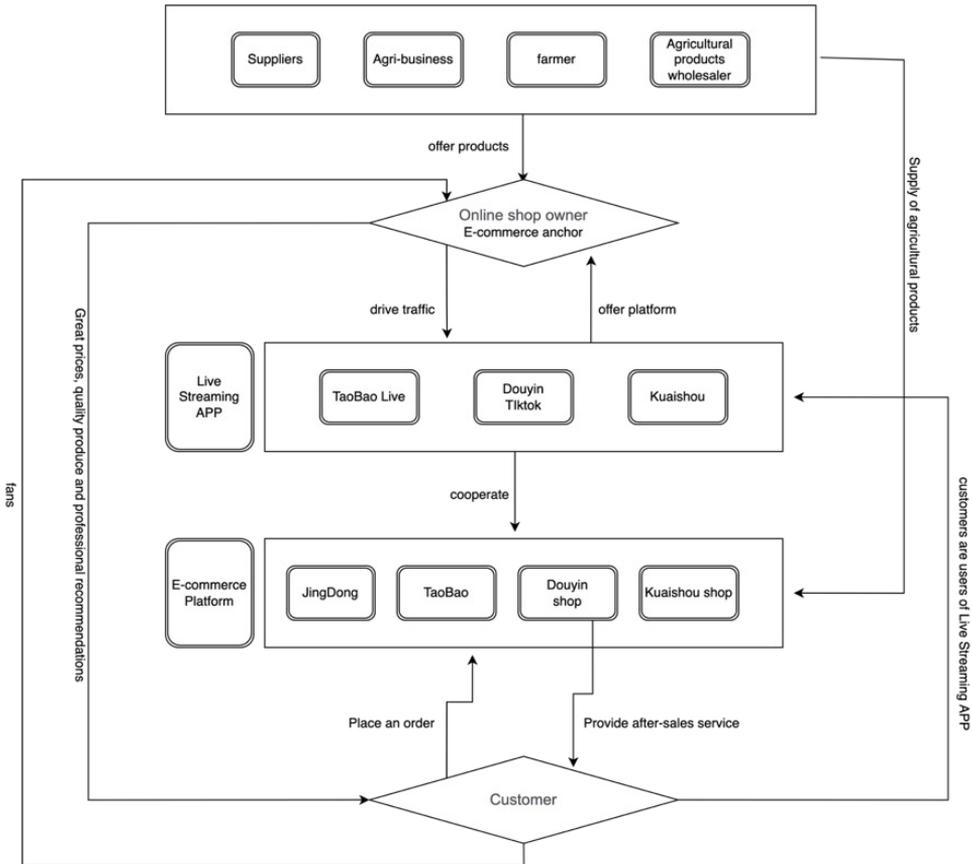
3. Features and advantages of the agricultural products plus live streaming model

The implementation of the rural revitalization strategy is a powerful driving force for the development of China's rural economy, providing support and protection for the construction of the rural economy¹⁸. The new form of "live streaming" has an important role to play in the development of the rural economy, enabling the needs of consumers and producers to be met. In addition, the barriers between fresh green food and the table are broken down, fast lanes are built, and the marketing of agricultural products is expanded. With the rapid penetration of using live streaming to sell agricultural goods, the distance between producers and consumers is reduced even closer. Consumers can communicate directly with producers online, and producers are able to show their produce more visually and explain to consumers the characteristics of their special produce. The producer can also give a detailed presentation of the special agricultural products in the live broadcast with the consumer's questions. This is of great significance in promoting the growth of farmers' incomes, accelerating the sale of agricultural products, and improving rural economic development. E-commerce platforms embed live streaming features into their own platforms or applications, and then to sell goods through live streaming function.

¹⁷ The original data from Qichacha Tec Co., Ltd. It is a corporate information search tool, based on the integration of information related to corporate credit, after deep learning, feature extraction and the use of graph construction technology, to provide users with comprehensive, reliable and transparent data information.

¹⁸ Han, J., "Prioritizing agricultural, rural development and implementing the rural revitalization strategy", *China Agricultural Economic Review*, 12(1), 2020, pp. 14-19.

Figure 1. The business model of live streaming selling for goods



Source: Made by authors

Figure 1 shows the live-streaming type of agricultural products is based on short-form video, social and entertainment content platforms with new live-streaming entrances, inviting weblebrities to carry out live-streaming activities. In addition, during the live broadcast process, shopping links are posted to attract traffic to e-commerce platforms, and short video and social platforms such as QQ, WeChat, Weibo and Baidu Post are all carrying out this type of live broadcast with goods. To address the backlog of agricultural products in many places due to the Covid-19 epidemic, these short-video social media platforms are actively building special live-streaming sessions for agricultural products. Local farmers, local government leaders and web celebrities have come into the live streams to promote local agricultural products and help to sell those products.

Unlike Taobao and other e-commerce contracted anchors, Douyin and Kuaishou are social short-video platforms that do not specifically contract e-commerce anchors but are mainly celebrities and weblebrities who broadcast live with goods, reflecting the concept of equality that everyone can be an anchor under the technology dividend. These weblebrities have not previously specialized in e-commerce, they come from all walks of life and have switched to live-streaming after gaining a certain number of followers and traffic, and because they are not professionally trained, these weblebrities have some shortcomings in terms of introducing the characteristics of the products, marketing skills and lively atmosphere.

But it is this non-professionalism that quickly brings them closer to their viewers and gives a social dimension to live-streaming. Not so professional with selling skills, but hundred percent with empressment attitude. A distinctive feature of the live-streaming type of agricultural products is that it relies on short-form video platforms and weblebrities to attract a large number of traffic and fans, and to turn these fans and viewers into potential consumers. It is worthwhile to note that Racer does not have a complete supply chain system and will channel traffic to e-commerce platforms such as Taobao through links during the live broadcast. But it has the distinct advantage and feature of having a huge fan base and traffic, with many live stream viewers and even more impressive turnover. For example, Luo Yonghao's live-streaming debut with goods generated total sales of RMB 110 million, with more than 900,000 pieces sold and over 48 million cumulative viewers, a height not reached by ordinary e-commerce anchors¹⁹.

4. Implications for China's regional rural economic development

4.1 Activation of existing rural e-commerce systems

The new form of "live streaming" has an important role to play in the development of the rural economy. It not only meets the needs of consumers and producers, but also breaks down the barriers between fresh green food and the dinner table, creating a fast track to expand the sales of agricultural products. With the rapid penetration of live streaming with goods, the distance between producers and consumers is shortened even further. Consumers can communicate directly with producers online, and producers are able to show their agricultural products more visually and explain the characteristics of their special agricultural products to consumers. In combination with the questions raised by consumers, producers can also provide a detailed introduction to the featured agricultural products in the live banding. This is of great significance in promoting the growth of farmers' incomes, accelerating the sale of

¹⁹ "Luo Yonghao's live-streaming debut with goods generated total sales of RMB 110 million", *People's Posts and Telecommunications News (PPTN)*, Available at: https://www.cnii.com.cn/gxxww/rmydb/202004/t20200402_165742.html (Accessed 13 April 2022).

agricultural products and improving rural economic development.

Selling agricultural products through live streaming has activated the existing e-commerce system and product chain supply system in rural areas. The short video broadcast has led to the development of the industrial economy in rural areas, and as a result, the previously offline business-based market has undergone a series of innovative changes in order to adapt to the live broadcast with goods, building up a relatively mature e-commerce support system, from financial support to the sale of products, to logistics and distribution, after-sales service, and so on. Then, establishing a complete market industry chain. This has enabled the path of live streaming with goods to be better realized. Under the leadership of the e-commerce platform model, especially with the “combination of live streaming and e-commerce”, farmers can generate more economic benefits from their agricultural products and effectively solve the problems associated with the lack of trust in the source of goods that exists to some extent in the hearts of consumers at this stage.

Through the live streaming of farmers themselves or weblebrities, not only can the agricultural products grown by farmers be sold, but also effectively change the general impression of the countryside and use live broadcast to bring goods and further promote the geology, landscape, specialties and customs of their hometowns. Now in the countryside, markets, farmland, pastures and a range of other places, only a mobile phone is needed, the farmers themselves can directly start a live show. This is simple, convenient, and no need for too much cost, which is also equivalent to setting up a physical shop online, so that the existing rural e-commerce system is more active not only that, but also significantly increase the income of farmers groups.

4.2 Solving the talent shortage

At present, there is a serious employment problem in most poor areas. Due to economic backwardness or geographical problems, it is difficult for the unemployed to find suitable jobs within a short period of time, and the live broadcast with goods can help to alleviate the employment pressure of the unemployed. Live streaming can effectively drive the staffing needs of the anchors and the operating teams behind them, creating new jobs, bringing additional income to more people and promoting the formation of industrial chains. This provides opportunities for the development of rural informatisation and related industries, enabling leapfrog growth in the rural economy. Live selling provides a new channel for trading agricultural products and a new platform for farmers and consumers, reducing costs in the process of selling goods and optimising the transaction process. More quality agricultural products are available to the public at low prices, and the commodity traceability model reduces consumer concerns. In addition, consumers and suppliers interact with each other in a positive way, promoting trade while boosting economic growth in poor areas and helping to alleviate poverty.

At this stage, with urbanisation, a large number of rural people are moving into the cities, leading to an increasingly serious phenomenon of ageing in the countryside. In order to implement the rural revitalisation strategy, the development of human capital must be put in the first place in the process of rural revitalisation, and with the strategy of vigorously developing human resources, farm owners and villagers will be built into the main force of e-commerce with goods, so as to form a systematic rural e-commerce industry chain and truly play a role in promoting the rapid development of rural agriculture and products. In addition, the new business model of "live broadcast + e-commerce to sell goods" is also attractive to young people to a certain extent, with the live broadcast platform, it can provide entrepreneurial employment opportunities for young people, attracting more young people to return to their hometowns to start their own businesses and return to the countryside. This provides a huge role in promoting the county's economic development.

5. Supply chain transformation driven by live e-commerce economy

According to a report by China Bureau of Statistics: China's live e-commerce market size exceeded 1.2 trillion yuan in 2020, with an annual growth rate of 197.0%, and is expected to exceed 4.9 trillion yuan in 2023. Enterprises obtain more controllable cost investment and more stable sales growth through regular self-broadcast. 32.1% of the overall live e-commerce turnover in 2020 and is expected to account for nearly 50.0% in 2023. The ecosystem of the live-streaming industry has been gradually improved. By the end of 2020, there were 8,862 live e-commerce-related enterprises registered in China, and the number of anchors in the industry had reached 1,234,000 (Airui Consulting 2021). This means: the live industry is rapidly transitioning from pure traffic dividend mining to dividend mining of the entire ecology, especially through refined operations and supply chain penetration to achieve new increments.

5.1 Live e-commerce requirements for the supply chain

Introduction of Taobao Live as followed, founded on April 21, 2003, Taobao.com mainly serves as a C2C model online shopping platform, and with the increase of business, Alibaba Inc. has established Alipay Payment Company (2004), and Ca-iBird Logistics Company (2013). 2016. Taobao officially opened its live streaming function, Taobao Live was initially positioned as a lifestyle consumer goods display and sales, as an embedded module in the mobile Taobao APP. With the increase in the penetration of live e-commerce, Taobao live categories towards diversification, Taobao gradually formed the dual entrance of Handao APP and Taobao Live APP, the latter officially launched in Spring 2019, is the first independent live e-commerce APP in China.

Table 1. 2019-2020 China live e-commerce users commonly used live platform top five

Rank	Platform	Percentage
1	Taobao	48.18%
2	Jd.Com	47.45%
3	TikTok	32.85%
4	RED	22.63%
5	Kwai	18.98%

Source: Adopt from iiMedia Research, 2021, data form strawberry pie.

Table 1 is the scale share of major platforms obtained from iiMedia Consulting's analysis of the monthly operation and year-end inventory data of China's live e-commerce industry from November to December 2020. The table shows that Taobao has become the "leader" in the live e-commerce industry with its years of experience in the e-commerce field. So, this article takes Taobao as the main case to explore its supply chain model.

Live e-commerce brings challenges to the traditional supply chain. Taobao live platform through the improvement of the traditional shopping platform supply chain system, online trading system built Taobao live system, the system reconstructs the people, goods, field, anchor type, live commodity categories, audience circles are to diversify the direction (Airui Consulting 2021) Its complete live e-commerce ecology, strong consuming user mind, and efficient platform governance capabilities drive the platform's continued GMV growth. The underlying support for e-commerce increment is the growth of e-commerce penetration and per capita consumption level, but these two factors are limited drivers. The self-generated incremental growth of live e-commerce is mainly due to more people watching, more stock and incremental users buying for unplanned needs, and the high pen price and unit price generated by the live packaged sales model (e.g., buy two get one free). The sales figures from these factors have attracted more suppliers to increase the number of live streaming sessions and more quality product feedback, but at the same time have created challenges for the supply chain.

Product demand is difficult to predict. In addition to the ordinary products in the live broadcast mode, each anchor must prepare a special marketing product. Although there is a certain trace of the qualities of the "pop", but the real formation of the "pop" is the influence of multiple factors, which causes the anchor to prepare the "pop" and the consumer's mind "Explosive" "there is an error, and most of the anchors are "first set single then order" mode of demand for the supply chain, in the second half of the live economy of the supply chain often disrupt the production rhythm. This brings the problem of inventory backlog and inventory shortage, which

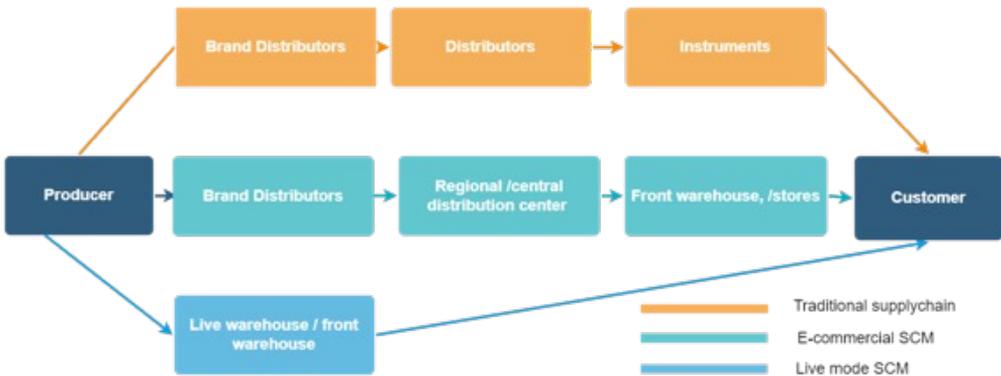
in turn has an impact on the subsequent distribution. Therefore, the supply chain under the live e-commerce model needs to be ready to respond to frequent fluctuations in demand changes.

Product life cycle is extremely short. Under the live e-commerce model, anchors cooperate with multiple commissioners for a short period of time. Because the head anchor needs a lot of new products to keep the traffic to ensure the attractiveness of the live broadcast. This means that the product style in the live economy is updated very quickly, and the products need to be diverse and cost-effective. These requirements force the supply chain side of the commissioner to accelerate the frequency of product development.

Supply chain services need to be flexible. Anchors mainly as a window to help businesses solve the problems of live e-commerce links, some large anchors will build their own supply chain system, some anchors only earn commission without a fixed partner merchant, the supply chain and manufacturers and platforms are responsible for, and later face a large number of return risks. In the face of different modes of customer demand, supply chain service providers need to provide integrated service capabilities, including warehousing, distribution, customer service, reverse, digital and other capabilities.

5.2 Characteristics of live e-commerce supply chain model

Figure 2. Comparison of three supply chain processes



Source: Made by authors

From Figure 2, the comparison of these three supply chain models can be seen. Through the live-streaming e-commerce model, the supply chain end can directly contact users, reduce the bullwhip effect caused by too many intermediate links, and realize a supply chain operation model based on real demand-driven, while

reducing redundant inventory. Based on the two-way interaction between live broadcasters, the anchor can sample small batches, determine whether there is a possibility that the product will become explosive, and decide whether to add production. So, the live-streaming supply chain has the dual characteristics of flexibility and agility.

Production and sales are closely connected. The traditional transit centre is transformed into a multi-functional place including warehousing, live broadcast, and operation, realizing the integrated service of “warehousing - live broadcast - delivery”, attracting many merchants and anchors to move in, while also innovating the form of cooperation between live e-commerce and express logistics. Live e-commerce supply chain link has been shortened. Live e-commerce can skip the middleman and connect the factory to the consumer. The reduction of links shortens the feedback time of user information and reduces the information gap, while it can help brands discover and cover potential consumer groups. The huge and stable demand can realize the model of selling before production. Live e-commerce provides the bestselling scenario, especially for explosive products. Live broadcasters have anchors as trust backing and a fixed fan base with high repurchase and high conversion, which can lead to many orders in a short time. With the guarantee of sales, although the user has not yet placed orders, but before the live broadcast can be the order volume and scheduling feedback to the upstream, producers’ backward production cycle on demand, while intensive orders and raw material suppliers bargaining compression production costs, minimize the risk of inventory and improve profits. At the same time live broadcast is a real-time interactive, flexible, and fast sales method, the anchor on behalf of the fans to exercise the right to choose, a single product live results can quickly feedback to the production side, indirectly accelerate the industry’s survival of the fittest. At the same time, the anchor needs a wealth of high-quality SKU to support the frequency of live broadcast and live attraction, forcing the supply chain to improve the response speed, improve the frequency and number of new.

Warehousing and distribution integration. The shipping characteristics of live e-commerce is a concentrated outbreak of fragmented orders, which provides a suitable scenario for an efficient warehouse and distribution integration model, with advance stocking in multiple RDC warehouses according to the expected order volume and fast turnaround delivery in the vicinity, reducing at least one transit and distribution. As the digitalization of the supply chain increases and the accuracy of demand-side forecasting improves, offline stores can become front warehouses and the integrated warehouse and distribution model will be more popular. At the same time, the growth of live orders of fresh produce promotes the development of cold chain transportation, and more live rooms and warehouses are in the origin to ensure the quality of products. Moreover, promoting the construction of major infrastructures, like highways, ports and railways (Erdei- Erdeiné Késmárki-Gally, 2018)

provides the process with necessary and valuable contribution. Deep cooperation and win-win situation is achieved through more real, accurate, and stable demand feedback.

Integrated digital supply chain. As most MCN agencies originate from content agencies, the ability to focus on building a persona and creating live content, so the ability at the level of “goods” is relatively weak, more need to provide integrated services at the supply chain. The supply chain of direct broadcast e-commerce focuses on big data selection, group goods, logistics and distribution, and reverse after-sales service. The front end needs more rapid, accurate, and real front-end consumer insights. For the front-end guidance production link, C2M is mostly big data insights + experience + demand feedback to predict trends and opportunities. And live e-commerce because of the data concentration burst, greatly shorten the data collection and analysis of the week, the availability of data and conclusive stronger (such as live sales in time to stop production when poor), while based on the anchor and operation of the massive selection experience and live user demand collection and real feedback, you can more flexible and accurate control of R & D design and production and marketing matching situation. A deeper and more effective cooperation can be created with upstream, forming a positive cycle of on-demand production and win-win situation for all three parties.

6. Conclusion

Live e-commerce has become a new model of retail in China, and likewise a new marketing channel. In China, many companies are starting to build their own live streaming platforms in the hope of capturing more market share, and many big anchors are also active in the live e-commerce market, with market resources and web traffic moving towards the top platforms and top anchors. However, in other countries in Europe and the Americas, this marketing model has not yet taken off and is very promising. As mentioned earlier, this new marketing model, which not only enlivens the market and raises employment, but also balances regional economic development and drives the development of industries in remote places, is a new marketing model worth promoting and trying. With the development of live e-commerce, the whole element of the live supply chain is still being expanded and upgraded, becoming more agile and more precise. So how to achieve the integration of the warehouse and distribution of the supply chain, light assets, digital will become the key to meet the development of live e-commerce marketing model.

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Ћинг Цаи
Јингђие Фу
Иван Несмили Георг

Продаја уживо преко интернета и модел ланца снабдевања у Кини: Студија случаја Таобао платформе за пренос уживо преко интернета

Од 2016. пренос уживо се појавио као нови модел продаје на кинеском тржишту продаје преко интернета, а након шест година развоја, сада се формирао комплетан канал продаје. Пренос уживо је постао важан продајни канал за трговце на мало због великог домета покривености и шире публике, и у великој мери је промовисао трговински и економски развој Кине. Важан је и због самих карактеристика продаје преко интернета уживо, која поставља веће захтеве на које треба одговорити у ланцу снабдевања. Ланац снабдевања треба да се прилагоди овом маркетиншком методу како би побољшао ефикасност продаје уживо. Овај рад користи углавном квалитативне методе истраживања. Користи истраживања докумената да анализира карактеристике продаје уживо и њен утицај на кинески регионални економски развој, и студију случаја за анализу промена у ланцу снабдевања које је извршила главна платформа за овај модел продаје. Надамо се да овај чланак може пружити препоруке за друге облике економских активности уживо и развој ланца снабдевања.

Кључне речи: продаја уживо преко интернета, модел ланца снабдевања, регионални економски развој

Petko Doykov*

India's Position on the US Indo-Pacific Strategy* **

Abstract

This paper focuses on the Indo-Pacific region, the approach of the US Administration to it and India's position on the latter. It consists of three main parts, each of them respectively devoted to the growing importance of the region, the strategies of Washington and New Delhi vis-à-vis it and the relationship between the approaches of the two strategic partners. Based upon the survey and analysis of existing academic sources and official documents the paper brings us to the conclusion that it is not entirely in the interest of India to act in harmony with the fundamentals of the US Indo-Pacific strategy. In addition, another suggestion of us, coming out as a conclusion, is that the USA needs to amend its strategy in order to make it more attractive to other partners, including India, such an amendment being a prerequisite for better defending its interests in the region.

Keywords: Indo-Pacific region, US Indo-Pacific strategy, India's concept on the Indo-Pacific, China, security.

1. Introduction

The title of the present work is "India's position on the US Indo-Pacific strategy". It logically comes to say that the subject of the study is the US Indo-Pacific strategy and the position of India on it. The US Indo-Pacific strategy came into existence in 2017, and the study timeframe covers the period from 2017 until now. The research focuses on the importance of India being positive about the US strategy but does not spell out any advice on how this should be carried out in practical terms. In purely geographical terms, countries of the Indo-Pacific region are in focus. A search amongst available online publications shows that there is already plenty of publications on the strategies of the USA and India for the Indo-Pacific, including relatively recent ones.

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Given the importance of the Indo-Pacific region and the thinking that the “India-U.S. bilateral relations have developed into a “global strategic partnership”¹ we thought it worthwhile looking more carefully into India’s position vis-à-vis the Indo-Pacific strategy of its strategic partner. The accent would be put here on the logic behind the existing relationship, be it cooperative or adversarial, between the approaches of India and the US towards the Indo-Pacific region. Such an effort may bring a deeper understanding of the subject of the current study, taking into consideration the fact that this particular relationship, in its turn, has got the potential to influence regional and even some major global issues as well as the relations between major powers.

The title of the study, its’ objective and the survey of the available sources suggest several research questions, the most pertinent amongst which seem to be the following: “Is it in the interest of India to act in accordance with the ideas embedded in the USA’s Indo-Pacific strategy?”

Our argument in relation to such a question would be that India should be fully in line with the US approach to the region otherwise New Delhi may lose the so-needed and valuable support of Washington concerning any existing and/or potential future tension in the relations of the former with Beijing and Islamabad.

Considering the specifics of India’s bilateral relations with the USA, China and Pakistan, respectively, we generally assume that it is indeed in the interest of India to act in harmony with the fundamentals of the US Indo-Pacific strategy. There may be other, specific, hypotheses, such as the need for the USA to introduce some amendments to the strategy with a view of making it more attractive to India. However, the current study primarily focuses on the major hypothesis that India should accept the US strategy as thoroughly as possible and act in accordance with it.

In the quest to confirm our hypothesis, the present research is based on a survey and analysis of existing literature and academic sources, as well as on an analysis of the relevant official documents. The survey encompassed available pertinent publications on the topic. In the form of the author’s own views, secondary analysis is also included. No fieldwork has been undertaken. It is, therefore, to be considered typical doctrinal research.

Books, articles, research works, official documents and websites are used to conduct the research. These could be identified as primary and secondary sources containing secondary data. No primary data are collected and used. Proving our hypothesis right and coming out with an affirmative answer to the research question, i.e., clearly confirming that it is in the interest of India to behave in compliance with the US Indo-Pacific strategy of 2017, would be the expected contribution to the existing knowledge and literature.

¹ “Brief on India – US relations”, Ministry of External Affairs, India, June 2017, Available at: https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India_US_brief.pdf

2. Information relevant to the research question: The Indo-Pacific region, its importance as regards world affairs and the way major powers, the USA and India approach it

2.1. The Indo-Pacific region and its weight in the international political arena

2.1.1. Which are the countries of the Indo-Pacific region, and are India and the USA amongst them? Is the region of ever-growing importance in geopolitical terms nowadays?

As per a publication in *Ceoworld Magazine*² the Indo-Pacific region includes 24 countries³, with India and the USA being among them. This is a vast geopolitical area stretching from the west coast of the USA to the west coast of India. From the point of view of boosting development within it, it is thought to be essential to establish commonly agreed norms, rules and practices governing this region.

According to other publications, the number of countries included in the Indo-Pacific region is much bigger. Differences can also be seen in whether India and the USA are considered to be part of this region. Other discrepancies between the various views are also there. For example, Canada's *Indo-Pacific Strategy*⁴ sees that number as forty.⁵ What is to be noted about this particular document is that India is considered a country from that region which is not the case in the USA.

The Indo-Pacific region encompasses one of the most populous countries of the world, such as Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, the USA and Vietnam.⁶ Moreover, this is the region with one of the biggest and strongest in economic terms countries where Australia, India, Japan, the USA and Vietnam are to be compulsorily mentioned. Defence and military aspects should equally be considered with the USA undoubtedly in the lead. Based upon the above, it is only natural to acknowledge that the Indo-Pacific is more and more in the highlights of world economics and politics.

The conclusions to be drawn here from the previous two paragraphs are that the Indo-Pacific is an important region, including many countries, some of which have leading positions worldwide when it comes to population, economy, and military

2 "Indo-Pacific Region", *Ceoworld Magazine*, Available at: <https://ceoworld.biz/indo-pacific/#:~:text=Countries%20of%20the%20Indo-Pacific%20R%20region%3A%20%20,%20%2026939%20%20%20more%20rows%20/>

3 Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Timor Leste, United States, Vietnam, Ibid.

4 "Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy", *Government of Canada*, November 11, 2022, Available at: <https://www.international.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/indo-pacific-indo-pacifique/index.aspx?lang=eng>

5 Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, the Pacific Island Countries (14), Pakistan, People's Republic of China (PRC), the Philippines, Republic of Korea (ROK), Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam, Ibid.

6 Names of the countries are hereafter given in alphabetical order.

strength. There are many analyses devoted to this region and the processes therein, which is just another confirmation of the Indo-Pacific's increasing significance. Both India and the USA, presumably major powers, are part of it. From that perspective, it is well worth concentrating on their interaction in this particular regional framework and writing on India's approach to the US Indo-Pacific strategy.

2.1.2. *The Major Powers and their position vis-à-vis the Indo-Pacific region*

"Great powers", "big powers", "superpowers", etc., these are just a few of the terms, used in international relations (IR) to refer to a limited number of countries around the world that are different to the rest, the majority of the countries worldwide, in what concerns their weight in global affairs and their abilities to influence events and processes. Over thirty are the synonyms for "major power" according to the online Power Thesaurus.⁷ The idea here is not to define the commonly used term major powers, nor is it to list them but rather to identify to what extent significant factors show interest in and commitment to the Indo-Pacific region. For the sake of clarity, however, it is worth mentioning that "major power" is usually described as "a state powerful enough to influence events throughout the world".⁸

In 2018 the then US Secretary of State Mark Pompeo laid out the US Indo-Pacific Strategy, which was the focus of the attention during his trip to the region from 30 July to 5 August. The initiative is focused on three areas, namely economics, governance and security.⁹

The recently published, at the end of 2021, "Russia in the Indo-Pacific", is intended to understand better Russia's role in this region, which in turn is supposed to confirm the existence of such a role and a respective commitment on the part of Russia.¹⁰ The military power of Russia in the Indo-Pacific and its role as a security factor in this region is also to be taken into account.¹¹

In April 2021, the Council of the EU adopted conclusions on an EU Strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific covering a broad spectrum of areas¹² and the Joint Communication of the European Commission on the Strategy¹³ was released in Sep-

7 "Synonyms for Big powers", *Power Thesaurus*, Available at: https://www.powerthesaurus.org/big_powers/synonyms

8 "Major power", *The Free Dictionary*, Available at: <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/major+power>

9 L. Hartman, "What is the US Indo-Pacific Strategy?", *ShareAmerica*, U.S. Department of State, September 23, 2019, Available at: <https://share.america.gov/what-is-u-s-indo-pacific-strategy/>

10 G. Christoffersen, *Russia in the Indo-Pacific*, Routledge, November 24, 2021, Available at: <https://www.routledge.com/Russia-in-the-Indo-Pacific-New-Approaches-to-Russian-Foreign-Policy/Christoffersen/p/book/9781032012766#:~:text=Russia%20in%20the%20Indo-Pacific%20contributes%20towards%20a%20more,Indo-Pacific%20who%20want%20to%20better%20understand%20Russia%27s%20role>

11 M. Sargeant, "Beyond Beijing: Russia in the Indo-Pacific", *Strife*, December 22, 2021, Available at: <https://www.strifeblog.org/2021/12/22/beyond-beijing-russia-in-the-indo-pacific/>

12 "Indo-Pacific: Council adopts conclusions on EU strategy for cooperation", *Council of the EU*, April 19, 2021, Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2021/04/19/indo-pacific-council-adopts-conclusions-on-eu-strategy-for-cooperation/>

13 "The EU Strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific", *Joint Communication, European Commission*, September 20, 2021, Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jointcommunication_2021_24_1_en.pdf

tember 2021. Later on the French Presidency of the Council of the EU announced its interest in implementing the Strategy and informed respectively of its plans to hold a ministerial forum in February 2022, bringing together the European Commission, the EU member states and the Indo-Pacific partner countries. The intention was to address the challenges related to security and defence, digital and connectivity issues, as well as the not less important global challenges such as health, climate change, biodiversity, etc.¹⁴ The first ever Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific eventually took place on 22 February 2021 in Paris with the participation of representatives from the 27 EU member states and around 30 Indo-Pacific countries.¹⁵

As far as China is concerned, there is an understanding that the rise of this country is behind the fear of its neighbours that they “will do whatever they can to prevent it from achieving regional hegemony”.¹⁶

As mentioned previously, the Canadian government has also come out with a strategy on the Indo-Pacific region. This document speaks of the global importance of the region. Moreover, it is clearly recognized that “the Indo-Pacific region will play a critical role in shaping Canada’s future over the next half-century”.¹⁷

Before concluding, at least three strategic documents, those of Canada and the USA, and the one of the EU, and mentioning regional hegemony and consideration of security factors is well enough to prove the big “ones” have turned their eyes on the Indo-Pacific, and a kind of a competition game is already being played there.

Furthermore, the existence of ANZUS, a 1951 security agreement in operation for more than 60 years and signed in order “to strengthen the fabric of peace in the Pacific Area.”¹⁸, QUAD, a “diplomatic network” and a “positive, practical agenda to respond to the defining challenges of our time.”¹⁹, AUKUS, a 2021 security pact for the Indo-Pacific, formed “at a time of rising tensions, especially over the South China Sea and Taiwan”,²⁰, etc., are some other examples of the complexity of the situation in the region and the need to follow it duly.

14 “Programme for the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union”, p. 17, Available at: https://presidence-francaise.consilium.europa.eu/media/qh4cg0qq/en_programme-pfue-v1-2.pdf

15 F. Grare, “Will and intent: The Paris ministerial forum on the Indo-Pacific”, *European Council on Foreign Relations*, February 28, 2022, Available at: <https://ecfr.eu/article/will-and-intent-the-paris-ministerial-forum-on-the-indo-pacific/>

16 J. M. Smith, “China’s Rise and Balancing in the Indo-Pacific: Taking Stock in 2021”, *The Heritage Foundation*, July 16, 2021, Available at: <https://www.heritage.org/asia/commentary/chinas-rise-and-balancing-the-indo-pacific-taking-stock-2021>

17 See *supra* note 4

18 Security Treaty Between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America”, *AustralianPolitics.com*, Available at: <https://australianpolitics.com/1951/09/01/anzus-treaty-text.html>

19 “QUAD”, *Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*, Available at: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/regional-architecture/quad>

20 J. Borger and D. Sabbagh, “US, UK and Australia forge a military alliance to counter China”, *The Guardian*, September 16, 2021, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/sep/15/australia-nuclear-powered-submarines-us-uk-security-partnership-aucus>

2.2. Positioning themselves in the Indo-Pacific: the cases of the USA and India

2.2.1. The US Indo-Pacific Strategy

Given the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific region and the fact that the USA is, evidently, considered to be belonging to it, it could only be seen as natural for Washington to elaborate and pursue a strategy corresponding to its national interests and its understanding of contemporary international and global politics. When the strategy itself was presented in 2018 by Michael Pompeo, the former State Secretary spoke at that time of a “free and open” Indo-Pacific, claiming that the USA and the whole world have a stake in its peace and prosperity.²¹ Moreover, Washington sees this strategy as an enduring commitment to the region.²²

As it was said in the preceding chapter, the strategy targets cooperation in the fields of economy and business, security and governance. The USA is the biggest investor in the region, and business engagement is at the centre of the idea of a free and open region. The private investment is reinforced by the governmental support for various projects, including with other countries such as Australia, Japan, etc., with a view of spreading prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. In addition to the business partnerships, another critical component of the strategy is the security cooperation in which training, joint exercises and various other programs are being carried out. The focus is on maritime security but also on human trafficking and drug smuggling.²³ If speaking of governance, in an implementation update of the State Department on the strategy of November 2019, it says that the Indo-Pacific Transparency Initiative, which focuses on anti-corruption, fiscal transparency, democracy assistance, media freedom, etc., was launched in November 2018.²⁴

In January 2021, the US Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific was declassified and made public. Reading through the document’s text shows that the main objectives of the strategy are to maintain the USA’s strategic primacy in the region, prevent China from establishing new spheres of influence, and ensure North Korea does not threaten Washington and its allies. Cooperating with China is not excluded when it is beneficial to the USA’s interest, and Russia remains a marginal player in the region relative to the USA, China, and India.²⁵

A very prominent place has been reserved in the document for India, which, if deci-

21 In order to avoid any confusions it is to be noted that while the details of the strategy were presented in 2018 by the former US State Secretary Pompeo it was the President Donald J. Trump who had made the US engagement in the Indo-Pacific region a top priority of his Administration and had outlined during his visit to Vietnam in November 2017 a vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific in which all countries prosper side by side as sovereign, independent states. See *infra* note 24, p.4

22 See *supra* note 9

23 *Ibid.*

24 “A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision”, *US Department of State*, November 3, 2019, p. 21, Available at: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Free-and-Open-Indo-Pacific-4Nov2019.pdf>

25 R. O’Brien, “U.S. Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific”, *USNI News*, January 15, 2021, Available at: <https://news.usni.org/2021/01/15/u-s-strategic-framework-for-the-indo-pacific>

sive and cooperating with like-minded countries, would act as a counterbalance to China. Furthermore, the desired option for India is to be the USA's preferred partner on security issues, with the two of them cooperating to provide maritime security and counter the influence of Beijing in South and Southeast Asia and other regions of their competition. It is essential that India can maintain the capacity to counter border provocations by China and take the leading role in maintaining the security of the Indian Ocean, increase engagement with Southeast Asia, and expand its economic, defence and diplomatic cooperation with other US allies and partners in the region. The objectives in this regard are to accelerate India's rise and capacity to serve as a net provider of security and significant defence partner, to solidify the enduring strategic partnership with it, and for this partnership to be underpinned by a solid Indian military able to effectively collaborate with the USA and its partners in the region to address the shared interests.²⁶

Other objectives of the strategy are to create a quadrilateral security framework with India, Japan, Australia and the USA as the principal hubs, to strengthen the capabilities and will of Japan, the Republic of Korea and Australia to contribute to the end states of the strategy and, most importantly from the point of view of the above-stated specific hypothesis, to align the strategy with those of Australia, India and Japan.²⁷

The release of the strategic framework was accompanied by a statement of National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien, the main accents of which could be summarised as follows: the framework was approved by President Trump in February 2018; it has served as a strategic guidance for the implementation of the 2017 National Security Strategy within the Indo-Pacific; the free and open Indo-Pacific depends on the American leadership, the USA being the largest economy with the most potent military worldwide; and, in contrast to China, the USA is seeking to ensure its allies and partners can preserve and protect their sovereignty.²⁸

In the same line of reasoning are the views of Roger Cliff, according to whom the Indo-Pacific presents major strategic opportunities for the USA, which enjoys significant strengths, namely possesses more human capacity than any other country in the world, and has the best technological capabilities and world's most capable military. What stands somehow different here is that India is not explicitly mentioned in the group of the closest democratic allies, unlike Japan, South Korea and Australia.²⁹

To sum it up, the USA is objectively compelled to adopt and follow a strategy for the Indo-Pacific. Amongst its main opponents in this region are China and North

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ R. Cliff, "A New US Strategy for the Indo-Pacific", *NBR Special Report no. 86*, June 16, 2020, Available at: https://www.nbr.org/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/publications/sr86_cliff_June2020.pdf

Korea, while Russia is probably and to some extent marginalised. Though not pointing to Pakistan for many, inevitably objective, reasons, the strategic framework sees India very positively and offers it options presumably matching the latter's national interests.

For the sake of being objective it is fair enough to say that the US Indo-Pacific strategy has attracted some criticism. To be more precise, such a criticism has been recently directed to President Joe Biden's Administration in relation to the latter's approach to the Indo-Pacific. On 11 February 2022 the White House published a Fact sheet on the Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States.³⁰ Attached to the Fact sheet is the text of the Strategy, unclassified document.³¹ As per the two documents the USA will pursue an Indo-Pacific that is free and open, connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient. The ways to achieve this strategic end include strengthening the U.S. role and building collective capacity with allies and partners and with regional institutions. As far as the means to achieve it are concerned, the documents speak of "modernized alliances; flexible partnerships, including an empowered ASEAN, a leading India, a strong and reliable Quad, and an engaged Europe; economic partnership; new U.S. defence, diplomatic, development, and foreign-assistance resources; sustained focus on and commitment to the region at all levels of the U.S. government".³² As in the case of the Strategy of 2018, the one of 2022 also reserves a special place to India. In particular, one of the ten elements of the Indo-Pacific Action Plan, adopted to implement the Strategy of 2022, is focused on supporting India's continued rise and regional leadership.³³

The main accusations against the Biden's Strategy, formulated by Zenel Garcia in an article in "The Diplomat" of March 2022, are that the strategy and policy of Washington towards the region rely on, supposedly, old assumptions about trade, norms and regional politics and that these assumptions are not suited for today's environment as far as they fail to account for the region's dynamics and complexity. Using his arguments and providing details about the latest regional developments he speaks of recently weakened US economic positions in the region and of possible restrictions in terms of market access faced by Washington over time.³⁴

Garcia then comes to conclusions about some countries of the region not entirely sharing the norms related to the idea of a "free and open" Indo-Pacific, such as the promotion of democracy, good governance, the rule of law, and strategic partnerships and alliances, in the first place, and about not all countries of the re-

30 "Fact sheet: Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States", *The White House*, February 11, 2022, Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/02/11/fact-sheet-indo-pacific-strategy-of-the-united-states/>

31 "Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States", *The White House*, February 2022, Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>

32 See *supra* notes 30 and 31

33 See *supra* note 31, p. 16

34 Z. Garcia, "What the US Indo-Pacific Strategy Is Missing", *The Diplomat*, March 22, 2022, Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2022/03/what-the-us-indo-pacific-strategy-is-missing/>

gion sharing the same interpretations of these norms, secondly. Regarding the first, he argues that seemingly many countries of the region, but not all, agree with the US-prepared norms. However, even those attracted to such values tend to perceive outside influence as interference in their internal affairs, the latter creating some risk of alienation between the USA and its potential partners. If speaking of the second, Garcia affirms that the US norms are subjected to divergent interpretations. While some of the regional countries support the freedom of navigation and agree to the perception that China poses a threat to it, other countries of the same regional groupings, namely Quad and ASEAN, and amongst them India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam, see these norms differently. According to him, proof for such a claim is that these four countries have views on key components of freedom of navigation, such as the innocent passage of military vessels and surveillance operations in Exclusive Economic Zones aligning closer with those of China than those of the USA.³⁵

And last but not least, the article says that the US strategy does not account for the divergence in interpretations of the geographic boundaries of the Indo-Pacific. While Japan has the most expansive interpretation of the region, spanning from East Africa to the U.S. west coast, India has the most limited interpretation, focused primarily on the Indian Ocean region and the South China Sea. In addition to this, India's strategy supposedly involves more limited economic and security aims and lacks a coherent strategy for the region. The main conclusion of Garcia here is that if the Administration wants to implement the strategy and secure the US interests in the region, this strategy is to be modified in such a way that it takes into account the dynamism and complexity of the region.³⁶

Reflecting on the above brings us to the following thoughts. To begin with, the US strategy is subjected to criticism, but the criticism as such is not the most important thing. What matters more is that this criticism reveals some deficiencies of the concept which are neither groundless nor to be underestimated. And here we come to the idea that these deficiencies necessitate action in the direction of amending, and updating the strategy. Finally, the adaptation of the document should probably be carried out so that it becomes more acceptable and attractive to other partners in the region, including India.

2.2.2. *India's thinking on the Indo-Pacific*

An article³⁷ by Huma Siddiqui published in November 2019 on the official website of the Ministry of External Affairs of India, presents the main elements of New Delhi's

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ H. Siddiqui, "India's concept of Indo-Pacific is inclusive and across oceans", *Ministry of External Affairs, India*, November 8, 2019, https://mea.gov.in/articles-in-indian-media.htm?dtl/32015/Indias_concept_of_IndoPacific_is_inclusive_and_across_oceans

concept³⁸ of the Indo-Pacific. They slightly differ from those of the US Strategy. In the first place, for India, the Indo-Pacific construct stretches from Africa to the Americas and covers both the Indian and Pacific Oceans, with China and Indonesia being considered parts of it. Israel is also referred to in the same context, strange somehow but not difficult to understand given the warm relations between New Delhi and Jerusalem.³⁹ Secondly, the US formula of “free and open” is expanded by India to become “free, open and inclusive”. In the third place, in addition to “inclusiveness” and “openness”, other aspects of India’s perspective are “ASEAN centrality” and “concept not directed against any country”. Connectivity, enhancing maritime security, counterterrorism, non-proliferation and cyber issues are in focus as well. Furthermore, maritime cooperation, dialogue and exercises in the Indo-Pacific region fall within the practical dimension of the concept where the SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region) concept of the Indian government, the annual Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD) held by the India Navy and the Malabar and Triumph exercises of India, USA and Japan are just a few of the examples.⁴⁰

The proposal of Prime Minister Modi⁴¹ to translate India’s concept of the Indo-Pacific into practical, actionable and cooperative measures in the maritime domain is referred to by Commander Subhasish Sarangi as the Indo-Pacific Oceans’ Initiative (IPOI). In an article from November 2020⁴² he speaks of seven sectors of cooperation proposed by the initiative: maritime security; marine ecology; maritime resources; capacity building and resource sharing; disaster risk reduction and management; science, technology and academic cooperation; trade, connectivity and maritime transport. According to him, the initiative targets the entire spectrum of challenges in the maritime domain and aims to widen the scope of the Indo-Pacific narrative beyond security and geopolitics to include challenges related to economy, development, and environment. Given its inability to compete with China in terms of funding infrastructure projects across the region, India offers the regional countries assistance in other areas that matter to them. While relying on existing platforms such as ASEAN-led mechanisms and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), in 2019 and 2020, several countries, amongst them Australia, Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines, expressed support to the initiative and committed themselves to co-

38 Outlined by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his keynote speech at the Shangri-la Dialogue in Singapore in June 2018, no document or text of the concept was available.

39 The text of the US Indo-Pacific strategy of 2018 does not explicitly define a geographic scope. It rather refers to the following countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, the Pacific Island Countries, People’s Republic of China (PRC), the Philippines, Republic of Korea (ROK), Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Southeast Asia and ASEAN as well as South Asia and Russia are mentioned and in comparison to the list of countries quoted above (see *supra* note 5) Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Timor Leste are not included. It is to be noted as well that the geographic definition of Huma Siddiqui does not correspond to the one of Zenel Garcia (see *supra* note 36). The Strategy of 2022 speaks of the Indo-Pacific region as stretching from the US Pacific coastline to the Indian Ocean.

40 See *supra* note 37

41 In a speech at the East Asia Summit (EAS) in Bangkok in November 2019 Prime Minister Narendra Modi proposed a cooperative effort to translate principles for the Indo-Pacific into measures to secure a shared maritime environment.

42 S. Sarangi, “Indo-Pacific Oceans’ Initiative (IPOI): India’s Indo-Pacific concept translated into action”, *The United Service Institution of India*, October – December 2020, Available at: <https://usiofindia.org/publication/cs3-strategic-perspectives/indo-pacific-oceans-initiative-ipoi-indias-indo-pacific-concept-translated-into-action/>

operation with India in its framework. The evolving initiative complements two multi-lateral efforts being steered by India, namely the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), and it could be easily seen that New Delhi's ambition is to have the leading role in respect of the IPOI as well.⁴³

After analysing the two preceding paragraphs, what could be thought of is that India's thinking on the Indo-Pacific region is different from the American one in terms of geography and scope of cooperation. However, one should not claim any apparent confrontation and/or mutual exclusion between them. Such a claim is indirectly confirmed by the ideas of Hongsong Liu and Ahmed Bux Jamali developed in an article of April 2021. According to them, without aligning formally with the USA and keeping in view the US Indo-Pacific strategy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is "pragmatically balancing" between Washington and Beijing. In fact, Prime Minister Modi is constructing a robust, proactive, and influential role of India in the Indo-Pacific region thus achieving the desired foreign policy outcomes. Ensuring maximum strategic autonomy and building India's maritime security order in the Indian Ocean region are considered to be Modi's crucial policy outlooks.⁴⁴

2.3. India and the USA in the Indo-Pacific: friends, rivals or foes?

In theoretical terms, three are the main options regarding the approach that could be undertaken by India vis-à-vis the US Indo-Pacific strategy: to be the closest friend and act jointly, to remain independent and cooperate while competing simultaneously, and to fight. It is more than evident that New Delhi would never go for the last option, at least for now. It has never been the case historically. It is not going that way in the present. Furthermore, considering India's preoccupation with Pakistan and China, one could argue that it is highly probable that such a choice would never be at the table. What one needs to do next is to discover which of the first two options is the working and, therefore, the probable to be taken up formula.

In an article published in June 2020 in "The Nation"⁴⁵ Imran Malik presumes that Washington has succeeded in getting New Delhi to the cause of its strategy; however, the latter's total commitment to it remains questionable. To support his view, he presents three main arguments. In the first place, Malik speaks of the different definitions of the two countries regarding the geographic scope covered by the term Indo-Pacific region.⁴⁶ It is worth reminding here that the same assertion is made by Huma Siddiqui in the article mentioned earlier in the text of this paper. According

43 Ibid.

44 H. Liu and A. B. Jamali, "India's Indo-Pacific Strategy: A Pragmatic Balancing between the United States and China", *Pacific Focus – Wiley Online Library*, April 15, 2021, Available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/pafo.12178>

45 I. Malik, "US Indo-Pacific strategy and India", *The Nation*, June 30, 2020, Available at: <https://nation.com.pk/30-Jun-2020/us-indo-pacific-strategy-and-india>

46 While Washington sees the Indo-Pacific region as extending from the west coast of the USA to the west coast of India for New Delhi the "Indo" must cover the whole of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), including the East Coast of Africa – Australia as well.

to Malik, these different views would bring divergences in perceptions, priorities, strategies, objectives and adversaries. Secondly, the logic of India being preoccupied with its interests and worries related to the Greater Middle East Region, the western Indian Ocean region, Pakistan and China, to sum it up, the strategic importance of its west and north, would prevent New Delhi from fully committing to the Indo-Pacific. India's inability to perform on two or more fronts makes a deal with the USA vulnerable in the view of Malik. In the third place, Malik sees the US Indo-Pacific strategy as China-centric and meant for limiting China's further rise and the only possible option left for Washington is to do this by war. Moreover, India would not be interested in waging war on somebody else's behalf, given the possible damages to be suffered. It is essential to mention that the idea of the purpose of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy to contain China is also shared by Mark Valenica.⁴⁷

At the end of his analysis, Imran Malik concludes that Washington needs to rethink its Indo-Pacific strategy. In the author's view, that statement would also imply the need to amend it to make it possible to get India aboard. And last but not least, while being a strategic partner of the USA and not an ally yet, India, asserts Malik, would prefer to act in parallel rather than jointly, which would help it preserve its strategic autonomy while enjoying the benefits of the cooperation.

In a similar approach, in an article of 14 January 2021 published in "The Diplomat"⁴⁸ Abhijnan Rej says that Prime Minister Modi would not sign up for the US strategy as it is a project to maintain the US regional primacy. He further explains that the Indian prime minister has repeatedly explained that his vision for the Indo-Pacific is "inclusive" and not "directed at anyone" and that India's preference is for a "multipolar Asia in a multipolar world" rather than for a philosophy aimed at maintaining the US supremacy in the Indo-Pacific. This mismatch between the two concepts is even more apparent in the context of the US strategy speaking about alignment with India's one. Such a line of reasoning would inevitably bring this analysis to the conclusion that the hint of alignment of the two concepts causes anxiety and even reluctance on the part of India to accept the US strategy and cooperate within it.

In conclusion, the analyses of Malik and Rej prove to be in line with our initial general assumption regarding India's approach to the US Indo-Pacific strategy only partially. In the first place, they confirm the existence of some discrepancies between the views of New Delhi and Washington. Furthermore secondly, while admitting the possibility for cooperation between India and the USA in the framework of the Indo-Pacific, they exclude the option of joint activities. To say it differently, it does not

47 See M. Valenica, "US reveals true intent of its Indo-Pacific policy", *Asia Times*, January 28, 2021, Available at: <https://asiatimes.com/2021/01/us-reveals-true-intent-of-its-indo-pacific-policy/>

48 A. Rej, "The US Strategic Framework for the Indo-Pacific: 3 Curiosities", *The Diplomat*, January 14, 2021, Available at: <https://thediplomat.com/2021/01/the-us-strategic-framework-for-the-indo-pacific-3-curiosities/>

seem to be entirely in the interest of India to act in harmony with the fundamentals of the US Indo-Pacific strategy.

The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war has further strengthened the arguments in favour of such a conclusion. Nowadays New Delhi has found itself in the awkward situation to have to choose between Russia and the USA. According to Lakhvinder Singh and Dalbir Ahlawat, in the near future it will be more and more complicated for India to balance between China, Russia and the USA. What the authors suggest in these circumstances is that India should maintain sound relations with China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, the USA, and ASEAN and that the major regional powers should take the lead and play a more proactive role in building a new security architecture in the Indo-Pacific with the backing of the USA.⁴⁹ In other words, New Delhi needs to support a multilateral security arrangement in the region rather than the US Indo-Pacific strategy.

If speaking of our specific hypothesis, namely that the USA needs to introduce some amendments to the strategy with a view of making it more attractive to India, then, starting from the text of the US strategy itself, going through the analyses of Zenel Garcia of Imran Malik, and ending up with our own conclusions, it seems to be a correct guess that Washington has to align its strategy to make it more attractive to other partners, including India.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

The analysis of the collected information allows for the formulation of the following conclusions:

(1) The Indo-Pacific is a region of growing geopolitical importance. The situation is complex and deserves attention. To some extent, all major players are involved in what is going on there, and establishing the rules of interaction is underway.

(2) For many objective reasons, the USA has formulated and is following a strategy for the Indo-Pacific. The main opponents are identified as China, North Korea and Russia. Japan, Australia, and South Korea are considered the natural partners in implementing the strategy. India is presented very positively, with difficult to decline offers being extended to it. The US Strategy of 2018 was followed by another one, announced in 2022. The second document keeps the tradition of reserving a prominent place for India.

(3) Our initial general assumption was that it is in the interest of India to act in harmony with the fundamentals of the US Strategy.

(4) In the course of the work on the paper, India's views on the Indo-Pacific region proved to be different to the USA ones. However, no confrontation between the

⁴⁹ L. Singh and D. Ahlawat, "India in Indo-Pacific: a way forward", *Asia Times*, June 13, 2022, Available at: <https://asiatimes.com/2022/06/india-in-indo-pacific-a-way-forward/>

two concepts was initially foreseen. Then, taking into consideration the historical background and the current status of the India – USA bilateral relations and other topical issues on India's foreign policy agenda, our conclusion was that within the Indo-Pacific region India would either cooperate with the USA or act jointly with it.

(5) The analysis finally showed that the initial assumption regarding India's approach to the US Indo-Pacific strategy was partially correct. The discrepancies in the views of India and the USA on the Indo-Pacific predetermine that while cooperation between the two countries in the region is possible yet a full spectrum of joint activities is to be excluded as far as it is not entirely in the interest of India to act in harmony with the fundamentals of the US Indo-Pacific strategy.

(6) The further survey and analysis of the available literature showed that Washington needs to rethink its strategy and amend it to become more attractive to other partners, including India.

Given the limitations of the research, the only recommendation could be to continue the work on the subject. Further analysis should include the context of the subsequent involvement of India's and the USA's concepts and the accompanying changes in the posture of the major factors involved. Due attention should be paid to the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on the developments in the Indo-Pacific region.

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Петко Дојков

Став Индије о Индо-пацифичкој стратегији САД

Апстракт

Овај рад фокусиран је на Индо-пацифички регион, приступ америчке администрације њему и став Индије о приступу САД. Састоји се из три главна дела, од којих је сваки посвећен све већем значају региона, стратегијама Вашингтона и Њу Делхија у односу на њега и односу између приступа два стратешка партнера. На основу истраживања и анализе постојећих академских извора и званичних докумената рад нас доводи до закључка да није у потпуности у интересу Индије да делује у складу са основама америчке индо-пацифичке стратегије. Поред тога, још један предлог нас, који смо изашли као закључак, је да САД треба да измене своју стратегију како би била привлачнија другим партнерима, укључујући Индију, такав амандман је предуслов за бољу одбрану својих интереса у региону.

Кључне речи: Индо-пацифички регион, Америчка индо-пацифичка стратегија, Индијски концепт о Индо-Пацифику, Кина, безбедност.

Mehreen Gul*

Post Covid-19 Era Energy Security and Crisis in Asia - Way Forward to Tackle the Issue **

Abstract

The period from 2019-to 2021 was unforeseeable and challenging due to ongoing pandemic COVID-19, rapid climatic change, economic challenges, sewer supply disruption, depletion of resources, energy security, and related crisis. The year 2022 will be another challenge to deal with. As we entered the third year of COVID-19 the energy crises have intensified pressures in overall Asian countries. The energy crisis is of grave concern and a reason for financial downturns in the economies. Asian countries are confronting a critical energy crisis. The world defies resource depletion in this case human security is incomplete without the concept of energy security. Likewise, under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), goal 7 appears as "Affordable and clean energy" which aims to ensure access to affordable, consistent, sustainable, and up-to-date energy for all. Two extensive aspects that may be able to mitigate the energy issues in a region are to analyze how to enhance energy security through regional collaboration and energy trade in the region, and the second, to review how energy security can be safeguarded. China, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Indonesia, and other Asian countries are in dire need to introduce alternatives or tackle energy-related crises effectively. However, for the swift and sustainable recovery international unity is the key element to formulate and implement new policies to curb the energy crises and security challenges in the region. Keeping all the above debate in mind, the study will focus on the ongoing energy crises and what can be the measures to recover the downfall in Asian countries.

Keywords: energy crises, energy security, sustainable recovery, regional collaborations, SDGs, COVID-19

1. Introduction

Energy is the source of providing the necessities of life. It eventually provides the services that make life easier. With the abundance of population, the services linked with energy go down ultimately. In this regard, the over-populated continent of Asia has always remained a dark image of energy sovereignty and equal availability. Likewise, the exposure of Covid-19 in the continent has further intensified the

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problems related to energy. As most of the Asian states are utilizing non-renewable sources of energy thus, the pandemic resulted in a situation where these states faced the shortage and crises of energy production and distribution. To further elaborate, states such as China, Japan, Pakistan, and India went on to the verge of extreme energy deficiency.

With Covid-19, the production houses went down in the majority of the states. It led to the minimum production of energy from available sources. Nevertheless, the demand increased with time thus, the Asian states eventually faced the dilemma of demand and supply. Likewise, the focus on non-renewable sources such as coal also left the states with no other options for survival. Specifically, Pakistan and India faced an extreme condition of energy crises where the state's energy requirements didn't fulfill. Furthermore, these two states are also engaged in the sphere of enmity thus, the energy crises also posed serious threats to national security and sovereignty. The focus on the management of security threats also appeared to be endangering human security in the region. Similarly, states such as Japan and China also observed brutal results of Covid-19 and its impact on energy crises. As these states and industrial producers, therefore, the crises resulted in the closure of industries and production houses which eventually has led to the downgrading of the economic graph.

This study takes into consideration the post-covid crises of energy and its impact on Asia. Furthermore, it also contributes to the listing of policy recommendations in this regard. To proceed, the theoretical understanding of energy crises and take of the different theoretical lens is given as under.

2. Theoretical Conception of Energy Security

2.1 Realist Perspective of Energy Security Discourse

The traditional energy security researchers generally belong to the realist tradition of International Relations Theory. Neorealist school of the tradition accentuates and emphasizes the states' energy policies with specific concentration on national security as core national interest, military enhancement and maintenance, and availability of uninterrupted energy resources for regional economic and power competition.¹ The primary consideration of the neorealist research agenda signifies the use of hard power and coercive measures to ensure the availability of energy resources and avoid energy crises and secure national interests. Neo-realist academics and researchers consider energy security as an integral component of a state's foreign policy and national security Policy. They assume that the energy security challenges and crises must be visible in comprehensive national security policy and broad-

¹ Daddow, O., *International Relations Theory (Third edition)*, SAGE Publications Ltd., 2017, pp. 620-628.

er foreign policy agenda.² Likewise, studies of realist tradition offer an approach to investigate and examine energy challenges in the geopolitical context. Furthermore, proponents of the neorealist explanation of energy security provide perspectives on the competitive relations of the major actors in the energy security domain, investigating the political consequences of energy challenges, and militarization of energy security.³

The realist approach to international relations is a traditional perspective with a state-centric approach to global politics. Its diverse and intellectually rich essence asserts the primacy of the state in an anarchic global order. It claims that it is significant to study international politics and state behavior as it is not how it should be. It assumes that states by nature pursue their core interests regardless of institutional compromise. A state cannot compromise its national interest, and cooperation cannot be achieved at the cost of the state's core national interests. Realists illustrate that energy security is an integral part of a state's national security and foreign policy. The self-interest narrow perspective of realism suggests that quest for energy resources will inevitably lead to competition in the energy market. Consequently, the militarization of energy security will drive conflicts in the future pursuit of limited energy resources, and chances of cooperation are minimum. the sole source of stability.⁴

2.2 Control Over Natural Resources: A Neo-Realist Perspective of Energy Security

Neorealists emphasize the significance of natural resources in general and marine natural resources. They accentuate that the ability and power to control natural resources are essential in the contemporary era of industrial development and rapid economic transformation. The Asian economies witnessed rapid development in the twenty-first century. The industrialization of major Asian economies saw enhanced energy requirements to run the economies. These major Asian economies are dependent on the oil and gas energy resources of the Middle East. To ensure the availability of energy, the security of supply lines is essential to ensure uninterrupted energy to China, India, Japan, Pakistan, South Korea, Indonesia, and other small economies of Asia.⁵ Neo-realists maintain that disputes over access to natural resources will be unavoidable, particularly in maritime security context energy challenges.⁶ The limited number of natural resources and the geographical constraints

2 Kalicki, J. H., & Goldwyn, D. L. (Eds.). *Energy and Security: Toward a New Foreign Policy Strategy* (First Edition). Woodrow Wilson Center Press / Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

3 Baldwin, D. (Ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism*, Columbia University Press, 1993.

4 Proskuryakova, L. "Updating energy security and environmental policy: Energy security theories revisited", *Journal of Environmental Management*, 223, 2018, pp. 203–214. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvman.2018.06.016>

5 Henry, R., Osowski, C., Chalk, P., & Bartis, J. T., "Promoting International Energy Security" In *Promoting International Energy Security* (pp. i–ii). RAND Corporation. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/j.ctt3fh0k9.1>, 2012

6 Narula, K., *The Maritime Dimension of Sustainable Energy Security*, Springer, 2018.

will enhance the possibility of conflict over energy resources. In this backdrop, Maritime security is the most important prerequisite for ensuring reliable energy distribution, as it ensures that illicit activity and emergencies are addressed in the region.⁷

2.3 Energy Security: As an Essential Component of National Interest

National interests should rule energy policy, and bilateral agreements should take precedence over agreements involving multilateralism, claims the neorealist perspectives of energy security. It is usually interpreted as a tightening of state control over natural resources, especially in resource-rich countries. 'Resource nationalism' is commonly mentioned as an example of a policy pursued by Russia and Venezuela. The energy market is highly competitive, it is essential to ensure adequate energy imports to meet the requirements of the national economy and military needs. The pessimistic views over cooperation and multilateralism maintain that multilateral energy security cooperation dialogues are less likely because of the high possibilities of compromise over national interest. The self-interested nationalistic view of the realist school maintains that the states should rely on self-help and compete for resources rather than cooperation.⁸

Studies have focused on changes in structural security related to energy interests. Despite persistent local wars, there is a low likelihood of a worldwide armed conflict. In any event, the most likely cause of growing violence is competition over energy resources. Because the global economy is so reliant on oil and gas, there is a greater chance of local and regional conflict that might escalate into a global conflict. Conflicts are unavoidable in the face of increasing competition among states for energy resources and technologies, which leads to increased military spending and complicates international collaboration. In fossil-fuel-rich countries, military implications of energy security can be seen in the domestic battle for energy exports rent. Terrorist strikes could be prompted by issues with energy security.⁹

2.4 Neo-Liberal Approach to The Conception of Energy Security

Neoliberalism emphasizes international collaboration including states, multinational corporations, transactional actors, and other supranational actors. In contrast to the realist state-centric approach to energy security, the liberal approach accentuates that international cooperation and regulation can address energy security challenges. Because individual states are unable to control energy prices; interna-

7 Wilson, B., "Maritime Energy Security", [SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 2229989], *Social Science Research Network*, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2229989>, 2012.

8 Elving, A. "Achieving Energy Security in the EU: National Self-Interest vs. Multilateral Cooperation", Dissertation, Swedish National Defence College, Available at: <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=nbn:se:fhs:diva-5334>

9 Klare, M., *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet: The New Geopolitics of Energy* (1st edition), Metropolitan Books, 2008.

tional organizations, regulatory bodies, research, and development organization, policymaking, and consultancy bodies transnational corporations, and financial institutions, think make and have an impact over policies. In an interdependent world, energy security can be ensured with cooperation and multilateralism not through a self-help system, as suggested by the realist school.¹⁰

The creation of a global energy market, and increased interdependency, has reduced the possibilities of violent escalation among the states. The global energy system built in recent decades is suitable for all significant market actors, regardless of the magnitude of their resource assets. As a result, they have no desire to engage in a military battle that could destabilize global or regional energy markets.¹¹ Furthermore, the huge expenditures of military operations and associated political issues do not justify the seizure of oil and gas resources, as buying oil and gas on the open market would be far cheaper and easier. Market forces define today's supply and demand, determine the number of investments, and ultimately determine the future of global energy.

2.5 International Organizations and Cooperation in Energy Sector: A Liberal Perspective

The neoliberals are especially interested in the utilization and significance of different international institutions which are used for shaping the global market of energy. To begin with, they can enter and make an intervention in market failures and during other exceptional circumstances (i.e. economic problems or disasters). OPEC and the International Energy Agency intervened in the 1970s during the oil crisis. Second, institutions such as the International Energy Forum help to strengthen information transparency and trust among global energy actors.¹² Third, the establishment of the World Trade Organizations and Energy Charter Treaty under the key objective of creating norms and rules to regulate international cooperation and create interdependence for global energy security.¹³

Through competition, the market ensures a stable energy supply, while interdependence ensures collaboration. Energy security challenges include threats entailed by the energy infrastructure from energy terrorism, which is the flip side or a side effect of international collaboration.¹⁴ Further discussion situates energy security within the securitization phenomenon, which emerged because international actors recog-

10 Baldwin, D. (Ed.), *Neorealism and Neoliberalism*, Columbia University Press, 1993.

11 Colgan, J. D., "Fueling the Fire: Pathways from Oil to War", *International Security*, 38(2), pp. 147-180, 2013.

12 Newell, P., & Phillips, J., "Neoliberal energy transitions in the South: Kenyan experiences". *Geoforum*, 74, pp. 41-44, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2016.05.009>, 2016.

13 Joseph S. Keohane, R. O. *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (1977th edition), Little, Brown, and Company, 1977.

14 Koknar M., "Maritime terrorism: A new challenge for NATO", *Energy Security*, Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, <http://www.iags.org/n0124051.htm>, 2005.

nize three types of challenges: ensuring energy supplies, ensuring secure energy extraction, transportation, and consumption, and improving energy efficiency for environmental, economic, and social purposes.

Neoliberals, unlike neorealists, think that the link between energy market actors and increases in energy security is not a zero-sum game. The global oil market is one effect of this cooperation, which has increased energy security. Assuring the continued growth of liberal energy is a major issue for energy security.

3. Constructivist Approach to Energy Security

Constructivists proposed an alternative and critical view of the construction of security. The constructivist accentuates that the international system is what states make sense of it, says Alexander Wendt.¹⁵ This body of argument implies that the fundamental characteristics of international relations, including those involving energy, are under flux and change. The actors who are involved build, narrate, and reproduce international relations and economic well-being. Different participants in international relations can view the same occurrences, including challenges to energy security, in different ways and perceptions. Simultaneously, because of engagement and information sharing, judgments and game rules are susceptible to change.

Energy issues are seen as “unstructured problems” since they are fraught with uncertainty, fundamental conflicts, and vested interests’ opposition. This implies that a top-down rationalist strategy is insufficient and must be replaced or supplemented with others that provide “second-best” policy mechanisms or out-of-the-box solutions, particularly during transitions.

In addressing disputes, including energy-related ones, constructivism’s energy security approach emphasizes the need to see and pursue common interests and shared values, to maintain communications, interpersonal interactions, and trust. Constructivist’s perspective asserts the construction of international values and rules for the regulation of energy security issues globally.

4. International Political Economy Perspective of Energy Security

Energy is one of the secondary power structures that supports the four basic power structures of security, finance, production, and knowledge, according to the international political economics school. In the contemporary era, there is a fight between the four basic institutions of power, with market actors, rather than states. Energy research demands a new, hybrid methodology that fully considers the impact

¹⁵ Wendt, A., “Anarchy is what states make of it: The social construction of power politics”, *International Organization*, 46(2), pp. 391–425. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027764>, 1992.

of policy considerations on energy markets and vice versa.¹⁶ The primary challenge here is determining the ideal state-market balance, which should be determined by a structural examination of power distribution in each society. This school's researchers look at international energy relations from the perspectives of power, political competition, and the various types of state governance that exist.

Researchers that emphasize the geopolitical approach concentrate on countries with limited access to energy. To safeguard national security, states gain direct or indirect control over fossil fuel reserves or energy transportation routes, as well as foster regional diversity in energy export and import. They recognize the geopolitical elements of national energy strategy and point to economic grounds for global energy politicization.

Most studies on energy security are based on a combination of the above-mentioned theoretical principles. Many scholars recognize the importance of international institutions and global markets in the neoliberal paradigm, as well as the influence of government actors and the conflict potential implicit in the competition for access to energy resources. Some of them also acknowledge the impact of ideas on how people view energy security challenges, which therefore influences policy decisions. For example, there are certain principles of keen importance for the actors of energy security. Those principles include diversification, security margin, high-quality and up-to-date information, cooperation between supplier and consumer countries, enlarging the IEA's influence by including China and India, infrastructure and supply chain stability, well-functioning markets, energy efficiency (which also helps reduce environmental impact), ensuring investment flow and progress in sophisticated technology.¹⁷

5. Policy Recommendation

COVID-19 has acted as a blessing in disguise. On one hand, it has severely affected the economies of the country while on the other hand, it has created opportunities to think beyond the short-term and unreliable approach to deal with energy and other related needs. Furthermore, it has taken all relevant stakeholders on board to widen the scope of the policies that deal with public life.

To start with Pakistan, the country has been facing energy security challenges for the last four decades, however, with the outbreak of Covid-19 the problem of energy security has increased manifolds. Firstly, Pakistan needs to increase the use of renewable sources of energy instead of depending on the traditional use of coal for fulfilling its needs of energy. The completion of long-awaited projects such as Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India (TAPI) gas pipeline and Central Asia -

¹⁶ Strange, S., *States and markets*, Pinter Publishers, 1988.

¹⁷ Yergin, D., "Ensuring Energy Security". *Foreign Affairs*, 85(2), pp. 69–82. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20031912>, 2006.

South Asia (CASA 1000) are the need of the time in this regard. Secondly, Pakistan and India should work on these technical areas to meet the energy needs of their population. The policies of both countries should be based on solving the issues in the changing geostrategic situation. Thirdly, the end of the war in Afghanistan is a blessing in disguise. Pakistan should take the benefit of its influence on the Afghan Taliban, who earlier acted as an obstacle for the projects like TAPI and CASA 1000 - to re-earn its connectivity with Central Asia amidst the challenges of COVID-19 has left the region in the lurch. Furthermore, Pakistan's newly launched National Security Policy which is based on the citizen centricity-rich approach is a good step forward in this regard. However, the implementation of the policy in its true spiritual needs every stakeholder on board. Moreover, Pakistan and India are severely affected by climate change. Both the countries are part of the Paris climate treaty, but they have shown little progress in this regard. So, the policymakers should consider tackling climate change at its earliest.¹⁸

In the case of China, the COVID-19 that erupted in the city of Wuhan has changed the ways through which countries were dealing with global issues such as climate change and energy security. The reversal to the protectionist's measure during the COVID era has further complicated the situation. The Chinese economic recovery with COVID is uncertain, but with moving away from short-term energy needs, Chinese decision-makers should double down on efforts for the clean energy transition, aiming to better balance short-term political targets with long-term strategic goals. In this case, China has good potential to emerge as a global power in the field of producing an economy based on low carbon with a huge amount of investment in the renewable source of energy in the post-COVID world. However, China is dependent on coal as its primary source of energy as it covers around 58 percent of its energy consumption. Thus, by using coal-based energy consumption, China is responsible for 11 percent of carbon emissions across the globe. This is a grave challenge to deal with global warming. China has lagged in achieving its goals of reduced carbon emission.¹⁹

Ensuring the national supply of energy is a basic outline of energy security. Citizen needs of the energy demand long term and sustainable approach. In the current political scenario, the trade dispute between the United States and China can further disrupt the supply chain and energy needs as China is the largest importer of natural gas and crude oil. As a result, this will cause the balance of payment problem for China to meet its energy needs. Hence, it will increase uncertainty and vulnerability in the Post COVID era. Therefore, China should initiatively reform energy patterns and seek more energy security space to hold out in the trade dispute and the COVID-19 pandemic.

18 "Sustainable energy key to COVID-19 recovery in Asia and the Pacific". *Policy Forum*, (2021, February 22), Available at: <https://www.policyforum.net/sustainable-energy-key-to-covid-19-recovery-in-asia-and-the-pacific/>

19 Liu, S. Q., "How is China's energy security affected by exogenous shocks? Evidence of China-US trade dispute and COVID-19 pandemic", *Discover Energy*, 2-2, 2021.

In the Pacific, Japan's progress in the implementation of a resilient, efficient, and sustainable way of energy production has been significant in the last decade. Reduction in greenhouse gases is the result of the use of a renewable source of energy as well as the energy from nuclear power, which led to the decrease in the use of fossil fuels. In 2018, GHG emissions had decreased by 12% compared to 2013, back to the same level they had in 2009. However, despite all this success, Japan is still dependent on fossil fuels. Its 88 percent of primary energy came from fossil fuels in 2019. As a need of the hour, technologies based on low carbon emission need to be employed to reach the goal of carbon-free Japan by 2050.²⁰

In this regard, some of the policy recommendations are that Tokyo needs to keep in check the energy needs of the people while also keeping the goal of decarbonization by 2050 intact. Investment in low carbon technology should be encouraged by keeping the prices low in the competitive process. Similarly, investment in the supply line of electricity and its network should also be encouraged so that the shift from nonrenewable sources to renewable sources of energy may not disrupt the supply line.²¹

Renewable energy needs more investment to meet the energy needs of the people in the Asia Pacific. Therefore, all the stakeholders such as international organizations, intergovernmental organizations as well multinational corporations in the energy field should be on board and increase the investment in low carbon emission technology. Other areas which need attention on a priority basis are addressing the rate of unemployment that is the result of COVID-19's lockdown and closure of many businesses. In addition, the post-COVID era sustainability needs to be supported through subsidies, cut on taxes, and recovery plans to pass through this critical time. Equal opportunities for the energy sector should be given to meet the energy needs of the population in Asia and the Pacific. Furthermore, the transition from nonrenewable to a renewable source of energy also needs finance from the private sector. So, the government should incentives the energy sector to attract private investments and work on the transition through a public-private partnership. This will not only help the private sector but also deliver better results to meet the energy needs. In addition, the subsidies on fossil fuels should be minimized to make renewable transition competitive and cost-effective. As a result, the transition will be swift, reliable, sustainable, and efficient. It will not only result in creating more jobs and opportunities but also meet the needs of consumers.

To conclude, countries in the Asia Pacific need their plan for recovery in the post COVID world. However, all the countries should focus on sustainable, long-term,

20 <https://www.iea.org/events/japan-2021-energy-policy-review>

Jiang, P., Fan, Y. V., & Klemeš, J. J., "Impacts of COVID-19 on energy demand and consumption: Challenges, lessons and emerging opportunities", *Applied Energy*, 285, 116441, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apenergy.2021.116441>, 2021.

21 "Japan 2021: Energy Policy Review – Event", IEA, (2021, March 4), Available at: <https://www.iea.org/events/japan-2021-energy-policy-review>

and cost-effective sources of energy that not only meet the demands and needs of the consumers but also take the considerations of climate change onboard.

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Мехрин Гул

Енергетска безбедност и криза у Азији у пост Ковид-19 ери: Корак напред у решавању овог проблема

Апстракт

Период од 2019. до 2021. године био је непредвидив и изазован због текуће пандемије КОВИД-19, брзих климатских промена, економских изазова, прекида у ланцу снабдевању, исцрпљивања ресурса, енергетске безбедности и повезаних криза. 2022. година ће бити још један изазов са којим се треба носити. Како смо ушли у трећу годину КОВИД-19 пандемије, енергетска криза је довела до појачања притисака на азијске земље. Енергетска криза изазива велику забринутост и разлог за падове у привредном расту и на финансијском тржишту. Азијске земље се суочавају са озбиљном енергетском кризом, а хумана безбедност је непотпуна без концепта енергетске безбедности. Исто тако, у оквиру Циљева одрживог развоја, циљ 7 се појављује као „Приуштива и чиста енергија“ који има за циљ да обезбеди приступ енергији која је доступна и одржива за све. Два опсежна аспекта која би могла да ублаже енергетске проблеме у региону су анализа како побољшати енергетску безбедност кроз регионалну сарадњу и трговину енергијом у региону, а други, ревизију како се енергетска безбедност може заштитити. Кина, Пакистан, Индија, Непал, Индонезија и друге азијске земље имају велику потребу да уведу алтернативе или да се ефикасно изборе са енергетским кризама. Међутим, за брз и одржив опоравак међународно јединство је кључни елемент за формулисање и спровођење нових политика за обуздавање енергетских криза и безбедносних изазова у региону. Имајући на уму све горе наведене дебате, студија ће се фокусирати на текуће енергетске кризе и које мере могу бити за опоравак азијских земља.

Кључне речи: енергетска криза, енергетска безбедност, одрживи опоравак, регионална сарадња, КОВИД-19



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