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# The Impacts of Executive Responses on Democracy During the Coronavirus Crisis in Croatia, Slovenia and Austria

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| ABSTRACT | In Croatia, Slovenia and Austria, the coronavirus crisis raised pre-existing deficiencies in the democratic orders to the surface, i.e., issues in functioning according to democratic principles in the circumstances of a public health crisis. In Austria, the strained executive-legislative relations were already visible in April 2020, when the opposition parties refused to support the second wave of crisis legislation without the appraisal process that would justify its urgency. In Croatia and Slovenia, the governments decided not to declare a state of emergency, arguably in order to avoid cooperation with the opposition and other state institutions in drafting and passing crisis legislation. Finally, in Slovenia, the government used the crisis as a pretext to install its people into leading positions in several key state and public institutions. |
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The coronavirus crisis measures that governments implemented around the world constitute a considerable risk for democracy. Firstly, these measures severely restricted several fundamental civil rights, such as freedom of assembly, freedom of speech and the right to privacy. While there was a consensus between governments and most citizens that such restrictions were necessary, it relied upon the assumption that they should be based on law and proportional to the risk. Secondly, these measures were implemented during a time of crisis, when the ordinary system of checks and balances between the executive, legislative and judiciary branch was disrupted. As in other historic examples of a great crisis, the coronavirus has broadened the reach of the state and strengthened the power of the executive (OBRINGER ET AL. 2018).

Recent research indicates the substantial willingness of citizens, faced with this ongoing health emergency, to change parts of the existing constitutional balance in favour of the executive (TEPE ET AL. 2020). This is in line with the notion of a regulative credit, i.e., social support for limitations placed upon a democratic order, including the system of checks and balances, human rights and freedoms in times of great crisis (BRZECHCZYN 2020). However, the problem with this situation is that it creates fertile ground for the consolidation of an authoritarian style of governance and practices within democratic countries. It strengthens the drive towards centralizing state power, using the public health crisis as a pretext. Therefore, political forces interested in furthering democracy need to raise awareness of these developments. They should popularize reforms that make democracy more resilient to crisis and, ultimately, better connected with the citizens. The problems for the democratic and liberal order emerging from a complex background of a public health crisis are both short- and long-term. In the short term, they point towards the need to repair the pre-existing deficiencies in the balance of power system in a crisis situation. In the long term, as argued by Oliver Nay (2020), they indicate the risk that certain exceptional measures might, in the future, fall within the scope of ordinary legislation, and that governments could take advantage of existing technological solutions to establish a permanent citizen surveillance – in other words, that this drift towards a more authoritarian style of governance will become permanent (MAATI – ŠVEDKAUSKAS 2020).

This article seeks to explore how executive responses to the coronavirus crisis impacted the democratic political systems of Croatia, Slovenia and Austria in the period between March and October 2020. Croatia and Slovenia are a frequently selected pair in comparative research due to their shared legacies of functioning within the political system of the former socialist Yugoslavia. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, the democratic developments in both countries went their own way. However, due to historic, economic and political reasons, the governments of both countries pay close attention to all developments across the border. This was particularly true of Croatia, whose progress towards integration into Euro-Atlantic structures was postponed by the Homeland War in the 1990s, and the country frequently looked upon Slovenia as an example in that respect. Austria was brought into the comparison due to the fact that the leading political forces in both Slovenia and Croatia, throughout the transition, considered this country an exemplary example of Western democracy. Therefore, the solutions of the Austrian political system were particularly closely observed. This relationship was further conditioned upon the geographic proximity and economic ties that predated the transition.

Methodologically, the paper uses comparison as a fundamental tool of analysis. While relying on secondary data concerning crisis-related legislation, elections, opinion polls, etc., the article provides an overview of the most important measures and political developments in the observed period. It will use comparison to bring suggestive similarities and contrasts between the cases into focus. Based on the results, it will proceed with conclusions regarding observable patterns and trends that could be useful for research of political systems in times of crisis beyond the narrow scope of the three selected countries. The main research question is how to explain variations in the quality of executive-legislative relations observed during the coronavirus crisis in the three selected countries. The starting hypothesis is that more populist and illiberal governments create more elevated tensions in executive-legislative relations. In countries with such governments, challenges to the established democratic standards are greater, but so is the willingness of legislatives to oversee executive activities.

The article starts with a theoretical section in order to secure a better understanding of the analysis that follows. It starts with the definitions of some basic concepts in political science such as democracy, liberal

democracy, authoritarianism and populism. The section than continues by explaining conceptual and procedural issues related to the notion of executive-legislative relations and the role of the judiciary, which are of key importance in this article. The main section of the article presents various important aspects of the coronavirus crisis in the three countries. It starts with some basic assessments concerning the three political systems. It then indulges in an in-depth analysis of the course of the crisis. The focus is placed upon the types of response measures, crisis-related institutional adaptations and the choice of a legal framework. The following subsections on executive-legislative relations and government popularity are closely related. The core issue in this part is the use of parliamentary oversight tools, which is subsequently correlated with the government's popularity. The main section also assesses the position of the courts. The article ends with a discussion and conclusions section, which is based upon the comparative analysis bringing forward various conclusions and recommendations.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The term democracy is understood as a form of government in which the supreme power is held by the people, and exercised by the people directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections (SEE MERRIAM-WEBSTER 2021). The logic of the democratic model assumes that public officials are responsible for their conduct and accountable to citizens, and that present policies can be challenged (TERCHEK – CONTE 2001). In the article, this term will be used broadly in the sense of including institutions, political parties, civil society, elections, etc. However, a particular focus will be placed upon shifts in executive-legislative relations and balance.

The article touches upon differences between liberal and illiberal concepts of democracy. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify them. In both cases the authorities are elected by the citizens and there is a division into the executive, legislative and judicial branches of power. Nevertheless, in liberal democracy the influence of the executive is limited by the increasing prerogatives of the judicial branch, which can block executive decisions if they violate the rights of various minorities (LILLA 2017: 136). In illiberal democracy the power of the executive branch is greater than the power of the legislative and judicial branches. While liberal democracy puts the individual in its focus, illiberal democracy emphasizes communality at the expense of individual rights and interests (BRZECHCZYN 2020: 86).

Another important terminological distinction for the analysis in this article is that between the authoritarian type of government and the authoritarian style of governance. The common feature of governments belonging to the authoritarian type of government is the enforcement of obedience to a central authority at the expense of personal freedoms, rule of law and other constitutional values and principles (LINZ 2000: 57). The authoritarian type of government is different from a dictatorship that forcibly silences the opposition with fear and repression. In a country with the authoritarian type of government, the democratic majority itself renounces the right to protest and dissent, while people holding minority opinions are isolated and persecuted (RODIN 2008: 235). In contrast, the authoritarian style of governance represents a milder form of democratic backsliding that could be described as the rulers' lack of attention to the variety of existing views (SEE HESLOP 2021).

The term populism should also be addressed. According to Cas Mudde populism represents a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite'. The populists argue that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people (2004: 543). Somewhere along this line of thinking Jan-Werner Müller claims that the most important defining feature of populism is its anti-pluralism because populists act as the only true representatives of the people (2016). Populism is closely related to illiberal democracy because populist leaders try to use the democratic aspect of liberal democracies to undermine liberalism (ZAKARIA 1997).

Since the end of the 17th century, the term 'separation of powers' has designated a core element of a democratic constitutional state. It refers to the institutional and functional differentiation of state power and its distribution among several authorities that are more or less independent in terms of their legitimation and their competences. As a rule, a distinction is made between three powers in this concept: the legislative, executive and judicial branches (STAMMEN 2013). The separation of power represents a relatively open constitutional principle with constants and variants. The necessity to apply it stems from the historic experience which indicates that people in power have a tendency to abuse it (HÄBERLE 2004: 141). The most common understanding of the separation of power is that of a horizontal division between the branches of state power. However, complementary to that core notion is a vertical distinction between state, regional and local

government (STAMMEN 2013). According to Peter Häberle (2013: 142), the fact that free media are sometimes referred to as the 'fourth power' shows that the canon of powers and their functions remains open as the constitutional state develops.

The separation of power in its pure form is often not assessed as a sufficient precaution against the abuse of power because an institution has a monopoly in exercising state authority and is not subject to any real control of power by another institution. The concept of the functional separation of power appears more beneficial, as in it, the exercise of the state authority or function always depends on the interaction of two or more institutions (STAMMEN 2013). The strong functional separation of power with multiple intersections between the legislative and the executive is a characteristic of parliamentary democracies, while presidential systems in general apply a looser form of the functional separation of power (HÄBERLE 2004: 143). To prevent the abuse of power by the legislative, two-chamber parliaments were established in many countries. The two chambers should compete with each other in terms of the exercise of legislative power through finely coordinated competencies (STAMMEN 2013).

Within the presidential system of the United States, the separation of power principle was upgraded by the system of 'checks and balances', which emphasizes the creation of the balance of power through the mutual supervision and restraint of different authorities. In essence, the powers are shared between different holders, whose functions are limited in time (SMERDEL 2013: 16).

Intersections between the legislative and the executive are rooted in the very nature of the legislative process, representing a collaborative exercise between these two branches of power (OLSON 1994). Therefore, the incentive to coordinate these two branches of power, rather than have them confront each other, is inherent in the democratic political framework (CHEIBUB – LIMONGI 2010). This coordination starts with the pre-legislative stage, i.e., the period before a law is proposed to the legislature. Within this phase, governments often form a commission that issues a report that is then widely commented on by the opposition and other interested actors. Subsequently, the legislation is initiated by the executive branch. MPs can also initiate legislation, though this rarely happens in practice because they spend most of their time examining executive proposals. The initiated

legislation can be amended by MPs in both committee and plenary sessions, although the rules of parliamentary procedure can significantly restrict the use of this option. Finally, once the proposed law secures legislative approval, the executive enacts it.

Apart from the legislative process, another prominent task of assemblies is their oversight of executive bodies. Here it is important to note that parliaments represent the plurality of social interests, where political positions of the society as a whole are represented (HÄBERLE 2004: 147). There are various oversight tools available to MPs, but one broad distinction is temporal, i.e., whether the oversight happens in anticipation of a government decision (*ex ante*) or as a mere reaction to it (*ex post*). Research has shown that parliaments can play a better strategic role when they act in the *ex ante* stage rather than the *ex post* stage (PELIZZO – STAPENHURST 2014). With the oversight mechanisms such as inquiries, questions, interpellations, votes on declarations, etc. assemblies can make sure that governments are politically accountable. However, they can also require the government to explain the choices it proposes, the appropriateness of the allocated resources, possible malfunctions, etc. (RIDARD – FOURMONT 2020: 12).

The theory of the 'decline of legislatures' was elaborated by Lord Bryce after the First World War. From his liberal perspective, the 19th century was considered a golden period for parliaments. In the 20th century, with mass democracy and further development of parties, parliaments entered into a decline. Public policy has increasingly been initiated and formulated by the executive (SANCHEZ DE DIOS 2014: 3). In recent decades, the trend of marginalizing representative assemblies has intensified, and the executive-legislative balance has further tilted towards the executive. The reasons for this are numerous and complex: from the increased technical complexity of decision-making to the collapse of the traditional architecture of the separation of powers and transformations ensuing from globalization (GRIGLIO 2020). However, the executive has not reduced the power of the parliament as in the zero-sum game process. Assemblies have also increased their activities, though at a slower pace than executives (SANCHEZ DE DIOS 2014: 3). This development is not without problems from the perspective of legitimacy, as it is only through elections that the legislative sovereignty is transferred from the people to the parliament as the second-order sovereign. The parliament then elects the executive as the third-order sovereign. Therefore, the executive derives its sovereignty only indirectly through this graded process (MERKEL 2020; SCHARPF 1975).

The disruption of the executive-legislative balance in favour of the executive is further heightened in times of crisis. Such situations create a sense of emergency which allows the executive to assert greater authority at the expense of the legislature (BAR-SIMAN-TOV 2020). Moreover, because of their deliberative nature, the legislative and judicial branches tend to play a reactive role in times of crisis (SELIN 2020). The coronavirus crisis measures, in particular, have made it difficult for legislatures to operate, as they run contrary to the basic principles of their work, which is based on the assembly of many people together (BAR-SIMAN-TOV 2020). It is within this broader context that the oversight role of the parliament, ranging from accountability to investigations, becomes crucial. First, legislative control over actions of emergency authorities is important for safeguarding the rule of law and due to infringements in respect of individual freedoms. Second, parliaments need to examine the emergency actions for their compliance with the standards of accountability, transparency and inclusiveness. Third, the legal quality of the emergency legislation needs to be proofed (GRIGLIO 2020). Last but not least, the proportionality of the adopted measures also needs checking because of the possible danger that leaders could use the crisis as an excuse for political power-grabbing motivations. In all of this, the leading role of the opposition is crucial because in times of crisis, oversight responses tend to strive for a cross-party consensus that may dilute the oversight outcomes (SEE GRIGLIO 2020).

The intersections and interdependences between the legislative and the executive underline the importance of having an independent judiciary. It is of key importance to assure the independence of judges, and these must be irremovable and independent from possible guidelines sent by representatives of the other two branches (HÄBERLE 2004: 143). It is also important that judges stay away from the influence of political parties. They must work within the framework of a rationally secured methodological canon, considering all cases according to the ultimate and penultimate standards of fairness. The judiciary, as such, must be separated from other state functions (IBID.: 153–154). Nevertheless, in an emergency situation, judges tend to exercise restraint, and legal texts that guarantee the rights of individuals in a democracy are often not respected to the letter. Representatives of the people in the legislative assemblies are generally considered better equipped to control changes in the rule of law and executive actions (RIDARD – FOURMONT 2020: 5).

## THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS IN CROATIA, SLOVENIA AND AUSTRIA

### Three political systems

All three of these countries are parliamentary democracies. They all directly elect their presidents but in all three, the institution of the president is mostly ceremonial and limited in terms of its powers. All three countries have proportional electoral systems. Croatia has a unicameral parliament, while the parliaments of Slovenia and Austria are bicameral. However, the upper chambers of the Slovenian and Austrian parliament enjoy only limited powers such as the power to delay legislation, and they are indirectly elected. Austria is a federal state composed of nine federal provinces that elect their regional parliaments. Both Slovenia and Croatia could be described as unitary states. Where Slovenia does not have a regional level of government, Croatia is divided into 21 regional units, though their powers are mostly administrative. All three countries have adopted the possibility of preferential voting, meaning that citizens, in addition to the possibility of voting for a specific ballot, have the right to select a certain candidate from that list. Nevertheless, in Slovenia preferential voting is currently allowed only at the EP elections. Preferential voting has, arguably to some extent, reduced the power that was concentrated in the hands of the political party leaders. In all three countries, there is some experience with direct democracy at national and lower levels. Slovenia used to have one of the most liberal direct democracy regimes in the world. However, since the constitutional changes introduced in 2013 this institution has been weakened and does not play that important a role. The introduced changes allowed the referendum only to be proposed by voters, limited the scope of the referendum's content and introduced further limitations through the establishment of a quorum of rejection (ŽUBER – KAUČIČ 2019: 140). All three countries have constitutional courts that rule on whether the laws that are challenged are in fact unconstitutional.

The coronavirus crisis struck Croatia in the last year of the mandate of the coalition government of the centre-right HDZ party and the liberal HNS party. In Slovenia, the crisis struck in a delicate political situation. The centre-left coalition government led by Prime Minister Marjan Šarec declared an epidemic on 12 March 2020. However, just one day later, on 13 March, the new coalition government led by Janez Janša, was sworn in.

Janša managed to obtain the support of the parties on the right side of the political spectrum. Finally, in Austria, the crisis happened at the beginning of the mandate of the centrist coalition of the centre-right ÖVP and centre-left Green Party. The Freedom House 'Freedom in the World 2019' report views all three countries as 'Free', and notes that all three countries respect civil and political rights. However, while Austria (93/100) and Slovenia (94/100) obtained relatively high scores for this variable, the score for Croatia was somewhat lower (85/100), which was due mostly to the corruption in the public sector and the existence of patronage networks around civil servants. The difference between Slovenia and Croatia is also corroborated by the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), which in the year 2020 gave Slovenia the high score of 9.27/10.0, while Croatia was rated 7.91/10.0 (BTI, 2020). Nevertheless, some other institutional quality ratings such as the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI) place Slovenia much lower than Austria (see Table 1).

**TABLE 1: TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL CORRUPTION PERCEPTION INDEX**

| Country | Score | Rank |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Austria | 76/100 | 15/180 |
| Slovenia | 60/100 | 35/180 |
| Croatia | 47/100 | 63/180 |

Source: Transparency International 2020.

## The course of the crisis

The epidemic in Croatia, Slovenia and Austria unfolded in three principal phases. The first acute phase, starting in early March and ending in early May, was characterized by a rapid growth of infections and strict implementation of response measures. During this period there were mobility restrictions for persons who were sent into self-isolation. Moreover, citizens were not allowed to leave their place of residence. Freedom of assembly was temporarily suspended. Lastly, between mid-March and mid-May substantial restrictions on business and education activities were imposed (see Table 2). In the second phase, between early May and late June, the spread of the disease was contained. Most of the restrictions were abandoned and the countries opened their borders to travel. In the third phase, since the end of June, the epidemic has returned to its initial power. Mandatory wearing of protective masks in shops and public transport was preserved along with some other measures, but the governments were unwilling to

re-introduce a total lockdown. The national approach in containing the epidemic was replaced with a more regional and local approach. In Austria, a four-color coronavirus traffic-light system was introduced in September 2020 to help avoid further pandemic waves. In this system the colours green (low risk), yellow (medium risk), orange (high risk) and red (acute situation) are used to indicate epidemiological situations down to the district level.

TABLE 2: TYPES OF RESPONSE MEASURES DURING THE ACUTE PHASE OF THE CRISIS

| Type of measure | Austria | Croatia | Slovenia |
|---|---|---|---|
| Closure of educational institutions | √ | √ | √ |
| Closure of hotels/places of accommodation | √ | √ | √ |
| Closure of gyms/sports centres | √ | √ | √ |
| Closure of public transport | | √ | √ |
| Closures of non-essential shops | √ | √ | √ |
| Closure of entertainment venues | √ | √ | √ |
| Closure of restaurants and cafes/bars | √ | √ | √ |
| Limited mass/public gatherings | √ | √ | √ |
| Teleworking recommendation | NA | √ | NA |
| Closures of workplaces | | | √ |
| Stay-at-home orders for the general population | √ | √ | √ |
| Mask mandatory in closed spaces | √ | √ | √ |
| Restrictions on private gatherings | √ | √ | √ |

Source: Author's compilation based on ECDC 2021, NA = Not Available.

Already in February 2020, both Croatia and Slovenia established a National Civil Protection Headquarters as a special body composed of experts and politicians in charge of handling the coronavirus epidemic. In Croatia, this body was headed by the Minister of the Interior and operated in close cooperation with the Minister of Health, who appeared at press conferences. In Slovenia, the National Headquarters lasted only about a month and on 24 March, this body was dismissed due to public outcry concerning its legality. This in turn strengthened the institutional role of the Ministry of Health and the National Institute of Public Health. Placing the National Headquarters in Croatia and the National Institute of Public Health in Slovenia at the forefront of anti-epidemic efforts allowed the national governments to focus primarily on measures aimed at helping the economy. In Austria, the role of experts in managing the crisis was less exposed (TRAXLER ET AL. 2020). On the one hand, the Ministry of Health

established the Coronavirus Taskforce as an advisory group consisting of ten people from the ministry. On the other hand, the ministry also organized an external advisory group consisting of 17 experts, half of whom were scientists, mostly virologists, from Austrian universities and research institutes. The problem with such a broad network of consulted experts was that it was not always clear who was advising the minister and on what grounds.

The parliaments in all three countries continued sitting without interruption throughout the crisis. In Croatia, a special regime was implemented in March and April whereby discussions during plenary sittings were attended only by two MPs from each party club (28 MPs of 151) in order to comply with the generally prescribed distancing rules. Furthermore, a significant portion of the work of parliamentary committees was performed on-line, mostly relying on e-mail communication. In May, changes to the rules of procedure of the parliament which took into account its functioning in the epidemic circumstances, were adopted. Similar measures were implemented in both Austria and Slovenia. The Slovenian parliament enabled sessions from a distance due to the coronavirus (EURACTIV 2020). In Austria during the acute phase of the crisis, the number of MPs in the lower house was reduced from 183 to 96 and in the upper house from 61 to 31. This, in theory, allowed even for the making of constitutional changes (BERLIZ ET AL. 2020). Nevertheless, technical and procedural difficulties hampered the proper conduct of the debate (RIDARD – FOURMONT 2020: 9). Furthermore, they limited the possibilities for effective oversight of the executive during the acute phase of the crisis (see Table 3).

**TABLE 3: STANDARD NUMBERS OF MPS AND REDUCTIONS/ CHANGES DURING THE ACUTE PHASE OF THE CRISIS**

| Type of chamber | Austria | | Croatia | | Slovenia | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | standard | crisis | standard | crisis | standard | crisis |
| Upper chamber | 61 | 31 | / | / | 40 | distance sessions |
| Lower chamber | 183 | 96 | 151 | 28 | 90 | distance sessions |

Source: Author's compilation.

A state of emergency was not declared by the governing coalitions in any of the three countries (see Table 4). In Croatia, if the government were to declare a state of emergency, all restrictions of civil rights and freedoms would require the support of a two-thirds majority in the parliament. Moreover, the duration of the state of emergency would have to be clearly defined and its prolongation would equally require a two-thirds majority,

i.e., cooperation with the opposition (ČULAR 2020; ZAKOŠEK 2020). Instead of taking this expected route, the government proceeded with its regular *modus operandi* of enacting decisions which are often backed by a simple parliamentary majority. The restrictive measures enacted by the National Headquarters were based on the Act on Protection of the Populace from Infectious Diseases, the Civil Defence System Act and several other laws. Subsequently, in April 2020, the Act on Protection of the Populace from Infectious Diseases was amended to retroactively legalize the measures that had been previously implemented. The proposal was initially discussed at the Committee on Health and Social Policy of the Croatian Parliament. There it barely passed because six members voted for the proposed changes while five abstained (HS 2020A). Afterwards the amendments to the act were voted on with 80 votes in favour, 21 against and 16 abstentions (HS 2020B). The strategy of not declaring a state of emergency was criticized by the opposition Social Democrats, the president of the republic and one judge of the Constitutional Court. It seems clear that declaring a state of emergency would have left the Croatian government much more dependent on the positions of its parliament, which was something that the government successfully avoided.

TABLE 4: GOVERNING COALITIONS AND MAIN OPPOSITION
PARTIES DURING THE ACUTE PHASE OF THE CRISIS

| Country | Governing coalition | Main opposition parties |
|---|---|---|
| Austria | ÖVP (centre right) and the Green Party | SPÖ (Social Democrats) and the right-wing Freedom Party |
| Slovenia | SDS (right-wing) and various other parties on the right | SD (Social Democrats) and various other parties on the left |
| Croatia | HDZ (centre right), the liberals and national minority MPs | SDP (Social Democrats) and the right-wing Bridge Party |

Source: Author's compilation.

In Slovenia, a state of emergency was not declared, likely due to the fact that in such circumstances, the Slovenian Constitution prescribes a transfer of power from the government to the president. Therefore, as the basis for the implementation of restrictions, the government relied on the Communicable Diseases Act and a series of anti-Corona laws. Finally, in Austria, a state of emergency was not declared because the Constitution does not envisage such an option. Not declaring a state of emergency, regardless of the constitutional possibility of doing so, is not specific only to Slovenia and Croatia. A similar situation was recorded in Germany, where a state of emergency was not declared despite the fact that the Basic Law provides for it. It was

argued that the effects associated with these constitutional provisions would not allow for a meaningful response to the public health crisis. Instead, through amendments to the Infection Protection Act, a tendency towards centralization started to emerge, both from the states to the federal government and from the federal parliament to the federal government (RIDARD – FOURMONT 2020).

### Executive-legislative relations

At the beginning of the crisis in Croatia, Prime Minister Andrej Plenković attempted to activate a legislative derogation which would have allowed the government to take over certain functions of the parliament by issuing decrees with legal force. This corroborates the insight that in times of crisis a sense of emergency is created, allowing the executive to assert greater authority at the expense of the legislature (SEE BAR-SIMAN-TOV 2020). However, after resistance from the opposition parties, the proposal was abandoned and it was never included on the parliamentary agenda.

In Slovenia, the new Prime Minister Janez Janša increasingly spoke about the need to establish the 'second republic', which would imply majoritarian electoral rules, a strengthening of the executive and changes in the judiciary (FINK-HAFNER 2020: 25). Therefore, it is not surprising that the government used the crisis to consolidate its power and push Slovenia towards a more illiberal type of regime and a more authoritarian style of governance. In the weeks after his coming to power, Janša replaced the leadership of the criminal police, the director of the National Institute for Public Health and members of the Public Broadcasting Programme Council. Later on, he even replaced the director of the Statistical Office, who refused to pass data to a member of the government group for the preparation of anti-Corona measures. The authoritarian style of the new Slovenian government also came to the forefront from its strained relations with most of the media (FINK-HAFNER 2020; LUKŠIĆ 2020B).

The opposition resisted the new authoritarian style of governance through tireless work, primarily in the National Assembly. In late April 2020, the opposition parties filed an interpellation concerning the Minister of Economy, who was accused of tolerating non-transparent procurement of medical equipment. After much debate, however, there was not a sufficient amount of MP support to organize a vote of no-confidence against the minister. The opposition also intended to initiate an inquiry commission in the National Assembly to investigate the public procurement of medical

equipment. The government MPs anticipated this and immediately initiated their own inquiry commission to look into the matter, which disabled the opposition in presiding over the inquiry. Nevertheless, by the end of June, opposition pressure over the medical equipment scandal led to the resignations of both the General Director of Police and the Minister of Home Affairs. All of this indicates that in the crisis, Slovenian MPs were very active in exercising the oversight role of the parliament. They were not satisfied with mere information on the government's crisis-related conduct. Instead, they reached for non-deliberative oversight mechanisms, such as interpellations, which envisage multiple relational patterns between government representatives and MPs. They also reached for deliberative oversight mechanisms, which require a vote in the plenary, such as an inquiry commission, to combat irregularities rooted in the more assertive role of the executive (SEE GRIGLIO 2020: 15–17).

In Austria, the opposition missed the opportunity to take a more active role in managing the crisis through proper oversight of government actions. That became impossible in mid-March after the parliament unanimously agreed to the Covid-19 Measures Act, which marginalized its role by giving the government the authority to issue ordinances (EHS 2020: 16). The validity of most measures issued under the Covid-19 Measures Act was set to expire on 31 December 2020, which represented a very broad time frame and discouraged parliamentary debate on the measures in the meantime (MATZKA 2020). Moreover, at the beginning of the crisis, the opposition in the Parliament missed the opportunity to request a launching of a Corona commission, a deliberative oversight mechanism which would subject the government's anti-Corona measures to supplementary critical reflection. A united opposition arguably could have pushed this through in exchange for their general support for the government (EHS 2020: 16). Faced with their failure, at the end of April the opposition parties cancelled their support for the second wave of crisis related legislation without an appraisal process to explain its urgency. They justified their actions by pointing to the low quality of the proposed legislation and the unwillingness of the government to accept their ideas.

### Government popularity

Legislative changes that would allow governments to trace infected persons, or even healthy individuals under special circumstances, via a mobile

phone application were attempted in all three states. However, in all the cases, the governments were not successful and the proposals were abandoned. In Croatia, the government attempted to introduce tracking apps via changes to the Electronic Communications Act. This was heavily criticized by the opposition, civil society and the media. In late March, 46 civil society associations signed a petition asking the government to withdraw the draft law (UDRUGA LET 2020). In response to this massive outcry, the government sent these legislative changes into the regular instead of the urgent parliamentary procedure, which sealed its fate as the parliament was dissolved in May 2020.

In Austria a geo-location mobile phone application was launched on 25 March 2020 and became the first tracking app in operation released in the EU. Among other things it provides its users with a possibility to report a 'suspicion of COVID-19 infection'. Nevertheless, with only 15% of the population using the app, its utilization remained low. The reason behind this is probably the political debate about people potentially being forced to download the app, which has negatively resonated with the public (STEHLIKOVÁ 2021: 53–55).

In Slovenia, at the very beginning of the crisis, the government wanted to give the police special health crisis-related powers that would enable them to track mobile phones, use facial recognition technology and enter homes. The concept was put aside only after it failed to gain sufficient support in the National Assembly and after the Commissioner for Information, as an independent body, warned against it. Months later, the idea was resurrected but experienced the same fate (STOLTON 2020).

At the end of April 2020, a governing majority in the lower house of the Austrian parliament-initiated amendments to the Epidemic Disease Act that would allow further limitations on public gatherings. It prescribed that in the future, such gatherings could be limited to certain groups of people. The opposition protested strongly, fearing that this could lead to discrimination of Corona risk groups or those who refuse to install tracking devices on their mobile phones (EHS 2020: 70; STEHLIKOVÁ 2021: 56). In the parliamentary committee in charge of health, the opposition requested a review process of this proposal, which was rejected by the opposition MPs, who argued that it would take too much time. The opposition MPs then vetoed the proposal in the parliament's upper house. Due to the limited powers

of the upper house, this merely prolonged the process of adopting the law. However, the prolonged period was useful as it allowed for corrections to the original proposal (IBID: 71). This corroborates the insight that in times of crisis, second chambers could be useful in mitigating the negative impacts of emergency legislation (SEE STAMMEN 2013).

In Croatia, despite a failed attempt at installing tracking apps on mobile phones, the citizens' overall perception of the emergency management was positive. This is visible from the April 2020 polling results, which indicated a lead for the ruling HDZ party (CRO DEMOSKOP 2020). Therefore, the government decided to capitalize on its popularity and, in May, called for early parliamentary elections to be held in July, two months earlier than when the regular elections were supposed to be held. Despite the fact that the Croatian Constitution provides the parliamentary majority with the power to dissolve the parliament at will and thereby call for early elections, a great majority of the opposition MPs also supported this move. The elections held on 5 July proved victorious for the ruling HDZ party, which took 37.3% of the votes (66 mandates) and came out as the relative winner (see Table 5). Shortly afterwards, HDZ was able to form a ruling majority supported by two small liberal parties and national minority representatives. The timing of the elections after the harsh but arguably successful management of the pandemic worked in favour of the ruling HDZ. Similar patterns of voter behaviour were observed in other countries which held national elections in 2020, such as Georgia (SEE MACHITIDZE – TEMIROV 2020: 89). The main opposition party, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), and its coalition suffered a strong electoral defeat, receiving only 24.9% of the vote (41 mandates). One part of the problem for the SDP was the fragmentation on the left because some of their traditional voters voted for other left-wing parties which appeared in these elections. The other part arguably had to do with the narrative of the SDP election campaign, which overwhelmingly focussed on general themes such as inequality and corruption. The more current debate about whether the restrictions were proportional to the threat, whether the costs of the lockdown were too high and whether the chosen legal framework for dealing with the crisis was appropriate has been ignored. Also, some shadow on the legitimacy of the elections was cast by the fact that the turnout was only 46.9%, making this the lowest turnout in the national elections since 1990 (DIP 2020).

**TABLE 5: RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS TO THE CROATIAN PARLIAMENT IN JULY 2020**

| Party | Number of votes | Percentage of votes | Number of MPs | Compared to previously |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| HDZ | 621,008 | 37.3 | 66 | ↑ |
| SDP | 414,615 | 24.9 | 41 | ↓ |
| Homeland Movement | 181,492 | 10.9 | 16 | NEW |
| Bridge Party | 123,194 | 7.4 | 8 | ↓ |
| We Can! | 116,480 | 7.0 | 7 | NEW |
| PFLN led coalition | 66,399 | 4.0 | 3 | ↓ |
| HNS | 21,725 | 1.3 | 1 | ↓ |
| Reformers | 11,425 | 1.0 | 1 | NEW |
| National minorities | 30,722 | 1.84 | 8 | = |

Source: DIP 2020.

In Slovenia, the public confidence that the government was making the right decisions in dealing with the epidemic increased from 58 to 76% from mid-March to mid-April. Likewise, support for the government increased from 42% to 64% (LUKŠIĆ 2000A). However, the opinion poll implemented in mid-June indicated that if elections were to be held then, Janša's ruling coalition would come in second with 40 MPs while the centre-left opposition parties would come in first with 48 MPs (RTV SLO 2020). This shift in the popular sentiment reflected the growing dissatisfaction among many citizens with the severity of the taken measures, and a concern that the government was using the crisis as a pretext to consolidate its own power. This dissatisfaction was articulated by the 'Friday protests', which started as cyclists' protests, since cycling was permitted while pedestrian gatherings were not. The largest of these protests took place in Ljubljana on 8 May, when more than 10,000 cyclists gathered around the Parliament. Simultaneously, cyclists' protests also took place in other larger Slovenian cities. These protests were organized by 24 different NGOs and all were mostly peaceful (FINK-HAFNER 2020). Nevertheless, there were also some instances where violent anti-protestors tried to confront the protestors.

In Austria, the popularity of the government parties increased under the crisis circumstances. According to a poll implemented in early April, the support for the centre-right ÖVP led by the Prime Minister Sebastian Kurz increased from 38 to 43%, while the approval of its coalition partner, the Green Party, increased from 14 to 19%. Simultaneously, the strongest opposition parties, the centre-left SPÖ and the right-wing Freedom Party,

lost some support $\overline{\text{(VIENNA ONLINE 2020B)}}$. This trend was later confirmed in the Styrian regional elections at the end of June $\overline{\text{(ORF – STEIERMARK 2020)}}$.

### The positions of the courts

The Croatian legal framework does not envisage any alternative to voting in person, such as mail-in or online voting. Therefore, at the end of June, the State Election Commission announced that infected citizens would not be permitted to vote in the general elections in July, as this could pose a threat to others. However, at the request of an opposition MP, the Constitutional Court issued an opinion urging the State Election Commission to determine a procedure that would allow infected people to vote $\overline{\text{(USRH 2020A)}}$. Shortly afterwards, this was achieved through the instrument of a 'trusted person'. In mid-September, the Constitutional Court issued a decision indicating that all measures implemented in the course of the coronavirus crisis were in accordance with the Constitution. The only exception was the measure prohibiting work on Sunday in the retail sector. The decision was not unanimous; it was supported by nine of twelve judges, while the three remaining judges voted against it, providing their dissenting opinions $\overline{\text{(USRH 2020B)}}$. These dissenting opinions have legal significance because in future decisions on this or similar matters, they could even become majority opinions. One of the main objections of the three judges was that harsh measures such as the national lockdown were not proportionate to the level of the posed threat $\overline{\text{(IBID.)}}$.

In Slovenia, the Constitutional Court also played a role in limiting the government's desire to reduce civil rights due to the public health crisis. Acting upon an anonymous initiative, it started a constitutional review procedure for the decree on the temporary prohibition of movement and gathering in public places. As a consequence, the government needed to water down that decree. It was obliged to periodically check, based on the opinions of experts, whether the adopted measures were still proportionate to the posed threat $\overline{\text{(FINK-HAFNER 2020)}}$. In August 2020, the Constitutional Court of Slovenia assessed the constitutionality of two government decrees adopted to combat and control the epidemic, namely the decrees on the temporary general ban on movement and gathering in public places and on movement outside municipalities. In its decision, the court ruled that there were no unconstitutional elements in the regulations, which had ceased to be valid in the meantime. However, as in Croatia, the decision was not

unanimous but supported by six of nine judges, while the remaining three judges provided their dissenting opinions (USRS 2020).

The role of the courts was arguably most important in Austria. In the acute phase of the coronavirus crisis, Austrian authorities issued around 30,000 fines to individuals who breached restrictions on the freedom of movement and assembly. These fines were issued for breaches of a regulation published by the Minister of Health that prohibited entrance to all public places, with several exceptions (supermarkets, pharmacies, etc.). However, already in May, the Provincial Administrative Court in Lower Austria ruled in favour of an individual that all restrictions based on the purpose of entering a public place are against the law (EHS 2020: 35). Therefore, at the end of May, opposition MPs requested a general refund for all collected fines, but it was refused by the ruling majority. In July, all fines collected in Lower Austria were paid back, but it remains open whether other federal states will follow that example (IBID: 36). In its decision of 22 July 2020, the Austrian Constitutional Court also noted that the ordinance prohibiting entry into public places was partly illegal. The Court stressed that based on the Covid-19 Measures Act, entering certain places may be prohibited, but people cannot be ordered to stay at a certain location, in particular at their home (VFGH 2020).

A particularly unfortunate legal episode in the course of the coronavirus crisis in Austria was the 'Easter Decree'. On 1 April, the Minister of Health issued a decree to limit visits in private homes during the Easter holidays. Gatherings of more than five people not sharing the same household were prohibited. The outcry of the opposition parties and many lawyers was great, mostly because of the vague language in the decree, which could have implied house searches aimed at determining abidance by the decree (JELENKO-BENEDIKT 2020). Finally, on 6 April, the decree was withdrawn as it had no legal grounds, though the government continued communicating as though its content was still legally valid, which created great confusion and an increased sense of legal uncertainty. In numerous cases, administrative criminal proceedings were incorrectly initiated by police, and such proceedings were only prevented if those affected defended themselves through legal action (EHS 2020: 32–33).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

It is historically well-documented that crisis circumstances strengthen the executive and upset the pre-existing executive-legislative balance. Therefore, within every crisis lies the potential for establishing a more authoritarian style of governance and longer-term destabilization of a political system. In such a context, the legislative and judiciary are called to double down on their efforts. The legislative, and opposition MPs in particular, need to strengthen their oversight of the executive to control and improve both the content and the proportionality of the emergency legislation (SEE GRIGLIO 2020). This is easier said than done, however, because during a crisis, governments feel pressured to act quickly, which may be at odds with established democratic practices. Furthermore, during such times, the executives are strengthened by regulative credit, i.e., social support for limitations placed upon the democratic order (BRZECHCZYN 2020).

With that in mind, this article chronologically examined the coronavirus crisis responses in Croatia, Slovenia and Austria to determine if there were variations and, if so, why they occurred. What was apparent is that in all three countries, a tendency of the executive was observed to pursue a more authoritarian style of governance that pertains to containing the role of the legislative. Moreover, at the very beginning of the crisis, the parliaments in all three countries allowed the respective governments to concentrate power concerning crisis management. In Croatia, the parliament rejected the option of activating a legislative derogation that would allow the government to take over certain functions of the parliament by issuing decrees with legal force. However, in both Croatia and Slovenia, the parliaments hardly protested in reaction to the fact that the respective governments avoided declaring a state of the emergency. This would have arguably constrained these governments by binding them to a more complicated decision-making process, where a lot of power would be shared with the assemblies and the institution of the president. In all three countries, legislation enacted for the management of the public health crisis marginalized the role of the parliament, but the parliament itself approved of this.

After this initial miss, pressure for oversight of the executive increased and tensions in the executive-legislative relations became observable. However, this tendency was more intense in Slovenia than in Croatia

or Austria. This confirms our starting hypothesis: that more populist and illiberal governments, such as the Slovene government under Janša's leadership, cause more elevated tensions with the legislative. This leads to greater challenges in maintaining democratic standards, but also a greater willingness of the legislatives to oversee executive activities. In all three countries, opposition MPs together with civil society groups disabled government proposals for introducing tracking apps. Nevertheless, in Croatia, their overall attitude could be described as insufficiently active and this transferred into the July 2020 general elections, where the opportunity to confront the government with alternative solutions concerning the management of the crisis, was missed. In Austria, opposition MPs tried to compensate for failing to mobilize against the March Covid-19 Measures Act through their work in parliamentary committees and the plenary aimed at improving the crisis legislation. Still, the results of the Styrian elections show that their overall behaviour in the crisis did not leave a lasting impression on most voters. Part of the problem in Austria was that the two largest opposition parties, SPÖ and the Freedom Party, have very different ideological backgrounds, markedly hindering their cooperation.

In Croatia and Austria, the oversight activities of the parliament were limited to questioning of government officials in the plenary and committees. The oversight activities of the Slovenian MPs were on a different scale. First, they filed an interpellation against the Minister of Economy, who was accused of tolerating non-transparent procurement of medical equipment. Second, they intended to initiate an inquiry commission in the parliament to comprehensively investigate the public procurement. Third, the pressure of the opposition during plenary sittings and in committees concerning the medical equipment scandal ultimately led to resignations of senior government officials. Fourth, they publicly unmasked numerous government attempts to take over institutions by placing those loyal to them in leading positions in these institutions. In some cases, these takeovers were slowed or even disabled by the MPs. In the area of legislative activities, as in the other two countries, Slovenian MPs managed to improve the crisis-related legislative proposals. Also, the efforts of Slovenian opposition MPs were rewarded with the growing popularity of their parties, but such a development was not recorded in either Austria or Croatia.

However, when evaluating the successes of the Slovenian MPs, one should not lose sight of the fact that the pressure on independent intuitions

and the rule of law by the PM Janez Janša was not comparable to the reality of the political situations in Austria and Croatia, which were more conventional. Therefore, the success of the Slovenian MPs may rather be attributed to a political crisis caused by Janša's exceptionally authoritarian style of governance and his efforts to move Slovenia towards illiberal democracy, rather than to superior institutional and legislative solutions during the public health crisis. As in Austria and Croatia, Slovenian MPs essentially played a reactive role. In other words, instead of using *ex ante* oversight tools, as the most advanced forms of parliamentary oversight (SEE PELIZZO – STAPENHURST 2014), they settled for *ex post* ones.

The role of the judiciary in correcting actions approved by the other two branches was also important during the crisis. In Slovenia, the intervention of the Constitutional Court started a review process that obliged the government to periodically check the proportionality of adopted measures. In Croatia, the Constitutional Court contributed to the rapid establishment of a procedure allowing infected people to cast their vote during the elections. In both countries, the Constitutional Courts ruled that there were no serious unconstitutional elements in the emergency legislation that limited freedom of movement during the acute phase of the crisis. Nevertheless, in both countries, these decisions were not unanimous, which is not without significance for further legal handling of this topic. In Austria, the Constitutional Court arguably contributed the most towards containing or even reversing the consequences of certain government actions. The fact that the Constitutional Courts in Slovenia and Croatia, for the time being, refrained from such drastic decisions corroborates the insight that in a time of crisis, judges tend to exercise restraint (SEE RIDARD – FOURMONT 2020). Nevertheless, this is likely also a result of the better legal grounds for emergency measures in these countries. It should also be noted that the core preoccupation in the critical decision of the Austrian Constitutional Court was the fining of citizens for not conforming to emergency measures. While widespread in Austria, that practice was rare in Slovenia and Croatia, where it was mostly applied to cases of breaching the rules of self-isolation.

There are many similarities in the approaches and measures implemented by the three governments and three parliaments in managing the coronavirus crisis. In the acute phase of the crisis the types of response measures were almost identical and there were many similarities in how

the work of the MPs was reorganized. Likewise, all three countries heavily relied on the work of experts to justify some of the implemented measures. This could partly be attributed to the fact that the pandemic is a global phenomenon as well as to learning spillovers stemming from debates and coordination at the EU level. Nevertheless, these similarities could partly rather be attributed to the aforementioned geographic proximity and strong economic and political ties between the three countries. For example, the process of moving away from the national towards a more regional approach in containing the epidemic was initiated in Austria in late summer 2020, and soon after that, it was accepted as a model in Slovenia and Croatia as well. Another example refers to the issue of declaring the state of emergency, as the approaches taken in Croatia and Slovenia in this regard were very similar.

The coronavirus crisis highlighted the pre-existing deficiencies of the political and legal systems in all three countries (SEE NAY 2020). First, it has raised the need to adopt an unequivocal constitutional definition of a state of emergency. The fact that the governments in Slovenia and Croatia decided to bypass this topic means that the existing legislation on a state of emergency there is in need of review. Second, it has pointed towards a need for institutional strengthening of the oversight function of the legislative in times of a public health crisis. One proposition here could be making a parliamentary inquiry commission run by the opposition a mandatory requirement. The leading role of the opposition in this and similar efforts is of key importance because party discipline usually restrains the parliamentary majority from taking more independent actions. Third, the Corona crisis has called for a clearer legislative determination of the role of science in a public health crisis in terms of decision-making processes. It needs to be clearly emphasized that this role is purely advisory, as the responsibility for decisions made should always lie with the elected officials. Fourth, the crisis underlined the necessity of assuring that elections could be implemented under such circumstances. This would imply practical and legal development of trusted alternatives to voting in person, which are underdeveloped in Croatia. Fifth, it pointed towards a general need for developing a more pluralistic social climate where alternative opinions and solutions would be valued. The fact that the governments in all three countries showed little readiness for debating opposition proposals speaks on that behalf. A general assessment that stems from the experiences of all three countries is that many of the listed pre-existing deficiencies are

shared by them. Therefore, rather than just nationally, the efforts targeted towards overcoming them should also be coordinated transnationally.

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## NOTE

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# Anti-Government Non-State Armed Actors in the Conflict in Eastern Ukraine

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**ABSTRACT**

This article presents the main ANSA involved in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. It focusses on an analysis of the specific phenomenon of the *opolchentsy – Narodnoe opolchenie Donbassa*. The aim of this paper is to introduce and describe these actors and to ground them in certain theoretical conceptions. The paper also tracks the changing motivations of the various ANSA brought under the umbrella of the quasi-state actor *NOD* throughout the conflict, and the changing array of formations that made up the *opolchenie* during a particular period of time. Evidently, the *opolchenie* do not fit into the usual classifications of ANSA.

The armed conflict in eastern Ukraine began to attract scholarly attention immediately after the start of the hostilities. The tension in this region was inseparably linked with the events that preceded the fighting: the overthrow of President Yanukovich during the so-called Euromaidan and Russia's annexation of Crimea that directly followed. A number of papers have analysed Russia's role in the conflict, the relations between Moscow and Kiev, and the response by the international community (HAUKKALA 2015; MALYARENKO – WOLFF 2018). Others have focussed on the military operations or the political, social and humanitarian situation in the region (KATCHANOVSKI 2016; ROBINSON 2016; KUDELIA 2016). Few, however, have analysed the armed actors, and those that have done so tended to focus on the state actors: the Ukrainian army and the Russian armed forces in the region (KUDELIA 2014; PIECHAL 2015). There is a huge amount of typological research available about armed non-state actors (ANSA), but since the beginning of the conflict in the Donbas, no one has tried to view *Narodnoe opolchenie Donbassa* (or *opolchentsy*) through the prism of existing conceptual studies. The fighting in Eastern Ukraine is still ongoing, and this, of course, makes it difficult to obtain information from this region.

This paper seeks to fill this lacuna by analysing ANSA who either have been engaged on the side of the pro-Russian separatists or irredentists or have been created by these separatists. This means that the study does not address ANSA fighting on Ukraine's side. The aim of this paper is to introduce and describe these actors and to ground them in the theoretical conceptions introduced below. The paper also tracks the changing motivations of the various ANSA brought under the umbrella quasi-state actor *Narodnoe opolchenie Donbassa* throughout the conflict, and the changing array of formations that made up the *opolchenie* during a particular period of time.

In the following text, the conceptualisation of armed non-state actors (ANSA) will be followed by the specification of the methods of research. Then the authors will explore the phenomenon of the *Narodnoe opolchenie Donbassa*, and then the transformations and metamorphoses of the NOD during the conflict will be analysed. Afterwards there will be an interpretation of the results of the study.

## CONCEPTUALISING ARMED NON-STATE ACTORS

The issue of *armed non-state actors* (ANSA) or *violent non-state actors* (VNSA) has been broadly treated in the literature (SALEHYAN 2009; WILLIAMS 2008; THOMAS – KISER – CASEBEER 2005; MULAJ 2010). For the purposes of this paper, we largely rely on Mair (2003), Schneckener (2006) and Williams (2008). Mair (2003) defined four ideal types of armed non-state actors: criminal organisations; terrorist organisations; warlords; and insurgents or rebels. He provides four essential criteria for classification into the four types: motivations; target groups; geographical scope; and objectives. Within each of these criteria, Mair (2003) distinguishes a dichotomy. He specifies two motivations – political and economic, as well as two target groups – either official security forces and competing groups, or the civilian population. The geographical scope, then, can be limited and clearly defined, or global. And, finally, the objective is either to overthrow and replace the existing government or to coexist with it.

Williams (2008) used the four types of ANSA as defined by Mair (2003), but added militias and paramilitary units to them. In addition to the motivations and objectives, he also distinguished other aspects, including in his model size and strength, organisational structure, the role of violence, the relationship to the state, the financing method and provision of resources, and the relationship with members and supporters. Schneckener (2006) provides more types of ANSA than the previous two authors, even though the gist remains the same. He distinguishes rebels/guerrillas, militias, clan chiefs/big men, warlords, terrorists, criminals, mercenaries, private military and security companies and marauders.

Schneckener's (2006) premises for defining ANSA imply that they are able and willing to use violence to achieve their objectives, and are as follows:

A.    They are not integrated into the mechanism of the state: they are not the president's personal guard, a special unit or the police;

B.    They have a measure of autonomy with regard to their policy, conduct of military operations, resources and infrastructure, even though they may be officially or informally used by state actors or can be directly linked with the structures of the state;

C. They exhibit a certain continuity of existence and operations conducted, precluding occasional or sporadic eruptions of violence from ANSA activities.

Very similarly to Mair $\overline{(2003)}$, Schneckener $\overline{(2006)}$ observes the ANSA's objectives (change or preservation of the status quo), geographic scope (control of territory versus indifference towards territoriality or globalism), relationship to violence (physical or psychological violence, corresponding partly to Mair's category of the target group) and motivation (political or ideological versus economic or profit-driven).

Relying on Mair's four criteria cited above and combining them with Schneckener's types, we obtain the following table, which will serve us in studying the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and the *opolchentsy*-type units and their allies:

**TABLE 1: THE AUTHORS' INTERPRETATION OF MAIR'S CRITERIA COMBINED WITH ANSA TYPES ACCORDING TO SCHNECKENER**

| Type of actor | Motivation | Geographic scope | Objectives | Objects of violence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rebels and guerrillas | Political/ideological | Limited | Regime change | State/regime |
| Militias | Political | Limited | Mostly status quo | Both/dependent on situation |
| Clan chiefs | Political/economic | Limited | Mostly status quo | State/regime |
| Warlords | Economic | Limited | Status quo | Civilians |
| Terrorists | Political/ideological | Global | Regime change | Mostly civilians |
| Organised crime | Economic | Global | Status quo | Both/dependent on situation |
| Mercenaries and private military and security companies | Economic | Limited/dependent on assignment | Dependent on customer | Mostly civilians/dependent on customer |
| Marauders | Economic | Limited | Both/dependent on the specific case | Civilians |

## THE METHODS OF OUR RESEARCH

This paper is based on a qualitative design and presents an interpretive case study of ANSA fighting the Ukrainian government and their motivations. The basis for this article is an ethnographic field research combined with elements of document and content analysis. For the research

itself it is essential not only to triangulate the collected data, but also to implement the triangulation of methods. All official data and statistics were therefore verified by alternative sources. The majority of (Western) research on the east Ukrainian crisis up until now is based on analysis of news articles published predominantly in the English language, as well as official documents and reports of the Ukrainian government and international organisations.

Field research related to the conflict which would also include primary data from the Donbass region is still not available, and because of that, the interpretation and exploration of the current findings are of a low quality. The texts on this topic published by Russian authors are unfortunately influenced by various propagandist methods (e.g. publishing articles on servers such as Sputnik or Pogrom, etc.). This article therefore can be considered unique thanks to the primary qualitative data collected from quite often hardly reachable sources and localities. The ethnographic methods employed in the study also allow for the collection of firsthand information and help one to discover original information. The authors are, however, aware of the pitfalls associated with the use of ethnography, especially the questions regarding the correct categorisation of data, proper evaluation of the collected information, and complications with the generalisation of information. For this reason, all the data collected with ethnographic methods are also triangulated by the aforementioned analysis of documents.

The field research itself is based on six elements, which must include: participant observation, collecting biographies, interviews, field notes, interpretation of findings, and the final report (DRULÁK 2008: 156). The research could be most accurately described as non-standardised, the reason being that standardisation is not feasible in the context of field work within an armed conflict. Participant observation is generally used as the primary or secondary method while researching the areas of conflict. The element of trust and the relationship between the researcher and the population or respondents is important. Relationships between the researcher and the population which are too close can, however, influence the transparency of the research (PALA 2016; CF. NORMAN 2009: 82). Quite often, the significant issue of discord between the trust of the population and the credibility of the research is present.

One of the co-authors of this text has focussed on the topic of Ukraine for a long time and she also had a permanent residency in Donetsk until 2016, which automatically puts her into the position of an observer-participant. The co-author also witnessed the protests and the declaration of a referendum in spring 2014. The role of the researcher in the observer-participant category brings multiple advantages and unique elements, but it also has its limits. Personal ties to and orientation in the research topic can have a negative effect as well, especially when the boundary between the personal experience (which is quite traumatic in the case of a conflict) and critical evaluation is distorted. The other co-author, however, didn't have any personal ties with Ukraine. The duo of authors did venture out for several short-term visits to Ukraine, each between two and three weeks long, in the years 2015, 2016, and 2018. All the visits included shorter research trips to the Donbass with the purpose of collecting data, especially to locations heavily affected by the conflict – Maryanka, Avdeyevka, Krasnogorovka, Starognatovka, Novtroickoye, Volnovach, and Mariupol. Gatekeepers authorised for stays in the Donetsk People's Republic were sent to the territories which are not under the control of Ukraine.

The sources and data were collected in several ways and were both primary and secondary in character. The key primary data were obtained through non-standardised, semi-structured interviews with politicians and activists living in the territory controlled by the Donetsk People's Republic (*Donetskaya narodnaya respublika*, DNR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (*Luganskaya narodnaya respublika*, LNR). These were supplemented with interviews of the same type with ordinary people of these regions. From 2014 to 2019, 80–90 non-structured, non-standardised interviews were conducted with politicians, activists, militants, humanitarian workers and ordinary people. These interviews had a role that was supplementary and contextual in character. This data collection is part of a long-term ethnographic project, which largely consists of field work; the present paper is only one partial output of the broader research design.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 27 respondents. Five of these held senior positions in the political and security apparatus of the DNR and the LNR. Another four had been high-ranking

officials prior to the creation of the separatist republics, and during the transformation of the local administration they either resigned or were removed from their posts. A further seven respondents were directly involved in military operations: four were participants in the erstwhile anti-terrorist operation (ATO) on the Ukrainian side and the other three took part in the armed conflict on the side of the *opolchentsy*. The remaining respondents were ordinary citizens who nevertheless were socially engaged in the conflict in some way, whether as workers in healthcare, civic activists or humanitarian workers. The variety of their positions, ideological and political visions, ages and occupations created an ideal sample for obtaining the most varied and complex information for the subsequent triangulation of data. Twelve respondents were between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-nine at the time of their interview. The next twelve were between the ages of thirty and fifty. Two respondents were in the fifty-one to sixty age category, and one respondent was in the senior age category (sixty-one to seventy-five years). Bearing in mind the safety of the respondents (since the armed conflict is ongoing and there is political tension in the region), the authors guarantee their anonymity and will not divulge anything connected with their personal data. This position agrees with both the ethics of research and the applicable legislation.

The selection of respondents was largely by the snowball method, or more specifically, four independent snowballs. Individuals identified through personal contacts of one of the paper's authors and deemed by her to be important due to their involvement in the object of research and the author's existing expertise and long-term fieldwork, served as gatekeepers. All the interviews were conducted in Russian.

Other primary data include legal documents (e.g. the constitutions of the separatist republics), direct statements by political and military leaders (e.g. through YouTube channels), programmatic proclamations, propaganda leaflets, websites and social media profiles.

The secondary data largely consisted of newspaper articles (mostly sourced from the internet) and other types of journalism, agency reports and scholarly articles and monographs, especially those concerned with ANSA and de facto states.

## ANALYSING *OPOLCHENTSY*

Historically, opolchentsy were various armed tribal formations such as popular guards or armed reserve groups of the militia type. Tsar Peter I introduced the so-called 'recruit obligation', which was a method of replenishing the armed forces by recruiting common people with no military training. Later, the term came to mean conscription. Under the Russian Empire, opolchentsy were represented by groups of warriors (ratniky) drafted during the Crimean War, the Russo-Japanese War and World War I. The Soviet era brought a profound qualitative change, as part of which a system of citizens' military training and subsequently also a programme of general military education were created. During World War II, in a transformed way, the phenomenon of opolchentsy reappeared. Volunteer formations appeared from the first days of the war, including communist battalions, militia groups and destruction battalions. As early as September 1941, the Diviziya narodnogo opolcheniya (DNO) was transformed into a rifle division that was incorporated into the Soviet army (BOLSHAYA SOVETSKAYA ENTSIKLOPEDIA 1974: 269–270).

More recently, the meaning of this historical term has shifted again. Unlike in the past, opolchentsy are no longer civilians serving their military (defence) duty during a war, but 'voluntarily mobilised' civilians (IVANOV 2011: 134–140; SKOROBOGATYY 2015).

In the conflict in the Donbass, the armed forces of the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics present themselves as opolchentsy. These 'republics' emerged after the wave of demonstrations in Eastern Ukraine protesting the deposition of President Yanukovich and the subsequent regime change; a referendum was then held in Crimea (unrecognised by the international community) and the two republics were proclaimed. Later, on 24 May 2014, a confederation of these republics was created, and it was called by the neologism Novorossiya (TASS 2014). A year later, on 18 May 2015, the confederation ceased to exist, although some of its representatives called it 'temporarily frozen' (REGNUM.RU 2015).

It needs noting that in the Donbass conflict, the opolchentsy cannot be conceived of as a monolithic armed actor, even though they are presented by the local actors as the 'DNR or LNR army',

officially called Narodnoe opolchenie Donbasa (NOD). In reality, this is an umbrella term for a conglomerate of various groups, which are often of very different ANSA types.

In the first step of the analysis, based on the data collected and inquiries among respondents, the contemporary opolchentsy can be divided into three broad categories: local inhabitants; Russian volunteers; and foreign volunteers. All of the opolchentsy groups form parts of the NOD. Now we will introduce these armed formations that are formally under the command of the NOD, and give more detail about the most important and best-known battalions (SKOROBOGATYY 2015; DONETSKAYA NARODNAYA RESPUBLIKA SOVET MINISTROV PREZIDIUM 2015).

### Local Inhabitants of The Donbass

Many people living in the Donbass were certain that their region would be able to survive independently. However, industry, which until recently contributed to the prosperity of this and other regions of Ukraine, ground to a halt. Hundreds of thousands lost their jobs and half a million people moved away (KORRESPONDENT.NET 2016; SEGODNYA 2016). Furthermore, the Ukrainian side adopted a stringent policy towards people who decided to remain in the two separatist regions. Until 30 April 2018, Kiev called the two regions the anti-terrorist operation zone (in Russian, *antiteroristicheskaya operatsiya*; in Ukrainian, *antyterorystychna operatsiya* – ATO), and now calls them temporarily occupied territories (in Russian, *vremenno okkupirovanaya territoriya*; in Ukrainian, *tymchasovo okupovana terytoriya*). The military operation, then, is called the operation of the united forces (in Russian, *operatsiya obedinonnykh sil*; in Ukrainian, *operatsiya obyednanykh syl*). As of 1 December 2014, Ukraine stopped payments of pensions and welfare to the inhabitants of the regions not controlled by the Ukrainian government (RBK-UKRAINA 2017). Jobs being unavailable; unpaid salaries and pensions; Ukrainians' obstruction of humanitarian convoys travelling from their territory to the *de facto* states, which largely sustained the poorest people in the regions, thus causing further poverty; Ukraine's ban on supplies of food and goods; the so-called 'Poroshenko blockade' of 2017 – all of these factors in effect forced some men – and women, though less so – who were fighting and fit, to join the *opolchentsy.* Thus, these people joined the *opolchentsy* armed groups not for ideological reasons – ones connected with their ideals, identity or other abstract-sounding arguments. Their motivation was largely

material and economic – to secure an income. This income consisted of both the regular soldier's pay and opportunities to enrich themselves materially in the theatre of the conflict, whether by looting, robbery or acceptance of bribes at checkpoints (*blokposty*) or other marauder activities.

### OPLOT

The Oplot brigade was originally founded in Kharkiv in January 2014 as a civic association opposing Euromaidan (SHEREMET 2014). As early as April of that year, the group was involved in blocking the Donetsk *oblast'* administration and later helped to organise the referendum on the status of the Donbass (TASS 2014; MALOROSSIYA 2014).

The head of the DNR, Aleksandr Zakharchenko, became the commander of the brigade, which allegedly included the battalions Smert' (Death), which, in the early phases of the conflict, was largely made up of Chechens supporting their leader, Ramzan Kadyrov (the *kadyrovtsy*); Svarozhych; and the Russian Orthodox Army (*Russkaya pravoslavnaya armiya*) (ISSHENKO 2014). In this configuration, Oplot became known as a brigade, but it is sometimes referred to as a battalion. In early 2016, a senior official of the DNR Ministry of Defence, Eduard Basurin, addressed the matter of the Oplot brigade in the media, arguing that it was a fabrication of the armed forces of Ukraine and that there was no such unit in the NOD (REPORTER 2016).

### BERKUT

This proudly named unit (its name means 'golden eagle') should be part of the DNR Ministry of Defence but all available sources point to the paramilitary nature of the formation and the fact that it seems to operate under the DNR police; it is excluded from the published structure of the DNR Ministry of the Interior, however (LENTA.RU 2017; VKONTAKTE 2017). In any case, our respondents agreed that the data indicating that Berkut belongs under the Ministry of Defence or Interior were obsolete. Although members of the former Berkut continue to serve in the armed forces, and some in the police, the unit as such no longer exists. The name is linked with a unit that was involved in the violent suppression of a demonstration at Maidan Nezalezhnosti, or Independence Square, in Kiev in November 2013; some of its personnel later joined the *opolchentsy* (GARMATA 2015).

## VOSTOK

The Vostok brigade was founded in early May 2014. It was headed by a former commander of the Alfa unit of the Security Service of Ukraine (*Sluzhba Bezpeky Ukrainy*, SBU) in Donetsk *oblast'*, Aleksandr Khodakovskii. Originally a battalion, it emerged from the organisation Patriotic Forces of the Donbass (*Patrioticheskie sily Donbassa*). At the moment of its inception, it was largely made up of personnel formerly serving in Ukraine's special units Alfa and Berkut[1] as well as volunteers with Russian citizenship, mostly from the Caucasus, especially the *kadyrovtsy*. Originally a battalion, it was later transformed into a brigade following the First Minsk Agreement (PATRIOTICHESKIE SILY DONBASSA 2020).

There were disputes between the battalion's commander Khodakovskii and Zakharchenko. At present (June 2018), the brigade is disarmed and most of its members have had to leave the Donbass, fearing purges by DNR and Russian special troops (DERGACHEV 2015).

## KALMIUS

At a time when the presence of foreign contingents among DNR troops could no longer be concealed, it was the Kalmius battalion that promoted itself as a unit made up solely of the inhabitants of the Donbass (VESELYY RODZHER 2014; ARCHIV NOVOROSSIYA TV 2014). According to a report by Novorossiya sources, it is a combat unit consisting of miners. Interestingly, the deputy commander of the Kalmius special unit is also the DNR deputy minister for the coal industry, Konstantin Kuzmin. He said that the miners were taking holiday or sick leave in order to be able to fight on the DNR side (ORLOVA 2014; VMAKEEVKE.COM 2014). Most of the miners lost their jobs, or were forced by the coal industry management to join the units of the *opolchentsy*. Special units of Russian intelligence agencies and professional soldiers providing training are part of the battalion (OTTER 2014).

## SOMALI

Somali, a special task force of the DNR Ministry of Defence, is interesting particularly for its media fame. Its commander, Mikhail Tolstykh (nicknamed Givi), became a symbol of the struggle against the Ukrainian armed forces. Beyond its very active propaganda on social networks, it is difficult to describe Somali as a true combat battalion (STOPTERROR 2015). It has been popular largely thanks to the position enjoyed by its leader. Givi was well-liked by the Donbass population, earned respect from his soldiers,

and gained some political weight. On 8 February 2017, he was murdered in his office by someone using a *Shmel'* flamethrower registered as military equipment of the Russian army. One of the possible explanations of his death is linked with the case of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, which was shot down over Ukraine. Givi allegedly knew who was behind the shooting down of the Boeing and who provided the weapons system. According to one version of the story, Givi was murdered by his subordinates; according to another, by the leadership of the people's republics on the order of the Kremlin, as Givi could not be controlled and increasingly won popular support, which was undesirable for the Russians. According to experts, a third version according to which he was murdered by the Ukrainian side, is unlikely (ANTIPOV 2017; KORRESPONDENT.NET 2017).

REPUBLICAN GUARD

This group was founded on 12 January 2015 on Aleksandr Zakharchenko's orders. Formally it is not part of the DNR Ministry of Defence but reports directly to Zakharchenko. The guard is largely made up of members of Oplot, the Russian Orthodox Army, the groups Pyatnashka, Bulat and Patriot and one company of the Varyag battalion. It is led by Ivan Kondratov, nicknamed Vanya Russkii (STOPTERROR 2015). Kondratov was also a deputy of the DNR People's Council (parliament) and unnerved the DNR leadership with his unpredictable media appearances which, as the Ukrainian side in particular pointed out, were unpredictable due to his drug addiction (TSN.UA 2016).

Although all of the battalions, brigades and units presented here came under the DNR armed forces and ought to be subordinate to the DNR Ministry of Defence, the reality is different. The battalions are actually quite autonomous. The relationships inside them as well as the links between the commanders and the DNR leadership are complicated. Zakharchenko commands the greatest authority; yet there have been repeated conflicts between him and the other commanders, and among the commanders themselves. Also involved in these relationships are the Donbass political elite and the Russian sponsors.

PRIZRAK

The Prizrak brigade is known under various names. Initially it was *Narodnoe opolchenie LNR*, and then it was designated a brigade and later a battalion. It won its greatest popularity and renown when it was a brigade, and that is why it is most often referred to as such in the public discourse. The group

was founded during the protests calling for LNR independence in April 2014. It was led by Aleksei Mozgovoi, though Aleksandr Kostin has been the most active field commander throughout its existence (VKONTAKTE 2018A). What is more, since the beginning there were strong links with Strelkov, and many opinions agree that in some strategic decisions it was Strelkov who had the last word (PRIZRAK.INFO 2015). When Strelkov left, Mozgovoi sided with those who criticised the Minsk Agreements and described the DNR and LNR leaderships as traitors (OBOZREVATEL 2014; SBORSCHIKOV 2014). Two assassination attempts were made against Mozgovoi, the second one successful. The official line put out by the LNR says that Ukrainian agents of the group Teni assumed responsibility for the assassination, but people close to Mozgovoi argued that it was the leadership of the people's republics and the Kremlin who were behind Mozgovoi's elimination, precisely because of his criticism of the Minsk Agreements and his lack of humility towards the senior leadership (GORDEEV 2015; GOROSHKO 2017).

There is a relatively widespread opinion that, like Strelkov, Mozgovoi was one of the few commanders of the people's republics' armed groups whose primary motive was not to achieve a position of power, or a pecuniary motive, as he primarily acted out of ideological conviction. This created a number of conflicts between him and the rest of the LNR elite, including the head, Plotnitskii, and it was the main reason for his elimination. However, this was preceded by attempts to moderate the conflict when the Prizrak brigade joined the LNR Popular Militia (*Narodnaya militsiya LNR*), the LNR armed forces (YARMOLYUK 2015). And yet, Mozgovoi continued to be unwilling to obey the orders of the LNR leadership; for instance, he organised his own military parade and his group was called the 'alchevskaya opposition' because it was one of the few to oppose Plotnitskii (BELOKOBYLSKIY 2015).

### Russian Volunteers

Most often discussed in connection with Russian volunteers are the soldiers of the Russian army who pose as volunteers, but in reality form part of secret, deniable operations undertaken by the Russian armed forces. People living in the territories of the DNR and the LNR have long suspected that the same 'little green men'[2] who had previously appeared in Crimea were now fighting in the Donbass. (Their participation in the Crimea operation and membership in the Russian army were ultimately admitted to by Putin in the film *Crimea. The Way Home.*)

This was confirmed immediately after the first fatalities, when papers and military IDs of Russian citizens were found among their personal items (NOVOE VREMYA 2014; THE GUARDIAN 2015; BBC 2015). Further evidence appeared when some Russian soldiers were captured and admitted that they had come to wage war on the separatist republics' side. Soon their families in Russia were heard from too, with mothers and wives of the soldiers compiling lists of killed or missing men and organising small-scale public protests (GRANI.RU 2014; ZAITSEV – RYUMOCHKIN 2014; GRUZ200.NET 2017). With the secret Russian contingent in Eastern Ukraine unmasked, there was no point in denying the fact, and the leadership of the Novorossiya armies admitted that there were three to four thousand Russian volunteers. The fact that they were servicemen in the Russian army or intelligence agencies was, nonetheless, still denied: they were presented as ordinary Russian men who came to fight the spread of Ukrainian fascism.

Russian media portrayed the Russian 'volunteers' as heroes, but their membership in the Russian armed forces continued to be unadmitted, even though amusing situations often arose with soldiers sharing photographs and statuses on their social networks that proved their presence in the area where the war was unfolding in Eastern Ukraine. In most cases, the servicemen were *de jure* on leave from the armed forces, so that their participation could not be interpreted as an official intervention by Russian troops. In doing so, the Russian armed forces formally relinquished responsibility for these soldiers, and, in a purely formalistic way, could deny that the 'little green men' were fighting in Ukraine because the Russian supreme command ordered them to do so.

Another group of Russian citizens who became involved in the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine were members of the so-called right-wing units of the Russian Spring. Here we mean mainly extreme-right activists, supporters of the 'White Movement' dating from the Russian Civil War, and groups which strongly accentuated the religious theme – from (neo)paganism to Orthodox Christianity. A closer examination of the links between these organisations and the separatist battalions might suggest that all these groups have an extreme-right ideological background, and some of them are deemed extremist even in Russia itself (ROVS.NAROD 2018; VKONTAKTE 2018B).

In reality, the situation is somewhat different. For example, the ROVS volunteer battalion is nothing but a history club of admirers of the White

Movement in Russia. Indeed, its name references an organisation linked with General Wrangel. The group does not have a single member in Eastern Ukraine, but its leader, Ivanov, was involved in the Donbass, alongside Igor Strelkov, the former military leader of Novorossiya (KAZANTSEV 2014). However, he was more of an ideological adviser. When Strelkov was removed, Ivanov decided to fight the Putin regime alongside Strelkov (DERGACHEV 2015).

In March 2015, another unit, Rusich, became part of a well-known unit in LNR territorial defence, the Prizrak brigade, led by Aleksei Mozgovoi. The commander of Rusich, Aleksei Milchakov, became its face. Milchakov has military experience; he served (and, according to some sources, continues to do so – i.e. he is formally on leave) in the Pskov Airborne Division. Due to the political disputes within the LNR, Rusich was transferred under the command of the DNR armed forces, specifically, the Viking battalion. In July 2015, when the Novorossiya project was frozen, the Rusich group was sent back to Russia and Milchakov declared a 'war against all' (NIKITIN 2015; GONTA 2015). The nationalist, even neo-Nazi ideological basis of the group is masked by pagan and Old Slavic symbolism, but the members of Rusich around Milchakov are activists of various Russian extreme-right groups.

The organisation Varyag is one of the few not to hide their extreme-right orientation, as it endorses its neo-Nazi ideology quite openly, as is apparent from its name, which references an SS volunteer regiment of the same name. Varyag is closely linked with another organisation called the Varjag Crew, and the two can only be distinguished by a detailed analysis. From the time of the Orange Revolution, some of their members appeared at various rallies as paid provocateurs. Thus, they originally supported Ukrainian nationalism and, in the context of the Orange Revolution, Yushchenko's camp. However, over the years they have changed their political doctrine, even if they broadly continued to endorse neo-Nazism. In the context of the East Slav realities, however, they moved into the pro-Russian camp, and during the Euromaidan they supported Yanukovich; many of them became known as *titushky* (RASTA 2014). Although on the general level and in their symbolism both *Varyag* and the Varjag Crew exhibited neo-Nazi traits, having abandoned Ukrainian nationalism they also absorbed the National Bolshevik doctrine, which they were able to combine with Russian Orthodox Christian nationalism. Most of them show no intellectual leanings – they are Russian skinheads or football hooligans – and have a rather meagre understanding of the ideological

aspects of their activities, valuing their apparently schizophrenic mixture of neo-Nazism, National Bolshevism and religious Russian nationalism largely for its emotional, romantic symbolism.

The Imperial Legion (*Imperskii legion*) is a military-patriotic club from St Petersburg which provides tactical and firearms training. It falls under the Russian Imperial Movement (*Russkoe imperskoe dvizhenie*), a monarchist and patriotic organisation having as its aim to return Russia to the tsarist form of government and renew the empire in its greatest territorial scope (PROGRAMMA RID 2018: JUNE 9). In terms of personnel, it largely recruits Russian skinheads, demanding of its members the Russian ethnicity and Orthodox Christian religion (VKONTAKTE 2018C). The Imperial Legion organised camps called Partizan, where military-tactical training was provided, and also recruited volunteers to serve among the *opolchentsy* in the Donbass. Ultimately the club was represented in the Donbass by only about twenty people, who served there as instructors training other combat groups. In early 2016, they issued a proclamation on the VKontakte social network to the effect that members of the Imperial Legion were no longer active in the Donbass. The group's contribution to the combat operations was altogether minimal; but it was much more effective as a fundraiser, helping the *opolchentsy* acquire weapons and other kit.

The Russian National Unity (*Russkoe natsionalnoe edinstvo*, RNE) can also be considered an extreme-right organisation, and it is active in Russia and relies on Russian nationalism and the Orthodox religion. It has as its aim to unite the Russian nation, consisting of the Great Russians, the Little Russians and the Belarusians. The organisation was founded shortly before the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1990 by former activists of the National-Patriotic Front *Pamyat'*. *Pamyat'* was an extreme-right anti-Semitic organisation with conspicuous monarchist traits (PRIBYLOVSKY 1999). When the anti-Semitic and the radical Nazi wings seceded from the RNE, those who remained endorsed the values of Russian nationalism and religious orthodoxy (RUSNATION.ORG 2018).

Despite the rift, the legend of this faction of Russian nationalism, Aleksandr Barkashov, was involved in the recruitment of volunteers for the RNE battalion in the Donbass. Well-known figures of this organisation include the first DNR governor, Pavel Gubarev.

However, it is uncertain whether the RNE really has combat groups in Eastern Ukraine. We believe that the RNE seeks to exploit the media spotlight turned on the conflict in the Donbass and thus to attract some of this attention to itself.

**Foreign Volunteers**

There has been much speculation about the presence of foreign fighters in the Donbass conflict. Apart from the participation of members of the Russian armed forces noted above, there is little firm evidence of this. Often there are efforts to win the attention of the world's media for various ephemeral groups, which are sometimes redolent of operetta. In terms of their affiliation with a state, there is a similar problem with the participation of the *kadyrovtsy* in the fighting in the Donbass as there is with that of the soldiers of the Russian army. The latter deny their membership in the armed forces of their state, but often do so very artlessly and blatantly. The *kadyrovtsy* have not denied their involvement at all, but, on the other hand, they come under the troops of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del*). In fact, they are a quasi-state armed force directly subordinate to the Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, who is formally subject to the authority of the Kremlin, but actually acts quite independently and if he is accountable to anyone it is to Vladimir Putin himself.

Among the foreign fighters, the Serbian volunteers of the battalions Jovan Šević and Novi Srpski Husarski Puk have attracted significant media attention. Via their names both groups evoke historical notions of Slavo-Serbia and the New Serbia of 1753–1764 – at that time Serbian frontier guards moved to the Russian Empire to defend the border with Austria and form a Serbian hussar regiment. In terms of the motives for the contemporary fighters to become involved in the Ukrainian crisis we note that they declare their struggle against fascism and NATO and in support of their Russian brothers and Orthodox Christianity. In the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, they are included in the so-called interbrigades – groups of foreign fighters. Beyond the battalions Jovan Šević and Novi Srpski Husarski Puk noted above, the Serbian-French section of the Prizrak brigade and the North Wind battalion (*Severnyi veter*) also have Serbian members. Most of the Serbian volunteers are veterans of the wars in Yugoslavia, where they obtained combat experience. Others are football ultras and members of

nationalist associations called the *bratushky*;[3] others still are members of the Serbian right-wing movement Serbian Action (*Srpska Akcija*), veterans of the Serbian anti-terrorism unit Kobra or former soldiers of the regular Serbian army. Aleksandar Vučić – then the prime minister of Serbia – said in 2014 that 99 per cent of the Serbian fighters in Ukraine were mercenaries (MALYSHEVSKY 2014).

Other foreign contingents are less numerous than the *kadyrovtsy* and the Serbian fighters. Many foreign fighters see their participation in the conflict as a kind of 'military safari' on which they can come, and during which they can shoot guns with impunity and also obtain some combat experience. Some of the individuals might be freelance instructors of foreign private military and security companies – such speculation circulates among the local population but cannot be verified from trustworthy sources. At present there is no substantial group of foreign fighters remaining in the separatist republics. In terms of their motivations, with some very small exceptions, one cannot see the presence of foreign soldiers as informed by ideology, religion or politics. All of them receive remuneration, and hence they are mercenaries.

Other foreign fighters in Eastern Ukraine included former Yugoslav soldiers (not just Serbs), Frenchmen, Italians, Germans, Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Britons and citizens of the Baltic states and other ex-Soviet countries. The contribution made by foreign battalions to actual combat operations has been minimal, but they were important for attracting attention and for the propaganda efforts of the separatist republics (MEDIUM 2016).

## TRANSFORMATIONS AND METAMORPHOSES OF THE NOD DURING THE CONFLICT

Over the course of the conflict in the Donbass since spring 2014, the NOD has undergone substantial change. It emerged in March 2014, when protests against the new Ukrainian government started in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine. The core of the NOD was made up of supporters of the Donbass' secession from Ukraine, especially active members of the so-called anti-Maidan, who later started to form their own armed groups, describing them as volunteer battalions: Berkut, Oplot, the Patriotic Forces of the Donbas, Varyag and Vostok. When the people's republics were created and the public administration and its premises seized, it was necessary to involve local contingents in the *opolchenie*, not in order to strengthen the

capacity of the army but to create the correct political-ideological conception of Novorossiya. Igor Strelkov (Girkin), the former commander of the NOD, said that this Novorossiya army was originally made up of Donbass inhabitants who opposed the illegitimately imposed government of the so-called 'Kiev junta'. Anyone could become a volunteer – it was enough to fill in a questionnaire on the army's official website and take an oath (VIDEO NOVOSTI ODESSY 2014; ZHUCHKOVSKY 2016; VKONTAKTE 2015). The issue of the locals being volunteers is crucial in terms of the historical meaning associated with the term *opolchenie*, which has voluntariness at its core.

The informal interviews with the inhabitants of the Donbass have nevertheless shown that most of the *opolchentsy* at that time were Russian citizens. The respondents particularly pointed out that the gunmen did not speak the local dialect, as well as the fact that they always stood in queues in front of exchange offices, where they exchanged their Russian roubles for Ukrainian hrivnas. The initial suspicions of the locals were confirmed with the first fatalities, in which the bodies of the alleged volunteers were identified as those of citizens of Russia.[4] As early as May 2014, it was apparent that most of the *opolchentsy* were not just Russian citizens, but actual soldiers of the Russian army. It transpired that the locals played only a little role in the NOD, that the NOD was much mythologised, and that the volunteer and militia conception of the *opolchenie* was not realised in the early days of the conflict.

In late May 2014, foreign fighters started to arrive in the Donbass, of which the most conspicuous were the Chechen *kadyrovtsy* (SEYLOR 2015). The inclusion of foreign nationals helped to make the Novorossiya army more popular in the media and also to spread the notion of a 'Russian world' (*Russkii mir*). The logistical cooperation between Russian private military companies and the local leadership started at the same time, with more instructors being sent to provide training. These militants were not primarily motivated by politics or ideology and were not serving voluntarily, and this contradicted the concept of *opolchenie*.

At the same time, there was intense fighting for Donetsk airport and over the summer there was a military conflict between the Ukrainian army and the *opolchentsy,* known as *Ilovaiskii kotel* (Illovaisk kettle) (SIBIRTSEV 2017). On 5 September 2014, the Minsk Agreement was signed to regulate the conflict, but it was not adhered to and the conflict escalated further, with

a recruitment drive among the locals in autumn. Many joined the *opolchenie* voluntarily, spurred by the following factors: the offensive operation of the Ukrainian army; the loss of life among the locals; blockades of supplies of food and water; the introduction of checks of people on the line of contact; the cancellation of payments of pensions and welfare by Ukraine; and increasing poverty and unemployment. The intense armed operations continued in January 2015, especially in Debaltseve. In response to this, the Second Minsk Agreement was signed. It did not end the fighting, but it did limit the combat operations to the area described as the 'Donetsk rainbow' (*Donetskaya duga*) – Mariinka-Avdiivka-Piesky, where the clashes continue to this day. In spring 2015, most of the foreign fighters left the Donbass. The rest of the *kadyrovtsy* did, too, and went on to participate in the Russian operation in Syria (SITNIKOV 2017). From summer 2015, the armed conflict between the Ukrainian army and the *opolchentsy* became more intense. The latter have been substantially strengthened by ideologically motivated volunteers and locals, but soldiers of the Russian army posing as members of the popular *opolchenie* continue to serve an important role. Another important milestone was the removal of field commanders in the autumn and winter of 2016/2017. Evidently, there were continuous internal conflicts and struggles for power within the *opolchenie*, and the broadly popular *opolchentsy* leaders who truly believed in the concept of Novorossiya and the related ideology were exposed to the greatest risk.

The NOD, then, is a unique example where the concept of *opolchenie* was put into practice only several months after the fictional founding, and not primarily thanks to the DNR and LNR propaganda, but due to missteps taken by the parent state (Ukraine), which gave up on providing elementary services to a certain segment of its population, admittedly under a situation where its role was made difficult by armed opposition activities that were much assisted by the neighbouring Russia. If in the early days of the conflict the claim that the *opolchentsy* were volunteers and ideologically motivated was a lie, then during the first year of the military operations, not least due to the unfavourable relationship of the Ukrainian government with its citizens living in the area affected by combat operations, the *opolchenie* transformed into a hybrid of volunteer and mercenary formations, which is unique chiefly thanks to the heterogeneity of the units within the NOD.

## INTERPRETING THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Table 2, based on Table 1 from the theoretical section above, will help us to interpret and summarise the data obtained according to the theoretical concept chosen.

**TABLE 2: INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY**

| Type of actor | Motivation | Geographic scope | Objectives | Objects of violence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Local armed formations | Economic and political/ ideological | Limited | Regime change in the Donbass | Ukrainian soldiers |
| Russian volunteers | Economic and political/ ideological | Limited | Regime change in the Donbass / fighting against the Kiev regime | Ukrainian soldiers/ civilians |
| Foreign volunteers | Political/ ideological | Limited | Fighting against the Kiev regime | Ukrainian soldiers/ civilians |

The local armed formations are largely made of people that are truly locals, especially since 2015, as indeed the official version says. Most of them are economically motivated, although we do find ideologically oriented Russian nationalists among them. The political-ideological motivation becomes more prominent as we go up in the DNR and LNR armed forces hierarchy, and among the commanders it occasionally prevails over the economic motivation. We note that the motivation among the masses tends to be economic and material, and that among the elite political and ideological, which might seem paradoxical when compared with the situations obtaining in a number of other conflicts. In the Vostok and Oplot battalions, the majority of combatants are politically and ideologically motivated, placing their belief in the notion of a 'Russian world' (*Russkii mir*). They were politically active even before the beginning of the armed conflict, during both the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan. The Vostok battalion is made up of former members of armed units of the Ukrainian Ministry of the Interior, namely Alfa and Berkut, that were the main forces dispersing the demonstrators in Kiev during the Euromaidan.

For the armed formations of the DNR and the LNR, the primary aim is to preserve the DNR and the LNR's sovereignty, which means that in the context of the conflict as a whole, in terms of their attitude towards the regime in Kiev, they seek to achieve a regime change but only in the Donbass. However, in the long term their objectives may change – this

being dependent, among other things, on transformations of Russian foreign policy. Many members of the DNR and LNR armed forces desire – or certainly desired at the beginning of the conflict – not only a regime change in the Donbass, but also a change in their nationality and the inclusion of the Donbass into the Russian Federation, i.e. they are textbook case irredentists. In the overwhelming majority of cases, their armed action targets Ukrainian soldiers or pro-Ukrainian ANSA. Violent actions against civilians are limited and mostly unintended incidents in this case. If we attempt to classify the DNR and LNR armed formations according to Mair's ANSA types, we note that most of them are insurgents, but as the conflict progresses some of the formations exhibit traits of militias or even warlords.

As far as the soldiers of the Russian army and Russian volunteers are concerned, there is a serious conceptual issue in that the soldiers are members of a state's armed forces. However, they are involved in the Donbass conflict incognito – Moscow's official position is that there is no deployment of Russian soldiers in the Donbass. In this respect, their activities fall under the categories of deniable, black and covert operations. The motivation of the soldiers of the Russian army – it does not matter much whether they went to the Donbass voluntarily or were commanded to do so as part of a deniable operation – is mostly a mixture of political and ideological stimuli, but there are also economic stimuli. To some extent, they had no choice, as they had taken an oath and by their deployment in the Donbass they were obeying the orders of the supreme command. However, an examination of their profiles on social networks and personal interviews reveals that the vast majority of the soldiers agree with their country's policy towards Ukraine and in ideological terms they are mostly Russian nationalists supporting the idea of a Russian world. However, the economic aspect of their motivation cannot be ignored, as their engagement in the Donbass conflict is considered a foreign mission (albeit one denied officially), which brings various benefits such as higher wages and better welfare and housing for their families. Furthermore, there is the tacit assumption that by staying in the zone of conflict they will profit at the expense of the locals. As far as the true volunteers are concerned, their motivation is largely ideological, though combined with an economic one. These are the sympathisers of nationalist groups noted above and members of the skinhead movement. Some of them see their participation in the conflict simply as an opportunity to make some money. And, as has

been ascertained, the overwhelming majority of the ideologically motivated individuals and groups are not actually present in the zone of conflict and their activities are only virtual. Those members of the Russian nationalist groups that are actually involved in the conflict receive a financial reward for their services (they mostly serve as instructors). The objective of the soldiers of the Russian army is to implement the Kremlin's policy, which is pushing for a regime change in Ukraine. Their violent operations largely target the Ukrainian armed forces, less so the local population. When *opolchentsy* perpetrate violence against the local population, it is largely via members of the Russian army and using Russian military equipment. The strategy for intimidation of the local population is implemented by friendly fire and shelling of towns and cities under a separatist administration. After such episodes the *opolchentsy* accuse the Ukrainian armed forces of violating the terms of the ceasefire and the Minsk Agreements and use these episodes (which they themselves perpetrated) to justify their shelling of Ukrainian cities outside the zone of conflict. If soldiers of the Russian army active in the Donbass can be seen as ANSA at all, then they have to be considered mercenaries.

Foreign fighters are represented by several distinct groups of gunmen. Foremost among them are the *kadyrovtsy*, who come under the armed forces of the Chechen Republic Ministry of the Interior and answer directly to Kadyrov. For most of them, the political-ideological aspect of the conflict is of primary importance, yet participation in the armed clashes is often understood as a kind of 'military safari' – a training sortie in a zone of conflict – which is a more individual, psychological motivation. However, even such 'war tourists' frame their participation in the conflict with sympathies for the ideas of Russian nationalism. Their numbers are rather small, especially as of late (2016–2017), and they are mainly used for propaganda in the media. The most numerous contingents among the ideologically motivated foreign fighters are groups from former Yugoslavia who enthuse about an Orthodox Christian civilisation, their support for their 'Russian brothers' and the fight against NATO. Some of the foreigners act as instructors, and are motivated primarily by economic interests; their numbers are very small indeed and they act individually. The foreign fighters oppose the 'fascist junta of Kiev' and promote regime change in Ukraine; as such both members of the Ukrainian army and civilians are their targets. As far as Schneckener's typology of ANSA is concerned, the foreign fighters in Ukraine can be subsumed under several types. Many

of them can be considered mercenaries and they exhibit the characteristics of marauders even more frequently – the more so because unlike the *opolchentsy* from the ranks of the locals, they have no personal connection with the region. The foreign fighters are a heterogeneous group that corresponds to multiple ANSA types, depending chiefly on their motivations and the transformations of their organisations during the conflict.

**CONCLUSION**

This article has presented the main ANSA involved in the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. It has focussed on an analysis of the specific phenomenon of *opolchenie* – a purely local formation that we can conceive of as an umbrella entity – with an organisational structure to some extent – under which armed units, whose *modus operandi* is often very independent, are rallied. Indeed, we can see an *opolchenie* as a very specific kind of non-state armed actor, combining elements of an insurgency, a militia, a volunteer unit and a pro-government paramilitary group which, however, acts in the interests of a neighbouring country, and not those of its homeland.

The existing knowledge about the ANSA phenomenon is insufficient for analysing this Eastern Ukrainian case, though arguably there has been a number of recent case studies that documented exceptional instances of non-state armed violence. For instance, they are informed by tensions arising from the characteristics of the local combatants and by the option, which is increasingly available to them, of becoming involved in global processes. The nature of the relations between ANSA and the state is also undergoing a change. There is nothing new about a state supporting an ANSA, or about direct (and clandestine, or denied) military support. Nevertheless, the direct Russian military support to the *opolchenie* has been particularly extensive, especially in the early stage of the conflict, and this is in contrast with Russia's policy of denying the involvement of its soldiers, and the claims that the Russian troops in Eastern Ukraine are volunteers. Another specificity in this case has been the use of Russia's own problematic armed actors – the Chechen Kadyrovtsy. Though formally part of the Russian security forces, in reality they act as a kind of semi-state ethnic militia.

Evidently, the *opolchenie* in this case does not fit into the usual classifications of ANSA. It is a hybrid formation that not only has a different motivation from that of a typical ANSA; it also has a specific structure. Its

goals have been subject to change throughout the conflict and are likely to change further.

As a result, the *opolchenie* does not fall under any of the categories of known empirical and theoretical concepts of ANSA (see Mair, Schneckener or Williams). This type of armed formation incorporates multiple categories – warlordism, foreign fighters, a militia, and an insurgency. An *opolchentsy* can be viewed as a living organism which has multiple layers; it transforms and shifts throughout time, changes its goals and motivations, and reacts to changes and challenges of the given armed conflict. The *opolchenie's* structure and approach to warfare have changed over time as well. The conflict in Eastern Ukraine has become a sort of aggregated and modified product of already known tools of Russian foreign policy. This corresponds with the concept of hybrid war known from texts by Frank Hoffman or Richard Johnson.

This case provides a clear example of how a modern conflict can transform the classical understanding of ANSA; it demonstrates that modern Western theories in this area suffer from lacunae that can be identified by studies of modern conflicts and security threats. In many ways, any such studies are imperfect due to the secrecy and limitations of resources and information about this issue.

Previous studies have not dealt with the *opolchentsy* in Ukraine or have not focussed on the specific form of ANSA involved in the conflict. The existing research has focussed on the undoubtedly determinative role of the Russian forces in the area and the circumstances of their deployment, or on pro-Kiev actors. Thus, the phenomenon of *opolchentsy* poses a research challenge. It is a challenge for the ANSA concept because most of the levels on which these actors are studied (their motivations, ideologies, organisational structures, and violent methods) will need to be refined over time. But the challenge is also broader, as it is concerned with the historical and ideological grounding of the phenomenon. So far, such an academic reflection of the phenomenon is lacking.

Besides the fact that this article fills the gap caused by the absence of theoretical grounding – in which *opolchentsy* are considered as an example of a non-state armed actor which in the short term can change its structure, motivation, and tactics of warfare – the article to a certain extent has also a practical use. The description of the ANSA in Eastern

Ukraine and the introduction of the concept of modern *opolchenie* tell us that the differences in composition of the specific formations, as well as the transformations of the given ANSA, will need a different and multi-layered approach to the solution of the conflict in the Donbass. Because solution suggestions are an important element of conflict research, this article can become a source of guidance on how to approach the particular actor for the purposes of the ensuing de-escalation and peace process.

## ENDNOTES

1    Here, Berkut refers to a special unit of the Ukrainian police. There is, however, continuity with the *opolchentsy* battalion of the same name, as the latter included members of the Ukrainian Berkut police unit, which opposed the pro-Western orientation of the Ukrainian government that was brought to power by the Maidan. Many of them were dismissed, as they were understood to have committed violence against the demonstrators in Maidan. Ultimately, the Ukrainian police abolished the whole Berkut unit on 25 February 2014.

2    'Polite people' (in Russian, *vezhlivye lyudi*) and 'little green men' *(zelenye chelovechki)* are designations for the masked soldiers in green unmarked uniforms carrying modern Russian weapons and equipment who appeared in Ukraine in 2014 during the Crimea crisis.

3    A Russian term, often used ironically, for southern Slavs, referencing a sense of belonging between Russians and Serbians during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–1878.

4    „Ubitye, plenennye, propavshie, zamechennye v Ukraine".

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# China's Revisionism and the Cessation of the Doklam Impasse

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| ABSTRACT | In the light of the Chinese and Indian perspectives on the cessation of the Doklam impasse, the present article analyses China's role and status in international politics. The Chinese perspective described China as a status quo power and never accepted Doklam as a disputed territory. While accusing India of aggression on Chinese territory, it portrayed China as a "responsible power" that ensured the cessation of the Doklam impasse with India through multiple diplomatic and military measures. Opposite to this, the Indian perspective viewed China as a revisionist power and termed the PLA's activities in Doklam as a source of consternation for its national security. From the Indian perspective, China's declining growth rate, increasing internal conflicts, the potential threat to its peaceful image, its apprehension regarding the BRI's derailment, the Korean crisis, the strategically advantageous position of the Indian military in Doklam and New Delhi's strategic relevance for Beijing in promoting its new economic and political groupings forced China to resolve the standoff peacefully. |
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Prior to the Ladakh standoff of 2020, in 2017, the international community witnessed a serious rivalry between the two Asian nuclear powers – China and India – in Doklam, a territory disputed between China and Bhutan. The recent rise of China has generated an extensive debate about its status quo or revisionist status, leading to the production of a huge body of literature and the emergence of two opposite schools of thought, one considering Beijing a status quo power and another viewing it as a revisionist state. Some studies (KENT 2002; JOHNSTON 2003; KANG 2007; CHAN 2008; SHIRK 2008; ZHONGQI 2008; FENG 2009; LANTEIGNE 2009; WANG 2010; KASTNER – SAUNDERS 2012; FENG – HE – LI 2019) portray China as a civilized citizen of the global community and a *"vocal defender"* of the status quo in IR. Scholars belonging to this school argue that China is a "responsible stakeholder" in the contemporary international system, has no logical desire to challenge or overthrow the existing order from which it has benefitted immensely and only wants some "constructive changes" in the global norms, values and institutions (IKENBERRY 2008). Opposite to the status quo viewpoint, other studies (CHRISTENSEN 1996; FRIEDBERG, 2005; CARTER – BULKELEY, 2007; KLEINE-AHLBRANDT – SMALL 2008; KEGAN 2009; MEARSHEIMER 2010; SAUNDERS 2015; KUMAR 2020) ruminate that China is a "narrow-minded" revisionist power aiming to remodel the existing global order. Studies which consider China a revisionist power, present Beijing as *"a high church of realpolitik"* possessing a centralized-authoritarian political system which shows no reverence for the prevailing liberal democratic values, norms and practices and finds it difficult to accept the US hegemony. So far, however, no attention has been given to the question of how Chinese officials and commentators interpret the role of China or how China's behavior is interpreted from the Indian side. Using the situation in Doklam in 2017 as a concrete case, this article aims to analyse the Chinese and Indian representations of the role of China in international politics.

The article is divided into four sections. The first section is introductory, and it describes China's foreign policy context in its Doklam standoff with India, studies regarding China's revisionist and status quoist behaviour, and the nature, sources and structure of the present study. The second section explains the geo-strategic context of the Doklam impasse. The third section explains why the Doklam crisis was resolved without any use of military force or violent clashes. This section comprises two subsections that describe Chinese and Indian perspectives on the cessation of the impasse between the two Asian neighbours. The last section then contains the conclusion of the study.

## GEO-STRATEGIC SETTINGS

The Doklam impasse was the result of China's territorial revisionism in its neighbourhood. Like the other neighbours, China has territorial disputes with Bhutan and Doklam is a disputed territory between these two countries. Doklam is situated between China, Bhutan and India. Strategically, it is important for India along with China and Bhutan as it provides a bigger buffer to India's Siliguri Corridor, which is an extremely narrow stretch of land (24 kilometers wide) between Nepal and Bangladesh in the Indian state of West Bengal that connects the central parts of India with its north-eastern states. It also serves as a hub of the railway network which connects to India's strategic military formations along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). It is located just a little over 100 kilometers from the Chumbi Valley (GURUNG 2018). The Doklam area is also significant for Thimphu as it contains the main supply routes into the territory of Bhutan. Chumbi Valley and Siliguri were a part of the trade route between Sikkim and Tibet. It has a great strategic importance for Beijing, New Delhi and Thimphu. Beijing and Thimphu dispute over it along with other territories. Beijing has also been negotiating about it with Bhutan since 1984 to resolve the territorial disputes, including that pertaining to the Doklam area. It had even offered a package deal to Bhutan that had serious implications for India's security. Thimphu did not accept the Chinese offer due to its special relationship with New Delhi. Bhutan detected an intrusion of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in the disputed Doklam area on June 16, 2017, in which the Chinese soldiers were involved in the construction of a road from Doka La to Jampheri Ridge. This was an attempt to change the ground realities and bring down the tri-junction point to Geymochen. Geymochen is the last major ridge line between the Siliguri Corridor and the Chumbi Valley (KUMAR 2017). Hence, China's move was an intrusion into a territory disputed with Bhutan. Furthermore, India considered this Chinese activity as a direct threat for India's national security (MITRA-THALIYAKKATTIL 2018: 240). The road construction, if completed, would have brought China closer to the Siliguri Corridor and deterred India's potential foray into Chumbi Valley. The Valley provides China with a launch pad for its operations to progress into the Siliguri Corridor. It is thus in India's security interests to ensure that it remains open (GURUNG 2018).

China's move to alter the status quo was targeted to Bhutan directly and India indirectly. The primary objective of its activity in Doklam, as Shyam Saran has argued, was to disturb the *"close and privileged relationship"*

of India with Bhutan, facilitate the entry of China for the negotiation and resolution of its border dispute with Bhutan, and promote its strategic and security interests vis-à-vis India (SARAN 2017). By creating the tension in Doklam, according to Srinath Raghvan, Beijing was assessing the relationship of New Delhi with its closest partner in South Asia, endeavouring to loosen them up a bit and gradually wean Bhutan away from India and also tilt the strategic and security environment in the region in China's favour (RAGHVAN 2017). When China's soldiers started the construction work, Bhutan's army opposed it and asked them to go back from the Bhutanese territory. The Chinese soldiers, however, did not pay any heed to the objections of Bhutan's soldiers. In the absence of sufficient material power to assert its claim over the disputed territory, Bhutan turned to India for assistance due to its special relationship with New Delhi and as the construction was also a threat to the security and strategic interests of India (GANGULY – SCOBELL 2018: 177; MITRA – THALIYAKKATTIL 2018: 259). India sent its troops to support Bhutan on June 18, 2017 and blocked the construction work in the disputed area. India's action was unprecedented as its army moved beyond the international border and engaged China from the territory of a third country for the first time. India's move was guided primarily by its security concerns, which arose from Beijing's unilateral attempts to alter the ground realities in the area concerned (MEHTA 2017: 10; KUMAR 2017). After obstructing the construction activities of China in the Doklam area, the Indian army in coordination with the Govt. of Bhutan, urged the PLA soldiers to avoid any alteration in the status quo (MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS 2017A). The Govt. of India expressed its deep concerns regarding the PLA's actions in Doklam by referring to the Sino-Indian Agreement of 2012 and conveyed to China the message that the PLA's construction activities would represent a huge alteration in the status quo with serious implications for India's security. Besides this, New Delhi emphasized exhibiting the *"utmost restraint"* in this and abiding by the Sino-Indian bilateral understandings of the principle that none of the parties concerned should recast the status quo at unilateral level (MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS 2017A; KUMAR 2017).

In spite of all this, China claims over 318 square kilometers of Bhutan's territory in the Western sector and 495 square kilometers in the Central sector. Beijing never accepted the Doklam area as a disputed territory, however. It asserted that the Doklam area is a part of its defined territory and thus presented its construction work there as a legal and legitimate activity. When China's territorial expansionism is challenged by

other countries, Beijing pretends to be a victim. It accuses the opposite party of making dangerous provocations and wages an indignant propaganda war to hide the actual matter involved (CHELLANEY 2017A). Beijing exhibited a similar behaviour against India during the Doklam impasse. It depicted New Delhi as an aggressor, claimed itself to be an aggrieved party and waged a full-throttle psychological warfare (CHELLANEY 2017B; CHELLANEY 2017C; CHELLANEY 2017D; DEEPAK 2017; HARA 2018: 164; PARTHASARATHY 2017). From Beijing's perspective, it was not an issue between India and China, but between China and Bhutan in which India as a third party had no right to interfere because of the sovereign status of Bhutan in IR. China accused India of treating Bhutan as an *"effective client state"* and said that its move in Doklam was a drive to create a wedge between China and Bhutan and also maintain its control over Thimphu (LIN 2017). Hence, Beijing, while using its media for this repeatedly, threatened to teach New Delhi a lesson (GING 2017). It contended that the presence of Indian forces in the area was *"an act of aggression against its sovereignty"* and hence demanded an unequivocal and expeditious pull-out of the Indian army from the site of the impasse (MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS 2017A; YOU 2017). India, on their side, demanded a simultaneous withdrawal of the PLA and the Indian army from Doklam. This resulted in a 74-day crisis lasting from June 16 to August 28, 2017 between the two countries and increased the possibility of a limited war between the two Asian neighbours. Beijing accused the Indian side of committing seven "sins" against the Chinese sovereignty and boasted of its military strength. It claimed that India lacks a military strength that would be comparable with China's (BISHT 2017; GLOBAL TIMES 2017A; MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS 2017A; YOU 2017; YUROU 2017). In regard to this, its Ministry of National Defence said, *"Shaking a mountain is easy but shaking the PLA is hard"* (XINHUA 2017). The *Global Times*, a leading Chinese newspaper, in its editorial, said: *"If New Delhi really keeps the faith that China will not take military action under any circumstances, then its analysis is not based on the principles of international politics and military science. If the Narendra Modi government continues ignoring the warning coming from a situation spiraling out of control, counter-measures from China will be unavoidable"* (GLOBAL TIMES 2017A).

It further claimed that the construction of the road can alter neither the status quo nor the military equilibrium between China and India. While arguing that India can't live amicably with its neighbours, it claimed that New Delhi's illusory fear of a change in the status quo and of losing of its military advantage in South Asia is the main reason that had triggered the

standoff between the two countries (ZHANG 2017; ZHOU 2017). It suggested that if India contends that it is a major power, then it should learn the lessons from its *"rash behaviors"* (GLOBAL TIMES 2017B). Hence, China used all these tactics in its psychological warfare against India. The basic objective of the Chinese propaganda was to demoralize and pressurize India so that it would carry out a unilateral withdrawal from the site of the impasse. The standoff ceased on August 28, 2017 as New Delhi announced the completion of the meteoric disengagement of the security forces of the two countries at the site of the impasse (MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS 2017B). Beijing also declared the settlement of the border standoff after the withdrawal of the Indian troops (MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS 2017B; MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS 2017C). Both China and India, and their media and strategic and security experts claimed the victories of their respective countries while speculating about the various reasons for the cessation of the Doklam impasse.

## WHY WAS THE DOKLAM CRISIS RESOLVED?

After the cessation of the crisis, both China and India officially and unofficially discussed the circumstances which led to the cessation of the impasse. Besides this, their media and strategic commentators also opined various reasons for its peaceful cessation. Both sides claimed their victories in the standoff and also tried to get the credit for resolving it peacefully.

### China's Perspective

China's perspective regarding the cessation of the Doklam standoff with India consists of the views of the Chinese government, its state-controlled media and strategic commentators.

First, the Govt. of China never acknowledged Doklam as a territory disputed with Bhutan. It also did not recognize the *"mutual disengagement"* of the Indian and Chinese military personnel from the site of face-off. In fact, it stated that the standoff was resolved because of the unilateral withdrawal of the Indian forces from the Chinese territory. Beijing informed the international community that it lodged its representations through diplomatic channels with India. The Spokesperson of its Foreign Ministry Hua Chunying disclosed that: *"[Beijing]…, made the facts and truth of this situation known to the international community, clarified China's solemn position and explicit demands, and urged India to immediately pull back its border troops to*

*India's side. In the meantime, the Chinese military…[took] effective countermeasures to ensure the territorial sovereignty and legitimate rights and interests of the state"* (MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS 2017B).

Hua Chunying further opined that due to these efforts of China, the Indian military personnel withdrew to the Indian side of the border and their withdrawal was verified by the Chinese personnel present on the site of the impasse. Hua also asserted that Chinese border troops are still stationed and continuing the patrolling in the Doklam area, and that Beijing would persist in upholding its sovereign right to defend its territorial integrity (MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS 2017B). Beijing admitted to the abandonment of its construction work in Doklam but gave the weather conditions and not India's objections as the reason for that. On August 29, 2017 Hua Chunying stated that China had long been building infrastructure in the Doklam area to ameliorate the living and working environment of its people and military personnel. Hua further asserted that Beijing would chart out an appropriate plan for the construction work while considering the *"the actual situation"* and assessing the various other factors, including the weather (MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS 2017C). China's media said that it was a difficult decision for the Indian Government to withdraw its troops from Doklam because of the surging nationalist sentiment in India. Nevertheless, due to the pressure from China, India took a *"rational approach"* (GLOBAL TIMES 2017C). The media argued that China engaged India through multiple diplomatic channels and conducted effective military measures to protect its territorial sovereignty, as a result of which India withdrew its forces from the site of the standoff (GLOBAL TIMES 2017D). Besides this, the media also argued that by withdrawing its troops from the site of the impasse India had recognized China's sovereignty over Doklam. According to them, Beijing did not give any explicit assurance regarding its construction or other activities in Doklam to New Delhi, though India had expected such an assurance when the bilateral confrontation ended (GLOBAL TIMES 2017C). The Chinese media claimed the settlement of the standoff as China's strategic victory by arguing that it ended India's *"speculative tactical intervention"* in the border region (SHEN 2017). Thus, from China's official and media perspective, it took diplomatic and military measures, as a result of which India was forced to withdraw its troops from Doklam.

Second, the settlement of the impasse, as the Chinese media argued, was a result of strategy, the wisdom and ability of the Chinese leadership

and the *"responsible attitude"* of China as a major power. The media presented the cessation of the bilateral standoff as being as significant as the ceasefire of the Korean War (1950–1953) and the termination of China's *"self-defense war"* with Vietnam (1979) (SHEN 2017). They argued that the Doklam incident illustrated that New Delhi can move or take action beyond the rationale of IR (GLOBAL TIMES 2017C). They also called the Doklam standoff a *"strategic battle"* between China and the US as India's *"sudden fit of radicalness"* had US patronage. They claimed that the US did its *"utmost"* to drive a wedge in the bilateral relationship of China and India, and that for this purpose Washington had coveted a long-term conflict between Beijing and New Delhi. But Beijing did not fall into the snare of Washington as it did not enter into a border war with New Delhi at this decisive moment. The cessation of the Doklam crisis, in this sense, as the media argued, was not only a victory of Beijing in its *"tactical game"* with New Delhi, but also a victory in its broader strategic fight with Washington (SHEN 2017). The Chinese media termed the cessation of the crisis without resorting to war as *"a victory for Asia"* and said that it demonstrated the *"maturity of the Asian continent"* (GLOBAL TIMES 2017C). The *"strategic rivals"* of Beijing, as they claimed, have no intentions to recognize China's upsurge from *"a kind perspective"* (SHEN 2017).

Third, China's strategic and security experts opined that the standoff also ended due to a comprehensive assessment of China's national power by India. According to them India did a broad evaluation of China's overall national power and then decided not to fight with it. Prior to the cessation of the standoff, China had asserted its capability of defeating India in a potential military conflict. While boasting of China's military strength, China's strategic experts like Song Zhongping had also claimed that India cannot be compared to China in terms of both economics and technology. Moreover, China has far superior weapons, trained military personnel and strategic infrastructure to those of India (YANG 2017A). The Chinese experts admitted that India's military is more experienced in mountain combat. But they also pointed out that India's logistics are poor and its weapons are imported from different countries and thus lack compatibility in one comprehensive combat system. Besides this, they argued that India's long-range missiles lack accuracy (YANG 2017B). On the other hand, the Chinese experts claimed that Beijing would be well positioned to defend its sovereign interests if a border combat became inevitable. All of its weapons, as per the experts' claims, are backed by a comprehensive national defence system. These weapons are indigenously researched, manufactured and maintained

without any external dependence (CUI 2017). Thus, from the Chinese perspective, India analyzed China's military superiority and took a rational decision to withdraw its troops.

Fourth, the Government of China, and its media and security analysts also acknowledged the role of the forthcoming BRICS Summit and the Nineteenth National Congress of the Communist Party (NNCCP) of China in the cessation of the impasse. After the cessation of the standoff, while responding to the questions of the media related to the settlement of the dispute with India at a press conference, the Spokesperson of China's Foreign Ministry Hua Chunying stated that: *"The BRICS Summit in Xiamen is an event for all BRICS countries. A successful BRICS Summit serves the common interests of BRICS and developing countries. As Chair, China stands ready to make active efforts and play a positive role in ensuring the success of this event. We hope that other parties of this meeting can also show support and cooperation"* (MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS 2017C).

Prior to this, Chinese media had accused India of *"blackmailing"* China during the Doklam standoff by refusing to withdraw its forces in the light of the then forthcoming events: the BRICS Summit and the NNCCP in China. According to Chinese perceptions India was trying to take advantage of the Chinese preference for an uninterrupted and smooth running of the said events. China's strategic experts like Ye Hailin, Xu Guangyu and Liu Zongyi had also opined that Beijing did not want to disrupt the upcoming BRICS Summit and the NNCCP of China (LIU 2017; YANG 2017A; YANG 2017C). Thus, China's perspective recognizes the importance of the BRICS Summit and the NNCCP in the resolution of the impasse.

### India's Perspective

The Indian perspective regarding the cessation of the Doklam impasse, also comprised the views of India's government, media and strategic experts.

First, India officially maintained that the Doklam standoff ceased due to the diplomatic communication with China. In its first official brief, the Govt. of India, through its Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), claimed to have diplomatic contacts with China regarding the occurrence at Doklam. It revealed that through these contacts, New Delhi had conveyed to Beijing its concerns related to the construction of the road and the unilateral

alteration of the status quo, as these activities were perceived as detrimental to India's national security and interests. Subsequently, an *"expeditious disengagement"* of the Indian and PLA soldiers at Doklam was accepted by the two countries (MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS 2017B). India's official statement indicated that the withdrawal of the Indian security forces was mutually agreed upon, but it was silent on the question of the reciprocal withdrawal of the PLA from the face-off site. On August 28, 2017, responding to questions related to the Doklam disengagement, the MEA again claimed that a swift withdrawal of the security forces of the two countries from the site of the standoff was occurring following the diplomatic communications (MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS 2017C). Hence, here, India mentioned the withdrawal of the PLA from the area of the standoff as well and emphasized that this type of dispute can only be resolved through diplomatic channels. Moreover, while referring to the Sino-Indian Agreement of 2012 and countering the Chinese government's invoking of the Anglo-Chinese Treaty of 1890, the MEA asserted India's *"principled position"*, which entails scrupulously respecting the bilateral understandings and agreements related to border disputes (MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS 2017C). The Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi had met the President of China Xi Jinping during the Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on June 7–10, 2017 in Astana, Kazakhstan and they agreed to respect each other's core concerns and appropriately handle all their disagreements without allowing them to become disputes (MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS 2017C). Thus, the second statement released by the MEA confirmed that both sides had been withdrawing their troops. India's government sources also informed the media about the *"mutual"* and *"simultaneous"* but *"sequential"* withdrawal of troops. It reported that both sides had gone back to their pre-impasse positions almost simultaneously by following standard operating procedures. It further clarified that the *"expeditious disengagement"* involved a pull-out of the security forces of both countries as a unilateral withdrawal of its security forces by New Delhi would not have required any agreement with Beijing (SINGH – ROY 2017). Hence, as per India's official logic, the *"expeditious disengagement"* was a bilateral and not a unilateral one and the Doklam standoff was ended due to its diplomatic communication with China.

Second, India's strategic analysts claimed the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) Summit and the NNCCP of China as vital elements in the final outcome of the Doklam impasse. The representatives of the BRICS countries had to attend the BRICS Summit at Xiamen, China

on September 3–5, 2017. Amidst the standoff, it would have been impossible for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to participate in the Summit in China. India had not confirmed the participation of Prime Minister Modi in the Summit. A boycott coming close on the heels of the boycott of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Summit or the cancellation of the BRICS Summit would have severely dented the image of President Xi Jinping as a leader of international repute (CHELLANEY 2017D; HAIDER 2017; NARAYANAN 2017; PANT 2017; SINGH, BHARTENDU KUMAR 2017). At that time, China wanted to attenuate the global perceptions of its aggressive designs. Besides this, its President Xi was keen to project himself as a global statesman. Amidst such circumstances, President Xi could have hardly afforded a military debacle with India (GUPTA 2017). The protracted crisis could have become a sore point for the Chinese leadership in the NNCCP on October 18–24, 2017 (SINGH, MAYANK 2017). As Chellaney opines: *"Beijing was left with little choice but to negotiate a deal with India… Two factors forced Beijing's hand. It wished to save the September 3–5 BRICS summit in Xiamen, China. More importantly, it wanted to safeguard President Xi Jinping's reputation in the run-up to the critical party congress this autumn. Had the standoff with India dragged on, it could potentially have taken a toll on Xi's standing"* (CHELLANEY 2017E).

Therefore, India's absence at the BRICS Summit or its cancellation would have tarnished the image of Beijing and President Xi Jinping's reputation before the critical NNCCP (PANT 2017). The NNCCP was even more important for President Xi as he had planned to uphold his political and ideological bequest in the Communist Party of China while equalling Mao Zedong (NARAYANAN 2017; PANT 2017). Hence, President Xi needed peace to achieve his objectives.

Third, the majority of India's strategic analysts also speculated that the topography of Doklam and India's strategically strong position in the area was a raison d'être that forced China to negotiate with India to end the standoff. They argued that the location was also advantageous to India, and its military advantage in the Sikkim sector would have made an escalation of the conflict costly for China. The Indian army, as strategic analysts argued, had encircled the entire area of Doklam while having enough provisions to neutralize the Chinese forces. It had been occupying a geographically high altitude, due to which the Indian army had a strategically greater advantage in the area vis-a-vis the PLA soldiers. If China invaded India in that area, the PLA might have experienced an embarrassing

defeat (CHELLANEY 2017E; SINGH, MAYANK 2017). China had realized that: "*…the PLA was not fully trained for war. The PLA is undergoing massive reforms and reorganization, including purging of senior officers. The PLA, thus, is in a state of flux and the Chinese leadership was not very confident of its war-making capabilities, particularly in the Air Force and Navy… The Chinese leadership also conceded to the fact that India enjoyed both geographic and strategic advantage in the area. The onset of winters was also on the horizon and life on the plateau during these months is a nightmare. Once again the Chinese troops deployed in the open would have been in a state of disadvantage vis-a-vis the Indian troops*" (GUPTA 2017).

Hence, India's strategic analysts also contemplated that the PLA might have decided to invade other parts of the border area with India, where it has a strategic advantage. However, there are also numerous segments on the border of the two countries where India enjoys an advantageous position. In case of an armed conflict, the Indian army could also "*[move] there to occupy territory under [the] control of China*" (SAJJANHAR 2017). Thus, it had become obvious to Beijing that a "*clear and decisive win*" in a war with India over this issue, would be difficult and moreover, the loss would be unacceptably huge (SAJJANHAR 2017). Nevertheless, Zorawar Daulet Singh did not give much weight to this argument. He argued that India's deterrent power or military balance had little to do with the peaceful resolution of the Doklam impasse as China still had overall geographical, logistical and technological advantages vis-à-vis India. It is improbable, as Singh has opined, that Beijing's strategic restraint had predominantly been "*shaped by fear of reprisals or high direct repercussions of a military escalation*" (SINGH, ZORAWAR DAULET 2017A: 11).

Fourth, to some extent, the international environment, especially the mounting tension in the Korean Peninsula and the pressure from the international community, also assisted in resolving the dispute (DWIVEDI 2017). There were also reports of the Russian President Vladimir Putin's evinced enthusiastic interest in the resolution of the boundary dispute between the two competing Asian neighbours. The Chinese President Xi, as Brahma Chellaney argues, had been facing "*a frustrating paradox*". On the one hand, President Xi was trying to prevent a possible armed conflict over the nuclear and missile programme of North Korea and on the other, he was searching for a way to punish India. However, China's hostility toward India over Doklam occurred at a crucial juncture when the nuclear and missile crisis in the Korean Peninsula was threatening the international

peace and security. Since Beijing was central to the US strategy and diplomacy against North Korea, any military conflict of the US and its allies, South Korea and Japan, with North Korea could have also easily impacted China. The US threats of war to Pyongyang had unnerved Beijing, which, as Chellaney observes, was one of the reasons why China had not proceeded with and acted on its *"constant threats to teach India a lesson"* (CHELLANEY 2017D).

Fifth, an armed conflict with India, as strategic analysts have argued, could have risked derailing China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), in which President Xi has heavily invested. The BRI is a *"potent instrument"* of China for the implementation of its revisionist agenda (NARAYANAN, 2017). Any military conflict with India would have undermined China's officially declared philosophy of internationalism surrounding the Belt and Road discourse (SINGH, ZORAWAR DAULET 2017B). Unlike in past imperialisms, in the contemporary era, coercion and commerce can't be mixed (MISRA 2017). Hence, Beijing needs a peaceful environment to succeed in its agenda.

Sixth, Beijing's authoritarian system and its increasingly suppressive policies have already exacerbated the domestic problems in China, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang. China, as Shayam Saran argues, is *"a brittle and opaque polity"* (SARAN 2017). Besides this, it is facing several cross-border security threats. In such a situation, as M.K. Narayanan observes, any military rendezvous with its neighbouring country could have further aggravated China's problems (NARAYANAN 2017).

Seventh, Beijing has provided a *"doctrine of [a] peaceful rise"* and *"peaceful development"* to the world for an anodyne facilitation of its growth. A military conflict with India could have tainted its peaceful image globally, bolstered the perception of it as *"a rogue state"*, and made it *"a pariah"* in international eyes (NARAYAN 2017; SAJJANHAAR 2017; SINGH, MAYANK 2017; SINGH, ZORAWAR DAULET 2017B).

Eighth, any outbreak of hostilities between China and India in Doklam, as Zorawar Daulet Singh has argued, would have fuelled the anti-Chinese sentiment in India. Even on a sub-regional level, China's conflict with India would have steered Beijing further towards the irredentist Pakistan as its exclusive partner. This would have been a suboptimal outcome for Beijing, which prefers to have a wider profile in the sub-continent (SINGH, ZORAWAR DAULET 2017B). Moreover, the premature assertiveness of Beijing

could have propelled its other strategic rivals, especially the US, Japan, and Vietnam, to unite with India against it (MISRA 2017).

Ninth, as India's strategic experts observe, China's declining economic growth and its increasing dependence on international trade also compelled it to resolve the impasse. M.K. Narayanan has observed in China an actual decline in its growth rate, extremely high levels of debt and an extensive increase in the cost of labour (NARAYANAN 2017). Its economy, as Shyam Saran observes, is facing stagnation like other major economies of the world. Furthermore, it has *"an ecologically ravaged landscape and [a] mounting debt that is 250 percent of GDP"* (SARAN 2017). Its overall government debt was about 4.03 trillion US dollars in 2016. This debt was almost 40 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of China (SINDNEY 2017). P. Stobdan writes: *"The economy is not expected to recover in the near future. With China's Central Bank piled with massive debts, global financial rating agencies seem loath to forecast a positive scenario for the country. China's corporate debt had touched $17.8 trillion in 2016, or 166 percent of the country's GDP. As such, the fear of China facing another financial crisis very much exists"* (STOBDAN 2017).

China relies relatively more on its "international trade" and "global production chains" to maintain the high growth rate of its GDP. Hence, it wanted to be viewed as a pillar of the prevailing global economic order rather than a disruptor of the same by the international community (NARAYANAN 2017). The Chinese economy's vulnerable point is that it lacks resources. The supply of oil from the Gulf countries to China is vital for its growth (NARAYANAN 2017). Peace on the Asian continent is, therefore, crucial for ensuring the uninterrupted supply of oil from these countries to China. A suspicious and disruptive atmosphere in Asia can impede the growth of China's economy (CHELLANEY 2017D).

Lastly, the *"indirect costs and the positive facets"* of China's relations with India and other South Asian countries also shaped the choices of Beijing. A military conflict with New Delhi could have upset China's policies and relationships with other South Asian countries. Likewise, China is attempting to build a common order through institutions like the SCO and BRICS. It needs India to promote its new economic and political groupings and also to convince the Western countries that there should be a restructuring of the existing institutions of and beliefs about the global

economic and political order. Its trade with and growing investment in India also influenced its decision-making about the issue concerned. The depth of engagement, the overlapping interests and the fretting about its reputational costs in South Asia were enough for Beijing to feel compelled to defuse the Doklam impasse serenely (SINGH, ZORAWAR DAULET 2017A: 11).

## CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, China's status and role in contemporary international politics have been discussed widely in the global academic and political discourse. In the light of the Doklam impasse, the present article also analyzes the Chinese and Indian interpretations of China's role as a status quo or revisionist power in international politics.

China's official statements, its media and its strategic commentators never recognized Doklam as a disputed territory. Indeed, it presented itself as a victim of India's aggression and asserted to persist with its legitimate right to protect its territory. It portrayed itself as a "responsible power" which resolved the impasse amicably by engaging India through numerous diplomatic channels. Chinese media and strategic analysts claimed the superiority of China's hard power resources, which, according to their interpretation, obliged India to withdraw its forces from the area of conflict. Thus, the Chinese perspective on the cessation of the Doklam impasse highlighted the role of China as a status quo and responsible power in international politics. From the Chinese perspective, Beijing is not involved in any revisionist activity and yet is committed to exercise its sovereign right to defend its territory.

Opposite to this, the Indian interpretation of China's role in international politics depicted China as a revisionist power involved in territorial revisionism. In its official statements, India termed China's construction activities in Doklam as an attempt at a unilateral alteration of the status quo and a source of trepidation for India's national security. India's media and strategic commentators also dubbed China a revisionist power. According to them, China's deteriorating growth rate, its growing internal conflicts, the upcoming BRICS summit and the threat of it being boycotted by India, the event of the NNCCP, and the risk of China's "peaceful image" being spoiled, along with its fear of the BRI's possible derailment, constrained Beijing and forced it to resolve its impasse with New Delhi.

Besides this, as the Indian media and strategic analysts have argued, the Korean crisis, the strategically advantageous position of the Indian security forces in the area of the standoff and India's strategic relevance for China in the promotion of its new economic and political groupings and attempts to convince the Western powers for restructuring the existing global economic and political order also obliged China to defuse the impasse with India tranquilly. Hence, from the Indian perspective, China is behaving as a revisionist power which is trying to alter the existing territorial status quo in its neighbourhood. Beijing's move in Doklam was also steered by its policy of territorial revisionism.

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# Book Reviews

# Maéva Clément and Eric Sangar (eds): Researching Emotions in International Relations: Methodological Perspectives on the Emotional Turn

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In the last two decades, neuroscience and neurophysiology served as a germane trigger for social scientists to ponder upon the connexion between the human brain and physiological traits and political behaviour. From the late 1930s, nevertheless, there had been some initial endeavours to use sundry experiments and include psychology in political science, albeit in a limited manner. In the 1950s, scholars of behaviouralism flirted with the idea of specialising in behavioural patterns more rigorously (SOMIT – TANENHAUS 1967). However, the technological means and research methods they had used cannot be compared to those employed in the last decades. As a consequence, new neuro-x fields, such as neurolaw, neuroeconomics, and neuropolitics, gradually emerged. Amongst these, sub-fields zeroing in on specifically designed areas have been formed too. Most interesting in this regard, though, is the field of philosophy and international relations (IR), in which scholars have refused to take part in the neuro-x formation (SEE HOLMES 2014) due to the fact that neuroscience and other forms of biological research may have already disproved the rudimentary pillars of international relations theories (HYDE 2010). Hence the reviewed co-edited book might then serve as a felicitous point of reference while adverting to the fact that scholars of international relations have become open to debate. Apart from a handful of papers (E.G., BLEIKER – HUTCHISON 2008; BLEIKER 2015), the number of books dedicated particularly to international relations theories and their bond to emotions and (neuro)physiological traits has remained exiguous. Some pioneering exceptions may be found though, as in the case of Yetiv and James (2017), who attempted to draw researchers' attention to interdisciplinarity when examining IR, and Holmes (2018), who vindicated that *tête-à-tête* negotiations proved to be more successful in comparison to other forms of bargaining.

The reviewed volume was co-edited by Maéva Clément and Eric Sangar, who have already worked together on their analysis examining the use of emotions amongst US and Islamist political leaders (CLÉMENT – LINDEMANN – SANGAR 2017). Dr. Clément has graduated from Sciences Po Lyon, Sorbonne University, and Goethe Universität-Frankfurt. Currently she is Senior Researcher at the Centre for Democracy and Peace Research (*Zentrum für Demokratie- und Friedensforschung*) at Universität Osnabrück in Germany. And her research foci comprise, for instance, international political theories, interdisciplinary emotion research, and peace and conflict studies. Eric Sangar, by contrast, studied at Sciences Po Paris and the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. And at the moment, Dr.

Sangar works as Lecturer at Sciences Po Lille, and his academic research has focussed on the linkage between collective memory and foreign policy and conflicts.

Apart from the first chapter, which serves as the introduction to this book, there are three main parts that divide the volume into three thematic blocks ("The Influence of Emotions on Actors and Politics"; "Emotions Shaped by Powerful Actors and Institutions"; and "Discursive Agency and Emotions"). In total, excluding the above-mentioned opening chapter, the volume consists of 13 chapters with each one having a different author or team of authors. The authors have concentrated on diverse aspects of emotions and their meaning and use in IR. The editors, nonetheless, emphasise their intent to fulfil and achieve the following three research goals (PP. 2–3): (1) to deliver *"valuable insights into how emotions and affects can be operationalised"*; (2) to give evidence of *"the role of emotions in IR"*; and finally, (3) to itemise the main obstacles to this type of research and the corresponding limitations. And after delineating the background of emotions and its short-term existence and overall complexity, the editors then summarise the two main debates they observe within the area. These debates have been comprised of emotions as the *"analytical concept"* and the *"conceptualisation of emotions at the international level"* (PP. 5–6). Regardless of the initial claim that the authors had only briefly summarised the roots and delimitations of *emotions, feelings, and affects*, at the same time it has remained blurred whether their approach and definitions had come from and were to be understood entirely from the angle of political science, or, by contrast, whether they were built on conceptions of psychology. In juxtaposition, in the way of utilising and comprehending these terms, a clear-cut variance exists as is later even implied in passing (P. 330). On the whole, the editors utilise emotions as an *"umbrella term"* (P. 5) as each author of the volume then perceives emotions differently. By analogy, all the authors always delineate their approaches to methodology and methods separately in the given chapters.

There are three chapters in the first block, and each chapter stands for an independent study, which is a scheme applied throughout the whole volume. To begin with, Chapter 2 considers the work of Eugene T. Gendlin, an Austro-American philosopher whose research balanced on the verge of philosophy and psychology when elaborating on the felt sense and personal skill performances, a concept issued in his book entitled Focusing.

This chapter adumbrates the aspects of Gendlin's philosophy, and possibly his sofa too, and connects it to the side of emotions alongside the importance of non-verbal expressions and body languages as demonstrated in cases of American political representatives (P. 43). The next chapter particularly specialises in two selected political actors, specifically Winston S. Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt. The purport of this analysis is to apply the concept of friendship and human relationship-based research onto international politics via *interpretative political science*. And finally, in the third chapter of this block, qualitative content analysis (QCA) was employed for the purpose of examining Russian foreign policy and its state of anger and status concerns. In this case study, the author uses two particular conflicts for looking into the examined course of action. The coding scheme is based on three general groups (cognitive, behavioural, and affective) that are further dismantled. Afterwards, the author compares the changes in Russian foreign policy towards the West over 25 years, and thereby concluding that there has been an *"emotional learning curve"* symbolising an increase in *"assertiveness in the relationship"* (PP. 95; 96).

The second block engages in institutionalism and its interconnexion with the actors' emotions. In the four chapters of this block, the authors immerse in miscellaneous ingredients of war, violence, power, and dehumanisation in association with the respective stakeholders. To start with, Chapter 5 demarcates the borders and use of *auto-ethnography*. In order to analyse and appraise security discourse, this case study examines and brings affective and emotional experience at London's Imperial War Museum to the fore. As later admitted by the author, nonetheless, this personal experience may indeed lead to biassed results due to the personal traits and socio-economic determinants, such as one's social class affiliation, for instance (P. 120). The following chapter (CHAPTER 6) outlines the *"discursive nature of emotions"* (P. 131) and this discursive approach had been employed when examining a set of data that the author acquired after interviewing 40 French airmen. Subsequently, a framework based on two main vectors was created in order to scrutinise the links to violence and its perception. Chapter 8 applies a computer-assisted narrative analysis sharing similarities with qualitative content analyses, as the authors had endeavoured to elucidate the narrative of actors taking part in the decision-making process in the Iraq War of 2003. Specifically, the roles of aggressor, victim, hero, and coward were taken into consideration under the terms of their political reactions in four investigated scenarios. According to the results, there were

palpable discrepancies between the discourses adopted by the West, represented by the US, and bin Laden in respect of victims (P. 201). In contrast to that, the *"hero-protective"* narrative was proved to be universal and boundless.

The longest and also the final block contains six chapters. Amid the migration crisis in 2015, Chapter 9 ponders upon multilevel interpretation possibilities in the case of the displayed images and ensuing emotional reactions depending on the infamous image of a dead three-year-old boy from Syria. The author's analysis concludes that the relation between graphic photographs and politics are of a complex character, and as in the case of the examined image, the impact of images may prove to be *"indecisive"* (P. 224), thereby having a multivalent effect on politics and the public. Chapter 9 then, however, recommends re-running the analytical arrangement of *political ressentiment* for further research in conflict studies, not only necessarily from the historical perspective, since it shows the overlapping role of emotions in collective identities (P. 246). While Chapter 10 employs discursive analysis in order to look into the concept of [governmental] *political ressentiment* in the case of the Greek debt crisis in relation to Germany, Chapter 11 changes sides by turning to philosophical persuasions when applying Hans-George Gadamer's framework *of fusion of horizons* to emotional experiences in the course of time of 9/11. Chapters 12 and 13 are built on discourse analysis and qualitative content analysis, respectively. The former explores the conflict between Russia and NATO over the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, shifts in the role of Russia *vis-à-vis* the West and how it was made into *"a pariah state"* owing to the incidence of *emotionalisation effects* (P. 288). The subject of the latter chapter is the national identity of the US and its coupling to the relations between the US and Iran. The qualitative content analysis sheds light on the occurrence of the *"fear"* that has prevailed in the US on the grounds of Iran's possession of nuclear weapons (P. 313). The results are also supported by a visual analysis testifying to the *"mistrust"* of the US towards the Iranian leadership (P.315). Chapter 14, the last one in both the block and the volume, recapitulates the methodological challenges associated with emotions and their research in IR as they appeared in the aforementioned case studies. Furthermore, the authors put these research hindrances into context, which makes this chapter distinctively valuable.

Inasmuch as the editors highlight the uniqueness of the volume, one may anticipate: (1) a chapter specifically devoted to the introductory

roots of the historiography of emotions in IR or ② an extra chapter on methodology and methods since in this area, *"methodology is still relatively under-discussed"* (P. 7), as claimed, but regrettably, the editors had merely encapsulated the peaks of prior research in a brief, yet accurate, section of the Introduction. And when it comes to discussing the limits of the research, this was done in the very last chapter (CHAPTER 14), which took account of the methods and methodology per se, albeit only to a limited extent once again.

On the one hand, the authors aimed to construct their methodology and the respective methods on those employed in political science, IR, and humanities. And meritoriously, the authors and editors strictly followed this direction whilst concentrating on epistemological, ontological, and theoretical aspects of research in order to insists on *"integrating tools from 'classical' social science"* (P. 2) in their work. But on the other hand, the significance of research opportunities in respect of neuroscience, or physiology, was not addressed. Alas, it was up to the footnote on page 25 to solve this problem, as in it, one may learn that the authors and editors *"recognise the insights gained through psychological experimentation […] but the volume is made primarily for a broad readership for whom experimental work and the resources it demands is [sic] not a realistic option"*. Nonetheless, some of the authors (E.G., CHAPTER 10) at least acknowledge the non-negligible role of psychology and thus interpret and adopt findings from it. Even though this volume is a valuable contribution to the studies of emotions in IR, the first question is whether this solely non-experimental and yet empirical approach may be sustainable. Each chapter has produced an inspiring insight into the opportunities of research into emotions as they appear across the theories and practice of IR. Yet it is imperative to bear the above-mentioned objectives of the volume in mind. Hence, those approaches towards methodology and methods that were utilised throughout the volume, may serve the purpose of *characterisation* and *depictions* of given situations, rather than identifying the *causes* or *origins*. In a long-term perspective, however, one may even wonder whether similar books will not have served as a dead-end track due to the fact that they endeavour to build a parallel milieu for the former theories of IR. And since not even the methods of psychology have been included in the book, many similar efforts to inquire into political affairs of IR may turn out to be disputable because enquiring into emotions without psychology and experiments may be a contradiction in terms. At the same time, nevertheless, findings from and interpretations of

data obtained through the tools of neuroscience, as associated with neuropolitics, have not been flawless either. Yet the latest studies using the tools of neuroscience and neurophysiology (E.G., DECETY – PAPE – WORKMAN 2018; HATEMI – MCDERMOTT 2012; SMITH ET AL. 2011) shall be acknowledged and recognised by the theorists of IR since their findings may be of great significance in terms of explicating deeper patterns of political behaviour.

Secondly, one may ask who shall make up the *"broad readership"*? Apart from the enthusiasts, who are not merely exclusively political scientists and their students, and a narrow selection of scholars of IR who are willing to consider the importance of such concepts as emotions and empathy and are not afraid to leave their comfort zone, one may hope that not just the appealing title of the volume may attract many readers from the outside of political science as well. This volume is worth reading because the editors have gathered together a group of experienced and noteworthy scholars who managed to deliver thought-provoking chapters whose content keeps raising both praising and scathing queries, even after finishing the very last page.

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# Lucy Delap: Feminisms: A Global History

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In *Feminisms: A Global History*, historian Lucy Delap provides an engaging and innovative account of the global history of feminism, analysing the progressive redefinition of feminism and its connection to various historical developments all around the world. Examining *"how unexpected linkages and resonances emerge across different feminist generations and epochs,"* (P. 3) this book offers a whole new perspective on the evolution of feminist movements globally, contesting the traditional simplistic 'feminist waves' narrative as well as the scanty perception of feminism as one united movement.

The author of this book, Lucy Delap, is an expert on gender history and the history of feminism. Delap is a fellow of Murray Edwards College at the University of Cambridge and a fellow of the Royal Historical Society. She works on projects related to the intersection of feminism and capitalism. Even though she focusses mainly on modern British history within her research, this particular publication is precious for illustrating her historical account with case studies from a diverse range of countries. She draws examples from various sources – from the writings of the Japanese anarchist Sentaro Kemuyama, who lived in the early 20th century, to a Dior fashion show catwalk in Paris in 2017. This great richness serves to confirm the author's key claim that *"histories of feminism cannot be located only within single nation states, regions, or empires"* (P. 18) and opens the eyes of an average reader who has heard solely about the Western suffragette movements and maybe recent demonstrations against gender-based violence. Hence, it can be supposed that the author's main aim is to enrich the readers' understanding of feminism with a broad array of examples of various global versions and branches of feminism.

Nevertheless, the book is not special only in its geographical scope but also in its structure. Delap adopted a revolutionary approach in that she analyses the history of feminism through various themes and objects which might seem unrelated to feminism at first but carry important linkages. This unique structure enables the author to cover in just one chapter examples ranging from Ibsen's *Doll's House*, Maoist attempts to socialize motherhood, and Claudie Broyelle's *La Moitié du Ciel* to the tensions between Domitila Barrios de Chungara and Betty Friedan at the Mexico City World Conference on Women in 1975. Therefore, the reader gains a deeper understanding of the complexity of feminism, its presence in various domains, and its fascinating interconnections with many different

phenomena. Instead of following a chronological order, the chapters deal with themes of dreams, ideas, spaces, objects, looks, feelings, actions, and songs. As was already mentioned, these words might seem unrelated to feminism but the author uses them as umbrella terms for her analysis demonstrating the presence of feminism in almost all spheres of life.

Since feminism can be a problematic and emotionally loaded concept, the author dedicates the introduction to an explanation of the various ways in which this term can be approached. She adopts an original method defining feminism as an activity rather than as an ideology, saying, *"Feminism is best understood as an overlapping, internally complex set of actions, questions, and demands that has been in formulation since the eighteenth century or even earlier. Its concerns change over time"* (P. 3). This definition makes feminism more neutral and inclusive, accentuating its social mobilisation feature. Moreover, it captures the changing nature of feminism as this concept evolves along with the social norms of a given society. This definition further corroborates that the author is well aware of the importance of discourse. She analyses the narratives surrounding feminism and their meaning for various groups as well. Delap explains that feminism is sometimes *"rejected as too divisive, too Euro-American, too white, too middle-class"* (P. 5). However, whichever label we apply to feminism (women's awakening, *feminizumu*, women's liberation, *femmes en lutte*, intersectional feminism), this just supports Delap's claim that there are different interacting types of feminism, even though we might sometimes focus only on the Western perception of this term. As Delap says, there should be *"no assumption that feminism looks the same in each place or time"* (P. 5).

Although the author does not provide a linear chronological evolution of feminism in this book, the mosaic that her book assembles demonstrates how feminism has changed throughout the centuries. Delap adopts a critical approach and she does not hide the problems and limitations of feminism. She identifies early feminism's limited scope, as it focussed mainly on upper-class white women. Moreover, she describes how feminism in the United States in the 1950s still struggled to include both white and black women. As the African American feminist Frances Beal mentioned, African American women faced *"very specific problems that have to be spoken to"* (P. 91) and they could not expect white feminists to advocate for black women's needs. The same holds true for lesbian women or transwomen, whose discrimination in the patriarchal order is still disregarded

by some feminists even nowadays. Delap mentions that transwomen were denied entry to some feminist events, such as the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, which enforced a strict women-only policy while not recognising transwomen as women. Nevertheless, the author delineates the evolution of feminism captured by terms like 'intersectionality,' which was introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, which demonstrate that feminism transforms. Through this development, Delap also demonstrates the flexibility and fluidity of the term 'feminism' since for Generations Y and Z, intersectionality is often a natural and inseparable component of feminism.

Delap does not avoid even the global North-South divide. She concedes the dominant position of hegemonic feminism, which has *"often been associated with a Western model of emancipated womanhood"* (P. 6). She describes the controversy centred around hegemonic feminism at the Mexico City conference in 1975, where the Bolivian tin miner's wife Domitila Barrios de Chungara opposed the famous American feminist Betty Friedan, who attempted *"to speak for other women, and to subsume their needs under a North American version of feminism"* (P. 254). This tension challenges the way too idealistic narratives of one united feminism sometimes promoted by international organisations dealing with women's rights. Delap's account of this situation in the section 'Feelings' further proves the usefulness of the organisation of her book, as it is detached from 'the four waves of feminism' narrative since she can combine events from various parts of the world. Moreover, this division enables the author to delve deeper into the feminist anti-colonial movements, such as the large protests of 1929 in Nigeria led by Igbo women against the British rule, as well. This example also outlines the social justice components of feminism. Delap mentions Ransome-Kuti's understanding of *"women's liberation being threaded in the liberation of the oppressed and poor majority of the people in Nigeria"* (P. 121). While these movements demonstrate great inclusivity, though they are sometimes ideologically intertwined with and/or discredited by communism, the author also shows the limited global understanding of Western feminists, who sometimes make racist or orientalist remarks. An orientalist concept introduced by the British feminist Eleanor Rathbone can serve as an example of this: she talked about the 'Turk complex', which she described as a universal mental patriarchy system in which men seek to maintain power over their wives and children.

The account of feminisms provided by Delap is valuable also in the sense that she actively includes the cooperation of men with women in the feminist struggle, even though they are otherwise often left out from feminist texts. She describes how some male thinkers, such as Lewis Henry Morgan, August Bebel, or Friedrich Engels, influenced women's perception of patriarchy and contributed to feminism's greater inclusiveness, especially in regard to women with a working class background. Moreover, Delap portrays men as allies of feminism, mentioning the 'anti-sexist men's groups' which aimed to offer an alternative to patriarchy. This interest was complemented by research on 'patripsych' (or what Rathbone called the 'Turk-complex') and masculinities, which aimed to explain the structures of gender relations and create names, such as hegemonic masculinity and toxic masculinity, for well-known behaviours. Since labelling a certain phenomenon is an important first step in tackling it, these developments were significant. Furthermore, the active support of feminism from gay men, who also suffered under patriarchal prejudices, gave feminist movements greater momentum. Nevertheless, even though Delap dedicates a subsection to this topic, she could definitely include the male perception and engagement in feminism more to demonstrate that feminism is not only about women's actions.

Although the author aims to provide a global narrative of feminism, she leaves out some regions from her analysis, which slightly limits her objective. The whole region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is represented in her book solely by the case of the punk-rock protest group Pussy Riot, which seems insufficient considering its rich history and the large potential for discussions about the intersection and impact of communism and women's rights in the CEE region. Moreover, Central Asia is fully omitted from the book. This might be caused by the small demographic size of the region (the population of the region is 75 million). Nevertheless, this still means that some points of view and versions of feminism are not represented in the book despite its richness. Hence, even though the author is trying to include as many countries as possible, her account is somewhat regionally unbalanced.

This book provides an accessible and comprehensive introduction to the global struggle for equality between women and men. Its contribution is even more valuable in the times of the pandemic, which poses a serious challenge to gender equality all around the world and makes feminism

even more crucial. *Feminisms: A Global History* captures the successful (and less successful) tactics feminists used to convey their message for centuries, which can inspire contemporary activists, who (unfortunately) often fight for the same rights that were demanded by feminists 100 years ago. Moreover, this book could contribute to finally changing the Westernised perception of feminism as something uniquely Western that must be exported to 'less-developed parts of the world.' It democratises the feminist narrative and reveals the intrinsic global nature of feminism, which makes it more inclusive. Delap suggests in *Feminisms: A Global History* that *"for some women and men, feminism has proved a transformative, explosive, life changing way of seeing the world"* (P. 8). Her book serves as an excellent, engaging, and eye-opening guide into this new way of seeing the world.

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# Peter Andreas: Killer High:
# A History of War in Six Drugs

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Earlier last year, Oxford University Press published a book called *Killer High: A History of War in Six Drugs*. The author of this publication is Peter Andreas, who has been working at the prestigious Brown University for a long time, specifically since 2001. In earlier years he was an academic at Harvard University, a researcher at the Brooking Institution and a member of the Social Science Research Council-MacArthur Foundation for International Peace and Security. He works at his current institution as a professor of International Studies and Political Science and International and Public Affairs. In his research scope Andreas specializes primarily in investigating the secret dimension of globalization. This includes illegal cross-border flows of people, goods, money, and information. He tries to blend the traces of the interaction between states, and the illicit flows across time and space in his publications, focussing mainly on the practice of government policing efforts and politics along and across borders. Due to such a research focus, his publications could be classified under the field of International Relations. However, in a more precise way, it could be said that their spectrum extends to the fields of security studies, political economy, history, and the study of transnational crime.

The political debate on transnational crime is still relevant in today's international environment. However, this debate sometimes seems misleading, as it does not always use terms such as "narco-terrorists", "narco-insurgents" and "narco-guerrillas" in an appropriate way. It could even be argued that through such a presentation of this issue politicians create a common tendency in society to consider the relationship between drugs and wars as a completely new phenomenon. For example, the so-called narco-trafficking is often related mainly to organized crime groups. Andreas's latest work, *Killer High*, comes to confront this social and political discourse. After opening it, we quickly find out that Andreas, with his research, is trying to prove that the mentioned relationship between drugs and wars is older than it might seem at first glance. Its history dates back to not only past decades but even past centuries. And Andreas sets out on this path because the mainstay of his research in *Killer High* is mapping the drug-war relationship from early antiquity to the present. He examines the relationship itself through six powerful drugs: alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, opium, amphetamine, and heroin. Through the interconnectedness of these selected drugs and wars Andreas tries to confront the ingrained opinion about and novelty of this relationship. Thus, his research traces the history of wars through the lens of drugs and the history of drugs through

the lens of war, on which he based his two main research questions: *"How did drugs make wars?" and "How did wars make drugs?"*

    The book is divided into an introductory part, six main chapters, and a conclusion in the form of a final discussion and evaluation. In the book, Andreas reveals new nooks and crannies of often well-known and very often researched world events through the drugs mentioned above. For example, his analysis of the British Empire in the 19th century, and specifically before the Opium Wars, confronts today's notion about narco-states. In the third and fourth chapter, we find out that, according to Andreas, the British Empire in this period was a kind of so-called narco-empire. From the British government's position, the supply of tea to British consumers from China was made possible by creating an opium addiction among the Chinese population. On the one hand, there was a tendency to satisfy consumers addicted to an "acceptable" drug, but on the other, this situation led to the creation of consumers of a more dangerous drug. In the following years it was precisely due to these circumstances that the situation escalated into the Opium Wars. At the same time, however, the British tea and opium trade was far from being the only or the most significant British drug trade. The British Empire had long relied on taxes on alcohol and tobacco. The British, of course, were not unique in this regard at the time. Every power (not only during the mentioned period) relied on these taxes. However, we see that this fact had an even greater importance for the British after we read that tobacco and alcohol taxes ensured the British victory over Napoleon (P. 33).

    Furthermore, in the text and particularly in the description of the formation of empires with the help of addictive substances, we also find the topic of hypocrisy. For example, we learn that the Bolsheviks during the Russian Revolution were staunch prohibitionists in the field of alcohol. However, after taking power they returned to their former customs and filled their state treasury with income from vodka just like their tsarist predecessors. Similarly, the Nazi ideology was hypocritical in this respect as well. It was also anti-drug, but at the same time the Nazis were able to aggressively supply their soldiers on the war front with amphetamine. Paradoxically, even Hitler himself was an exemplary addict. As is written on page 140, during his reign in Nazi Germany he was given up to eighty-two different drugs. Such data makes one wonder whether this hypocrisy is a reality in which political propaganda represents only the will of a rational ruler and is far removed from the cruel truth.

From the whole work it is evident that in it, the author contin-ued his work from previous years (SEE THE ARTICLES "DRUGS AND WAR: WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP?" AND "CRIME, VIOLENCE, AND ILLICIT ECONOMIES IN REGIONAL AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE" OR THE BOOK SMUGGLER NATION: HOW ILLICIT TRADE MADE AMERICA), as the text shows extensive expertise in this research area. Moreover, we can ap-preciate Killer High even more by seeing it as his masterwork in terms of the collected data. A kind of drug-war relationship typology was created in the book, representing the main essence of the author's research path and helping to answer his research questions. The first type of relationship is "war while on drugs", an experimental condition where drugs are con-sumed by combatants and civilians during a war. Andreas's second type is "war through drugs", which means the use of drugs to finance wars or weaken the enemy. The third is "war for drugs", where wars lead to secur-ing the drug market. The fourth situation is a "war on drugs", which occurs when military means are used to suppress drugs or to attack or discredit military opponents in the name of drug suppression. The last, fifth type is "drugs after the war", i.e., drug use by victors and losers after the conflict (PP. 8–11). This typology is a critical issue in the text as across observations of the individual types, the author confirms his initial hypothesis: "drugs made war and war made drugs" (PP. 1–14). This statement will surely sharpen the reader's attention if he or she senses an apparent reference to Charles Tilly and his quote *"states make wars and wars make states."* Even with such an assumption, the reader will not be far from the truth.

Throughout his research and conclusion, Andreas refers to Tilly's work (P. 181). In connection with the system theory of statehood, it could be said that Andreas's research is a very high-quality and innovative interpretive out-put of Tilly's theory. In the dimension of so-called statecraft or, if we want, state-making, there is a considerable innovation in the drug-war relationship described in the book. As Andreas himself said, by extending Tilly's dynamics to different contexts we can say that *"states create drug wars and drug wars cre-ate states."* This conclusion represents one of the most important answers to the hard research questions as it brings a new perspective on the mentioned state-building process. In addition to the new perspective, it also brings new questions for the future. As is well known, the violence in Mexico continues to rage more than a decade after the former President Felipe Calderon launched his action against drug cartels. Moreover, looking at the militarized interven-tions against drug cartels in this country we may ask what type of state is being built. Will drug wars lead to an excessive strengthening of state institutions?

Overall, we could obligatorily say about this work that Andreas successfully managed to combine and connect his knowledge of the research areas mentioned above, and his many years of academic practice. Moreover, unlike other works such as *The Drug War* by Arnold S. Trebach, *Blitzed: Drugs in the Third Reich* by Norman Ohler, or *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams, and the Making of Modern China* by Julia Lovell, *Killer High* does not focus on just one segment of narcotics problems. Also unlike them, Andreas brings his academic approach, insight, and structural, systemic thinking to the issue by grasping narcotics and wars together, which brings to the social sciences the first holistic work of this type and a new innovative research approach in this research field. The very genius of Andreas's research lies in grasping the human hunger for addictive substances. These, as it is known, have accompanied humanity since time immemorial.

Moreover, like addictive substances, wars have accompanied humanity for centuries as well. By connecting these two factors in the context of history we find the just mentioned innovation, namely placing them in the study of wars, the process of state formation and the issue of economic interconnectedness in international relations. It is no wonder then that his book has recently been nominated for the Lionel Gelber Prize, a literary award for the world's best non-fiction book in English on foreign affairs that seeks to deepen public debate on significant international issues. The book can satisfy the eye and mind of those interested in international relations and history, but also sociology, economics, and psychology.

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The author is currently a doctoral student at the Department of Politics and International Relations of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen. His research focusses on non-state actors, terrorism and the related counter-terrorism, and the secret dimension of globalization. This dimension includes illegal cross-border flows of people, goods, and money due to transnational organized crime groups.

# Michal Kolmaš: National Identity and Japanese Revisionism

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Michal Kolmaš, the head of the Department of Asian Studies at the Metropolitan University Prague, presents the book *National Identity and Japanese Revisionism* as the outcome of his more than a decade long fascination with Japan (Preface). Kolmaš was, in a way, lucky because this period allowed him to observe the society while it was led by a strong-willed conservative leader with clear revisionist goals. Kolmaš was presented with material suitable for his in-depth case study on Japanese national identity, in which he follows up on his past research interest in the role of Japan in international relations, and the way national and collective identities are formed.

Before his resignation in September 2020, Shinzo Abe was a central political figure of Japan as *"his comprehensive election victories have granted him the capacity to propose and pass legislature [sic] that significantly alters Japan's postwar trajectory"* (P. 4). Abe served as the Japanese prime minister between 2006 and 2007 and then assumed the office again in 2012. As a result, he became the longest serving prime minister in Japanese history, surpassing the second longest serving prime minister, Katsura Taro (1901–1913), by nearly a year. Abe's conservative (or outright right-wing nationalist) views regarding constitutional and historical revisionism were well-known. Both Japan's post-war constitution (mainly its Article 9, which is preventing Japan from maintaining its armed forces) and the issue of its historical guilt for the atrocities it committed during World War 2 were of crucial importance for Abe's politics. Similarly, he was understood as a hardliner with regard to the People's Republic of China's (PRC) rising military potential and the North Korean nuclear program. As such, he systematically pushed to modify the post-war *status quo* of Japan.

According to Kolmaš, the interaction between the motivated political will of Abe and the popular and institutional pushback against his revisionist agenda creates a discursive framework forming the Japanese national identity (P. 3). This interaction affects not only Japanese foreign policy, but also domestic issues, such as internal security, the perception of history and the reflection of the past in the state-provided education. Kolmaš endeavours to analyse these two discursive forces – Abe's revisionism and the institutional and popular reaction to it – and thus contributes to the understanding of the contemporary Japanese identity. To fully realise his goals, he divides the book into four distinct chapters, which I will outline below.

The first chapter, "National identity and the study of contemporary Japan" (PP. 7–31), provides a theoretical overview. Kolmaš focuses on two approaches to studying national identity, namely social constructivism and the post-structural approach. He is well aware of the practical limitations of both of these methods. To bridge these two methods and to account more accurately for the forces shaping the Japanese identity, Kolmaš opts for what he calls *pragmatic synthesis* and turns to Waever's identity sedimentation. Waever posited that *"deeper structures are more solidly sedimented and more difficult to politicize and change"* (WAEVER 2002: 32). This provides Kolmaš with a basic descriptive and analytical tool for mapping the discourse between Abe's administration (the least sedimented level) and the post-war pacifist identity of Japan (the most sedimented level). As such, Kolmaš is able to better understand why Abe's appealing 2012 election call to "*take Japan back from the postwar history*" (P. 25) was met with a post-election restraint from the public and institutions, but also from coalition partners.

"Sedimentation of the pacifist identity", the second chapter of the book (PP. 32–49), focuses on the process of sedimentation of the post-war pacifism in the Japanese society and its institutions. The pre-war Japan was formed by its perceived superiority *vis-à-vis* other Asian countries and its inferiority *vis-à-vis* European countries and the USA. Japan has been seeking to put itself into a more favourable position during the war (PP. 34–35). However, because of its defeat, the subsequent US occupation, the instalment of American-based ideas (liberal democracy, free market individualism), and the enactment of the peaceful Constitution, Japan found itself in the inferior position once again (P. 35). This played an important part in the identity of Japan during the Cold War. However, the Gulf War (1991), the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) and the crisis following the missile test in North Korea (1993) have demonstrated the absence of a clear Japanese strategy of how to deal with the new security environment (P. 46). Kolmaš describes the pre-Abe response to these changes as culminating in the person of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi (2001–2006). Koizumi's views of Japanese foreign policy were, as Kolmaš puts it, *"tougher and more assertive"* but at the same time *"emotional"* rather than *"rationally revisionist"* (P. 48).

We encounter Shinzo Abe for the first time in the third chapter, "Abe's convictions and ideological background" (PP. 50–67). Kolmaš frames the replacement of Koizumi by Abe as an uneasy transition because Koizumi

commanded high popular support and was well accepted by the masses. Abe, on the other hand, came from a conservative family that was well-stablished in the upper echelons of the society. Abe's grandfather Nobusuke Kishi was the ruler of the Japanese puppet state Manchukuo, a member of the wartime cabinet, and a suspected class A war criminal. He also served as the prime minister of Japan (1957–1960) and resigned in 1960 during the popular Anpo Struggle (P. 52). Understandably, the ideological connection between Abe and Kishi is not based solely on family ties. Kishi founded the *Seiwa Political-Analysis Council*, a nationalist and conservative faction of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Abe later joined the faction and led it himself (P. 52). Similar to Kishi in many other accounts, Abe called for a revision of the Japanese pacifist constitution "*in order [for Japan] to become a tier one country and a leader in Asia*" (P. 53). In a similar tone, Abe's long-standing view is that *"a self-confident nation should not need to apologize forever"* for its historical transgressions (P. 55). This, in my opinion, closely mirrors past statements made by some of the West German politicians, such as Chancellor Helmut Schmidt or the CSU-leader Frank-Josef Strauss. Kolmaš explains Abe's ideological background in great detail, as I believe many readers who are interested in Japan but oblivious to Japanese faction politics will appreciate. Abe's first stint as prime minister, which ended when scandals and his overt revisionism led to his resignation in 2007, is covered in this chapter. However, as Kolmaš closes this chapter, he states that Abe rose to power for the second time in 2012 in response to a call for a more confident and experienced leader (P. 67).

In answer to this call, and after his election victory in December 2012, Abe *"reinvigorated his conservative and revisionist agenda"* (P. 68), to which Kolmaš dedicates the fourth chapter "Deconstructing Abe's narrative on constitution change, school education, security polity and regional leadership" (PP. 69–119). Here, Kolmaš goes beyond simply stating that Abe's agenda is conservative and overtly revisionist. He explains how exactly Abe's revisionism manifests in terms of public appearances, multilateral foreign policy initiatives and specific steps undertaken to alter the standing practice of deployment of Japanese Self-Defense Forces. Kolmaš then presents four case studies focusing on (1) the history of Japan and the revision of its historical guilt, (2) the constitution and the revision of the pacifist constitution, (3) the internal security and the revision of Japan's liberal stance, and (4) foreign policy and the revision of Japan's bilateral reliance on the USA. In each case study, Kolmaš outlines

Abe's narrative and the popular and institutional pushback which creates constraints on Abe's revisionism. Kolmaš provides plenty of specific examples of both of the discursive forces. Again, I must commend Kolmaš for explaining the context. To those "only" interested in Japan and its politics and policy, Abe's statement on the 70th Anniversary of Japan's defeat in World War II (2015) might seem without any controversy. However, Kolmaš explains well its relation to the Kono Statements of Remorse (1993) and the Murayama apology (1995). Even readers without an in-depth knowledge of the subject are then readily able to understand why Abe's statement damaged Japan's relationships with the PRC and South Korea, and why it drew criticism from the former prime ministers Yohei Kono and Tomiichi Mirayama (P. 72).

Because of the limited space of this review, I cannot engage more with these case studies, but Kolmaš has gathered enough evidence to warrant the book's conclusion, titled "A limited change for Japan" (PP. 120–128). Abe's strong-willed and forward-looking approach has met its match in the lower sedimented level of the Japanese identity. As a result, Abe's revisionist activities met with only limited success. Yet, as Kolmaš mentions in the case study dedicated to the change of the security policy, *"the Abe government has initiated a set of reforms that transform Japan's security posture and allows for measures that were unfathomable before"* (P. 92). However, Kolmaš concludes that *"the change is much slower, more complicated and nuanced than generally anticipated"* (P. 121).

In the subchapter "Looking to the future", Kolmaš further states that *"the postwar pacifist identity has created a significant set of brakes on this revisionism"*, but *"the identity is under constant pressure from the Abe administration"* (P. 127). Abe's goal to change the pacifist constitution has met with a strong opposition from his coalition partner (P. 88) and Abe could not rely on popular support in this regard (PP. 89–92). However, Abe hinted that he would like to see the Constitution changed in 2020 (PP. 60, 80).

The book is thin and dense. It is also timely in its focus, although to a large extent inadvertently. Kolmaš has, unknown to him, drawn a sort of a memento to Abe's administration. In July 2019, the LDP won the election to the House of Councillors (the upper house of the Diet). However, it has lost the two-third majority necessary to pursue the change of the pacifist constitution. Shinzo Abe has thus lost the political power to pursue his

lifetime political goal. At the beginning of 2020, the worldwide pandemic hit. Abe's government was thus forced to focus on more pressing issues, and the constitutional revision (lacking popular support) became side-lined. As in 2007, Abe resigned from the position of prime minister shortly after the disappointing election results, citing health issues, in September 2020 when it was clear that he could not fully realise his dream of a self-confident Japan following the constitutional change. In spite of the great plans that he pushed forward with a strong resolve, his effect was limited, as Kolmaš aptly demonstrated in his book. Inadvertently, Kolmaš might have written a book that will form the way we think about Shinzo Abe for years to come. *National Identity and Japanese Revisionism* covers Abe's origin and his political activity (both in- and out-of-office), but also, as a trick of fate, its legacy.

As a whole, the book is an in-depth case study of forces that shaped the Japanese identity during the second decade of the 21$^{st}$ century. It is beneficial not only for those studying Japan but also for those studying how a collective identity is formed and how it responds to political pressures.

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