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BOOK REVIEWS

Article

Overcoming Systematic Punishments: A Neoclassical Realist Approach to the US-Turkey Relations After the S-400 Crisis

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Abstract

Turkish–American relations have always had tough and contested times. In most of these issues, both states are influenced by domestic political dynamics. After the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011 and American support to YPG/PYD in Northern Syria, the Turkish-American relationship entered new turbulent times. After these developments, Turkey realigned itself with Russia in the region. In 2017, Turkey signed a S-400 acquisition deal with Russia as a major air defense system. This deal deteriorated Turkish-American relations further, which led to the termination of F-35 deliveries and even to sanctions. This research will contribute to the literature of neoclassical realism as a profound case study. Then it will move on to Gideon Rose's neoclassical realist 'Innenpolitik' analogy to understand both Turkish and American domestic dynamics in this crisis. This research will end with the implication of Randal Schweller's 'Underbalancing Theory' to explain this crisis-prone structural anomaly. It will help the readers of this article to understand how this bilateral relationship could re-normalize again as a stable alliance.

Keywords

Turkish-American Relations, S-400 Crisis, Neoclassical Realism, Foreign Policy Analysis, Domestic Politics

Introduction

Turkish–American relations have notoriously experienced hard times since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis when the US withdrew Jupiter missiles in Turkey without consulting with the Turkish authorities. While this action was justified as a condition of being a great power, for Turkey as a middle power ally, it created huge disappointment over the US assurance. Even though the main topic of this

research is about the S-400 crisis, it is vital to remind that domestic perceptions and threat ordering divergences between Turkey and the US are not new, but a prolonged issue among two allies.

In the aftermath of the US support to YPG/PYD in their fight against ISIS and failed coup attempt in 2016, Turkey cleared the way for the purchase of the S-400 Missile Defense System from Russia instead of American made Patriots. Though Turkey's position stands in urgent need of A2/AD (anti-access/area denial) capabilities due to the decreased number of fighter jet pilots. (Beyoghlow, 2020, p. 40) Many scholars and even some state officials believe that the S-400 procurement was purely politically motivated and appeared as a tool of foreign policy. For this reason, this research will take neoclassical realist theories of foreign policy as key literature to understand what led two countries to end in S-400 Crisis.

The first part will start with a literature review of neoclassical realism (NCR). Brian Rathbun underlined that all neoclassical realists are as well as Structural Realists. (Rathbun, 2008, p. 297) This review will first focus on what is a structural anomaly of neorealism. Then it will proceed to the existing literature of NCR and on its explanatory power to analyze foreign policy decisions and causes of structural anomalies. This part will also define how this research could contribute to the literature of NCR as a profound case study.

The following part will approach S-400 Crisis from Gideon Rose's *Innenpolitik* dynamics. The part will emphasize internal dynamics like 'national character', 'partisan politics', and 'socio-economic structure' of the US and Turkey over the S-400 Crisis. (Rose, 1998, p. 148) Such kind of explanation will help us to understand why the S-400 crisis was a structural anomaly. This analysis will help readers to understand the reasons for the underbalancing of the US and the pile-on bandwagoning of Turkey in the Middle East.

The next part will go deep into Randall Schweller's underbalancing theory and its implications on the S-400 Crisis. Schweller argued that factors like 'elite consensus', 'government vulnerabilities', 'social cohesion', and 'elite cohesion' can push great powers to underbalancing. (Schweller, 2004, p. 169) Unforeseen American underbalancing in the Middle East region due to domestic dynamics pushed Turkey to a pile-on bandwagoning with Russia in the Syrian civil war.

The last part will define the S-400 crisis between the US and Turkey as a perceptual shock, which was defined by Christensen and Zakaria. This part will conduct a rhetorical analysis of Turkish and American foreign-policy elites. Though the S-400 crisis seemed unforeseen by both states, this research will show how domestic dynamics developed it as outcome of this anomaly. Such kind of structural anomaly made the emergence of the S-400 Crisis inevitable as a systematic pun-

ishment. NCR understanding will help readers of this research to understand and overcome the perceptual shocks that instigated the S-400 Crisis and following corrosion of the relations.

What makes this crisis special is because many scholars and policymakers classified it as the worst case in bilateral relations. Former US ambassador to Turkey James Jeffrey defined the S-400 Crisis as 'the worst crisis' in the bilateral relations (Voice of America, 2021) It is because, alike from previous ones, it was both crucially linked with changing international environment and also with domestic constraints of two states. This research will use several neoclassical realist lenses, like Innenpolitik and underbalancing, to explain how this relationship evolved as a perceptual shock and a systematic punishment due to domestic dynamics. It will also help the readers of this article to understand how this bilateral relationship could re-normalize again as a stable alliance.

Literature of Neoclassical Realism and Turkish-American Relations

For many years of the Cold War, structural realism constituted a backbone for Turkish – American relations. Turkey's security concerns and American interests made alliance and balance as main themes of this relationship. However, the emergence of ISIS in a region where the US was reluctant to aground its soldiers has become one of the greatest divisive issues between the US and Turkey. This situation was due to both countries having different security priorities and agendas. Prominent structural realist Kenneth Waltz argued that 'a great power which did not want to fulfill a great power' role is a 'structural anomaly'. (Waltz, 2000, p. 33) This research will show how this structural anomaly developed due to the Syrian civil war step-by-step and led to the S-400 Crisis.

The decision of the US to leave the initiative in Syria to Russia pushed Turkey to fix its relations with Russia after its historical low due to the crisis of the downing of the Russian jet in 2015. This could be epitomized in Stephen Walt's argument of 'proximate power' where Moscow becomes closer than Washington in Syria. (Walt, 1985, p. 10) This development makes Turkey's purchase of the S-400 Missile Defense System inevitable. As Waltz argued, even if structural realism is still relevant, it is not a theory of foreign policy (Waltz, 1996, p. 55) It cannot explain the development of structural anomaly of the American and Turkish alliance. For this reason, this research will pick neoclassical realist analysis of foreign policy as its guiding theory for understanding the S-400 Crisis.

The findings of neorealist scholars revealed that both Turkey and the US as a great power did not behave in a way of what structure of the international politics dictated them to. Even with all these developments, both Ankara and Washington preferred to define this relationship from the basis of alliance dynamics. Until the

Syrian civil war, Turkey and the US tried to find points of convergence based on the ideational ground of democracy promotion and stabilization in the Middle East. Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell underlined that perceptions (or misperceptions) of leaders and people, complex international signals, problems of rationality (like domestic dynamics, election politics, etc.), and constraints on mobilizing state power could lead to systematic anomalies. (Ripsman, et al., 2016, pp. 20-24) This paper will gradually address how all these affected Turkish-American relations and brought us to S-400 crisis.

However, the Syrian civil war underlined a turning point where this alliance relationship was critically bound by the effects of domestic politics. Differentiated foreign policy priorities and concerns created a shock of perception between the two countries. Christensen and Zakaria argued that perceptual shocks are sole events that have cumulative effects of gradual, long-term power trends. (Rose, 1998, p. 160) S-400 crisis emerged as a perceptual shock of changing long-term power trends in the region.

Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell underlined two types of neoclassical realism (NCR) in their book *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics*. Type I of NCR tries to explain why anomalies of structural realism develop, while type II focuses on explaining foreign policy decisions and constraints. (Ripsman, et al., 2016, pp. 26-30) While the same book also defines a Type III NCR, which is hybrid and tries to explain shifts in the international system through domestic lenses. (Ripsman, et al., 2016, p. 96) This research will serve as a case study of Type III NCR, with its extensive focus on Turkish-American domestic dynamics for understanding the S-400 crisis.

Turkey's definition of new and imminent threats creates an immense, restricted strategic environment. NC realists argued that 'more imminent and dangerous threats could limit state actions for fulfilling the necessities of what structure dictates to it'. (Ripsman, et al., 2016, p. 52) Washington's limitation to mobilize national power due to domestic pressures against involvement in another conflict also constrained it to realize its great power role. Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobel underlined state and social harmony is not always straightforward, which requires continuous consultation with society. (Ripsman, et al., 2016, p. 71)

Rose also underlined that the state's foreign policy cannot always be defined with the limits and opportunities of the international environment. (Rose, 1998, p. 151) The next part will focus on his *Innenpolitik*, or domestic dynamics, and how it caused an underbalancing by the US and Turkish pile-on bandwagoning. NC realist Rathbun argued in his article that overarched domestic political influences created a 'systematic punishment'. (Rathbun, 2008, p. 311) Overcoming systematic punishments requires extensive understanding of both neorealism and NCR,

while this research will try to serve both Realist and Turkish-American relations literature as a case study of type III NCR.

Innenpolitik and S-400 Crisis

Until 2014, the Turkish airspace was repeatedly violated by Russia and Syria. This created a strong sense of insecurity combined with relentless frustration over Ankara's allies. In 2016, Turkey decided to start a rapprochement with Moscow to solve the problem of insecurity in Turkey, which was caused due to the Syrian civil war. Turkey at that time expressed its will to purchase an air defense system that has A2/AD capabilities combined with SAM capabilities. For this reason, Turkey started to negotiate defense contracts with the US consortium for Patriot Systems, with Russia for S-400 Systems, and also with China.

As Kasapoğlu and Ülgen argued, S-400 Missile System shows better prospects in terms of SAM capabilities when compared to the American Patriot System. (Kasapoğlu & Ülgen, 2019, p. 3) SAM capabilities are an urgent need for the Turkish state, whose airspace was violated without actual physical support from its allies. Some scholars like Beyoghlow argued, 'in interim, Turkey, aimed to solve the problem of pilot shortages caused by the failed 15th July coup attempt and following the removal of soldiers linked with the Fethullahçı Terrorist Organization (FETÖ)'. (Beyoghlow, 2020, p. 40) While in actual military terms this directs us to this position, many scholars underlined the purchase of S-400 systems as a purely political move.

The S-400 System could create problems in terms of using them as an active air defense mechanism of a NATO country. As Kasapoğlu argued, S-400s could not become interoperable with Turkish Air Force's and also with NATO's AWACS reconnaissance planes, who use different radar and early warning systems. (Kasapoğlu, 2019, p. 15) This creates a relentless debate in Turkish domestic politics, as the ruling Justice and Development Party (JDP) and its partner Nationalist Action Party (NAP) defined the process as key to ensuring Turkey's sovereign rights. An American Congress Report indicated Ankara's purchase as a move to 'achieve political autonomy' after Western allies' disappointing response to Turkey's security concerns in the Syrian Crisis and also in the 15th July coup attempt. (Zanotti & Thomas, 2019, p. 16)

This research will not reject such claims but try to define how the S-400 acquisition become a prevailing issue between Turkey and the US from theoretical lenses. It will also try to explain how Turkey's *Innenpolitik* conditions motivated Ankara to purchase S-400 Systems at the expense of its limitations and problems like sanctions and its disqualification from the F-35 Fifth Generation Multirole warplane production program.

a. Innenpolitik and American Foreign Policy

American foreign policy since its independence in 1776 has been witnessed a relentless debate between isolationism and interventionism. To understand this debate, students of International Relations should go deep into the domestic characters of respective states and their effects on foreign policy decisions. As Gideon Rose argued, all states, even if they are in anarchy and self-help system, has unique characteristics. (Rose, 1998, p. 148)

While the post-Cold War period indicated an anomaly for American foreign policy, where the US as the dominant power in Waltzian terms acted as a force of good based on its hegemonic power. This anomaly, which started with the Clinton administration, was continued until the Obama administration, who refrained from entering new and costly wars. This approach has derived from American public opinion, which decided to not become embroiled in the Middle Eastern crisis, which led to the election of Donald Trump as the President of the US.

The last period of President Obama and President Trump's term in office show a return to the Jacksonian tradition of American foreign policy, which pushes the US to the reluctance of using American military power for purely ideological purposes. (Clarke & Ricketts, 2017, p. 371) As Jacksonian heritage is based on a kind of 'limitation of American action for sole national interests' in the Eurasian Crisis (Clarke & Ricketts, 2017, p. 371), it robustly impacted American role as a great power and its hegemonic position in the Middle East. President Trump, who set 'America First' as his guiding principle, created a huge resentment in American involvement in Syria. Even after Russia's and Iran's involvement in Syria created huge rebalancing in the Civil War, the Obama administration remains hesitant to mobilize American power. In 2018, President Trump said that 'the US cannot continue to act as gendarmerie of the world' which has become a shock for many people. (Gilles, 2018)

As both Obama and Trump administrations lacked complete control over the US Congress, partisan politics of both Republicans and Democrats played an important role in shaping American role in Middle Eastern policy. Even though the Obama administration has general confidence, its Syrian policy was viewed as 'negative'. (Barron & Barnes, 2018 , p. 1) In the 2016 elections, people who refrained from voting for Hillary Clinton stressed her failure in the Middle East policy, which sourced from an attack on the US Embassy in Libya. Even in 2019, Donald Trump decided to distance himself from the former administration fully with a complete withdrawal plan from Syria, which was rejected by Senate Republicans. (Smith, 2019)

Despite being a great power that has responsibilities to engage in the Middle East, American public opinion is distancing itself from new involvements. According

to a 2016 Pew poll, 57% of Americans said that the United States 'should focus on its problems while let others take over global and regional issues.' (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2016, p. 70) This opinion takes an important impact on both Democrat and Republican candidates in the 2016 Presidential Election. Many Americans admonished their state to address developing great power rivalry rather than dealing with domestic affairs and problems of Middle Eastern states. Silent majorities, which echoed by President Trump in the aftermath of the 2016 elections, had a crucial impact on American foreign policy who want domestic economic reforms rather than pushing a global agenda. The next part will show how these Innenpolitik conditions led the US to an underbalancing in the Middle East, which ended with S-400 Crisis.

b. Innenpolitik and Turkish Foreign Policy

Since 2015, when the US decided to distance itself from being involved in the Syrian crisis and following the crisis of downing of a Russian jet, both Turkish foreign policy and domestic politics see grave changes. The Turkish downing of the Russian plane in Syria concluded with a Russian SAM build-up in Syria, which limited Turkey's ability to conduct cross-border precision-guided airstrikes. After the crisis, the US and NATO rhetorically supported Ankara's position and called for commencing talks, but remained reluctant to actively supporting Turkey against Russia. (Hürriyet, 2015)

In 2016, Turkey experienced a hard shock when a military faction linked with FETÖ initiated a failed coup attempt on 15th July. While Russia expressed its support to the JDP Government immediately after the failed attempt, the US and Western allies acted slower. Following the coup attempt, Turkey's frustration over American relations grew. In 2017, Washington failed to respond to Turkey's request for the extradition of Fethullah Gülen, who is the leader of FETÖ. Turkish officials underlined that 'the US cannot be a reliable ally anymore as it becomes a safe-haven for the enemies of the Turkish state.' (Flanagan & Wilson, 2020, p. 192)

While incumbent Trump Administration created a new shock in 2017 when Washington decided to provide heavy weapons to PYD/YPG militants. (Flanagan & Wilson, 2020, p. 190) These developments created a perception of threat to Turkey's territorial integrity and survivability. Changing developments in Syria pushed Turkey to realign itself within the conflict while also purchasing S-400 Missile Systems. In 2019, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that 'S-400 purchase was a key step to modernize Turkish air defense capabilities that can help in its war against terror.' (Hürriyet, 2019)

Developments in the Syrian civil war since 2015 reaffirmed Turkey's political culture that is based on Sevres Syndrome, and hard-pressed it to act in voluntary

isolation based on self-help. (Schmid, 2014, p. 212) In line with this, Presidential Advisor İbrahim Kalın echoed Turkey's new policy as precious loneliness. Also, President Erdoğan's leadership correspondingly called Turkey's purchase of S-400 a matter of sovereignty. (BBC Türkçe, 2019) His relationship with Russian President Putin also takes an important role in the creation of a 'marriage of convenience'. (Erşen & Köstem, 2020, p. 240) Such a kind of realignment, based on interest-based cooperation, is essential to put under analysis. As the Congressional Report of the US underlined, Turkey's national character ended with Ankara's self-perception as a 'junior partner' for the West, which pushed them to act wisely. (Zanotti & Thomas, 2019, p. 19)

Another Innenpolitik development that influenced Turkey's decision to buy the S-400 missile defense system was party dynamics. In 2018, Turkey shifted to an executive presidential system, and with the following elections in 2019, ruling JDP aligned with the Nationalists Action Party (NAP) under the name of the People's Alliance or 'Cumhur İttifakı'. As Tarık Oğuzlu discussed, the ruling JDP has taken significant steps to revive Turkey's Middle Eastern and Islamic identity (Oğuzlu, 2008, p. 14). While JDP's alignment with NAP created a deep policy change in Turkish foreign policy. As NAP sided with JDP government over the course of the Operation Euphrates Shield and the Operation Olive Branch, Turkey's foreign policy orientations also see a change of rank-ordering in Turkish threat definitions and policy orientations. Collaboration between the JDP and NAP spilled over to different areas of foreign policy, as Devlet Bahçeli, who is the leader of the NAP, supported JDP's decision to buy S-400 Missile Defense System. In his speech, Bahçeli defined S-400 as a prospect for Turkey's survival and a national matter for its sovereignty. (Hürriyet, 2019)

Yet again, the preceding part indicated that Turkey's public opinion takes a conformist position over the issue of S-400s. According to an opinion poll, 44% of the Turkish population supported, while 31,1% has no idea about Turkey's purchase of the S-400 system. (Daily News Hürriyet, 2019) Crisis after the failed coup attempt on 15th of July, Pastor Brunson Crisis, the issue of extradition of Fethullah Gülen, and American support to YPG/PYD in Northern Syria created a vast knock-back to the Turkish public opinion towards the US. Again, an opinion poll by Kadir Has University uncovered that more than 60% percent of Turkish public opinion see the US as an essential threat to Turkey's national interests. (Erşen & Köstem, 2020, p. 241)

American Underbalancing and Turkey's Pile Bandwagoning

Even though both Turkey and the US are bound by the balance of power politics, Rose's *Innenpolitik* dynamics had a huge impact on the two countries. Gideon Rose underlined that countries' responses to threats are highly constrained in

leaders' access to states 'relative' material power. (Rose, 1998, p. 169) Whether it is a great power like the US or whether being a middle power like Turkey, it relies on the state leader's ability to extract national power through domestic politics. Neoclassical realist approach also provides an important prospect for understanding realism's balance-of-power politics.

This part of the research will firstly define how the domestic dynamics of the US pushed Washington to an underbalancing. Underbalancing is an important concept that, derived by Randall Schweller, where elite and social level fragmentations led states to behave less likely to follow the balance-of-power politics. (Schweller, 2004, p. 170) The following section of this part will cover, how American underbalancing in the Middle East led Turkey to shift to a pile-on bandwagoning with Russia over the issue of the S-400 missile defense system.

a. American Underbalancing in the Middle East

The US's over-involvement in the Middle East in the aftermath of 9/11 and following the War on Terror generated an inner debate and criticism over the American role as a great power. The policies of the Obama and Trump administrations show a 'transmission belt' which is defined by Schweller as 'mediation and redirection of policy outputs against external forces'. (Schweller, 2004, p. 164) Even Russia's position as a re-rising power in the Middle East, the US abstained from countering the Damascus regime and Russia aggressively in the Syrian civil war.

Even structural realist understanding sees balancing as a natural process when a new great power tries to intervene in regional issues. Moscow's rise in the Syrian civil war took miscellaneous responses, as even prominent structural realist scholars Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt advocated the US for leaving the ground to Russia to deal with the Syrian regime. (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2016, p. 82) However, what led to American underbalancing in Syria should be pursued in the country's domestic dynamics. As Schweller argued, over the actors' preferences, domestic politics can sometimes have a decisive effect on structural dynamics. (Schweller, 2004, p. 168) It can also clarify the structural anomaly of the American decision to minimize its footprints in Syria, despite stationing its soldiers in Northern Syria.

Schweller's thesis over underbalancing in the neoclassical realism highlights the importance of 'elite consensus' which can lay constraints on taking decisive and costly government actions that also confined recent American politics. (Schweller, 2004, p. 171) Under the Obama administration, American elites failed to reach a consensus on how to respond ongoing civil war in Syria. As most of the republicans rejected Obama's plans to carry out an intervention against Damascus over a risk of public veto in the 2016 elections. Hence, the Iraq War was perceived as president Bush's war, nor subsequent Obama and neither Trump administration

privileged such kind of bipartisan support again. Kenneth A. Schultz underlined that the problem of bipartisan support creates a risk of dramatic policy swings, which could constrain the ability to make long-term commitments to allies and adversaries. (Schultz, 2018, p. 9)

As both President Obama and Trump agonized from having solid congressional support, the American government faced a huge vulnerability. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, called for a 'Just Say No' campaign against Obama's policy initiatives, curtailed his hands in foreign policy decisions. (Kane, 2017, p. 21) Schweller argued, in a vulnerable government, leaders simply fail to neutralize the external threat while also satisfying its great-power ambitions. (Schweller, 2004, p. 174) Obama administration's weakness to address the Syrian civil war paved the way for deeper Russian involvement in the Middle East. Contrary to President Trump's valiant action over Bashar Assad's use of chemical weapons in Syria and against Iran, his administration also suffered from identical constraints.

American social unwillingness to give their consent to following administrations created a weak social cohesion, where Schweller also underlined the significance of deep political disagreements. (Schweller, 2004, p. 175) Most of the American people voiced their unwillingness to continue costly and enduring wars in the Middle East region. The American public increasingly pushed the US to concentrate on emerging great power rivalry and respond to domestic issues like the economy, infrastructure, and immigration. As Rose argued, weak social cohesion led to a failure of state power mobilization. (Rose, 1998, p. 163)

Like a problematic elite consensus, weak elite cohesion in the US leads to incoherent half-measures, which defined by Randall Schweller. Even elites in Washington acted unwillingly to involve Syria; President Trump's attempt for complete withdrawal was likewise failed by both Democratic and Republican lawmakers. American elites experienced hardships over determining whom to balance and with what costs in the Middle East. Hence, Jacksonian tradition led to a dilemma in Syria, where the US continues to possess military power in Northern Syria for its national interests. Even this, it miscarried to answer the questions of what is our goal in Syria and what are these national interests.

b. Turkish Pile-on Bandwagoning in the Middle East

American underbalancing in a relatively unstable region, where Turkey has excessive security concerns, generated a shock for Ankara. While many scholars and political analysts defined Turkey's decision to buy S-400 systems and rapprochement with Russia as a shift of axis, it could similarly define as a 'pile-on bandwagoning' which was named, by, again, Randall Schweller. (Schweller, 1994) As bandwagoning is a type of loose balancing, Kenneth Waltz defined it as 'fad'. (Waltz, 2000, p. 38) From structural lenses, which can define American behavior

as a structural anomaly, Turkey's conclusion for stirring closer ties with Russia could also be given the impression in the same way.

Stephen Walt defined the importance of 'proximate power' over the balancing behavior, who also defined bandwagoning as a common practice in a situation where balancing is simply not available. (Walt, 1985, p. 17) Turkey's participation in the Astana Process with Russia and Iran demonstrated Ankara's domestic concerns over America's Syrian policy and their support for YPG/PYD forces. After Washington's realignment in Syria and Russia's seizure of over-hand, it pushed Turkey to bandwagon with a new hegemon in the Syrian civil war based on status-quo, which is also defined by Schweller as a result of underbalancing by a great power in a region. (Schweller, 1994, p. 79)

Turkey's shock after American support to YPG/PYG in Northern Syria and after the 15th July coup attempt resurfaced Sevres Syndrome. As Dorothée Schmid argued, it led to voluntary isolation from the West and pushed Ankara towards other regional powers in the Syrian Civil War. (Schmid, 2014, p. 213) Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan underlined Ankara's disappointments with the words of 'stab-in-back' after the US decision to support a group that was designated as terrorists by Turkey. (Barron & Barnes, 2018 , p. 4) Foreign policy and security circles in Ankara decided to overtake measures for securing Turkish interests.

Schweller argued that in a 'piling-on bandwagoning' state align with winning camp in a war that its outcome was already determined. (Schweller, 1994, p. 107) Turkish decision to participate in Astana Process, with countries like Russia and Iran, who have limited common identity and goals in Syria, could be explained with this. As piling-on state joins the stronger coalition for avoiding victors' punishments and proliferating from a post-war settlement. (Schweller, 1994, p. 95) Turkey's decision to buy S-400 Missile Defence Systems indicated Turkey's will to show its new relationship with Moscow after the 2014 Jet crisis. As Kasapoğlu and Ülgen underlined, Turkish decisions for defence contracts could not solely focus on strategic decisions but also through domestic and regional political dynamics. (Kasapoğlu & Ülgen, 2019)

Discovering Perceptual Shocks and Systematic Punishment in Turkish-American Relations After the S-400 Crisis: Rhetorical Analysis

As Schweller shows in his article, 'constant mobilization is not always possible' even for great power with global agenda. (Schweller, 2004, p. 200) After the US' underbalancing in the Middle East due to domestic limitations, Turkey faces a perceptual shock of abandonment in the Syrian crisis. While Turkey's purchase of S-400s created a huge shock for American officials, where domestic and bilateral

relations among the two countries already deteriorated. Rose argued that foreign policy decisions are profoundly related to 'how each country's policy-makers understand their situation'. (Rose, 1998, p. 158) As this research underlined, both Turkey's and the US's inner dynamics and perceptions created a structural anomaly.

While both Washington and Ankara explained solutions for solving S-400 Crisis, where even some American lawmakers offered to buy S-400 systems and Turkey was still keen to buy Patriot system along with S-400. Little progress was shown as neither Turkey nor the US attempted to solve their reciprocal perceptual shocks. Washington's underbalancing in Syria and Ankara's decision to pile-on bandwagoning with S-400s created this shock, which can only overcome by first acknowledging the situation.

Western scholars and politicians extensively interpreted Turkey's purchase of S-400 as a 'Turkey's shift of axis'. (Ovalı & Özdikmenli, 2020, p. 122) This extensive thinking creates a shift in perception of Ankara by Washington. For understanding perceptual shock and systematic punishment, this research uses rhetorical analysis of Turkish-American officials. NCR, in some cases, relies on foreign policy elites (FPEs) and their opinions on how they understand the world around them. (Ripsman, et al., 2016, p. 123) For empirical analysis of S-400 as a perceptual shock and systematic punishment, this research conducted a rhetorical analysis of FPEs from both countries.

Turkish state news agency underlines Greece's historical acquisition of the Russian S-300 system (which is still operational in a separate national manner in the Aegean Sea). (Teslova, 2019) Many Turkish officials and people accept the American stance on S-400 as a double-standard and a perceptual attitude. Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar proposed a Greek model for the use of S-400s. (Hürriyet Daily News, 2020) However, even with all these developments, US State Secretary Anthony Blinken defined 'Turkey as a so-called ally' and classified the issue as 'being in the same direction with Russia.' (Haber Türk, 2021) This speech shows how Turkey's gradual policy changes create a perceptual shock in American FPEs.

While Turkey defined S-400 purchases closely with its national sovereignty and security, Turkish President Erdoğan underlined that the previous Obama administration denied Turkey's purchase of Patriot Missile Systems and S-400s than became an issue of national security for Turkey. (TRT Haber, 2019) This also shows how Turkey's perceptual shock towards Washington's support became an effective motivation for buying S-400s. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu insisted that Turkey sees the US' stance in Syria as a more urgent issue to focus on compared with S-400s. (Sputnik Türkiye, 2021)

While politicization of the S-400 issue in both countries made things worse, domestic politics made the issue a chronic one. Turkey's use of anti-Western rhetoric for creating a grand coalition of JDP and NAP created a vicious circle in foreign policy. (Ovalı & Özdikmenli, 2020, p. 123) Turkey increasingly started to define the issue as a matter of national independence. After trials of the system in 2020, President Erdoğan declared that they are not bound by America's stance towards these trials. (Deutsche Welle Türkçe, 2020) While in the US, the new administration increasingly sees the S-400 issue as a limited opportunity to create bipartisan support to foreign policy, since Anthony Blinken warned Turkey in that way. (Reuters, 2021)

Even both countries still adopt alliance rhetoric to define Turkish-American relations, the S-400 crisis increasingly became a systematic punishment. In line with Blinken, American Syria Special Representative James Jeffrey defined S-400 as the greatest obstacle in improving bilateral ties and underlined that there would be no improvement in Biden Administration. (Akal, 2021) This rhetorical analysis shows us that perceptual shock and systematic punishment led Turkey and the US to a gridlock, which is tough to crack even what the international system dictates.

Overcoming Perceptual Shocks in Turkish-American Relations

After the decision, the US immediately sanctioned Turkey over its future role in F-35 multirole jet deliveries. A Congressional report underlined the possibility of further sanctioning with CAATSA, which was blocked by President Trump earlier. (Zanotti & Thomas, 2019, p. 18) Before implying sanctions, US officials should make clear foreign policy analysis to understand how Washington's underbalancing created a perceptual shock in Turkey. Washington should also see that Ankara's pile-on bandwagoning is more like a fad, in line with Kenneth Waltz, rather than a complete shift of axis. Erşen and Köstem argued that Turkey's new relationship with Russia could be named as a 'strategic partnership' due to geographic realities and economic interdependence, rather than a wholly new alliance. (Erşen & Köstem, 2020, p. 241)

Not only in terms of politics, but Turkey's decision to buy S-400 Missile Systems rather than the American Patriot System created another shock. Not only Congress and the public, for the first time since the Cold War, the Pentagon also suffered from a perceptual shock. In April 2019, Pentagon overruled Turkey's offer to create a technical Joint Working Group on S-400, as they saw it as 'not essential or a way for resolution for the US.' (Reuters, 2019) Many technical-level proposals for solving this crisis were dismissed by the Pentagon due to extensive disagreements at the military-level related to the war in Syria. Foremost, Turkey and the US should overcome their military level disagreements on the field than

should move to the political ones. As security interests define the basis of every cooperation at the structural level, Pentagon always actively fulfilled the role of a crucial foreign policy advisor to the US Government.

On the political level, Ankara and the new administration of Joe Biden must understand *Innenpolitik* dimensions and their implications over the foreign policymaking process. On 30th December of 2020, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu announced the creation of a 'Joint Working Group' whereas it could be a first step for overcoming perceptual shocks. (Hürriyet Daily News, 2020) Former US European Command Commander Lieutenant General Ben Hodges claimed that the US and Turkey should first avoid defining their alliance with the basis of the S-400 crisis and should establish a trust-and-respect framework. (Kabasakallı, 2021) This speech also confirms the importance of freeing the S-400 issue from bilateral perceptual shock and systematic punishment.

Just like in the 1960s, the S-400 crisis between Turkey and the US show similar problems of diverse threat perceptions and orderings, the US's growing inability to fulfill its great power status due to domestic dynamics, Turkey's inflexible policies due to domestic dynamics, and increased lack of communication among two states.[1] (Sever, 2006, p. 80) Without alliance motivations based on mutual trust and respect, there will be little room for restoring the full-Cold War-like US-Turkish Alliance soon.

Conclusion

Turkish – American alliance since the 1960s have seen continuities and changes and convergences and divergences. The current S-400 crisis is one of the grimmest crises that some scholars concluded the case as a shift-of-axis in Turkish foreign policy. In contrast, this research tried to approach, from a neoclassical realist perspective, to show how this crisis developed as a structural anomaly.

From structural lenses, the US, a long-standing hegemon and a great power in the Middle East, faced new regional realities. These realities, combined with domestic dynamics, pushed Washington to tolerate Russia as a rising power in Syria and the broader region. While the equivalent inner dynamics hard-pressed Turkey to distance itself from its existing alliance structure to a bandwagoning, which is a fad since Turkey and Russia also have diverse agendas over the future of Syria.

This research used neoclassical realism's *Innenpolitik* analogy to explain the structural anomaly between Turkey and the US. This shows the United States' national

character, leadership, partisan politics, and socio-economic character in recent years played an important role in its emergent underbalancing in the Middle East region. While vice-versa, the situation could also be implied for the Turkish case, whose rank orderings of threats and priorities in Syria changed, with also changing and emerging domestic dynamics like nationalism, Presidential System, and growing mistrust against its Western allies.

Randall Schweller's theory shows us that elite consensus, elite-social cohesion, and weak governments in the US made an underbalancing in the Middle East region unescapable as Washington increasingly fell short in mobilizing domestic power capabilities. This underbalancing pushed Turkey to pile-on bandwagoning for shielding the status quo in Syria.

Foreign policy elites, both from the US and Turkey, increasingly vocalize the S-400 crisis as an existential matter for normalizing the alliance. This shows how they increasingly support the existence of perceptual shock and systematic punishment between two states. As a result of the overarching impact of domestic constraints composed of power changes in the region, a structural punishment hit this relationship hard. Prevailing reluctance to accept this situation even made things more problematic, since no move for normalization could be carried-on.

As the last part indicated, while the US considers further sanctioning of Turkey under the frame of CAATSA, Washington should also consider that this will create no effect other than increasing and deepening this perceptual shock. What Turkey and the US should make is careful foreign policy calculations over the domestic dynamics and simply over Structural power asymmetries, while the US is a great power and Turkey is a middle power with different threat rank orderings. Without a re-start of the communication between Washington and Ankara, based on reciprocal comprehension, S-400 Crisis will unescapably linger to be a systematic punishment among two allies.

Acknowledgments

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[1] 'Ayşegül Sever underlined that four factors that Western-Turkish Alliance in the 1960s are again different priority orderings, Britain's inability to carry weight in the region, inflexibility of Turkish implementation of Baghdad Pact and increasing lack of communication between Turkey and the US.' (Sever, 2006, p. 80)

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Bio

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The BRICS and the Arab Uprisings, 2011-20

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Abstract

How have the BRICS countries responded to the changes unfolding in the Middle East since 2011? What insights can be gained by their reaction to the region's conflicts over the past decade? Doing so is relevant since it moves analysis of the BRICS beyond their initial economic association to questions of global governance and regional security. The Arab uprisings were notable because they began at a time when all five BRICS countries were on the UN Security Council (UNSC) and therefore at the forefront of the international community's response to the emerging crisis and subsequent challenges. Drawing on a study of individual behaviour by the BRICS countries alongside collective statements from the group, the study reveals that despite some variations between the authoritarians (Russia, China) and democracies among the BRICS, the five all broadly embraced the principles of state sovereignty and non-intervention. In practice, this meant that they were more inclined towards the regimes over their populations and demands for social change. Overall, though, it was the authoritarians who had the most lasting regional impact. In addition to greater Russian activism in Syria and Libya, the authoritarians benefited from structural factors, including their permanent UNSC membership and China's preponderant position in the global economy.

Keywords

BRICS, Arab Uprisings, Sovereignty, Intervention, Protests, Society

Introduction

What has been the BRICS record in relation to the Arab uprisings? What does it tell us about the role of rising powers in relation to social and political protests as well as the relationship between states and societies and their stance towards the international system more generally? Although the BRICS constitute only one group of non-Western countries, their interaction with the uprisings was notable because all five of them were on the UNSC at their onset in early 2011. Moreover, the BRICS are a worthy group of state actors to study, since they constitute one of the more notable and visible groups of emerging or rising powers in the world today. As the global system looks to be shifting from an American-led unipolar one towards a more multipolar environment, the presence and role of actors like

the BRICS will likely become more important.

When judging the record of the BRICS towards the uprisings – from their origins and through their unfurling over the subsequent decade – the record is a mixed one. Taking a bird's eye view of global policies depicts the BRICS as a challenge and resistance towards (mostly) Western efforts to shape and direct the uprisings. For observers who wanted to see curbs put on hegemonic behaviour by the US and Europeans then, this was a welcome move. However, for those who identified with the protestors and their demands for better economic opportunities, greater government accountability and more of a say in shaping their countries' futures, the results of BRICS activism were less positive. Whether directly or indirectly, BRICS rhetoric and actions in favour of state sovereignty meant that they effectively supported – whether directly or tacitly – the regimes which repressed their people.

In order to make sense of the BRICS and their response to the Arab uprisings, the paper is set out in the following manner. The first section considers the BRICS as a group, their origin and development and orientation towards the international system, resulting in a contrary position in favour of multilateralism and state sovereignty at the same time. The second section looks at the origin of the Arab uprisings and the BRICS response to them. Instead of viewing the uprisings as a singular event, it considers them as a long-term process, trans-national process which began with growing social discontent among Arab populations before 2011. Particular attention is given to the BRICS reaction in two sites where the uprisings became violent and prompted an international response: Libya and Syria. This early period, during 2011-12, was significant because all five BRICS countries had a direct input into the international response, owing to them all being members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) at the time.

The third section deals with the BRICS responses to Libya and Syria after 2012. This was the period where individual BRICS capacities and level of involvement began to vary more substantially, owing to their presence or otherwise on the UNSC and domestic developments at home. The final section summarizes the actions of the BRICS countries and concludes that on balance the BRICS countries opted for sovereignty over multilateralism and defended states over their societies – albeit with some variation and nuance between the five. That they did so suggests that these states are more conservative than they initially promised. Moreover, if they are representative of other emerging and rising powers, the future will likely look much as it does now.

The BRICS and the international system

Why have the BRICS favoured states over societies during and since the Arab

uprisings? The reasons for this were mostly due to systemic factors, but also contextual ones relating to the uprisings and their subsequent development. First, in systemic terms, the BRICS had emerged at the highpoint of US unipolarity. The BRIC label (South Africa would not join until 2011) was first coined in 2001 by Jim O'Neil at Goldman Sachs who wanted to capture the changes taking place in the global economy, especially the rise of the global South and developing world for trade and investment purposes. At the time, the BRIC constituted no more than a useful acronym for a group of emerging markets; only later would the countries' leaders take it upon themselves to meet at the side of international summits and meetings and coordinate their agendas.

During their first decade, the BRIC countries observed the gap between the values and practice of hegemonic powers in this system (Brosig 2019). Preeminent powers like the US emphasized the liberal nature of the international system, in particular its integrated nature sustained by globalization and multilateral cooperation. They were also prepared to use force unilaterally to pursue its interests, most notably in its invasion and occupation of Iraq after 2003. That grated for many, including the BRIC leaderships, who in response stressed their commitment to multilateralism and state sovereignty (Stuenkel 2015).

Although the BRICS differed between themselves in their commitment to democracy or authoritarianism, Laïdi (2012) noted that state sovereignty was one issue which they all could agree on. Moreover, it was a long-standing one, dating back decades. Both the newly independent India and reunified China saw themselves as standing apart from the West for instance, especially against the former colonial European powers and contemporary imperialist powers like the US and Soviet Union (Hargreave 1984). Notwithstanding communist China's ideological affinity towards Moscow, both it and India shared an association with the developing world in the global South. They both attended the Bandung Conference in 1955, which led to the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement. India became a prominent party within it, rejecting the entreaties of the capitalist and socialist camps. China became an observer, a position subsequently adopted by Brazil as well. Brazil's observer status reflected its own pursuit for autonomy and distance from the hemispheric dominance of the US after 1945 and which included greater outreach to the developing world (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2009) – an orientation that was also echoed by South Africa following the end of apartheid (Gqiza and Ogunnubi 2019). As for Russia, its post-Cold War fall from superpower status and the fragmentation of the Soviet Union and socialist bloc meant a more diminished role in the world. That contributed to frustration and a sense of grievance which Putin exploited in his aim to recover former Russian "greatness" after 2000 (Lo 2015, Tsygankov 2016).

In sum, the BRICS were acutely aware of the assertiveness of great and super

powers and their own vulnerability. Consequently, they were generally more sympathetic towards measures which might curb the excesses of greater powers. That included a preference for a neo-Westphalian international system in which states had a prominent role and whose sovereignty was inviolable (Brosig 2019). In taking this position, the BRICS contrasted with the prevailing order and constituted a challenge, potentially behaving as spoilers (Schweller 2014).

However, others argued that the BRICS did not seek a wholesale change to the international system. Rather than being confrontational, their demands were more modest, seeking only reform. They wanted a "democratization" of the international system, which was taken to mean they and other rising powers having a say in the global order (Stuenkel 2015, BRIC 2008, 2009). In this reading, the BRICS were less concerned with states' autonomy and more with a more equitable distribution of integration among states. More specifically, they were committed to multilateralism within the liberal order and wanted to have more voting rights in financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank as well as in political bodies. Brazilian and Indian demands for permanent membership on the UNSC similarly fit into this call, even if Russia and China – who already had veto power – were less keen. Alongside other states, the creation of the G20 as a forum for some of the larger countries from the North and South provided a partial balm.

In general then, the there was a tension within the BRICS over the nature of the international system. They defended both sovereignty and non-interference while also being supporters of state interconnectedness, integration and multilateralism. Commitment to these principles could hold rhetorically, but became exposed in practice, including in the early stages and aftermath of the Arab uprisings. This initially became apparent in the case of Libya, when its dictator, Muamar Gaddafi, refused to bow down to public demands.

Beyond the question of whether the BRICS were for or against the prevailing international system is a question regarding the extent to which it is a coordinated or cohesive entity. Although it was portrayed as working in common after 2001, in practice the group was never as unified as it seemed. Laïdi (2012) attributes this both to the common theme which brought them together – state sovereignty – being the very same which undermined those efforts. Looking at BRICS interaction on the UN, Burges (2011) has noted structural and ideological tensions as well as rival claims to leadership have also hindered greater unity. Although the group made economic sense given their "rising" status, politically they were far too disparate, argues Burges. Beyond their own internal political systems and worldviews, their actions and voting behaviour at the UN have rarely been in line. Second, the UN structure has resulted in asymmetric influence: as UNSC permanent members, Russia and China hold veto power while the others are merely aspirants to the same. Third, beyond Russia and China, the claim of leadership

by other BRICS countries are contested, for example by Pakistan towards India's status in South Asia and Argentina by Brazil's in South America.

To these differences is also a question of scale. That has included both economic and political differences between China and the other four, and especially India. Economically, China now dwarfs the other BRICS countries and has begun to factor as the principal global rival to the US. Politically, tensions have emerged within the group, especially between China and India over their border and leading to violence. Recognizing the lack of unity, Russia's President Vladimir Putin stated his ambition to improve foreign policy coordination between the BRICS at its 2019 summit. However, the failure to do so has highlighted the BRICS preferred way of working, which is to cooperate where possible and avoid controversial subjects (Ayres 2017, Kapoor 2020).

The BRICS and the start of the Arab uprisings

In viewing the BRICS response to the Arab uprisings, it is important to keep in mind that the protests and demonstrations were not a standalone event but part of a wider process of change which is currently taking place in the Arab world. Although the mobilizations which began during the first half of 2011 were the most visible feature of this trend, it was arguably only the earliest such instance. There were already signs during the previous decade of growing dissatisfaction with economic opportunities and government preparedness and competence to respond; UNDP's Arab Human Development Reports had already noted that people in the region were struggling with precarity and finding it difficult to find good and regular jobs and income and a lack of good public services (UNDP 2002, 2003, 2004, 2009).

Such sentiments have also been at the heart of the protest movements, which took place in the Arab world during 2011 and since the end of 2018, from Sudan and Algeria to Iraq and Lebanon. However, while some have questioned whether the latter protests heralds an Arab Spring 2.0, others suggest it is only the latest manifestation of what is a broader, generational shift-taking place in the region (Fahmi 2019, Bartu 2020).

This expansive notion of a region – its states and peoples – facing structural challenges and pressures for change was not taken on or understood by many political elites, both within or outside the Middle East. Indeed, when the protestors toppled President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt in early 2011, the initial reaction by some BRICS governments like Brazil, Russia and China, was to acknowledge the recent changes while stressing the need for a peaceful transition in terms of political and economic change (Ministério das Relações Exteriores 2011, Zoubir 2020, Katz 2012, BRICS

2011a). A sense that there were more substantive developments underfoot was not yet evident.

At this stage, the BRICS were in much the same position as the other observers outside the region: the protests appeared to have emerged spontaneously and caught them by surprise. They were geographically distant and for the democracies among the BRICS – Brazil, India and China – their manifestation represented no particular challenge to their own approach to political life (Brosig 2019). By contrast, for the Russian and Chinese leaderships there was more domestic consternation at the developments unfolding in Tunisia and Egypt, in particular the possibility of imitation. That led to both governments to take measures against it (Baev 2011, Pollack 2011).

Whereas the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings unfolded in a largely independent fashion, the Arab uprisings began to acquire a more direct international involvement in the case of Libya. Muammar Gaddafi vowed not to suffer the same fate as Ben Ali and Mubarak and began to make preparations not to budge. Similar calculations were also made by Bashar al-Assad in Syria while Saudi Arabia refused to tolerate the spectacle of protests taking place in Bahrain on its doorstep. In both Libya and Syria, the regimes' resort to repression changed the dynamics of the uprisings; protest and demonstrators gave way to violence as militias were formed to take up arms against the regimes.

The rising violence in both Libya and Syria prompted a shift in thinking about the Arab uprisings and their portrayal in the media. Gaddafi's decision to use force against his own people led to calls for an international response from inside and outside the region (Lynch 2013). Increasingly, the conduct of the uprisings began to be debated in international forums like the UN. That it did so, came at a notable moment since all five BRICS countries were on the UNSC in early 2011. It therefore gave the group greater diplomatic importance than it might otherwise have had – and which became painfully apparent when the three temporary members departed at the end of 2011 and 2012.

It has been previously been noted that as a group the BRICS shared a respect for state sovereignty and an aversion towards foreign intervention, especially military action. Publicly, they declared their commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, with support from multilateral regional and international organisations. Military force should only be used as a last resort.

That commitment was to be tested in Libya. At first, all five BRICS countries were in line with international opinion. They all voted for Resolution 1970, which condemned the violence and proposed sanctions against the Gaddafi regime, including referring the case to the International Criminal Court.

Although the five had voted together, there were differences among the BRICS countries. The three non-permanent members on the UNSC – Brazil, India and South Africa – were democracies and therefore more sympathetic to the protestors and their demands than Beijing and Moscow. Yet even among them, however, there were differences. South Africa's ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), had longstanding ties and differences with Gaddafi. Although Gaddafi has supported the ANC during its struggle against the apartheid regime, he also claimed pan-African leadership for himself. That caused irritation in Pretoria. Despite this, President Jacob Zuma led a peace mission to Tripoli in May, but which was overshadowed by the wider international involvement that was emerging (BBC 2011, Kirchick 2011, Solomon and Swart 2005).

In contrast to South Africa (and India), Brazil took a stronger line on the human rights situation in the country than South Africa and India did. It was also more more prepared to refer the Gaddafi regime to the International Criminal Court for its use of violence against the population than its fellow democracies (Brosig 2019). During this period, Brazil also contributed to the wider international debate regarding the appropriate use of intervention. In 2005 UN member states had approved the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) principle to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The norm was employed as justification in Western action against Gaddafi, but which generated unease by other states when it became clear that their motives went further, to remove Gaddafi. Brazil brought up this issue by proposing an addendum to R2P, namely, "Responsibility while Protecting" (RwP), which would set limits and accountability regarding UN-sponsored interventions (Stuenkel 2016, Avezov 2013).

Despite the Brazilian initiative, the UNSC's wider efforts on Libya had little effect on Gaddafi. In response the UNSC debated and passed Resolution 1973 which proposed a no-fly zone and the use of "all necessary measures… to protect civilians… under threat of attack" (Brosig 2019: 66). Brazil, India, Russia and China all abstained, with only South Africa voting in favour. The West – Britain, France and the US – then interpreted the resolution to begin an air campaign against Gaddafi soon after, which generated criticism from the BRICS countries.

The differences between the BRICS on how best to deal with the Libyan crisis was apparent in the modest space given to it at the group's summit in April. In the declaration the leaders limited their words to expressing their wish to continue to cooperate on the matter and the hope that the different parties in Libya resolve their differences through dialogue and with the support of the UN and regional organisations (BRICS 2011a).

The BRICS' suspicion of the West and its motives continued during the early stages of the Syrian uprising. All five were concerned that the West would push

to remove Assad and responded in several ways. Initially, the response was diplomatic: in summer India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) sent a delegation to Damascus in an effort to reconcile the government and opposition – although it only met with the former (Brosig 2019, Bloomfield 2018).[1] When it failed in the face of Western and Arab opposition, a draft resolution was put before the UNSC and backed by the West, which condemned the violence and put the bulk of the blame on Assad. Russia and China vetoed it while Brazil, India and South Africa abstained.

Perhaps in response to this, following a meeting of BRICS deputy foreign ministers in November, they stated that "Any external interference in Syria's affairs, not in accordance with the UN Charter, should be excluded' and proposed a 'thorough review to see if the actions taken [in Libya] were in conformity with the provisions of the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council." (BRICS 2011b) But while the BRICS shared a common opposition to Assad's removal and Western interference, differences were emerging between the BRICS over the most appropriate course of action (Brosig 2019). After Brazil left the UNSC at the end of 2011 a new draft resolution was put forward in February 2012. While military action was ruled out, sanctions were put on the table. India and South Africa voted in favour while Russia and China vetoed it.

From uprising to insurgency and the BRICS response

Efforts by the BRICS to find a common path in response to the Arab uprisings had struggled from the outset. Although they shared some common principles, operationalizing them proved harder. Furthermore, the prospects for any collective and coordinated action diminished after India and South Africa followed Brazil off the UNSC at the end of 2012. That left Russia and China as the two remaining BRICS countries in the UNSC, owing to their permanent status. Of the two, Russia's voice was arguably louder, given its greater involvement in both Syria and (later) Libya (Bronig 2019).

Although Russia and China were the two principal BRICS members on the UNSC in the years that followed, there was little attempt by either state to coordinate their response to subsequent developments in Syria and Libya with the rest of the BRICS or to speak on their behalf. Notwithstanding this, the BRICS did refer to the growing violence in Syria at the New Delhi summit in 2012, where the joint declaration called for peace and "broad national dialogues" and included

[1] IBSA was created in 2003 as a separate entity from the BRICS. The democratic character of the three countries means that their gatherings provide greater space for discussion on issues relating to human rights and civil society than occurs with the BRICS. They are also less encumbered by tensions and rivalries between themselves, as is the case between China and Russia and China and India in the BRICS (see Stuenkel 2012). However, compared to its first decade IBSA's influence began to decline after 2011, the final year that it held a summit. Ministerial meetings only resumed in 2017 and 2018.

"the Syrian government and all sections of Syrian society". (BRICS 2012) Similar sentiments were repeated in subsequent summit declarations in the following years, along with references to curtail terrorism, human rights abuse by all parties and support for Russian efforts at consultation through the alternative Astana process (BRICS 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017).

After 2012, Assad began to lose control in Syria. The emergence of militant and terrorist groups like ISIS/Islamic State in Syria and Iraq in 2013-14 not only appealed to fellow Muslims to join them, but invited them to emulate their actions in the Caucasus, Xinjiang and parts of India. Their rise brought the consequences of the uprisings closer to Russia, China and India, who rallied in defence of Assad. Of the three, Russia became a direct participant in the Syrian war from 2015, carrying out airstrikes against terrorists – a label that was interpreted generously to include various rebel groups against Assad. Russia also became a strong supporter of Assad at the international level: while 14 resolutions were passed at the UN between 2015 and 2018, 10 fell, usually owing to Russian vetoes. By 2020, 16 drafts on Syria had failed because of Chinese and Russian vetoes (Adam 2020).

Russia also began to take a more active role in the Libyan conflict from the middle of the decade (Wehry 2018). The country remained fragmented following Gaddafi's defeat and murder in late 2011. Power lay primarily with the various local, regional and tribal armed groups, which had emerged after 2011. From 2014 the former army general and regional warlord, Khalifa Haftar, brought together many of these groups in the east of the country and began a military campaign to take over the country. Russia joined other regional and European countries involved in the struggle by providing military assistance to Haftar, and despite the arms embargo (Lederer 2020). Diplomatically, Russia has also signaled its support in a number of ways, including abstaining on Resolutions 2509, 2510 and 2542 – the last of which China also abstained on – for not taking sufficient note of Libyan concerns (UN 2020a, 202b, 2020c). Russia's involvement has also led to it being criticised by the UN for not adhering to the arms embargo on Libya, an issue which along with the involvement of several outside actors, made the file an "extremely complex and difficult" one for South Africa's representatives, who returned to the UNSC during 2019-20 (Fillion 2020).

Russia's activism in Libya and Syria may be explained by several factors. In Syria Moscow had backed the Syrian government for reasons of national security to reject the Western-sponsored efforts at regime change. Following the fall of Palmyra to ISIS in 2015, Moscow feared Assad was on the verge of collapse. Should he go, both the country and the wider region lay open to the threat of terrorism. Russian intervention was therefore justified on the basis of being invited in by the Syrian government to combat the terrorist threat (Charap, Treyger and Geist 2019, Hayatli 2016).

In Libya Russian involvement began in 2015. Although Moscow's involvement was seen as weighted towards General Khalifa Haftar and his Libyan National Army militia, it did not ignore the other parties, conducting outreach both to the internationally recognised Government of National Accord in Tripoli as well as other armed groups. In contrast to Syria, where Russia has been solidly behind Assad, in Libya it has been more inclined to achieve compromise between the competing parties (Charap, Treyger and Geist 2019).

For China, a motivating factor was the impact of the growing radicalization stemming from the uprisings, especially the rise of militant and extremist Islamist groups like ISIS and the impact they might have on their own Muslim populations in China and among the Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Despite the transnational threat posed both by ISIS and other militants, China did not directly intervene in either Syria or Libya. Yet nor has it needed to. Unlike Russia, it does not need to employ coercion to establish its great power status. Of the BRICS countries, China stands apart as the second largest economy in the world and the only rising power that poses a potential global challenger to the US.

As the decade progressed, China's engagement and approach to the region became more assertive, especially following the arrival of Xi Jinping as president. In 2013, he launched the Belt and Road Initiative, which sought to bring Chinese capital together with state elites across the Eurasian landmass to encourage greater connectivity in the form of physical infrastructure projects, better telecommunications and new markets.

The Belt and Road Initiative has since become a central tenet of China's emerging conflict management response to the region. Although not yet formally recognised as such, it has become part of the emerging "peace through development" concept, which has been articulated by some Chinese scholars and diplomats working on the region. In their telling, Chinese support for state-initiated and directed projects in the region that generates improved development outcomes is the most optimal means for countering social unrest and regional instability (Abb 2018, Wang 2019, Burton 2020).

The IBSA group's diplomatic retreat at both a global level and in relation to the Middle East after 2012 was compounded by political and economic shifts at home. India maintained its embassy in Syria and was viewed favourably by the Assad government for not taking a robust stance against it. Although Indian decision makers were torn over the alleged use of chemical weapons in Ghouta in 2013, both the Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party governments (which was elected in 2014) sought a balance between international inspections and no foreign interference (Bloomfield 2018, Mehta 2017). To square the circle of Russian intervention, India emphasized Moscow's actions against terrorism. From 2014,

remaining Indian interest declined further as Prime Minister Narendra Modi redirected India's Middle East policy towards Israel and the Gulf monarchies, which promised more in the way of trade and investment (Burton 2019). Diminishing interest and involvement was also a consequence of other factors too, including a growing preoccupation with China's geopolitical footprint in its immediate neighbourhood of Central and South Asia, through the development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (Kamran and Mahsood 2021).

Economic decline and political disorder at home similarly led to less engagement by Brazil and South Africa (Vadell and Ramos 2019, Van der Merwe 2019). In Brazil, its actions in relation to the Arab uprisings constituted a more modest foreign policy, especially when compared to the previous presidency under Lula (2003-10) (Vigevani and Caladrin 2019). Brazil's retreat from the Middle East during the 2010s contrasted with Lula's activism which had seen him become a regular visitor to the region and an instigator of more regular relations between South America and the Arab world through the APSA conferences which took place between 2005 and 2010. As well as increasing financial contributions to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees, he also offered to mediate between Israel and the Palestinians and worked with Turkey to reach an agreement that would have enabled Iran to enrich uranium for its civilian nuclear programme under international supervision and without sanctions in 2010 (Amorim 2017, Oliveira de Carvalho 2019). His successor, Dilma Rousseff, adopted a less proactive foreign policy, both generally as well as in the Arab world.

Following Brazil's departure from the UNSC at the end of 2011, Brazilian activism in relation to the uprisings and their subsequent development slumped. In Brazil, a system of humanitarian visas, which enabled Syrians to seek refuge in the country was established in 2013 (UNHCR 2013). By 2017 around 3000 had taken advantage of the scheme (Garcia 2017). Nevertheless, beyond this, its involvement with the uprisings was marginal. Between 2011 and 2017 trade had declined between Brazil and the Middle East while Brazil's GDP growth fell after 2010 and contracted by 3.5 and 3.2 percent in 2015 and 2016 (Vigevani and Caladrin 2019, World Bank nd).

The period also saw a growing political crisis as corruption enveloped the ruling Workers Party. Although not directly implicated in the Operation Carwash scandal, President Dilma Rousseff was impeached and replaced by her vice-president, Michel Temer, who along with much of the wider political class, turned out to have been involved in the scandal.

National anger and outrage contributed to the election of Jair Bolsonaro in 2018, who proposed a reset of Brazilian foreign policy. He abandoned Brazil's traditional search for autonomy in favour of closer alignment with the US and its

allies, including Israel. That included support for Trump's decision to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and proposal to do the same, although ultimately that promise was downgraded to the opening of a trade office (Abusidu 2020). Economic exchange has become the principal consideration since; in 2019 Bolsonaro visited Israel, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE to encourage more trade and investment in Brazil (Brazil-Arab News Agency 2019, 2020).

South Africa similarly experienced slowing growth during the decade, which reduced the country's development prospects. Under President Jacob Zuma (2007-18) the country's foreign policy sought to retain a strong Africanist focus while also encouraging greater South-South cooperation (of which the BRICS was one aspect). That included visits to the Gulf region in search of trade and investment in 2016. However, the government was hampered by self-interest and enrichment by Zuma and his associates, the legitimacy of which is presently being challenged in the hundreds of court cases facing the ex-president (Van der Merwe 2019, Gqiza and Ogunnubi 2019).

Zuma's replacement by Cyril Ramaphosa was heralded as a break with realpolitik. Ramaphosa himself claimed that South Africa's foreign policy would be driven by "democracy, justice, human rights and good governance" and less by adherence to autocratic leaders (Hamill 2019). In 2019, South Africa returned to the UNSC as a temporary member. It voted in favour of all the draft resolutions put forward on both Libya and Syria (and notwithstanding its frustration with the presence of outside parties, especially in Libya). Moreover, it was its votes on Syria where it has attracted criticism.

By now, the scope of the war was largely limited to the northern province of Idlib, where rebel forces held out. Discussion in the UNSC revolved around the question of access for providing humanitarian assistance. At the end of 2019, Russia and China vetoed drafts that would have left the four cross-border checkpoints open in favour of two on the Syrian-Turkish border for six months in Resolution 2504. Then in July 2020, the two countries again vetoed drafts, which would have kept the two points open and eventually abstained on Resolution 2533 that kept one border crossing open for 12 months. In their explanations, Russia and China questioned the need for humanitarian assistance, pointing out that previous approval had taken place during an exceptional period in 2014. In addition, they opposed what they saw as infringements on Syrian sovereignty, including the imposition of unilateral sanctions such as the recently Caesar Act by the US (Security Council Report 2020).

South Africa voted in favour of both resolutions as well as the other, alternate Russian drafts that were put forward in January and July. While its willingness to vote for both the Russian and non-Russian drafts could be read as a determina-

tion to support any way to keep the cross-border mechanism working, it has also prompted criticism for its accommodation of the Syrian regime and its human rights abuses, as well as its Russian and Chinese backers (Security Council Report 2020, Adam 2020).

The focus on Syria (and Libya) not only at the start of the Arab uprisings but also at the end of the decade highlighted the way in which the BRICS leaderships have largely framed them. Rather than viewing them as an expression of pent-up social discontent, they have viewed them in a more limited way, by concentrating on only the most politically extreme and problematic manifestations resulting from them, especially armed conflict, terrorism and the associated humanitarian crisis. To this may also be added a preoccupation with emphasising the sanctity of states' sovereignty and a rejection of any outside interference in their internal affairs (even if it has recently been more honoured in the breach than by observance in the case of Syria and Libya by Russia). This is reflected in the most recent BRICS declarations made, in Brasília in 2019 and Moscow in 2020 where references relating to the Middle East cover the violence, terrorism and the need for humanitarian assistance in Syria, Yemen and Iraq, along with the need to resolve the longstanding Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the tensions between countries in the Gulf (BRICS 2019, 2020).

Conclusion

This study has surveyed the response of the BRICS to the changes in the Middle East over the past decade, with a particular focus on the Arab uprisings and their aftermath. In addition to their collective statements on the conflicts in Syria and Libya in particular, it has also noted their individual behavior and the extent to which some of the countries were more influential on these matters than others.

Broadly, the BRICS shared a common respect for state sovereignty and a wariness to outside interference, especially by the West. However, their commitment to non-intervention was not absolute and there were differences between them regarding under what conditions it might happen, as shown by Russia's direct presence to counter terrorist threats at the invitation of the Syrian regime and Brazilian contemplation at referring Gaddafi to the International Criminal Court for human rights violations.

In overall terms though, the BRICS prioritized the international dimension over developments within states and between governments and societies during the uprisings and after. Their involvement was initially diplomatic and focused on limiting Western efforts to remove leaders like Gaddafi and Assad. An important contribution towards this position was the reaction of the BRICS to Western intervention in Libya and which influenced their subsequent response, whether

through the IBSA diplomatic initiative to Damascus in 2011 or Russian diplomatic (and later direct) support for Assad – a position backed by China.

However, by the time Russia opted for a more direct approach in Syria, the BRICS as a presence on the UNSC was no more. Following Brazil's departure at the end of 2011 followed by South Africa and India a year later, the BRICS ceased to operate as a full group on the UNSC. Over the next few years the most prominent BRICS members on the UNSC – and therefore with access to the international debate over the Middle East – were Russia and China. Certainly, they did not speak on behalf of the group as a whole (with joint declarations after each summit and meeting of relevant ministers being the sum effort at coordination), but they had greater influence as the decade progressed in the aftermath of the uprisings. Both countries owed their position to being permanent UNSC members alongside China's economic influence, which gave it unparalleled weight, and Russia's more direct approach (including intervention in Syria at the invitation of the regime and its outreach to all the conflict parties in Libya).

Both China and Russia were arguably less sensitive to the demands beyond state elites. While Russia's intervention in Syria could be defended on legal grounds, it effectively meant tacit acceptance of one party over another, namely the regime against its opponents, both terrorist and non-terrorist. Meanwhile, although the authoritarian nature of the Syrian regime did not unduly trouble either Moscow or Beijing, it presented more of a challenge for the BRICS democracies of Brazil, India and South Africa. However, even among the three, there were differences in their commitment to such principles, for example, Brazil (in 2011) taking a more active stance than India.

Notwithstanding the lack of cohesion and coherence, individually some of the BRICS countries benefited from the uprisings and their consequences. For both its democratic and non-democratic members, the Arab uprisings took place at a time when all five states were members of the UNSC, providing them with an early opportunity to test their influence through a formally constituted international organization (and in contrast to other, looser groupings like the G20). The lessons were instructive, especially the lack of unity beyond the joint statements made at their regular summits. At the same time, to judge them too harshly on this would be a mistake. Certainly, their initial response to the uprisings was a reactive one, but this was in keeping with other, more powerful states like the US as well. Indeed, that made sense since the uprisings' origin were largely domestic and therefore caught almost everyone by surprise – including the governments and their security services supposedly prepared to catch sight of any unrest. More significant for the BRICS however, was the fact that that initial reaction resulted in a "conservative" preference for the status quo – namely the primacy of the state over society – and which also meant less challenge to the Western-dominated international order.

On the other hand, as the uprisings transformed into armed insurrections and the Western response became more activist – resulting in its intervention in Libya – this prompted a re-evaluation among BRICS countries, the consequences of which did result in a challenge to the prevailing international order. The most obvious example of this was Russia in Syria, echoed by China. But it also came from Brazil too, through its norm generation around "responsibility while protecting".

The lessons drawn from the BRICS experience is arguably similar for other non-Western states and their leaderships. Although multilateralism and sovereignty are strongly supported by other middle powers both inside and outside the region, the limits on their ability to act mean that international cooperation may not be possible. Other examples include middle powers like Malaysia and Indonesia, whose resources and capacities were insufficient to employ directly in relation to the disorder generated in Syria, even as they had to deal with the fallout in the form of radicalized citizens at home and those attempting to travel to the region to join groups like Islamic State. By taking this hands-off approach, middle powers are essentially endorsing another state's sovereignty. By implication, that means extending tacit acceptance of a state's leadership – and in so doing, the absence of a veto over their actions towards the population within their borders.

Bio

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Think Tanks, Foreign Policy and the Emerging Powers

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All rising powers, or emerging powers, are not rising in vacuum; they are confronted with a variety of challenges at home and abroad. How to meet these external challenges and thus make their rise more smoothly vis-à-vis the status quo power (aka established power) have not only bothered the leadership of these countries, but also concerned International Relations (IR) scholars and foreign policy experts. The current literature makes great contribution to people's understanding of grand strategies that rising powers pursue.[1] But these research fails to demonstrate where these "grand strategies" are from, or how they are made, and who made them. The volume Think Tanks, Foreign Policy and the Emerging Powers edited by James G. McGann has shed some light on these questions by concentrating on the role of security and international affairs (SIA) think tanks in emerging powers and illustrating how these policy institutions facilitate to cope with challenges via designing, revising and legitimizing foreign policy in the ever-changing context of world politics.

James G. McGann is a senior lecturer in International Studies at the Lauder Institute and senior fellow at Fels Institute of Government, University of Pennsylvania. He is also a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, a well-known SIA think tank based in Philadelphia. As director of the Lauder Institute's Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP), Dr. McGann has been examining the evolving role and character of think tanks since the inception of TTCSP in 1989 by collecting data and conducting research on think

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[1] See, for example, Mares, David R. & Trinkunas, Harold A. 2016. Aspirational Power: Brazil on the Long Road to Global Influence. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press; Leverett, Flynt & Wu, Bingbing. 2016. The New Silk Road and China's Evolving Grand Strategy. The China Journal, no.77, pp.110-132; Pardesi, Manjeet S. 2017. American Global Primacy and the Rise of India. Honolulu, Hawai'i: East-West Center.

tank trends in policymaking process. Referred to as the "think tanks' think tank," TTCSP has developed and launched its first annual Global Go to Think Tank Index Report since 2007. Dr. McGann has authored more than fifteen books on think tanks in the past thirty plus years.

The volume under review is one of the latest books on think tanks by Dr. McGann. It aims to "explore how security and international affairs [SIA] think tanks in emerging powers collaborate with their policy-makers to meet current and anticipate future foreign policy and security challenges" (pp.13-14). To achieve this goal, the book examines 12 think tank cases that are broken down into four parts and 25 chapters by region, i.e., Part II Africa (Nigeria and South Africa: Chapter 5-8), Part III Asia (China, India, Singapore, South Korea, and Vietnam: Chapter 9-19), Part IV Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico: Chapter 20-25), and Part V Middle East (Qatar and Turkey: Chapter 26-29). The four parts explicate the unique foreign policy challenges that the emerging powers face and strategies that have been developed to effectively respond to these policy issues by think tanks. The introduction part is composed of 4 chapters, in which Chapter 1 and 2 provide a detailed exposition of the literature on and evolution of SIA think tanks and the role they have played in shaping foreign and defense policies; Chapter 3 analyzes the changing character and context of world politics and the role of emerging powers in the multipolar world; Chapter 4 examines the definition of "emerging powers" and their main groupings and development. The conclusion part contains the sole Chapter 30, which assesses the ongoing trends and major challenges for SIA think tanks in rising powers by comparing the think tank cases analyzed in the volume and provides some suggestions for future research.

The case studies in this book show that think tanks "have become a permanent part of the political landscape and are now an integral part of the policy process in many countries" "irrespective of their structure or level of autonomy" (p.8). For example, the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) actively conducts track-two diplomacy and defines the Chinese role in the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and energy security and development (Chapter 10) while the AI Jazeera Center for Studies (AJSC) in Qatar serves as a gateway for the world with scientific research in knowledge disseminated through the media and strategic thinking in the Arab world. When comparing with different cases of think tanks contained in the book, the editor arrives at some interesting conclusions. It is argued that different think tanks emphasize varying agendas. Concretely speaking, "most Asian think tanks have research strands on reginal organization on the continent, while the Latin American counterparts focus on their own region" (p.423). The volume also points out that "emerging-power think tanks are situated in critical regions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and their local expertise pro-

vides in-depth and expert analyses of reginal events with a global impact" (p.424). It is needless to say that these think tanks have made great achievements and contributed to the development of emerging powers in which they are located by in-depth theoretical research and policy analysis. However, they are confronted with various, and sometimes shared, problems. For example, both the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) and the AJSC suffer from the lack of funding, while many other think tanks such as the CIIS are yet to broaden the scope of research, enhance the depth and systematicity of studies, and double down efforts to deal with relations with government as well as overcome leadership challenges.

An outgrowth of the G20 Foreign Policy Think Tank Summit between TTCSP and Brazil's Fundação getulio Vargas (FVG) in 2012,[2] the edited volume is also a product presenting Dr. McGann's decades-long experience of research of and consulting on think tanks. Some major merits in the book are worth mentioning. Firstly, the cases are properly selected from the TTCSP database of nearly 7,000 think tanks worldwide based on "a clearly articulated mission and programs that are focused on SIA research," "a date of establishment that spanned the Cold War period and fell within the overall parameters of the longitudinal study," and "a globally representative set of think tanks for the study" (pp.14-15). By doing this, secondly, it makes these cases comparable and helps target shared challenges, paving the way for solutions to improve the development of think tanks in emerging powers at large. Thirdly, the insider insights by contributors, most of who are managers and research fellows at the think tanks they analyze, make arguments of this volume more convincing. Lastly, the structure of this book also deserves recognition. An overview of the emerging power provided before the think tank(s) of this country is (are) examined, for instance, makes the book more reader-friendly. The appendix provides readers with detailed analysis of the relations between the correlation of events with the category of think tanks established in rising powers. However, it does not mean that the book is without any demerits. For example, in the case of China, where the past decades have witnessed the upsurge of all types of think tanks and their growing influence in foreign policy, it is suggested to introduce and analyze a private/social think tank so as to open another window to observe the second largest power.

The volume edited by McGann has provided quite a novel insight into the role think tanks play in emerging powers, particularly their contribution in "aiding the transition and, most importantly, aiding the transformation of the nation's foreign policy to better reflect its changing status globally" (p.11). In the post-COVID-19 era where the great-power competition between China and the United

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[2] For details of the summit, see Doherty, Christopher, et al. 2012. G20 Foreign Policy Think Tank Summit: Summit Report, https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=ttcsp_summitreports.

States is more likely to intensify, think tanks in both countries are expected to take more responsibility in smoothing the power transition. Taking into account of think tanks' advantage of collaborating separate groups of researchers and engaging stakeholders in the policy process, think tanks from outside China and the United States could and should also play a due role in preventing the two powers from heading into the alleged Thucydides' trap. In this case, this book is recommended to practitioners, including policy makers and diplomates as well as think tank managers. People who have strong interests in public/foreign policy, international development, and IRs, particularly teachers and students of IRs and political science would also find it helpful and interesting.

Bio

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