

REGIONAL SECURITY INTERDEPENDENCE

**Proceedings of the Workshop Organized
by the Department of Political Science,
Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno,
September 25, 2015**

EDITED BY
MIROSLAV MAREŠ AND TOMÁŠ ŠMÍD

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REGIONAL SECURITY INTERDEPENDENCE: INTRODUCTION

MIROSLAV MAREŠ, TOMÁŠ ŠMÍD

Abstract: In this introduction editors explain the aim and context of the workshop and proceedings. They deal with concepts of regional security and with research on regional security interdependence.

Keywords: regional security; interdependence;

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Contemporary security development is characterized by growing interdependence of security phenomena at local, national, regional and global level (Kegley, Wittkopf 2006). Within the world regions regional security complexes with their regional security orders were established (Stewart-Ingersoll, Frazier: 2012). The so called “new definition” of the regional security complex is related to „a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another“ (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde 1997: 201“.

Well developed research of regional security complexes can be enhanced with research of regional security interdependence between two or more geopolitical areas. It includes an analysis of the relation between security actors from various regions and the trans-regional spread of security threats. Cooperation of security forces from various regions can be also an important part of such an analysis (Mareš et al 2013: 121–13).

This research of interregional dependence is a goal of the workshop organized by the security division of the Department of Political Science

of the Faculty of Social Studies of the Masaryk University in Brno. It is focused on several case studies from various regions – Central Europe, Eastern Europe, the Near East and the Middle East. Various security sectors are analyzed in individual papers (military sector, regime sector, economic sector). Research perspectives used by scholars participating in this research are a good basis for the future development of regional security studies. This workshop is organized and this volume is published to the 10th anniversary of establishing the study program security and strategic studies at the FSS MU.

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PANEL 1:

REGIONAL SECURITY INTERDEPENDENCE
IN MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA

UPS AND DOWNS OF TURKISH RELATIONSHIP WITH ERBIL AND BAGHDAD IN THE POST-2003 ERA

TOMÁŠ KAVÁLEK

Abstract: This article elaborates on the development of the Turkish foreign policy towards Iraqi Federal and Kurdistan Regional Government (IFG and KRG) since the US invasion to Iraq in 2003. The article analyzes several dimensions of Turkey's foreign policy towards KRG and IFG: security, politics and economy. Relations between Iraqi Kurds and Turkey underwent remarkable change since 2009. Rather warm relations with Baghdad started to falter since 2009 onwards. Strengthening Iran's influence over predominantly Shiite Iraqi Federal Government since the US pullout from Iraq only strengthened Turkey's reliance on Erbil. In 2014, ISIS swept through vast Sunni areas of Iraq bringing decay of Baghdad's power and further increasing its dependency on Tehran. These developments boosted Turkey's efforts to use ties with Barzani to further its strategic goals (gain upper hand against the Kurdistan Workers' Party and its franchise in Syria, and obtain hydrocarbon resources). I conclude that Ankara eventually opted for KRG after initially trying to balance its ties with Baghdad. Turkish establishment reflected not only the limits of its influence in Baghdad, facing especially Iran, but also took into consideration its concerns regarding Kurdish ambitions in the region and hunger for hydrocarbon resources. In the final calculation, Barzani's KRG became a more profitable option.

Keywords: foreign policy; Iraq; KRG; Kurdistan Regional Government; New Foreign Policy; Turkey

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Introduction

Turkey underwent remarkable changes in the last decade. In 2002, the government of the moderate-Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) with its Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan came to power as single partyone. AKP managed to form single-party governments in two subsequent elections in 2006 and 2010. Number of political reforms have been pursued under auspices of getting closer to the European Union standards such as democratization, pacifying army under civilian control and it aimed at creation of new Turkey as a regional power exploiting its unique position on the “crossroads of civilizations” (Rodriquez et al. eds. 2014; Kuru 2012; Robins 2013). AKP’s regime, however, started to adopt authoritarian tendencies with a higher pace after the 2013’s wave of anti-governments protests. Ambitious Erdoğan was elected as the first president in Turkish history with a popular vote in summer of 2014. However, his party subsequently failed to reach majority in June 2015 general elections (Cagaptay, Stull and Baskhar 2015).

Turkey, under AKP, gradually started to change its rather passive role in foreign policy regarding not only its “troubled” neighbourhood but also grew stronger bilateral relations with global powers. Turkey’s project of pro-active and widely engaged foreign policy began to shape after 2002 and fully emerged in the post-2007 era after further consolidation of the AKP’s power in the second term (see Robins 2013; Linden et al. 2012; Barkey 2011). The so-called New Turkish Foreign Policy (NFP) with its ambitious steps was at first highlighted as a remarkable success and ambitious project. Later on, it was criticized for its setbacks (see e. g. Ayata 2014).

It marked perhaps one of the most illustrative instances is an evolving policy towards Iraq. At the same time it shows both potential and limits of Turkish regional power. In 2003–2007, Ankara remained locked in the realist security approach of “default support” for Baghdad, seeing Iraqi unity as a counter-power to Kurdish nationalism. After 2007, AKP’s establishment pursued closer ties with Baghdad by for example expanding economic and political relations. At the same time, AKP sought to get closer with Barzani’s Kurdish Regional Government. By 2009, such balancing proved to be unsustainable. Baghdad viewed it

as an unwanted support for KRG's independence and at the same time Turkey found it increasingly difficult to compete with the reality of strengthening Iranian influence over Baghdad government. At that time, Barzani's Iraqi Kurdistan became a more valuable partner for Turkey with regards to engaging in domestic Kurdish issue and recognizing Northern Iraqi hydrocarbon riches. These trends were only strengthened facing regional turmoil, Kurdish success in Northern Syria, ISIS re-occurrence, and Iran building strong influence over Iraqi Federal Government (IFG).

Analytical Framework

The goal of the research is to examine and compare foreign policy of Turkey towards Iraqi Federal and Kurdistan Regional Governments in post-2003 era. The two elements of comparison are foreign policies of one state (Turkey) towards a state actor (Iraq, represented by the Iraqi Federal Government – IFG) and a sub-state actor (Northern Iraq, represented by the Kurdistan Regional Government – KRG) (Constitution of Iraq 2005). It is time-series designed comparison of two policies; the time delimitation is 2003 (fall of Saddam's regime) until present (August 2015).

It could be argued that comparison of the policies towards a state and a sub-state actor is problematic since those are on different levels of analysis. However, Iraqi Kurdistan is acting in many aspects, including its foreign policy towards neighbors, gradually as an independent actor of international relations (Bengio 2012). This state of affairs was bolstered since summer of 2014 when ISIS conquered a major Sunni part of Iraq (Kaválek and Brožík 2014). Peshmerge (armed forces and militias operating under auspices of the KRG) are perceived as an effective fighting force against ISIS, Baghdad's grip further loosened, and (perhaps most importantly) ageing president Massoud Barzani repeatedly pursues independence bid as his personal goal since summer of 2014, claiming this May it is a matter of "when", not "if" (Vatanka 2014; Ahmad 2015). Thus, in this comparison we remain in fact on the same level of analysis; observed actors function like two more independent entities rather than a state one controlling sub-state one. Furthermore, especially after ISIS occurred in the summer of 2014, Baghdad is also losing its independence

with Iran exercising enormous influence over Iraqi Shiite politics. Iran also has a large armed force under the command of Qasem Souleimani operating in Iraq (Siegel 2015; Pregent 2015). Baghdad government is, however, still an official representative of Iraq (albeit it lost control over parts of its territory).

This study's goal is to shed light on the developing Turkish foreign policy towards IFG and KRG, while highlighting main policy shifts that occurred in 2003–2015. I also briefly introduce the New Foreign Policy concept and its basic premises. Secondly, I identify the key dimensions of relations which can be observed in the NFP towards IFG and the KRG – security, political, economic, and cultural dimension. Motivation for Ankara's policy shifts will be put into the context of regional security developments. While the NFP is frequently an examined research topic in academia in recent years, comprehensive analyses of Ankara's policies towards Iraq with regards to the regional security context is rather scarce (see e. g. Lindenstrauss and Aksoy 2012; Özcan 2010; Cagaptay and Evans 2012; Morelli and Pischedda 2014).

Turkish New Foreign Policy

The government of the AKP which has dominated country's politics since 2002 pursued remarkable changes of foreign policies. The quest for the NFP can be described as an attempt to elevate Turkey's profile as a pro-active regional power, especially focusing on the region of Middle East (Onis 2011; Larrabee 2007). Its goal is to enhance stability, security and interdependence in the region, which will eventually create stable and profitable environment for Turkish development and increased influence in the region. In many ways, the new concept of foreign policy prioritizes the instruments of soft power over hard power tools; rather than coercion it tends to use seduction (for more on soft power see Nye 2004).

The underlying document formulating the basic principles of the NFP is Ahmet Davutoğlu's article "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision" dating back to 2007. It is also more thoroughly described in Davutoğlu's earlier book called "A Strategic Depth" (Davutoğlu 2001). The core principle is to engage a multi-dimensional approach while pursuing Turkey's interests, which could be described as contrasting to previous rather passive

“security-based”, or “military” approach relying on hard power. We cannot consider this policy shift as a year-to-year rapid change. However “(...) it is the AKP who provided Turkish foreign policy with semblance of coherence and a sense of self-confidence.” (Barkey 2011: 1) There are several explanations for such policy shift. Security-based explanations highlight the fact that “(...) Ankara has formulated a pro-active, multidimensional and constructive foreign policy to adapt itself to the changing security conjuncture of the new era (...)”. (Kutlay 2011: 68) Identity-based explanations focus on re-discovering historical and cultural affiliation with the Middle East, “Islamic solidarity”, which has been undermined during the previous period (ibid.). Other explanations focus on political economy [based partially on Keohane and Nye’s (2001) interdependence theory]. “The major driving force for the soft power activism of Turkish foreign policy has been the economy and trade.” (Kutlay 2011: 76)

Nowadays, the NFP is a project that ended up in a failure, stripping Turkey off the partners in the overwhelming majority of the Middle East (Ankara has now constrained relations with Egypt, Libya, or Gulf Countries, and obviously with Assad’s Syria). Turkish bet on “Arab streets” and Muslim Brotherhood, hoping for exploiting ideological affinity in the aftermath of Arab revolutions failed (see e. g. Onis 2012).

The quest for the NFP has had considerable impact on foreign policy towards both IFG and KRG. Remarkable policy shift towards Baghdad and Erbil has been closely scrutinized by academia. Turkish relations towards Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan represent examples of pro-active pursuing of the NFP. The NFP towards Iraq gradually starts to follow its declared principles and it is pursued in several core interconnected dimensions which can be identified. It experienced shift from solely military (or security) approach to employing economic, as well political (or diplomatic), and cultural tools.

Security Dimension

Firstly, the security dimension of pursued policies remains very strong (Lindenstrauss and Aksoy 2012). Ensuring security and stability of Iraq are goals which are still key interests of the Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq; in Turkey’s eyes, it also provides an upper hand against

PKK and against Iranian meddling etc. Security is still a crucial dimension, although compared to previous era, it is now being supported by more diverse means including not only “hard power” ones, but also political and economic tools.

Political Dimension

Secondly, political dimension (as well as diplomatic means) plays an important role. For example, various political institutions enhancing cooperation were created; there were various high level visits, indicating the state of relations between the examined actors. Political means, including various negotiations and holding regional meetings, are widely used to pursue Turkey’s foreign policy. They are also indicators of the main policy shifts (e. g. ceasing visits or not inviting certain actors usually indicates worsening relations). Negotiations and contacts with respective leaders also indicates the status of relations (for example talks with opposition to the IFG shows shift of attention towards different actors).

Economic Dimension

Thirdly, there is the economic dimension. According to many authors, economic side of the NFP is a crucial aspect of Turkey pursuing its interest in a respective country or region (Kutlay 2011). The nature and level of investments, as well as the extent of mutual trade with both actors show favoring one or the other. The issues regarding energy security and supply of crude oil and natural gas to Turkey, as well as investments in oil and gas explorations are subjugated to economical dimension of Turkish policy towards the KRG and the IFG. We may argue that Turkey’s flourishing economy has been in need for more resources and Turkey wishes to be “an energetic hub” (Alsancak 2010). Turkey’s rapidly growing economy itself is hungry for hydrocarbon resources – it is estimated its oil imports will double in the next decade (U. S. Energy Information Administration 2015). Extensive economic dependency of Erbil on Turkey can also be considered as leverage against Barzani and an aspect insuring his loyalty.

Cultural Dimension

The last aspect of the NFP are, with respect to Nye's soft power concept, various "soft power tools" (Nye 2004). We see diverse attempts to increase Turkey's popularity and influence through various charitable projects, sponsoring education or health care cooperation, as well as cultural events, promoting common identity, tourism etc. (Özcan 2010; 2011). For example Sadik (2012) argues, using Warner's and Walker's (2011) framework that religion is an important tool for elevating Turkish soft power. Since over 90 % of Turkish citizens belong to Sunni branch of Islam, pro-Islamist AKP indeed plays on a moderate Islamist card both in domestic and foreign policy (see e. g. Aydın-Düzgüt 2014). Those tools are closely tied to the efforts in other dimensions and help raise Turkey's positive profile. Using Sunni Islam is indeed applicable only in Iraqi Kurdistan and in Sunni parts of Iraq, but since the government of Baghdad is dominated by Shiites it has its limits and cannot compete with Iranian Shiite soft power. However, in Iraqi Kurdistan we see numerous blueprints of Turkish soft power, handful of mosques are being built and it is financed by agencies tied to the Turkish state. I will not further elaborate on those efforts in this article.

Security Dimension

The security dimension of Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq in post-2003 era is guided by two major concerns – dealing with a Kurdish issue and clashing with Iran as an another regional player who is a natural Turkey's rival (e. g. Kane 2011). The underlying core interests in Iraq remain basically the same. The key interest is to gain help and support, while dealing with PKK and the second one is to maintain and boost its influence over Iraq while keeping its unity and stability (or at least a stable buffer zone) (Lindenstrauss and Aksoy 2012; International Crisis Group 2008). *"Turkey believes that regional stability and security directly affects its security."* (Özcan 2010: 123) Turkey naturally views with distaste and suspicion rising influence of Iran over Baghdad government. However, tools and means to secure those interests have been steadily developing. We see the rise of the use of economic, political and cultural tools, as well as flexible reaction in response respectively

to changing internal situation in Iraq.

After 2010 elections in Iraq, Development of the domestic politics in Iraq gradually led into a policy shift that in many ways meant giving up efforts to establish strong influence over Iraqi federal politics. Predominantly Shiite government of al-Maliki has also gradually started to lose its grip over Sunni areas of Iraq since 2011, facing al-Qaeda in Iraq (later on ISIS) and other rebels which forced Baghdad to rely on Iran's assistance. Turning to Erbil for strategic partnership was in many ways simply reflecting reality on the ground – Turkish power over Shiite politics in Baghdad could not match entrenching Iranian presence. Favoring Erbil addressed all the Turkish concerns in the changing environment – support against PKK, stable buffer zone on Turkish-Iraqi border, and ensures hydrocarbon riches for energy-hungry Turkey.

Favoring Baghdad: 2003–2009

We can roughly divide Turkey's foreign policy towards Baghdad into two overlapping periods: 2003–2009 and 2009–2013. The premise guiding Turkey's stance towards Baghdad and Erbil in the first period was continuing predominance of "realist-exclusionist approach" (Oguzlu 2008). This stance can be characterized as a "default support for Baghdad" along with "an inherent suspicion towards Erbil". The key premise was that supporting the KRG will eventually lead to emergence of an independent Kurdish state which would probably be hostile towards Turkey and support Kurdistan workers' party operating in Turkey so that the domestic Kurdish issue would hardly be solved. At the same time, the key premise was to keep Iraq united and strong as a buffer against Iran (and al-Maliki was seen as "a man for the job"). Generally, every potentially positive step towards the KRG was perceived as a major threat (ibid.). However, as AKP was gaining more confident position, it gradually initiated careful contact with KRG (Cagaptay and Evans 2012). The "Kurdish factor", however, spoiled relations and gave an upper hand to "realist-exclusionists". As PKK renewed its insurgency in 2004, Ankara repeatedly criticized Erbil for not taking up sufficient precautions to prevent PKK from operating within its territory. Finally, in March 2007, after unofficial pre-negotiations, Turkish National Security Council gave go-ahead to high-meetings with KRG officials and the first high-level

visit of Davutoğlu to Erbil took place in October 2008 (Gazete Vatan 2007; Larrabee and Tol 2011).

During “realist-exclusionist period” Turkey relied mostly on Baghdad and its Prime Minister al-Maliki for several reasons. Turkey believed in feasibility of al-Maliki’s goal to maintain strong united Iraq that would overcome sectarian resentments. Therefore, it seemed rational to bet on Baghdad led by al-Maliki, believing it would grow strong and eventually provide help while dealing with PKK. Evidence, however, proved opposite and the possibility of establishing control over Northern Iraq (and dealing with PKK) became highly unlikely. Several visits and phone calls were made between Ankara and Baghdad, who was assuring its support in fighting against PKK through 2006 and later on (Cagaptay and Evans 2012). For example, during August 2007, premier al-Maliki signed a protocol against terrorism in Turkey and expressed “good will” to deal with the issue pro-actively on behalf of Turkey (International Crisis Group 2008).

“Erbil Up, then Baghdad Down”: 2009–2015

AKP started to pursue the NFP towards Iraq more openly in 2008 and in 2009 – the year which might be named “The Year of Turkish Pro-activity” (Ulutas 2010). The approach called “liberal-integrationist” has gradually obtained an upper-hand. This particular stance also modified approach towards the KRG and Baghdad. “*The change in Turkish attitude towards Iraq did not come suddenly but gradually.*” (Özcan 2011: 80) Despite Baghdad’s and al-Maliki’s statements about supporting fight against terrorism, there were several major incidents showing considerable strength of PKK. The PKK’s offensive in the summer of 2007 along with its attack on Turkish border post in Dağlica in October 2007 resulted in a major cross-border operation “the Sun” of the Turkish Armed Forces to Northern Iraq in the beginning of 2008 (Jenkins 2007; Hürriyet 2008). In October 2008, another bloody attack on the border military post near Aktütün executed by PKK is considered as “the trigger” causing Turkey to acknowledge that dealing with PKK was not possible without help of Iraqi Kurds (Tavernise 2008). Thus, since 2008 and on we see major policy shift regarding stance towards the KRG. Turkey started to diversify its relations and the event marks a turning to a

balanced strategy between favoring Baghdad and Erbil. Several high-level visits occurred subsequently, for example in October 2008 Ahmet Davutoğlu met Kurdish leader Barzani in Iraq, which was the first high-level visit after four years (Larrabee and Tol 2011).

Lindstrauss and Aksoy talk about further renovation of previous “Ozalian strategy”, which counted on dealing with PKK with the help of outside actors and in Turkey’s eyes Baghdad was not a viable partner for that matters anymore (Lindenstrauss and Aksoy 2012). Despite Baghdad’s continuous rhetoric promising steps against PKK, Turkey ceased to see the IFG as the partner who can help without the KRG support (Larrabee and Tol 2011). In 2010, during the historical visit in Turkey, Barzani pledged to pursue “all efforts” to stop the PKK violence (Firat News Agency 2010). The attempt to “diversify” partners to deal with PKK was not welcomed by the IFG with al-Maliki, who gradually started to see it as an unacceptable incursion into internal affairs (Cagaptay and Evans 2012). However, the main reason for worsening relations and mutually negative rhetoric between Ankara and Baghdad was the fact that “security dimension policy shifts” were followed by economic and political ones (further discussed below), which in al-Maliki’s eyes went against his interest and weakened his leverage against the KRG.

Since the second half of the year of 2010 Turkey gradually counted more on the KRG and its influence over PKK. In April 2012, Barzani stepped up its rhetoric against PKK, when he called for stopping the fighting, threatening that otherwise PKK “would bear the consequences” (Hürriyet 2012). To sum up, since 2008 we can see the signs of changing policy regarding the issue of PKK from favoring Baghdad as a viable help to relying on Erbil. This policy trend can be further observed after 2010 Iraqi elections and along with other policy changes favoring Erbil over Baghdad in the security dimension.

Turkey continuously tried to play “Barzani” card while dealing with PKK. Barzani clan regards PKK as its main rival in the pan-Kurdish discourse (International Crisis Group 2013). But it is indeed not possible for Baryani to condemn PKK openly or take direct steps against it. Kurd-on-Kurd fighting (remembering bloody civil war in 1994–1997 between Barzani and Talabani clans) is not popular and would decrease Barzani’s popular support at home. However, Barzani has been happily using Turkey’s invitation to bolster his position among both Turkish

and Syrian Kurds on the expense of PKK. For example in November 2013, Barzani for the first time visited Diyarbakır and met with Erdoğan (Candar 2013). Pro-Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) organizations are allowed to operate in Turkey and are actually supported by Turkish establishment. KRG also competes for the hearts of Syrian Kurdish refugees in Turkey, sending humanitarian aid, materials etc. and making sure “Barzani label” is promoted (Zaman 2015).

The KRG is also seen by Turks as a useful tool to manipulate Syrian Kurdish landscape currently dominated by the PKK’s franchise PYD (Democratic Union Party). There were several (so far failed) attempts to create unified Kurdish command and governance of pro-PYD actors and other Kurdish political parties tied mainly to Barzani’s KDP. Non-implemented power-sharing deal from 2012 was renewed in Dohuk in October 2014 but it is not likely to change anything about the PYD monopoly in Syria (for more details International Crisis Group 2015). Last October/November, Ankara allowed some 150–200 peshmerga to cross Turkish territory to help a besieged symbolic city of Kobane (Solomon and Dombey 2014). PYD accepted only this symbolic help and refused to host more peshmerga units, fearing it would decrease their monopoly among Syrian Kurds. PYD still keeps an upper hand in Syria, suppressing and harassing pro-KDP actors and any other opposition among Kurds in Syria since 2012 (Human Rights Watch 2014).

Since Ankara renewed attacks against PKK after more than two years of ceasefire and negotiations in July 2015, Barzani said that PKK should “withdraw” from Iraqi Kurdish territory to prevent civilian casualties (al-Jazeera 2015). Turkey repeatedly conducted air sorties on PKK safe havens in mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan. PKK also bombed oil pipeline on Turkish soil in July, carrying Barzani’s oil to Turkey and further to international markets. It was strongly condemned by KRG since such attacks led to loss of millions of dollars on revenues for Barzani (Johnson 2015). At the same time, combating ISIS since the summer of 2014 catapulted PKK’s influence on the ground in Northern Iraq. PKK deployed its forces in Sinjar area, and has militants on frontlines east of Kirkuk (International Crisis Group 2015). PKK profited with closer ties with Iran which also facilitated better relations with its Tehran’s ally – Talabani clan’s Patriotic Union of Kurdistan controlling eastern part of Iraqi Kurdistan (ibid.). Thus, for Barzani, PKK became a more acute rival to

its power, and is actually (albeit not openly) happy with Turkish crackdown. Turkey at the same time views ties with Barzani as one of the more “subtle tools”, limiting PKK’s growth in the area.

Maintaining Iraqi Unity versus Iranian Influence

The second key interest of Turkey is to maintain unity of Iraq and consequently in order to ensure this goal to promote pluralistic non-sectarian politics. In the previous period (until 2008 and more significantly until elections of 2010), there were two premises. Firstly, al-Maliki and his State of Law Coalition was an actor who could maintain Iraq united, without sectarian bias; as the man who would respect “power-sharing deals” with other groups (see e. g. International Crisis Group 2012). Secondly, the KRG and its rising power and ambitions to be independent were perceived as a possible threat to Iraqi unity by Turkey. However after elections 2010 when al-Maliki broke power-sharing deals with the other blocs (such as by Turkey supported al-Iraqiyya), the sectarian violence has been on the rise (ibid.; Sullivan 2013). Gradually, Turkey stopped believing that al-Maliki is “the only man to count on”. At the same time Turkey adopted a policy increasing contact with other actors in order to diversify its influence and find allies to balance al-Maliki’s authoritarian tendencies which promote sectarian strife (e. g. Sadr Movement, Allawi’s al-Iraqiyya, and also Kurds). The second mentioned premise – the KRG as a threat to Iraqi unity – was gradually not perceived as so imminent as al-Maliki’s sectarianism. Respective positive policy steps were made to balance the KRG against the IFG (for more see below). As the USA withdrew from Iraq in 2011, Iran’s influence in the country started to rise even more (Kane 2011).

Al-Maliki started to be treated with a more friendly approach by Iran whose interest is to keep Shiite government in a weak state to exercise its influence over it (Lindenstrauss and Aksoy 2012). Therefore, “(...) *more comprehensive cooperation with the KRG was a natural outgrowth of the intensified Sunni-Shiite rivalry given the turmoil in Syria and American withdrawal from Iraq.*” (ibid.: 52) Al-Maliki’s sectarian politics eventually led to growing outcry among the Sunnis, which culminated in a crackdown on Sunni protests camp in April 2013 in al-Hawijah (Bradley and Nabhan 2013). Following months witnessed an upsurge of violence, terrorist

attacks and eventually a full-scale resurgence of ISIS since late 2013 (see e. g. Lewis 2013; Lewis 2014). Shortly after April 2014 parliamentary elections, when ISIS forces swept through vast Sunni areas of Iraq leaving Iraqi security forces in dismay and retreating in chaos, in September 2014, al-Maliki left the post of the prime minister and the post was given to Haidar al-Abadi. Iranian influence became even stronger with deployments of al-Quds forces under the command of Qasem Souleimani and with Tehran-backed Shiite militias assuming role of de facto armed forces over disintegrated Iraqi Army (Siegel 2015; Pregent 2015). Turkey could no longer meaningfully compete with Iranian influence over Shiite politics. And thus Turkey has continued to focus on KRG, with occasional attempts to exploit Sunni affinity for example by training of Sunni militias from around Mosul which has been going on for months now (Yeni Safak 2015).

Turkish ambition in Iraq simply hit its limits and Ankara's policy shift is merely a reflection of reality on the ground. The trend of favoring Erbil over Baghdad which took shape in 2009 was only strengthened when Iran started exercising more and more influence over Iraq. Occurrence of ISIS only boosted existing trends. However, Ankara has not abandoned its interest of keeping Iraq at least nominally united, curbing Iraqi Kurdish independence bid, and preventing full-fledged chaos in Sunni areas. Turkish establishment considers ties with KRG as the best possible insurance of keeping influence in Iraq, having a secure buffer zone, ally (may it be covert) to combat PKK. KRG also exports considerable hydrocarbon riches to Turkey (currently up to 400.000 b/d) via pipeline built by Turkish investors, running solely through Kurdish territory (Johnson 2015).

Political Dimension

Compared to previous periods, Turkey within its NFP started to use various political and diplomatic tools to promote its interests in Iraq. In contrast to solely "security-only" or "military" approach, there is an extensive spectrum of tools being used, such as high level mutual visits, negotiations with various political actors within Iraq, establishment of new cooperative institutions, as well as opening new embassies (see Lindstrauss and Aksoy 2012; Cagaptay and Evans 2012). *"The most*

striking development in Turkey's policy towards Iraq was the steps taken by Ankara to end the dominance of security issues in bilateral relations." (Özcan 2010: 129) The underlying interest of Turkey is to maintain Iraqi unity and exercise its influence through various actors in order to ensure security and stability. Turkey is ready to promote democratization and power-sharing in Iraq, because it "keeps the country together", which is Turkey's interest (Davutoglu 2007).

These predicaments remain the same; however, considering internal Iraqi instability, Turkey was forced to re-evaluate the scope of its ambitions. Iran's influence has been growing stronger since 2011, fueling sectarian politics of al-Maliki's regime. Turkey did not have capacities to cope with Iranian influence over Baghdad government and thus increasingly focused on KRG. Relationship between Baghdad and Ankara (also embedded in personal enmities between Prime Ministers Erdoğan and al-Maliki) hit rock bottom in April 2012 when al-Maliki labelled Turkey as a "hostile state" (Malone 2012).

The underlying cause of continuous Baghdad's distaste for Turkey was Ankara's dealing with Barzani and backing up his ambition to export oil independently, without Baghdad's consent. Apart from that, Iran getting stronger grip over Iraqi politics, is a rival of Turkey and naturally has no desire for any kind of "special relationship" between Ankara and Baghdad. We are yet to see whether the new Prime Minister of Iraq Haidar al-Abadi will successfully rejuvenate ties with Ankara as he declares he wishes for. Indeed, since ISIS re-occurrence in summer of 2014, Iran has been even stronger with more boots on the ground in Iraq, leaving al-Abadi little room to defy its wishes.

"The Baghdad Years": 2003–2009

Development of policies towards the IFG and the KRG experiences extensive dynamics. After the Iraqi parliamentary elections of 2005, we may observe the rise of activism in political dimension towards the IFG. The period of 2005–2009 can be briefly characterized as the time of extensive and warm relations between Ankara and Baghdad. At the same time Turkey established contact with various opposition Sunni groups such as Tariq al-Hashemi's Iraqi Islamic Party. Negotiations with "all groups" within Iraq (except of the KRG) became the key principle.

President Jalal Talabani and prime minister al-Maliki were perceived as promoters of unified democratic Iraq; therefore, Turkey encouraged other opposition groups to cooperate with them. However, as al-Maliki's regime became according to other leaders more authoritarian and sectarian and not willing to share power, this idea gradually faded away, as well as al-Maliki's taste for support of those groups by Turkey (International Crisis Group 2012; Sullivan 2013).

Firstly, the main concerns (as noted above) were security ones – to obtain help to fight with PKK. However, during historical visit of Erdoğan in Baghdad in July 2008 mutual cooperation was to be much broader and with institutional grounding. Erdoğan accompanied with key ministers (foreign affairs, trade, and energy) stated desire to built bilateral cooperation institution (Cagaptay and Evans 2012). As we see nature of the meeting and its broadness brings different tools and level of engagement with the IFG than in previous years. From now on more tools and “standardization” of cooperation with Federal Government was pursued (Özcan 2010).

Fruits of this extensive effort were further bred during other visits. In October 2009 in Istanbul, there was a first ministerial meeting of *High Level Strategic Cooperation Council* (HLSCC) between Iraq and Turkey. “*The Turkish and Iraqi delegations agreed to cooperate on a wide range of issues, ranging from environmental cooperation to energy partnership. (...) One of the most remarkable decisions was to create a free trade area and form a joint commission to streamline mutual investments. (...)The need to reduce political tension brings to the fore another area of cooperation agreed at the HLSCC: combating terrorism.*” (ibid.; see also Kardas 2009) The variety of discussed topics and a wide range of mutual agreements predicted further cooperation and understanding which may lead to further bettering relation.

On the other hand, if we compare political dimension of policies towards the KRG we see a rather hesitant approach. High level visits were sporadic and if occurred they were “out of the public eye” – such as Nechirvan Barzani's visit in Ankara in February 2003 (Hürriyet 2003). However, gradually some “unofficial” channels of communication were established (e. g. through Turkish National Intelligence Organization). The previous perception of the Kurds as a threat slowly faded away as the NFP gained more confidence. Through 2009, it was evident that

the cooperation with the Kurds would soon be more extensive and would be conducted openly.

A Period of the pro-KRG Activism: 2009–2015

Despite satisfying development regarding institutionalization of political dimension of Turkey-IFG relations, the previously warm mutual relations started to deteriorate rapidly in the second period. During Iraqi parliamentary elections of 2010, Turkey supported secular, nationalist bloc al-Iraqiyya of Ayad Allawi. Al-Iraqiyya won elections, however, al-Maliki remained after nine months of negotiations in his prime ministerial position in exchange for power-sharing deals with opposition leaders (Barkey 2011). Besides contacts with Sunni groups, several visits and attempts to cooperate with other Shiite leaders occurred, such as with Ammar al-Hakim, or Muqtada as-Sadr, which was perceived as a rather hostile act by al-Maliki since those actors represented his opposition (Yegin and Özertem 2013). However, as Cagaptay and Evans point out, al-Maliki's deal was perceived as a setback for Turkey and Sunni allies, while Iran considers it "a victory of its interest" (Cagaptay and Evans 2012). As of March 2011, Erdoğan made his trip to Baghdad to promote Turkey's commitment to pursue non-sectarian stable Iraq (ibid.). Since 2010, al-Maliki's politics became more authoritarian and started to break power-sharing deals, which fueled sectarian enmity between Sunnis and Shiites.

Nuri al-Maliki was ousted from prime ministerial position in August 2014, and Haidar al-Abadi assumed his office. Al-Abadi is considered as more moderate and trying to balance more carefully its relationship with Iran and Turkey (Jafari 2014). Ankara immediately tried to exploit al-Abadi's attempts to limit (Iran-backed) Shiite militias influence and Iranian influence in general. Al-Abadi visited Ankara and met with the new Turkish foreign minister Mevlut Çavuşoğlu in November 2014. Çavuşoğlu said: "*When Maliki was prime minister, the smallest of issues would become problematic. (...) However, now that Abadi is in charge, things have changed.*" (ibid.) Al-Abadi is still trying to curb extensive Iranian influence. His latest step was a purge of high-level government officials. Among those sidelined in August 2015 was also al-Maliki who held the post of vice-president (Sridharan 2015). However, given the level

of Iranian entrenchment, al-Abadi's efforts will likely fail to change discourse in a large scale. These events clearly showed that Ankara is eager to re-build relationship with Baghdad government if the conditions become more favorable.

Turkey's priority remained support for the unity and stability of Iraq, being in contact with all groups. However, the sudden continuous "meddling" against al-Maliki's interest harshly deteriorated mutual relations. In December of 2011, al-Maliki stated that Turkey was unacceptably meddling into Iraqi affairs, and in April of 2012 Turkey was labeled as a "hostile state" by al-Maliki (Hürriyet Daily News 2011; Malone 2012). Relations continued to further deteriorate, high level visits ceased. Hostile relations between al-Maliki and Ankara continued. Al-Maliki continuously criticized Ankara's engagements with Erbil especially with regards to exporting its hydrocarbon riches through Turkey which Baghdad considered unconstitutional since it occurred without its consent (for more details see chapter on Economic dimension). For example, in January 2014, al-Maliki said that "*The Iraqi government holds Turkey legally responsible on this subject, and reserves the right to demand resultant losses.*" (Hürriyet Daily News 2014).

On the other hand, relations with the KRG remarkably blossomed and strengthened in (not only) political dimension. The first evident clue about bettering relations and their openness was a raising number of high level visits by Turkish officials to Iraqi Kurdistan (see Cagaptay and Evans 2012). Kurdish leaders were subsequently often invited to come to Turkey. In March 2011, Erdoğan became the first Turkey's Prime Minister to visit Erbil during his Iraqi trip. Mutual visits continued, however, as relations with al-Maliki deteriorated and Turkey disliked his tendency to monopolize its power, they were made without stopping in Baghdad (which is against protocol). That basically meant that Turkey started to consider Iraqi Kurdistan as a partner who has the right to negotiate without Baghdad's consent. For example in August 2012, Davutoğlu surprisingly visited the disputed city of Kirkuk, without notifying Baghdad (Today's Zaman 2012). Warm relations and exchange of visits continued, for example, Massoud Barzani visited during a high-profile visit the symbolic Kurdish city of Diyarbakır in November 2013 (Candar 2013).

While contact with the KRG started as a part of “being in touch with all groups in Iraq”, it little by little transformed into a tool of exercising pressure over al-Maliki, gaining upper hand in Iraq and creating a buffer against Iran. Through May 2012, Barzani stated that they view Turkey as “strategic partner”, not just a “neighbor” (Bozkurt 2012). Another “boost” of the KRG-Turkey mutually beneficial relation was given by deteriorating KRG-IFG relations, especially relating to negotiations about oil and gas revenues sharing (see below). Turkey started to view the KRG as a fully viable and indispensable partner in the region and in Iraq. It lost previous “inherent suspicion” and accepted the KRG as another tool for fulfilling its strategic goals, particularly useful considering current unstable situation in Iraqi Federal politics and the whole region (especially regarding curbing pan-Kurdish ambitions of PKK).

Economic Dimension

Economy and trade are considered as one of the main tools of the NFP (Kutlay 2011; Lindenstrauss and Aksoy 2012). We may consider gradual rise of trade with various neighbors and other Middle Eastern countries as the first announcer of the NFP, since trade rose rapidly in 2000s along with the “Strategy of Trade with Neighboring Countries” adopted in 2001 (Özcan 2011; Onis 2011). Trade with Iraq rose from less than 3 billion in 2007 to almost 12 billion dollars in 2013 (TUIK 2015). For example in 2009 there was 30 % rise of export to Iraq compared to the previous year (Kutlay 2011).

As relations with the IFG were moving in a positive direction in 2007–2013, mutual trade, cooperation and investments rapidly grew hand in hand with Turkish economic boom. Commercial tool of the NFP was at that time corresponding with the development within security and political dimensions. On the other hand, investments in Iraqi Kurdistan were sporadic before 2008, since relations were not warm. Gradually Turkey realized that creating economical interdependency was not solely against its interest and gave up an attitude “by not trading with them, we will starve them to death” (International Crisis Group 2008).

As the policy towards Erbil changed there was a rise of investments in strategic sectors, such as construction, oil exploration, banking etc.; also a common trade forum was established (Özcan 2010). “According

to Kurdish officials, Turkey is the KRG's main business partner—trade volume is \$7.7 billion, and 80 percent of Kurdish consumer imports come from Turkey. (...) The economic relationship has taken a sharp upward turn since 2010, when an estimated 730 Turkish firms were operating in northern Iraq. By April 2012, KRG trade minister Sinan Celebi counted 1,023 such firms, more than from any other country.” (Cagaptay and Evans 2012: 10) In 2014, the trend continued (albeit not with such an upward tendency) with Turkish export to Iraqi Kurdistan reaching around 8 billion dollars (E-Kurd 2014).

In the second period (2009–2015) of worsening relations with Baghdad, we do not see major reflection in trade patterns. Although trade patterns with the KRG further rose, trade relations with the IFG in fact did not deteriorate as one would expect. It can be explained by the sense of pragmatism in the NFP and its support by various actors in Turkey who have their material interests in Iraq. *“Not only bureaucrats, but diplomats and businessmen have increasingly played a role in Turkish foreign policy towards Iraq.”* (Özcan 2011: 89) However, we may observe some efforts of the IFG to damage Turkey's commercial interest by cancelling oil exploration deals, or revoking operating licenses (Yegin and Özertem 2013; Hürriyet Daily News 2012). But it is unlikely that the IFG would further try to directly damage Turkey's investments – the IFG needs them and it might also discourage other foreign investors. Moreover, new Iraqi prime minister al-Abadi agreed with prime minister Davutoğlu in November 2014 on boost of the trade relations (Hussein 2014). Currently, out of 12 billion dollar worth exports to Iraq, 8 billion go to Iraqi Kurdistan, while only 4 billion account for trade with the IFG (ibid.). Considering the security situation on the IFG-controlled territory, it is unlikely that trade volumes will rise dramatically, but al-Abadi's stance towards Turkey is certainly more favorable than the one of al-Maliki.

Kurdish Oil as a Source of Friction

Energy sector is an area where we can observe extensive dynamics of relations between Turkey, the IFG and the KRG. Turkey vastly invested into renovation of oil fields and explorations in southern Iraq during first period of 2003–2009 (International Crisis Group 2008; Cagaptay and Evans 2012). Other large contracts and licenses for Turkish firms

were granted with promises of further investments as well. However, internal Iraqi dynamics struck this mutually beneficial relation. The KRG is during the second period 2009–2013 in a serious dispute about sharing oil export revenues with Baghdad: “(...) *due to a dispute regarding payments between Baghdad and Erbil, oil exports from the KRG were suspended in the summer of 2012. At the same time, Turkey has begun to trade with Erbil, with trucks carrying Kurdish oil to Turkish ports in return for refined oil from Turkey.*” (Yegin and Özertem 2013: 2) In the meantime, Turkey started to invest into oil explorations within Iraqi Kurdistan and signed several deals with the IFG. On the other side, “(...) *the KRG has been looking at Turkey as an alternative to Baghdad for its energy exports.*” (Cagaptay and Evans 2012: 12) This was not welcomed by al-Maliki and he strongly protested against incursion in strategic energy sector. Baghdad saw independent exports of Kurdish oil as a threat to its unity since other oil-rich provinces (especially Sunni ones) may exploit it as a precedent to pursue similar ventures. Dispute ended with Baghdad ceasing promised deals about explorations and investments for Turkish companies in Baghdad-controlled oil fields (e. g. Hürriyet 2012).

Turkey is in energy sector “in the middle” and has a rather disadvantageous position. While it is useful for the KRG to diversify its oil exports, because it is making them less dependent on Iraqi consumption, Turkey lost considerable contracts and position in the rest of the country. “*As long as the political basis of the Turkey-KRG relationship remains solid, any effort by Baghdad to rein in Erbil’s oil ambitions will run into a wall of Turkish resistance.*” (Cagaptay and Evans 2012: 13) Therefore, at the same time Turkey’s rising interest in energy sector within Iraqi Kurdistan is in fact a safety for Erbil against further pressure from Baghdad. Explanation why the IFG uses this sector to put pressure on Turkey lies in the fact that they can diversify their exports to Iran, Lebanon, Syria etc., and also easily lure another foreign investors in energy sector, rather than in other economic sectors.

As the dispute between Erbil and Baghdad over independent Kurdish oil exports went on, Turkish companies (as well as international ones) invested into Iraqi Kurdish oil fields. It is estimated that besides 4 billion barrels of oil, Erbil possesses 45 billion of unproven reserves, as well as up to 35–35 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves (Paasche and Mansurberg 2014). Since summer of 2009, Baghdad has been arguing that Erbil cannot

award contracts to oil companies without federal consent. It has further objected to independent exports, arguing oil riches of Iraq should be, according to the constitution, redistributed on the federal level from a joint pool. In 2013, Turkish companies eventually build a brand new Kurdish pipeline that would bypass existing federal Kirkuk-Yumurtalik pipeline to Turkey. Previously, Kurds were sending usually around 100.000 b/d through Kirkuk-Yumurtalik pipeline since late 2009 (Kardas 2009). Additionally, Erbil was also officially selling oil to Turkey via trucks next to traditionally blooming smuggling – in 2013, reportedly some 20.000 b/d to (Pamuk 2013).

A new “independent” Kurdish pipeline started to operate in the beginning of 2014, currently sending around 400.000 b/d of Kurdish oil to Turkey (U. S. International Energy Administration 2015). The latest attempt to reach a deal between Baghdad and Erbil occurred in December 2014. Parties firstly agreed that Kurds would hand over 550.000 barrels of oil to Iraqi state oil company each day. In exchange, they would receive 17 % from national budget (Salih 2015a). The deal, however, was only partially upheld by both sides while KRG does not sell enough oil through Iraqi state company and Baghdad does not fulfill its budgetary commitments either (Salih 2015b).

While Baghdad may still be complaining about Turkey buying Kurdish oil without its consent, it is now in a worse position since the old federal Kirkuk-Yumurtalik pipeline does not run as it is on the ISIS-held territory. Kurds, on the other hand, try hard to sell as much oil as possible to fill in its gaps in budget. At the same time, KRG struggles to push ISIS from oil-rich areas, such as disputed Kirkuk to extract oil there and eventually entrench its presence there so Baghdad cannot move in (e. g. Saadulah 2015). For Turkey, it is indeed a favorable situation.

Concluding Remarks: Turkish Ambition Hits Regional Realities

Turkey’s foreign policy towards Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan experienced extensive changes in 2003–2015. AKP governments were gradually leaving previous “security-based” and rather isolationist approach of the previous establishment. The New Foreign Policy of Turkey increasingly pursued after 2007 was an ambitious project that included various dimensions ranging from security, political to economic.

We can divide examined time into two overlapping periods (2003–2009 and 2009–2015). The first period marks pursuing policies in security, political and economic dimension towards the IFG and gradually creating patterns of cooperation even with institutional backing (High Level Strategic Cooperation Council). At the same time, relations with the KRG were still rather cold and cooperation with Kurds was viewed as a potential threat to stability of Iraq and security in the region. Barzani's KRG was largely viewed with an "inherent suspicion". However, gradually, contact and cooperation with the KRG was established, firstly covertly and since 2009 more openly. The second period 2009–2013, on the other hand, marks favoring the KRG over Baghdad, while relations with Baghdad and policies froze and rhetoric became hostile.

The core interests of Turkey remain the same – to seek an ally to curb PKK's ambition, seek profit and markets, ensure supply of hydrocarbon resources, and ultimately to ensure at least nominal Iraqi unity.

Hesitant approach towards the KRG can be explained by continuous preservation of traditional position towards Iraqi Kurds – they were considered as a threat both for Turkey and for Iraq. Having good relations and cooperative institutions with al-Maliki's government along with encouraging other groups seemed as a good strategy. In further years (2008/9), also in the light of insufficient steps against PKK, we see a tendency to include the KRG as well.

Proposed and pursued balanced strategy of diversification and balance of relations between the IFG and the KRG worked in "intermezzo" of 2009. However, at that time, another "source of dynamics" struck Turkey's efforts – the domestic changes in Iraq. After 2010, al-Maliki proved to be increasingly unwilling to uphold his part of the bargain between Shiites and Sunnis. Another aspect is rising Iranian influence, even more apparent with American withdrawal in 2011. When Baghdad started to lose control of Sunni territories in 2013 (and finally lost it in summer of 2014 to ISIS), it was a further invitation for Iran to entrench its control over Baghdad, especially through deployment of its security forces. Ankara's capacities to secure good and profitable relationship with Baghdad were thus severely limited since Iran is Turkey's rival.

Al-Maliki's government was also seeing Ankara's ties with Barzani as a threat to its national unity, while facilitating independent Kurdish oil exports. Turkey, on the other hand, needed hydrocarbon resources

for its blooming economy. Al-Maliki finally declared Turkey a “hostile state” in April 2012 marking rock bottom of mutual relations (Malone 2012). Ankara’s and Erbil’s interests have also significantly overlapped after 2012. Their common enemy, PKK and its Syrian franchise PYD earned prominent position, threatening its traditional rival in the pan-Kurdish discourse – Barzani. After ISIS occurrence in 2014, PKK also managed to control more territory in Northern Iraq (namely Sinjar) on the expense of Barzani’s peshmerga.

Ankara’s desire to keep close ties with Baghdad and support Iraqi unity, fearing partition would further strengthen Iranian power in the region, which is still apparent. After al-Maliki was ousted in August 2014, new prime minister Haidar al-Abadi and Ankara immediately started to repair its relations. It is, however, disputable up to which extent can al-Abadi defy Iran on this matter.

Rapid worsening of political, security and partially also economic dimension of relations appeared between Turkey and the IFG. But we experience rather lively rise of cooperation with the Kurds. From one point of the view, it can be interpreted as an attempt to have at least some “upper hand in Iraq”, securing a buffer against Iranian influence etc., while rather ambitious balancing strategy of being between Baghdad and Erbil failed. From this point of view, it seems that Turkey “bit too big chunk to swallow” with its pro-active and rapid hard-to-balance policies towards various actors in Iraq. As Onis states: *“Over-assertiveness and over-confidence in international affairs can have significant pay-offs in short term but can also be detrimental to national interest and to lead to isolation in the long term.”* (Onis 2011: 62)

On the other hand, extensive and relative rapid success of fulfilling newly articulated complex NFP policy goals and its wide range of tools is remarkable and definitely shows Turkey’s potential in the future. Moreover, there is no change of Turkey’s core interests in Iraq. Their pursuit is only bumping into various obstacles: *“The Arab Spring has forced Turkey to countenance alternatives to Baghdad, but its core policy continues to value a stable and strong Iraqi authority. Neither the personal rancor between Erdoğan and Maliki nor Ankara’s fear of Shiite ascendance in Baghdad has changed this fundamental belief.”* (Cagaptay and Evans 2012: 10)

List of Abbreviations

- AKP – Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)
 FM – Foreign Minister
 HLSCC – High Level Strategic Cooperation Council
 IFG – Iraqi Federal Government
 ISIS – Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham
 KDP – Kurdistan Democratic Party
 KRG – Kurdistan Regional Government
 NFP – The New Foreign Policy
 PKK – Kurdistan Workers’ Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan)
 PM – Prime Minister
 PYD – Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat)
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IRAN'S POLICY TOWARDS IRAQ AND TOWARDS AFGHANISTAN IN THE PRE-ISLAMIC STATE PERIOD

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Abstract: This paper deals with Iran's foreign policy towards Iraq and towards Afghanistan in the pre-Islamic State period. Author analyses Iran-Iraq relations, Iran-Afghanistan relations and she compares Iran's policy towards Iraq and towards Afghanistan. Causes, goals, contents, and actors of these relations are researched.

Keywords: Iran; Afghanistan; Iraq; foreign policy; pre-Islamic State period

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Introduction

The US invasion in Afghanistan in 2001 and its invasion to Iraq in 2003 represent very significant turning points in Iran's foreign policy. Two hostile regimes of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein were overthrown. But, on the other hand, there has been a significant involvement of the US, Iran's declared enemy, and influence on the Iranian immediate borders. Therefore, Iran must carefully contemplate the policy towards its two neighbors. Given Iran's strategic position, cultural ties and political ambitions, the country can't allow abandoning neither Iraq, nor Afghanistan. It is interesting and beneficial to analyze the policy of Iran towards the two countries.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the Iran's policy towards Iraq and towards Afghanistan, to compare them, to identify main common and different features and to set them into a broader regional and

geopolitical framework. Importantly, the author will focus solely on the post-invasion period, which means that the Iranian foreign policy towards Afghanistan will be analyzed from 2001 onwards and towards Iraq from 2003 onwards. Furthermore, the text provides an analysis of the period before withdrawal of coalition forces from Afghanistan at the end of 2014 and the US troops from Iraq at the end of 2011. Also, the text doesn't address the contemporary regional dynamics after the declaration of a self-styled caliphate of the Islamic State, that served Iran as a vehicle for expansion of its influence across the region, and, specifically, in both Afghanistan and, mainly, Iraq.

The paper will be divided into several chapters. The first three chapters will be dedicated to the brief overview of Iran's foreign policy in general and the overview of Iran-Iraq and Iran-Afghanistan relations, respectively. The author will focus on the main and most significant features. The pivotal chapter of the paper, addressing the issue of comparison of Iran's policy towards Iraq and towards Afghanistan during the era of heavy international/US presence in the countries at hand will follow. It will have three sub-chapters, based on the elements of this comparison laid down by the author. These are causes and goals, contents and dynamics, and main actors of the two policies. In conclusions, the comparison will be evaluated and its results will be set into a broader framework.

As for methodology of the paper, the actor-specific theory, which explains the behavior of specific actors, allowing richer explanation and even prediction of the foreign policy behavior of particular entities than actor-general theory, which explains the behavior of actor in general, e.g. game theory (Hudson 2005), will be applied. The design of this paper is a comparative analysis, using descriptive, analytical and mainly comparative methods. Moreover, in the last chapter about the perspectives of the two policies, the author will work with a scenario planning method.

As for sources used in the paper, there are plenty of electronic sources available, however, none of these deals with the issue at hand specifically. The sources mostly address either Iran's policy in general, or towards Iraq or towards Afghanistan individually. Nonetheless, there are only few secondary and primary sources to this topic, such as e.g. official documents, agreements etc.

Overview of Iran's foreign policy

Iran's foreign policy is set by the Supreme National Security Council (Shoraye Aliye Amniate Melli). The primary aim of this institution is the revision of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (as it did in 1989), its aim is also to watch over the Islamic Revolution and safeguard the Iran's national interests as well as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country (Iran Online 1996). There are three defined responsibilities of the Council by the Constitution: 1. determining the national defense/security policies within the framework of general policies laid down by the Supreme Leader; 2. coordination of activities in the areas relating to politics, intelligence, social, cultural and economic fields in regard to general defense and security policies; and 3. exploitation of materialistic and intellectual/non-material resources of the country for facing the internal and external threats (International Constitutional Law Project Information 2010). The members of the Council are: heads of the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary branches, Chief of the Supreme Command Council of the Armed Forces, the official in charge of the Plan and Budget Organization, two representatives nominated by the Leader, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of the Interior, and Minister of Information¹, a minister concerned with the subject, and the highest authorities of the Army and the Islamic Revolution's Guards Corps (Iran Online 1996). Iran's Supreme Leader has final say over all SNSC decisions. The President has some influence over foreign policy—he appoints the cabinet and the head of the SNSC—but power remains mostly in the hands of the SNSC and the Supreme Leader.

A contemporary course of Iranian foreign policy started with 1979 Islamic Revolution. A close analysis of Iran's actions in the region shows that in the post-Khomeini era, Iran has shifted its policies to securing the revolution within its borders rather than exporting it. Actually, the ideology of Iran's leaders has little security implications² and the foreign

¹ It supervises Iranian intelligence efforts.

² Bigger influence of ideological factors can be seen in the Levant seeing a partnership forming between local armed non-state actors and Iran, such as in case of Hezbollah or Hamas.

policy of Iran is driven more by geopolitics. Basically, Iranian foreign policy is strategic and pragmatic and rather defensive, it's based on the aim of achieving strategic goals (Saarinen 2010). More pragmatism in Iran's foreign policy is strongly presented in order to better counter expanding US and Saudi Arabia's influence in the region of Iran's interest. Iran looks towards cooperation with neighbors, with other nearby and Muslim states. Facing sectarian conflict and fragile states outside its borders, Iran's domestic characteristics, its ethnic politics and cultural-religious identity, and its national security have become inextricably tied to that of the region. This security interdependence was reinforced with the invasion of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) and the post-invasion dynamics and landscape. (Ibid)

The former vice foreign minister Abbas Maleki elaborated a concept of "Sub-Regions of Iran", distinguished by the level of its strategic significance and prioritized by the Iran's interests in them. These are Middle East, Persian Gulf, South West Asia, Central Asia, Caucasus, and Afghanistan, and Caspian Basin. Naturally, the highest priority the Middle East and Persian Gulf possess, the middle priority was given to the sub-region of Central Asia³ (Wilde 2009: 12). After the break-up of the Soviet Union, Iran has started to pursue more balanced regional policy than even before, nowadays the country looks more in the eastern direction that it did, while the western direction still remains very important (Afrasiabi, Maleki 2003). In relation to this, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran: 4 groups of countries are ranked in preference: 1. Iran's neighbors; 2. Muslim countries; 3. Third World countries; and 4. countries that furnish political, economic, social and/or military needs of Iran (Maleki 2009). Basically, Iran seeks emancipation from foreign influence.

Hence, regionalism is a very strong feature of Iranian foreign policy. One of the constant themes of Iranian statements on regionalism has been self-reliance among regional states and the exclusion of extra-

³ As for relevance to this final paper, Central Asia's sub-region includes Afghanistan, whereas the two sub-regions with the highest priority include Iraq.

regional powers (to wit the United States). Based on new realities after the break-up of the Soviet Union, Iranian leaders have concluded that Iran's only viable approach in international relations is to become the indispensable regional player in the West Asia (Maleki 2009). The Constitution of the Islamic Republic makes Iran's preferences in foreign policy clear. So far, Iran's response in foreign relations has mainly focused on 3 levels: 1. consolidating Iran's regional position and relations in the Middle East; 2. deepening the relations with the European Union as a leverage against potential future US domination in the region; and 3. seeking a new strategic relationship with Asian countries (Maleki 2006).

As stated above, Iran as an emerging economic and technological power has the potential to play a leading or pivotal role in a number of regional configurations – Persian Gulf, Central Asia, and the Caspian Basin.

Iran perceived conservative Sunni Saudi Arabia⁴ and Arab countries in general, Israel,⁵ the United States and partly Sunni Islam as such to be its main rivals.⁶ Undoubtedly, Iranian foreign policy is also heavily influenced with the US policy of „Axis of Evil“, within which the US seeks to internationally isolate Iran.

Iran's traditional sphere of influence is the Middle East. The foreign policy in Iran towards this sub-region is more heavily influenced with ideological factors. It includes Iraq, which Iran generally perceives as a country with US high influences. The strategic rationale behind Iran's regional policy vis-à-vis the Levant has been to increase its Islamic credentials, to compete with Saudi Arabia (mainly over Lebanon), and to maintain an irregular capacity to challenge Israel and America through supporting Hezbollah, and to a lesser extent, Hamas. Nevertheless, after the break-up of the Soviet Union, Iran has started to focus more on eastern direction as well. Iran's position in the Central Asia is that its policy is based not on ideology, but on trade and cultural links between

⁴ Iran and Saudi Arabia compete for obtaining the status of regional power.

⁵ Strong hostility towards Israel is backed with Iran's support for Hamas and Hezbollah.

⁶ As for hostility of Iran towards Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, both are perceived as the US' henchmen in the region.

it and the republics. Iran's policy in the region is one of economic pragmatism and positive political engagement. Iran maintains high strategic interests in this sub-region too, which widens Iran's opportunities. Important are trade and investment, protecting open access to energy supplies, escaping the international isolation. Iran avoids any possibility of collision of interests with the countries of the region. However, despite of all potential for cooperation, it has to be noted that Iran in no way is a dominant player in the region. Afghanistan, considered as an US satellite by Iran, is in this sub-region included. Indeed, even the overall Iranian leadership's perceptions of Iraq and Afghanistan differ from each other.

Iran-Iraq relations

As for the overview of the relations between Iran and Iraq, this chapter will provide a brief, fleeting draft of the given relationship from 1979 (the Islamic revolution in Iran) onwards.

Iraq waged a cruel war with Iran in the period 1980–1988. Generally, the two countries were enemies to each other for a long period. After the era of mutual hostilities, the fall of Saddam Hussein and his regime in 2003, as a result of the US invasion to Iraq, caused rapid, visible improvement in bilateral Iran-Iraq relations.

Iran played an important role in Iraq's post-war reconstruction and enjoys good ties with several Iraqi politicians and officials, including President Jalal Talabani and Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki nowadays. Several Shiite political parties in Iraq maintain close ties with Iranian leadership. Particularly, these are Al Dawa, ISCI, and the Sadrists. Exchanges of high level visits between Iran's and Iraq's politicians and army officials are common (Barzegar 2008).

There has been an improvement also in religious affairs – visits of Shiite shrines and sacred places in both countries. There are significant economic and security agreements and cooperation agreements. The number is more than 100, actually. Very significant feature of the given bilateral relationship is trade, especially in the fields of construction, and food and industrial sectors (Ibid).

But there are some disputing issues as well. First of all there is an issue of war reparations⁷, then the 1975 Algiers Treaty⁸. Very strong feature of Iran-Iraq relationship is represented by disagreements over the exact position of the Iran-Iraq border and, importantly, the existence of Camp Ashraf, the seat of the People's Mujahedin of Iran⁹ in Iraq, but recent reports have suggested several assaults or raids of Iraqi forces on this camp and arrests of some members of the group, so the question of the reason of improving relations with Iran has been raised.

Iran-Afghanistan relations

The brief overview of main aspects of Iran-Afghanistan relations will be examined from 1979 onwards. Afghanistan and Iran are historically tied to the greater sphere of Persian civilization. The ties between Iran and Afghanistan are significant especially since before the Islamic Revolution (1979). These ties are based on the depth of language, ethnicity and cultural links.

Iran has ever supported Shiite minority in Afghanistan (especially Hazaras) and after the Taliban's massacre of eight Iranian diplomats and journalists by the Taliban in 1998, Iran started to support even the Northern Alliance – major rival of the Taliban. At first, Iran favored Afghan groups that were politically and ideologically committed to the

⁷ The official UN estimate for 1980–1988 war reparations is \$149 billion, but Iran suggest an informal estimate of direct and indirect effects of the war reaching \$1 trillion (Barzegar 2008: 49).

⁸ Also known as the Algiers Accord or the Algiers Declaration an arrangement between Iran and Iraq to settle their border disputes over Shat al-Arab waterway (or Arvand Rud) and the Khuzestan (Mideast Web).

⁹ The People's Mujahedin of Iran (also known as *Mujahadeen-e-Khalq*) is the largest and most militant group opposed to the Islamic Republic of Iran. It was founded in 1963 and its ideology is a blend of Marxism, feminism, and Islamism. The group currently seeks to overthrow the Iranian theocracy and install a democratic government. Its armed unit operated from camps in Iraq near the Iran border since 1986. The group maintained its headquarters in Iraq until the American invasion in 2003 when many members surrendered their weapons. Until 2003 the MEK received funds, arms, and state sponsorship from Saddam Hussein. The group is considered as a terrorist organization. (Fletcher 2008)

principles of the Islamic Revolution. Later on, Iran extended the scale of groups it supported – the qualitative shift in Iran’s policy towards Afghanistan was due to serious concerns about the increasing influence of Saudi Arabia and the US on the Afghan Mujahideen in 80s (Wilde 2009: 17–19; 26).

The ties between the two countries are steadily improving in economic, security, cultural, trade and other spheres. Interestingly, since the US partly depended on Iran’s good will for stabilizing and establishing a new order in Afghanistan, both sides entered into a tacit agreement on limited cooperation (Ibid: 27).

There are some disputing or even rather burning issues in Iran-Afghanistan relations too. There still exists an unresolved water dispute of Helmand River. Important issues in this relationship are also Afghan refugees in Iran and repatriation of many Afghan asylum seekers and the issue of drug-trafficking, where Iran plays mainly a role of transit country. (Ibid: 11–38)

Iran is also one of the major actors in efforts to rebuild the country.¹⁰ Iran and Afghanistan enjoy a great economic and trade cooperation. Iran significantly helps reviving of Afghanistan’s economy and infrastructure¹¹ in particular (Ibid: 28). The true is that Iran is the fourth largest investor in Afghanistan. Main fields of Iran’s involvement in reconstruction activities in Afghanistan are construction of roads and bridges, energy, agriculture and health care (Ibid: 28–30). Basically, Afghanistan provides new markets for export products, transit routes, industrial and irrigation projects as well as the exploitation of natural resources (Ibid: 29).

Cultural cooperation between Iran and Afghanistan is significant as well.

Importantly, Iran and Afghanistan maintain close mutual security cooperation. The two countries cooperate in counter-narcotics operations, organize joint military exercises and alike.

¹⁰ Iran is one of the most generous donors in Afghanistan and contributed more than 650 million dollars to the reconstruction process (Reissner 2007: 17–19). The role as generous donor in Afghanistan reflects Iran’s own vision of freeing itself from the image as third world country, setting new standards as an industrial power and a development model for the entire region (Wilde 2009: 29).

¹¹ Especially reconstruction of highways.

Comparison of Iran's policy towards Iraq and towards Afghanistan

The main part of this paper is the comparison of Iran's policy towards Iraq with its policy towards Afghanistan during the occupational era of the two countries. There are three main groups that pose basic elements of the given comparison. These are causes and goals, content and dynamics, and the main actors involved in the two Iranian policies.

It is necessary to highlight, that these two policies of Iran aren't codified anyhow, there is no explicit document introducing the very form of neither Iran's policy towards Iraq, nor Iran's policy towards Afghanistan. Further, there are plenty of features of the two policies, so the author of this final paper is going to pick up, analyze and compare just the most important and most significant ones.

Causes and goals

The causes of the two foreign policies of Iran are similar in the vast majority – there is direct presence of US forces on Iran's immediate borders, coupled with the possibility of new US military bases there, which potentially would serve as bases for the possible US attack on Iran. Iranian efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan are not driven by the efforts of exporting the Islamic revolution. On the contrary, the two policies are based on maintaining Iran's strategic interests and achieving strategic goals. Iran seeks to hamper the part of the US strategy of encircling and isolating it. The true is that in relation to Iraq, the Iran's policy is more heavily influenced by ideological factors that it's towards Afghanistan. It's due to the fact, the Iraq is one country within the traditional sphere of Iranian interest, whereby Afghanistan is included in the Central Asian sub-region where Iran needs to pursue more pragmatic policy, with regard to great economic opportunities in the given sub-region. The cultural ties are strong with this sub-region, much stronger than with the sub-region of the Middle East. Actually, the given Iran's policies are heavily affected and influence by broader geopolitical changes and shifting of the overall security-political environment in the region, especially since the two US invasions in 2001 and 2003, but more recently there is the potential effects of the rebellions in the Middle Eastern

countries as well as the targeting-raid and killing of Osama bin Laden. Persisting issues of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the arch-rivalry between Pakistan and India do not have more significant effects on the two Iranian policies. On the contrary, the rise of China and developing economic and trade markets in Asia as well as energy supplies' transfer opportunities do have effects.

The cultural and especially religious ties are very important features of the two Iran's policies, when there are Shiite majority of the population in Iraq and Shiite minority in Afghanistan. In both countries, establishing a friendly, stable government with the capacity to impose and maintain order (albeit too weak to challenge Iran's hegemonic aspirations) has been and is Iran's main objective. In the case of Iraq, the government shall be preferably Shiite, in Afghanistan there shall be at least a representative portion of political power-sharing for Afghan Shiite minority. Very importantly, Iran seeks to counterweight anti-Iranian, pro-Saudi, pro-Pakistani¹² and pro-American elements and influence. Preventing both Iraq and Afghanistan from being used as a platform for attacks by Iranian opposition groups are significant aspects as well. Moreover, basically, the chaotic situation in Iraq and also in Afghanistan gives Iran leverages its hand in order to regain Iran's strength.

Moreover, in the case of Afghanistan, burning issues of a high number of Afghan refugees in Iran and the question of their repatriation and also reducing the flow of Afghan drugs exported to, or transported via, Iran. Moreover, Iran aims to use Afghanistan in its regional network as a strategic bridge-head to gain access to the new markets in Eastern Asia.

¹² The rivalry with Pakistan is deep-seated and explains, in part, Iran's nuclear program. Although Pakistan and Iran are bound by cultural, tribal, and religious bonds, Pakistan's cooperation with Saudi Arabia, which along with the US bankrolled Pakistani military programs, does not fit with Iran's policy. The questions of Shia minority in Pakistan as well as the living idea of Balochistan are very strong features of the given relationship. Moreover, there is little common ground between Iran and Pakistan on a solution to the Afghan crisis, and history may repeat itself with both states once again funding proxy wars between Shiites and Sunnis in each other's countries as well as in Afghanistan, increasing the likelihood of a major sectarian explosion in the region (Pant 2009).

Contents and dynamics

To achieve its objectives in Iraq, Iran follows a dual strategy – Iran’s main policy since 2003 has been to advance balanced relations with all Shiite factions, focusing on supporting the moderate Islamic factions such as the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq and Al Dawa at the level of Iraqi governing elites. It’s due to the efforts of strengthening Iran-influenced Shia political parties in Iraq’s power-sharing and political system. Surprisingly, Sadrist (or Moqtada al-Sadr’s movement) do not enjoy a long-term Iranian support (Barzegar 2008: 51–52). On the other hand, Iran has been and even now is backing several armed militias in Iraq, the Mahdi army and Special Groups Criminals in particular, providing them with logistics and support, weapons, engineering and explosives, tactics advisors and information operation. The presence and activities of Qods Force officers were revealed in Iraq (Felter, Fischman 2008: 55–82). Iran’s main goal in these efforts was to eliminate, or at least balance pro-Saudi and pro-Pakistani elements operating in Iraq, to counter the US and to tie down American troops in Iraq in the hopes that would delay any potential action against Iran. The level of influence of Iran in Iraq can also be measured by the fact, that it raised and lowered the violence level in Iraq by increasing or withholding weapons and supplies to Shiite militias. There are deep, personal ties between Iranian-linked militants in Iraq and Iraqi politicians¹³ (Ibid: 84). Further, in Iraq, Iran seeks cooperation, not confrontation because it opposes “the Balkanization” of Iraq. Iran fears that such fragmentation would incite secessionism and fragmentation, which would create dangerous instability in the region, open the space for Saudi Arabia’s influence, potentially get the attention of the US again and possibly threaten Iran itself (owing to the problems of Kurdistan and Balochistan which are deeply connected to Iran or any other opposing armed group operating in the country). There are also great economic, trade and energy supplies’ transfer opportunities for Iran in Iraq, particularly the reserves of high-quality oil in Iraq. Access to these reserves could markedly weaken imposed sanctions on Iran by Western states.

¹³ The most known example is Moqtada al-Sadr and his Mahdi army.

In Afghanistan, Iran focuses solely on non-military policy. Iran supports the president Karzai as well as anti-Taliban elements in Afghanistan, Shiite Hazaras and Hezb-e Wahdat party in particular. However, this support is already not of material nature (weapons, logistics...) ¹⁴, Iran provides huge donations, financial assistance and moral support to these actors. The means employed by Iran have shifted from military support of armed factions (as in 80s and 90s) to financial assistance. Iran focuses on the reconstruction activities – reconstruction of the infrastructure in the country first of all. Big issue is a repatriation of Afghan refugees settled in Iran, which Iran can use as leverage on Afghanistan's government. The burning issue of drug-trafficking is important too, Iran carries on efforts in order to eliminate the illegal drug-trade and participates in counter-narcotics operations. Its main aim is to prevent hostile Taliban to seize the power in Afghanistan again. Thereby, it is not in Iran's interest to sap US military efforts in Afghanistan against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Some aspects of Iran's Afghan policy are clearly antithetical to US interests, but the two countries do share some common objectives (Milani 2006: 255). Moreover, some reports claiming the support of Iran to the Taliban has occurred, reportedly proven by seizing arms shipments of Iranian weapons to the Taliban (BBC 2011). There were also reports of the existence of insurgents' training camps in Iran (The Sunday Times 2010). However, such Iranian activities are not much probable, because Iran has no interest in creating instability on its eastern border and the comeback of the Taliban to power – “child of rivalry Pakistan”. It would totally contradict Iran's geopolitical and regional strategy. On the other hand, the option of the support by some autonomous cell within the Islamic Revolution's Guards Corps or any individual or groups of individuals in Iran. The question is, whether there is a potential for possible armament and other material support to potential Shiite militias, which could be created in case if the Taliban's retake power in Afghanistan.

¹⁴ It is so maybe because of the history, when Iran backed several warlords in Afghanistan, who local citizens perceive as more brutal than e.g. the Taliban.

Actors

It is also important to introduce some of the main actors of the two Iran's policies and given bilateral ties.

Foreign policy of Iran results from complex, multifaceted interactions among numerous governmental and non-governmental participants. As specified by the Iranian Constitution, four major offices are responsible and most important for foreign policy of the country – these are the Supreme Leader, the President, the Head of the Expediency Council, and the Foreign Minister. The framework of Iranian foreign policy is then set by the Supreme National Security Council.

As for the competences of the four main (management) actors of Iran's foreign policy, the Supreme Leader approves or disapproves foreign policy initiatives, and his word is final in the more significant matters of foreign affairs. Some of the examples of foreign policy decisions that were directed by the Supreme Leader include Iran's stance of neutrality during the allied attack on Iraq in 1991, the nonintervention in Afghan internal affairs (even after the killing of nine Iranian diplomats in Mazar-e Sharif by the Taliban in 1998), and the support of the Palestinians in the Arab-Israeli conflict (Maleki 2002). Further, the competences of the President in Iran's foreign policy decision-making are modest – in Iran the office of presidency does not bestow full control over foreign policy, the armed forces, or the nuclear policy of the Iranian state, which are ultimately under the control of the Supreme Leader. The President has some influence over foreign policy—he appoints the cabinet and the head of the SNSC, however, the President's competences focus primarily on the social, cultural, and economic policies of the country – not foreign policy, even despite his nominal chairmanship of the National Security Council. The President does not even have control over the armed forces, the security services and the police forces (Buchta: 4). The Expediency Council designs the Grand Strategy for the Iranian regime, and proposes guidelines for foreign policy. In times when Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani served as the Head of the Expediency Council, he promoted close ties with Russia, China and India within the framework of “Asian Identity” (Maleki 2002). Foreign Minister is acting and sustaining bilateral relations with other countries (Ibid).

On Iraqi and Afghan side, there are some important personas enjoying the Iranian support. The actors in both countries are rather personalities or small groups.

In both Iraq and Afghanistan, Iran strongly supports local citizens of Shiite ethnic group, primarily Shiite political parties and powerful politicians – in Iraq these are President Talabani, Prime Minister al-Maliki, to the certain extent al-Sadr, as for Iraqi political parties, Iran's support al-Dawa party, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq or the Sadrists; in Afghanistan, these are the President Karzai and his government, Shiite Hezb-e Wahdat party, and also several (former) warlords, such as Ismail Khan, Hajji Mohammad Mohaqiq or Abdul Rashid Dostum.¹⁵ Important actors of Iran's policy towards Iraq are members of armed Shiite militias too.

Due to wide-ranging cooperation between Iran and Iraq and Iran with Afghanistan, there are many more relevant actors involved, such as government departments, business companies, cultural and religious associations, police departments, armed forces, intelligence agencies, offices of public services etc. There are also some regional or international organizations and their agencies that have some effects on Iran's policy towards Iraq and Iran's policy towards Afghanistan, such as Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries in the case of Iraq or Economic Cooperation Organization in the case of Afghanistan etc.

Conclusions

It's obvious that the basic framework of the two foreign policies is similar, however modified according to the complex of specific conditions existing in Iraq and in Afghanistan, respectively. The focus in the two Iran's policies is given to the political-security stability and to the strengthening of various economic opportunities. Iran behaves highly pragmatically in order to pursue its hegemonic ambitions and standing as a regional power and assure political and security stability on its

¹⁵ Generally, Iran provides financial assistance to the anti-Taliban elements in Afghanistan.

borders, what further enables development of economic prosperity, new markets and exploiting natural resources and supplies' transfer. All of this enables Iran to raise and strengthen its position as regional power. In Iraq, Iran pursues policy based more on ideological factors, than in Afghanistan, where it behaves in a more pragmatic and practical way, because of the primacy of economic opportunities there and failure of Iran's former ideologically influenced policy in Afghanistan.

There are also differences between the main means of pursuing the two Iran's policies – in Iraq, more, let's say, aggressive policy is seen, because Iran directly supported and trained some armed groups there and has countered the US influence in Iraq also militarily, whereas in Afghanistan, Iran focuses more on reconstruction activities and provides financial assistance above all, which is maybe due to the history of Iran's material support to the Northern Alliance before the 2001 invasion. Basically, Iran's policy towards Iraq is based on the balance of interests, whereas in Afghanistan, Iran aims to gain favor of Afghans and thus prevent Taliban to gaining power, which would strengthen Iran's rival Pakistan.

Nonetheless, the emergence of the pseudo-state entity called the Islamic State, a self-declared caliphate has change the dynamics in the entire region of the Middle East. Originating from the Islamic State's ideology, the sectarian tensions long existing between Sunni and Shia communities has sharply escalated, leading to open, and often bloody violence between the groups. Sectarian violence has been spilling over the entire region and at all levels – local, national, and regional, but it has produced some important geostrategic effects as well. Recognizing the rise of the Islamic State and, in particular, the opportunities it provided to Iran, Iran has been expanding its influence across the region. Shiite militias are one of the dominant conflict parties fighting on the ground against the Islamic State belligerents in Iraq. The Afghan Taliban has held several talks with the Iranian officials regarding the attempted Islamic State's outreach to Afghanistan. It also was one of the factors leading to the nuclear deal between Iran and the US. Changes has been set in motion across the Middle East.

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KAZAKH ISLAMIST TERRORISM: THE CHANGING GEOPOLITICS OF TERRORIST THREAT

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Abstract: This paper analyses the issue of Islamist terrorism's spread into Kazakhstan, a country where terrorist attacks of this kind are a relatively recent phenomenon. The paper explains the emergence of terrorism in Kazakhstan in the context of the development of Islam and particularly in relation to Islamist extremism in Central Asia; it focuses on the dynamics of Islamist violence in the country in the twenty-first century. The authors evaluate the consequences of terrorism's propagation into Kazakhstan and the Kazakh diaspora as it affects the overall geopolitics of Islamist terrorism.

Keywords: Kazakhstan; terrorism; Islamist extremism; geopolitics; diaspora

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Introduction

In recent years, Islamist terrorism as linked to global Jihadism has appeared in Kazakhstan, a country that has hitherto been unaffected

by this phenomenon. Kazakhstan's geopolitical position is important: it is the largest landlocked country in the world, and its territory forms the boundary between geographically defined Europe and Asia; it is also the interface between Central Asia and other Asian regions (e.g. East Asia and, through the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus). Above all, it is a frontier region of traditional Islamic civilization. Although Kazakhstan is relatively sparsely populated (around 15 million), the Kazakh diaspora also plays a certain role in the contemporary world. This is the context in which we must understand the expansion of Islamist terrorism, as representing the enlargement of the geopolitical field into a new setting. The emergence of Islamist structures can therein substantially strengthen Jihadism's position of power globally. In this article we seek to explain the dynamics and consequences of the spread of Islamist terrorism into Kazakhstan, employing the lens of the geopolitics of terrorism, which so far has tended to be focused on other countries in Central Asia. We also focus on the participation of Kazakh foreign fighters within the structures of the so-called Islamic State, as well as on the Kazakhstan government's policy countering Islamist terrorism.

Framework for geopolitical analysis of Kazakh terrorism

In this paper we view the issue of Kazakh terrorism through the prisms of the geopolitical spread of terrorism (Dasque 2013: 166) and the transnational dimension of the proliferation of terrorism. The analytical framework consists of three main dimensions:

1. The importance of an area or state for the variant of terrorism examined, or alternatively, of the ideological current that provides the background for this variant. In our study, the focus is on Sunni Islamist extremism;

2. The intensity of terrorism in the given area (the ability on the part of the terrorists to destabilise security in the area);

3. The importance and number of terrorists originating from a given area outside that area (what we could term the area's 'ability' to produce terrorists, employed elsewhere in conflicts featuring elements of terrorism).

These three dimensions can be interlinked, with the dynamics of development in one influencing the others. All three dimensions are affected by the ability on the part of the government in the relevant area

to fight terrorism and its willingness to do so. If a government is weak and the territory in question important, foreign fighters might arrive in the area. By contrast, a specific consequence of pressure exerted by a domestic government might be that fighters leave for foreign engagements.

The main research objective of this paper is to provide an evaluation of Islamist terrorism in Kazakhstan in terms of all three dimensions outlined above. One needs to bear in mind that the post-Soviet Central Asia forms a specific security complex, one that is narrowly linked with the Caucasus region and developments in the Middle East. Whereas the dynamics of the proliferation of terrorism originating in the Caucasus has already attracted scholarly attention (Winslow, Moelker, Companjen 2013), Kazakh Islamist terrorism has not yet been studied in detail.

Historical excursus into the evolution of Islam in Kazakhstan

The nomadic Central Asian Turkic ethnic groups of the Kazakhs and the Kyrgyz have never been Islamised to the same extent as the more settled Turkic Uzbeks or the Persian Tajiks. Islam was very slow to propagate among the nations of the steppes and only gained a foothold during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Islamic revival was much slower in Kazakhstan than in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The Kazakhs were not the only Muslim community in the country, however: they account for more than 63% of the population, which is also comprised of the Uzbeks, the Uyghurs and the Tatars.

Historically, the direction of Islam's propagation in Kazakhstan has varied: it appeared much sooner – by several centuries in fact – in southern parts of what is today Kazakhstan than in the centre and north. As early as the end of the tenth century, Islam spread among the settled tribes in Zhetysu and Syr-Darya. The founder of the Sufi order Yassawia, Khoja Akhmet Yassawi, who died in Turkestan in 1166 or 1167, probably made the greatest contribution to the dissemination of Islam amongst the populations of South Kazakhstan. However, further propagation of the religion was impeded by Mongol incursions. Very few Kazakhs, mostly city-dwelling merchants, truly became practising Muslims. The pastoral nomads' acquaintance with Muslim practices

was rather superficial; being self-sufficient, they lacked links with the cities in which the Islamic madrasas and mosques had been growing. The sultans and the khans were more religious, yet they generally failed to spread Islam. Even the sultans understood Islam essentially as the favouring of one god at the expense of others. Traditional religion, which prevailed until Islam was universally accepted, has been labelled tengrism or tengrianism.¹⁶ The specificities of nomadism, such as living in yurts and seasonal movement, made the celebration of Muslim holidays difficult for the Kazakhs (Edelbay 2012a: 208–218). In the eighteenth century, there were hardly any mosques and madrasas in the steppes; and those in South Kazakhstan were left in the state they had been in subsequent to the Mongol invasion of the cities. The Kazakhs did not know Arabic and lacked detailed knowledge of the Koran. Although Islam took deep roots in the cities south of the steppes, self-sufficient nomads had few contacts with Muslim centres in the north-east or the south. Thanks to this isolation, the Kazakh religious tradition preserved elements of early shamanism, animism and ancestral worship (Olcott 1995: 18–20).

The situation changed towards the close of the eighteenth century through the missionary activities of the Tatars from Kazan, on the orders of Catherine the Great.¹⁷ The Tatars had the necessary linguistic knowledge and were much better equipped than Russian orthodox missionaries to understand the culture and values of nomads. Thanks to their activities, books in the Kazakh and Tatar languages became increasingly popular and acceptance of Islam went hand-in-hand with this. Catherine had hoped that the conversion to Islam would speed up the process of pacifying the steppes and that religion would serve as a civilising force for the Kazakhs, yet it often had precisely the opposite effect (Olcott

¹⁶ Expert Saniya Edelbay defines Tengrianist shamanism (Tengri is a sky cult) as ‘the traditional religion of the nomadic Turkomen. There also existed worships of the spirit of the earth (Zher-ana) and the spirit of water (Sou-ana), as well as cults of fire and cattle.’ (Edelbay 2012a: 208–218, Edelbay 2012b).

¹⁷ Since the conquest of Kazan by Ivan the Terrible in the middle of the sixteenth century, the Tatars had been forbidden from practising Islam and constructing mosques. They also had to leave the centre of Kazan. It was Catherine the Great who once again allowed them to practise Islam openly.

1995: 46–47). Subsequently the Tsars ceased to view the conversion of the Kazakhs to Islam positively and began to see Islam as a potential rival, in terms of their subjects' loyalty; this led them to limit the construction of schools and mosques. Although not playing an important role in the political life of the Kazakh society before the Bolshevik revolution, Islam nevertheless enjoyed significant presence in daily life (Saktanova 2008). During the Soviet era, the religious situation was characterised by the weakening of Islam's position in society, due to the Bolshevik campaign against the clergy (Edelbay 2012a). The religious Muslim hierarchy was viewed as the fundamental rural buttress of the old order. Collectivisation was accompanied by a more aggressive anti-religious policy, with mosques, mekteps and madrasas closed throughout Kazakhstan. City clergy in particular were arrested; some rural clerics continued their religious activities illegally. Despite the enormous scale of the anti-religious propaganda, the sympathies of the population remained with Islam. As World War II erupted, Moscow adopted a more conciliatory policy towards religion in general and Islam in particular, especially with respect to the Kazakhs and the Central Asian Nations. In 1943, the Ecclesiastical Administration of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM) was created, which, according to Olcott, 'had the right to publish spiritual materials and train clergy under state direction. This muftiate was not powerful, with very limited rights, but its simple existence was a concession to religion and an important precedent. Nevertheless, from the conclusion of World War II until after Stalin's death, there were no further concessions, not even symbolic, to the Kazakhs and other non-European nationalities.' Olcott argues that 'Doctrinal Islam, never widely influential among the Kazakhs, had by the early 1950s almost vanished, but ritual Islam, which blended Muslim ritual with Kazakh customary practices, remained almost universal' (Olcott 1995: 196–197).

Islamic extremism in Central Asia and the most important organisations in the region

During *perestroika*, in the second half of the 1980s, a revival, politicisation and radicalisation of Islam began amongst the Muslim nations of Central Asia. The governments of these states initially supported

revivalist tendencies, assuming Islam would fill the ideological vacuum left in society by the fall of communism, even though religious activities remained fully under the oversight of the state (Cornell 2005: 583). The first clandestine schools (khufiya) were instrumental in Islamic revival; underground Islamist organisations transformed themselves into civic bodies and political parties with the aim of taking political power (Bobokhonov 2013). The start of the civil war in Tajikistan in 1992 brought about an important change to the perceptions of Islam in Central Asia, as radical Islamist armed groups fought on the side of the opposition against the old communist elite. This led to stricter controls over the political opposition in the other countries of Central Asia, especially in cases where the opposition not only had a political but also a religious character. In the 1990s, radical Islamist forces in Central Asia drew inspiration from sources other than the local moderate Sunni Islam of the Hanafi madhhab (Cornell 2005: 584). The Islamisation of Central Asian societies continued in parallel with the decline of the secular education systems, which produced poorly educated youth. In their search for a better and just life, these young citizens visited mosques, clandestine religious schools, and underground Islamist organisations, where Islamist preachers often manipulated them. These youths had gradually become an active agent in the process of contemporary Islamisation in Central Asian countries; the countries tend to lack sufficiently qualified religious authority to develop a moderate and tolerant Islam (Bobokhonov 2013). The aim of the Islamist militants in Central Asia is to re-create an idealised version of the Islamic caliphate, as they believe it had existed in the seventh century, during the life of the Prophet Muhammad. At the regional level, the majority of organisations set as their goal the establishment of a Turkestan caliphate, which would unite all the nations of Central Asia under the roof of one Islamist political system. The new generation of Central Asian militant Islamists cultivates good relations with the Taliban and remains within the territories of Afghanistan or Pakistan (more recently also in Syria, however thus far not permanently). The Taliban and other groups are also important in terms of funding, a fundamental source of which is the illegal drug trade (Turgelov 2013).

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)

The roots of the IMU reach back to the 1990s, when in the city of Namangan,¹⁸ in Fergana Valley, a group of Uzbeks, led by Tohir Yuldash¹⁹ and Dzhusma Namangani²⁰ named themselves Adolat (Justice), calling for the implementation of sharia law, which according to them would end the inequality, despotism and criminal chaos of the times. Adolat sought to take over the role of local state authorities. The Islamist militants openly criticised Karimov, stockpiled weapons and embarked on steps toward the establishment of an Islamic state in Uzbekistan (Naumkin 2013: 3).²¹ Initially, President Karimov's government remained passive over several months, but in March 1992 Adolat was banned and broken up (Cornell 2005: 584). Many Islamists were arrested and their leaders fled the country (Naumkin 2013: 44–46). They left for Tajikistan, ravaged by civil war, where they joined the ranks of radical opposition forces. When in 1997 the peace accords ended the armed conflict in Tajikistan, the IMU strongly protested. Yuldash and Namangani seceded from their former allies; Namangani moved to Afghanistan, where the Taliban had expanded; and Namangani formally founded the IMU in Kabul in 1998.²²

In early 1999, the IMU was accused of orchestrating bomb attacks that almost killed President Karimov. Part of the IMU returned to Tajikistan and in August 1999 undertook a campaign in the Batkensk region of Kyrgyzstan. Having obtained the ransom for released hostages, they retreated to Tajikistan; under the pressure of Uzbekistan, they were subsequently pushed out of Tajikistan into Afghanistan.²³ In the summer

¹⁸ Together with Margelan and Andizhan, this city was the cradle of militant Islamism in the Fergana Valley (Naumkin 2013: 3).

¹⁹ Born in 1967, he was an 'underground' imam in the early 1990s.

²⁰ Born in 1969 as Dzhusma Khodzhiyev, he served in Soviet airborne units, and in 1988 returned from Afghanistan.

²¹ Naumkin, "Militant Islam", p. 3.

²² Naumkin claims that IMU was founded as early as 1996 (Naumkin 2003: 26).

²³ One of the leading members of IMU, Zahid Dekhanov, left in 1996 for Almaty (then still the capital of Kazakhstan) to recruit Islamist extremists, who were sent to training camps in Chechnya, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Dekhanov himself was trained in Chechnya in 1997. In October 1998, he was sent as Yuldash's advisor to Turkmenistan (then led by Saparmurat Niyazov) to establish an Islamist political centre in the country.

of 2000, Namangani returned to Tajhikistan, and organised another, stronger offensive in Kyrgyzstan and from there into Uzbekistan. After being pushed out of Uzbekistan and having ended operations in Kyrgyzstan, Namangani moved into Afghanistan, where he fought Western forces on the side of the Taliban. In November 2001 the IMU suffered substantial losses in the battle for Kunduz in the northern part of the country, and Namangani was killed in the operations. In 2004 terrorist attacks were committed in Bukhara and Tashkent, killing 44 people; the IMU was allegedly responsible (Cornell 2005: 590). Between 2001 and 2007, IMU was active in Southern Waziristan under the leadership of the commander of the local Taliban, Nazir. They got into an argument with the militias of the local tribes, and with Nazir over violating customs and left (Latif 2009). In 2009, the IMU joined the group of Taliban fighters led by Hakimullah Mehsud, who was killed in a US drone attack in 2013 (BBC 2013).

In 2002, the Union of Islamist Jihad (UIJ) split off from the IMU. This organisation was also led by the Uzbeks; but unlike the IMU, it established itself on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, in the milieu of the international armed Jihad whose main enemy was the USA, not Islam Karimov (Zenn 2012: 7–10). After the creation of this group, some Uzbek fighters from the IMU continued to stand behind Yuldash, who later died in 2009 in a drone attack; the international drive of the IUJ is nevertheless attractive to many a fighter from the Central Asian nations. Yuldash's priority was to topple the regime in Uzbekistan as well as others in Turkestan (an umbrella term used by Islamists for all five Central Asian states). By contrast, UIJ is fully engaged in fighting the USA and pays virtually no attention to Central Asia. In 2007, the UIJf was also involved in preparing acts of terrorism in Germany (Logvinov 2010).

He was arrested and extradited to Uzbekistan. Kazimbek Zakirov, another leading figure of the IMU, came to Almaty under similar circumstances; from this city he planned IMU activities in Tashkent. After the 1999 explosions in the city of Taldy-Kurgan (Kazakhstan), Zakirov was arrested; at the time there was no strict control of Islamist activities. The city served as a transit base for terrorists who in May 1997 planned a coup. The base, masked as a private business in Almaty, supplied militants with money and false passports produced in Kyrgyzstan (Naumkin 2003: 23).

Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation)

Palestinians in Jerusalem founded the Islamist movement in 1952, and it was not therefore a Central Asian phenomenon like the IMU.²⁴ The aim of the organisation (hereafter HuT) was to create an international Islamic caliphate based on sharia law. In the 1990s it attained some popularity in Central Asia. It was subject to substantial repression in Uzbekistan; court trials of the HuT leaders in Namangan, Fergana, Andijan and Margilan forced a large component of the organisation's members to leave the country. Many found new homes with their relatives in the Kyrgyz city of Osh and in Jalalabad.

In the mid-1990s, most of HuT members in Kyrgyzstan were Uzbeks from Uzbekistan, who had recruited local Uzbeks into their ranks. The first branches of the movement in South Kyrgyzstan appeared in this manner (Sukhov 2013). The HuT became more popular since the 2010 Kyrgyz pogroms were carried out on the Uzbeks in Osh, Jalalabad, and the environs; the movement also penetrated into Northern Kyrgyzstan, close to the border with Kazakhstan. Although HuT members claimed that they wished to attend their aims by peaceful means, the branches of the organisation also served as recruitment centres for militant Islamist groups (Ahrari 2006). Thanks to foreign donors from Arab countries, the HuT was fairly well funded in Central Asia in general and in Kyrgyzstan in particular. It was able to pay its members sums for their membership that were fairly decent in local terms – a very attractive offer indeed in a country where poverty is rife, all the more so given

²⁴ Hizb ut-Tahrir was founded in Jerusalem by Taqi-Uddin Al-Nabkhani (1909–79), a judge of sharia law appeal tribunal. The members were recruited from the Palestinian branch of the religious and political party Muslim Brotherhood. The political doctrine of Hizb ut-Tahrir is based on the idea of re-establishing the religious-political structure of the Caliphate dating to the times of the Prophet and his first four successors (until the murder of Caliph Ali in 661). According to the theoreticians of the Brotherhood, this was the only time in Islam's history when a just state had been realised in which social product was distributed evenly, because the Muslim community had observed God's commandments and Caliphs were chosen from amongst the most dignified individuals. Thus, the aim is to revitalize bygone glory by returning to the 'purest' form of Islam (Ahrari 2006, Sukhov 2013).

the fact that the Kyrgyz security forces were unable to deal with this threat. Thus, Kyrgyzstan formed the HuT's main base in Central Asia, and the organisation focused its propaganda mainly on the Kyrgyz Uzbeks. Generally speaking, the movement presents itself as an Islamist alternative to corrupt and ineffective governments, one that does not differentiate between various ethnicities, seeks Muslim solidarity, and proposes the perspective of one Islamist state in Central Asia that would bring together Kyrgyz Uzbeks with their tribesmen in Uzbekistan and other countries of Central Asia (Knyazev 2013).

In Kyrgyzstan as well as in Kazakhstan, Islamism is a fairly recent phenomenon; the nomadic Kyrgyz people have never been particularly religious and seldom observed all of Islam's practices. Hizb ut-Tahrir is not particularly popular in Central Asia at the moment, but if conditions were to deteriorate in these countries in the future, and were they to become unstable, HuT might influence a segment of society and spread Salafist ideas among the population. Under the banner of other organisations, they might then resort to violence or even attempt to overthrow these regimes.

Islamic radicalism in Kazakhstan

Role of Islam in post-Soviet Kazakhstan

Under the Soviet regime, there were no functioning madrasas in Kazakhstan and all religious activity took place in Uzbekistan. Thus, the infrastructure of Islamic religious education in Kazakhstan had to be built virtually from nothing. An analysis of the dynamics of the religious situation in Kazakhstan, from early times, to the post-Soviet era, testifies to the presence of contradictory tendencies. Although Islam did prove viable and resilient, it had never played an important political role. In the early 1990s, relatively liberal legislation with regard to the activities of religious organisations was typical. The Spiritual Board of the Muslims of Kazakhstan (DUMK) was created, and state authorities cooperated with the DUMK to implement a programme of Islamic revival, establishing contacts with Muslim countries, educating specialists on Islam abroad, etc. The country's leadership appreciated the moral potential of religion and its ability to consolidate social life, whilst ruling

out the possibility of using religious principles in internal and external politics or the establishment of political parties on a religious basis. Mainstream Islam in the country is the Sunni Hanafi madhhab, practised by Kazakhs, Uyghurs, Uzbeks and other less numerous ethnicities. As the links with the Muslim world strengthened, Sunni Islam of the Hanbali madhhab – the most rigid and the strictest of all madhhabs – began to penetrate into Kazakhstan, subsequently serving as a foundation for the spread of radical Islamic ideas. Sufism is also relatively popular, especially in south Kazakhstan. It is connected with the figure of Yassawi and holy places, in particular Yassawi's mausoleum in Turkestan (Zhusupov 2001: 62–66). Since the early 1990s, the number of those who consider themselves religious has increased, as did the number of mass religious rituals. These rites have spread among rural and urban populations alike, and Islam has been reinstated in its position of a traditional cultural element. As before, the functions of traditional Islam will be embedded within the framework of Kazakh culture, while its role in state-sponsored counterbalance to Islamic radicalism has rapidly increased (Zhusupov 2001).²⁵

Birth and evolution of Islamic radicalism in Kazakhstan

Due to the poor religious literacy of the population and the weakness of the imams in the state religious organisation DUMK, Salafi propaganda has found relatively fertile ground in Kazakhstan. DUMK imams often lack training in theology, know no languages except Kazakh, and generally fail to meet the standards expected of them. Muslims dissatisfied with the formal side of traditional Islam are unable to acquire the religious enlightenment they seek from state-sponsored imams, and therefore turn to the Salafi imams. Many citizens do not recognise the DUMK's authority, and tend to think of the imams of this spiritual board and the mufti, appointed by president Nazarbayev, as officials compromised by politics (Shibutov 2013).

²⁵ Ibid.

Until recently, Kazakhstan had been distanced from the main Islamist bastions in Central Asia (of which the most important has been the Fergana valley) and has managed to avoid the manifestations of violence connected with Islamic radicalism. The first madrasas, which were not controlled by the state provided the birthplace for the Salafi community in Kazakhstan, and the activities of foreign missionaries played an important role in it. The madrasa Aynabulak, in Almatinskaya oblast, and the Kazakh-Arab university in Shymkent, now both closed, had been particularly influential, as had the Saudi Arabia cultural centre in Almaty, which remains open (although its closure has been discussed). Also important has been the position of Kazakh students who were educated in the religious universities of Saudi Arabia, but who subsequently returned to their country and spread their teachings in towns and villages. The Salafi movement spread between 1994 and 2006, especially in the oil-rich Western regions: Atyrauskaya, Mangystauskaya and Aktyubinskaya oblast. Western Kazakhstan is plagued by high unemployment, which has reached up to 90% among the young and active rural population; huge income inequality, and high levels of corruption affecting state administration at all levels also beset it. In the absence of an alternative ideology of justice, Islam is becoming increasingly important as a social institution. The geographical proximity of Western Kazakhstan to Dagestan and Russia's Astrakhanskaya oblast also plays a role (Tekushev 2013).

Two groups have been of decisive importance for the development of Islamism in Western Kazakhstan. The first one was the so-called Jamaat of Ayub Astrakhansky (civil name Anguta Omarov), which was founded in the second half of the 1990s. This was a non-violent Islamist group based in Astrakhan, Russia. Omarov is presently in Belgium, but in the late 1990s and in the first decade of the twenty-first century, his ideas were transplanted into Western Kazakhstan, where a 'branch' of the Jamaat was founded in the village of Kulsary (about 200 km west of Atyrau). It comprised 30 to 40 people, and until 2005, the group was subject to strong pressures exerted by the Kazakh security forces. At present members of the Jamaat are inactive and do not publicly express themselves in any way. New and more radical groups have replaced them in the meantime. The second instrumental factor in the development of Islamism in Western Kazakhstan has been the radical teachings of imam

Abdulkhalil Abduzhabbarov (also known as Sheikh Khalil), originally from Shymkent, South Kazakhstan. Abduzhabbarov came to preach Salafi ideas in a private mosque in Atyrau, which was then not under the control of the DUMK. Kazakh security forces accused Khalil, now in hiding in Saudi Arabia, of being the ideological mastermind behind the terrorist attacks in Kazakhstan, yet during the visit of the Kazakh Salafists to Saudi Arabia in 2012, Khalil allegedly rejected the use of terrorism for political and religious purposes. Interestingly, about 200 Kazakhs, who were members of Ayub Astrakhansky's Jamaat fled in about 2005 to the Czech Republic, where they requested political asylum. Only the first ca. 3 to 5 families were granted asylum, the remainder were not. The other Islamists only received temporary residency, which they keep renewing; some of them left for France and Belgium. Among those who arrived first and received asylum was Ruslan Maytanov, the leader of Ayub's Jamaat in Atyrau, who now lives in France (Ponomarev 2013).

The evolution of the Islamist underground in Kazakhstan was accompanied by harsh confrontations between the Salafi community and state power, alongside the official clergy. Kazakh Islamists faced the task of establishing an independent Salafi network. Their ultimate aim was to overthrow the existing governing elite, and, in cooperation with the global Salafi militant network, to establish a sharia state – a caliphate – in the area (Tekushev 2013). Said Buryatsky,²⁶ one of the ideologues of the Caucasus Emirate, was among the influences that moulded the radical opinions of Kazakh Muslims; his preaching was popular, not least because it was in Russian and responded to burning social issues faced by the Kazakh youth.²⁷

²⁶ Said Tikhomirov, real name Aleksandr Tikhomirov, was born in 1982 in Ulan-Ude in Buryatia (Russia). He had been the main ideologue of the Caucasus Emirate, until being killed by Russian security forces in Ingushetia in 2010. His father was Russian and his mother Buryat, but according to some sources he was brought up by his stepfather who was a Chechen. Said only adopted Islam at the age of 15 and studied Islamic literature independently. Later he studied with respected sheiks in Egypt and Qatar. He only joined the North Caucasian militants in early 2008.

²⁷ Said Buryatsky preached in mosques in Aktobe, Almaty, Shymkent and Atyrau, and his teachings have also been translated into Kazakh. Between 2004 and 2006, Buryat toured the former Soviet republics, including Kazakhstan, with his sermons.

According to Tekushev, the development of Salafism consisted of several stages:

1. First stage (1997–1999): The Salafi community emerges in the western regions of Kazakhstan, bordering Uzbekistan. From 1998, these communities begin to gather for prayers, away from the official mosques. From this point on, they focus on the official clergy, and in the next stage – repression – begins.

2. Second stage (1999–2004): Disputes arise between the official clergy and the Salafists. A theological conflict ensues, in which the security forces intervene, cooperating with the official clergy.

3. Third stage (2005–2006): The conflict with the Salafists becomes violent; a rift occurs in the community, and a new militant, radical wing of the future Salafi network appears. Part of Kazakhstan's Salafi community emigrates to the Czech Republic, the rest remain in Kazakhstan. The latter will, in 2011, form the core of the militant Islamists.

4. Fourth stage (around 2011): The most active part of the radical community begins its armed struggle; militant Jamaats responsible for terrorist attacks arise and openly declare their participation in global armed Jihad (Tekushev 2013).

The Islamist organisation Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT) became active in Kazakhstan back in 2000, with main bases in Pavlodar and Almatinskaya oblast. In 2005, the activities of this organisation were banned on Kazakhstan's territory; it came under pressure from the security forces, and in 2007 it practically disintegrated, although few of its members remained active in the country (Zenn 2012).

Violent manifestations of Islamic radicalism in Kazakhstan

For the period from ca. 2000 to 2005, cases were found in which Kazakh citizens had participated in terrorist acts abroad (for example, the group Jamaat of Central Asian Mujahideen, which was dismantled in Uzbekistan, counted Kazakhs amongst its members). A small number of Kazakhs had also appeared in Afghanistan and in other countries. From 2005 onwards, however, the number of Kazakhs being tried on the territory of Kazakhstan itself for crimes connected with extremism and terrorism had increased (Shibutov, Abramov 2012). Violent acts of Islamist radicals began to shake Kazakhstan in 2011, especially the

South and the West. Although the Islamist underground had been developing for more than a decade and security forces had been observing the activities of the growing Salafi community, the state was not yet prepared to avert the terrorist threat. Acts of terrorism were usually committed using home-made explosives; these included suicide bombers and armed attacks on buildings owned by security forces, courts of law and prisons, as well as assaults on the persons of members of the security forces. Terrorists had not focused on civilians, but solely and exclusively on security bodies of the state: the Ministry of the Interior and the National Security Committee (KNB). The period of terrorist activities started in May 2011 (Suionova, Gazizov 2012). Prior to that date, groups of potential terrorists were arrested before actually committing terrorism; escapes from jail were also organised. Using the sources cited below, a list was compiled of the main violent acts committed by Kazakh Islamists in the country (many of which can be classified as terrorist attacks):

- On 17 May 2011 in Aktobe (Aktyubinskaya oblast) a suicide bomber attacked the building of the KNB, dying in the attack and wounding three people (the perpetrator, R. Makhatov, had been a member of a small Salafi community in Aktobe, which he joined having been persuaded by his wife).
- On 24 May 2011 in Astana next to KNB's house of detention, suicide bombers sitting in a vehicle exploded their car. No one was injured apart from the attackers; the explosive was probably set off prematurely.
- On 30 June 2011 in the Shubarshi village (Aktyubinskaya oblast), two policemen were shot.
- On 2 and 3 July 2011, again in the Shubarshi village, two policemen were killed and three wounded in a shoot-out; heavy military machinery was called in to quell the Islamists.
- On 11 July 2011 in the Kenkiyak village (Aktyubinskaya oblast), a skirmish occurred between the Islamists and police forces, in which one policeman and nine armed Islamists perished.
- On 29 July 2011 in the Kyzylzhar village (Aktyubinskaya oblast), one policeman and two Islamists were killed during a special operation by security forces.
- On 31 October 2011 in Atyrau (Atyrauskaya oblast), a suicide attacker detonated his explosives, seeking revenge for sentences meted out to Islamists for terrorism. Only the attacker had died.

- On 12 November 2011 in the city of Taraz (Zhambylskaya oblast), eight people died (including five policemen) as a consequence of a rampage by the militant Islamist Maksat Kariyev. The city had been gripped by fear all day
- On 3 December 2011 in the village of Boralday (Almatinskaya oblast), seven Islamists and two policemen died in a gunfight, as police raided those suspected of the murder of two policemen, committed in November.
- On 21 June 2012 in Aktobe (Aktyubinskaya oblast), three Islamists attacked a taxi driver and killed a traffic policeman. Later, in a shootout, two policemen were wounded and two Islamists killed.
- On 17 August 2012 in the Baganshail village (Almatinskaya oblast), a special operation was undertaken against the Islamists, in which 12 were killed.
- On 12 September 2012 in Kulsary (Atyrauskaya oblast), a skirmish took place between the police and Islamists, in which five of the latter perished.
- On 14 September 2012 in Atyrau (Atyrauskaya oblast), a group of Islamists fired at police officers and attacked their station with Molotov cocktails (two officers were wounded). In the gunfight that followed, between the police and Islamists, four Islamists were killed (Shibutov, Abramov 2012, Suionova, Gazizov 2012, Tekushev 2013).

Initially, the authorities sought to downplay some of the incidents and lay blame on ordinary criminal groups (for example, in Western Kazakhstan on groups stealing oil), but later it transpired that these were committed by hitherto unknown Islamist Jamaats, determined to achieve their goals by means of violence and terror. Several terrorist attacks failed due to the incompetence of the perpetrators and their lack of experience: the explosives were set off before they managed to use them.²⁸ In 2008, 9 people were tried for crimes connected with terrorism;

²⁸In July 2012 in the Tausamal village (Almatinskaya oblast) a blast shattered a family house, apparently caused by homemade explosives. Eight people perished in the fire that ensued, and a large amount of weapons and explosives was uncovered in the burned-down house. In September 2012, a house exploded in Atyrau; a 21 year old Salafite was making an explosive device that detonated in his hands.

in 2009, 19; in 2010, 8; in 2011, 33; and in the next year, 79 people (the terrorists who died whilst preparing attacks, or who were eliminated by police forces are not included in these numbers). Since 2007, 148 Kazakh citizens have been found guilty of terrorism-related deeds. According to a statement issued by the National Security Committee in February 2013, 42 extremist groups have been eliminated in the past two years and 35 attempted terrorist attacks were thwarted (International Crisis Group 2013). The state responded to the rise of terrorism in Kazakhstan by increasing the efficiency of law enforcement agencies, and the elimination of the Islamist Jamaats was often successful. In terms of organised religion, a new Agency for religious affairs was created and a law pertaining to religious activities and religious entities was adopted, all of which required religious bodies in the country to re-register. Since then the activities of Islamists in the country have been partially restrained.

No terrorist attack has been recorded on Kazakhstan's territory in 2013. This might be caused by the partial elimination of those Islamists able to commit terrorist acts, the more effective control of Islamists by state agencies, and the decisions on the part of young Kazakhs to leave and fight in Pakistan or Syria. According to the available sources, Kazakh Islamists (or even terrorists) are not hierarchically organised; in most cases there are no more than a few individuals grouped in a local, nameless Islamist cell. Very little is known about these groups, as the state controls all mainstream media and provides scant information about alleged terrorists and the extremists who were apprehended or killed. Many court trials have been closed to the public. This has then provided the spur to numerous conspiracy theories, establishing the goals, ideologies, financial backing, hierarchy, international links etc. of the Islamists (International Crisis Group 2013).

Jund al-Khalifah (Soldiers of the Caliphate)

Jund al-Khalifah has been described as the first Kazakh terrorist organisation, yet numerous questions persist as to its formation, its activities and its very existence; the available information is extremely sketchy (International Institute for Counter-Terrorism 2012). The organisation was allegedly founded in 2011 on the Afghan-Pakistan border by three young Kazakhs (Rinat Khabidolla, aged 26, Urynbasar

Munatov, 26, and Damir Znaliyev, 24). The age of the alleged founders raises questions in respect to the significance of the organisation. According to the Kazakh expert Marat Shibutov, it does not make sense to assume that this tiny group would influence what is happening among the Islamists in Kazakhstan, especially when the young age of its members is taken into account. According to Shibutov, the three young men could hardly have acquired the necessary authority to lead in such a short time, out of Afghanistan, illegal Islamist networks in Kazakhstan; their ability to organise terrorist attacks is also doubtful. More likely, they are propagandists who seek to endow terrorist acts with legitimacy, articulate political demands, and serve as false targets, which cannot be tracked down by Kazakhstan's intelligence services in either Afghanistan or Pakistan (Shibutov 2013). Jund al-Khalifah claimed responsibility for explosions in Atyrau, attacks on the police in Taraz, and the gunfight between the police and Islamists in Boralday (Shibutov 2013). There are probably no strong links between the founders of the organisation and the illegal Islamist movement in Kazakhstan, and the organisation apparently represents no serious threat to national security. Several militants in Kazakhstan have claimed to be members of this group, but they typically do so to obtain funding from abroad, and according to some sources, the organisation as such is virtually non-existent (Shibutov 2013). There has been no new information about the activities of the Soldiers of the Caliphate since late 2012. Kazakh citizens continue to be involved in combat operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan alongside Taliban and other groups, however.

Kazakhs as foreign fighters

Kazakhs have also cooperated with the militant Islamists of the Caucasus emirate, including the former Kazakh vice-emir of the Khasavyurt vilayat in Dagestan, who was killed by Russian special forces in November 2012. In total, about 200 Kazakhs are fighting in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Zenn 2013); a number of these were recruited by the North Caucasians, but originally radicalised themselves in the West Kazakhstan provinces of Atyrau and Aktobe. In 2013, about 40 Salafites from Kazakhstan's Karagandinskaya oblast were arrested in Syria on the side of the Islamists, and security forces apprehended another group of about a hundred, who came under the influence of

foreign Salafite emissaries, before they travelled beyond Kazakhstan's borders. Kazakhstan authorities fear the return of those émigrés who have contacts and war experience and who might join the illegal Salafite networks in Atyrau, Aktobe, North Caucasus, Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. In 2013, however, the militant Islamic activities were subdued, thanks to the increased efforts of the security forces (several attempted terrorist attacks were thwarted in Astana and Almaty) and a stricter policy of the DUMK. Salafites held in prison nevertheless continue to pose a problem, as they intermingle there with the criminal world and seek to recruit new supporters and obtain funding for their illegal activities (Zenn 2013).

Although law enforcement agencies have spoken about the links between domestic terrorists and the Soldiers of the Caliphate in Afghanistan, there are much stronger relationships between the local Kazakh Islamists (especially those in Western Kazakhstan) and the small illegal Salafite combat squads in Chechnya, Ingushetia, Dagestan and other republics of the Northern Caucasus. Their connections with Pakistan and Afghanistan have been very sporadic and episodic in character. Failed attempts at terrorist acts have testified to the terrorists' technical incompetence, missing experience of army service, and general technical illiteracy, due to their insufficient education and their low age (Zenn 2013).

Throughout 2014 and in early 2015, several incidents that were related to the activities of Kazakh fighters within Islamic State (IS) have attracted attention. The rise of this group in the midst of the conflicts in Syria and Iraq led to the declaration of an Islamic caliphate in mid-2014, and the renaming of the group from Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to Islamic State. The Islamic State gained strength with the arrival of many foreign fighters, including Kazakhs, into the organisation. Estimates put the numbers of Kazakhs involved at about 300 (including women and children) (Urazova 2014) and they have been used by IS in Russian-language propaganda.

Videos showing Kazakh child soldiers of IS have also attracted much attention. In November 2014 a video has been published entitled 'Race Toward Good', depicting Kazakh soldiers undertaking combat training, and being educated in Arabic and religion (Zenn 2014). One of the boys also appeared in another video from early 2015, where he executes two

alleged Russian spies within IS (Zavadski 2015). Kazakh Islamic activists are also involved in procuring funding and recruiting fighters for IS in other countries, including Russia and the USA (where a Kazakh citizen who is an ethnic Uzbek was arrested while attempting to travel to Syria to aid IS)(Paraszczuk 2015). These developments also present a challenge for the Kazakh counter-terrorism policy.

Kazakhstan's counter-terrorism policy and its issues

Since the establishment of an independent Kazakhstan, the government has been pursuing its own counter-terrorist policy. Domestically, its foundations have consisted of the Act on Measures to Combat Terrorism from 1999 and the Program for Combating Terrorism and Other Forms of Extremism and Separatism from 2000 onwards (Omeliicheva 2007: 372). Kazakhstan has also become involved in international counter-terrorist cooperation, and seeks to strike a balanced relationship with Russia and the USA in this area.

As early as 1998, KNB cooperated with the US Embassy in Almaty to eliminate the threat represented to the Embassy by Iranian agents. In the same year, the USA and Kazakhstan signed a joint statement regarding combating terrorism (United States Department of State 1999). The events of 11 September 2001 had repercussions for Kazakhstan and its new institutional structure for combating terrorism. In 2003, the interdepartmental Counter-terrorism centre was established at the National Security Committee of the Kazakhstan republic (President Respubliki Kazakhstan 2003).

Internal counter-terrorist measures were significantly strengthened and international cooperation extended in 2004, because of suicide attacks in the Uzbek metropolis of Tashkent. The Kazakh Supreme Court recognised as terrorist groups al-Qaeda, the East Turkistan Islamic Party, the Kurdish People's Congress and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. This meant that any activity in the country by these groups was forbidden. In the same year, about sixty alleged members of Hizb-ut Tahrir were arrested in Kazakhstan (United States Department of State 2005: 49). The cooperation between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was boosted by the good relationship between the rulers of both countries, Nursultan Nazarbayev and Islam Karimov, which gradually developed into a strategic partnership (Nichol 2013: 16).

Gradually, Kazakhstan became a signatory to all important global treaties on terrorism adopted by the United Nations. It also became involved in counter-terrorism policy of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and in the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation. Since 2006, several international exercises have been held in Kazakhstan; for example, the 'Atom-Antiterror' exercise that focused on issues of nuclear terrorism (Komitet Nacionalnoj Bezopasnosti Respubliki Kazachstan 2008). Under the impact of a series of terrorist attacks in 2011–2012, the Kazakh authorities, spearheaded by the President adopted the State Program on Counteracting Religious Extremism and Terrorism for 2013–2017 in autumn 2013; its fundamental aim was to prevent the radicalisation of the population at large (McDermott 2013).

Practically for the duration of its existence, Kazakh counter-terrorism policy has been subject to criticism by human rights activists. It is allegedly far too harsh and has been misused against all of the regime's opponents. Extradition of terrorist suspects to allied Uzbekistan has also been censured, as human rights are purportedly violated in the extraditions (Human Rights Watch 2005). Critics argue that the concept of extremism, as used in Kazakhstan is too wide and allows for the persecution of the regime's opponents (Lillis 2013). Likewise, the new counter-terrorist strategy mentioned above has given rise to misgivings, as it allows for the detailed monitoring of opponents (Nichol 2013: 16). The problem has also spread into Western Europe. In 2013, Amnesty International protested against the extradition of the Kazakh citizen Aleksandr Pavlov from Spain, and his trial in Kazakhstan. Pavlov (at that time in age 37), the former head of security for the Kazakh opposition figure Mukhtar Ablyazov, is wanted by authorities for 'expropriation or embezzlement of trusted property' and also for 'plotting a terrorist attack'. According to Amnesty International, Pavlov would be at risk of torture and unfair trial in Kazakhstan (Amnesty International 2013). Despite these criticisms, Kazakhstan's security policy has, in the main, been oriented against real terrorist and extremist threats connected with Islamism.

As activities of Kazakh fighters within Islamic State have increased, Kazakhstan has become an important partner in the global counter-terrorism struggle. Kazakh politicians have very sharply condemned IS propaganda videos featuring Kazakh nationals. When a Kazakh

citizen suspected of being a foreign fighter of IS was arrested in the USA in early 2015, Kazakhstan promised every assistance to the U.S. authorities in the investigation of the case (Paraszczuk 2015).

Conclusion

The presence of Islamist terrorism and extremism represents a threat to the current regime in Kazakhstan; it also contributes to the geopolitical expansion of this phenomenon. As the series of attacks that took place in 2011–2012 has shown, there are presently some grounds in Kazakhstan, based on which religious extremism and terrorism can flourish. It is true that the vigorous response on the part of the Kazakh security forces has managed to subdue the wave of terrorism, at least temporarily; yet the extremists' ideological foundations and the international links they cultivate continue to pose a threat. Islamists in the whole area seek to establish a large Central Asian caliphate, which would then affect Kazakhstan's territory (Thamm 2008: 76). Moreover, Kazakhstan can serve as the point of contact between the Islamist movements in East-Central Asia and Islamism spreading across the Caucasus, on Russia's territory. Kazakh fighters have appeared on other fronts as part of the global jihad, and supporters of Islamist extremism can be found among the Kazakh diaspora throughout the world. In this context, the fact that structures of Islamist extremism and terrorism have become embedded in the world's largest landlocked country must be considered an important factor in terms of the geopolitics of terrorism. Despite the fact that the scope of Islamic radicalisation in post-Soviet Central Asian Republic should be not overestimated (Heathershaw, Montgomery 2014), we can consider Kazakh terrorism as a serious and growing threat.

We have studied three dimensions of the geopolitics of terrorism, for which the following observations can be made.

1. Since the mid-1990s Islamist extremists have considered Kazakhstan an important part of their planned Central Asian caliphate. This has led to activities by foreign Central Asian groups on the Kazakh territory, and their agitation within the Kazakh Islamist scene.

2. At the turn of the first and the second decade of the twenty-first century, a wave of Islamist terrorist attacks hit Kazakhstan. It provided

a threat to its internal security, but has not jeopardised the key functions of the regime, and the security forces managed to curb the wave.

3. Due to the general migration trends from Kazakhstan and the state's struggle against Islamist extremism, diasporic Kazakh militants have become an important element in Islamist terrorism. Since 2014 they have played an important role within Islamic State, at least in terms of propaganda. Their potential return home is a security threat for Kazakhstan.

It is possible, then, to demonstrate the dynamics of Islamist terrorism's geopolitical development on the example of Kazakhstan. Islamists in the region have successfully introduced into the country terrorism from close neighbours, particularly from Uzbekistan, thus enabling the domestic Islamist scene to realise its own terrorist campaign. Subsequently, Kazakh fighters have become involved in the main front of the global jihad and might return to Kazakhstan to continue with their original plans there.

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PANEL 2:

REGIONAL SECURITY INTERDEPENDENCE
IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

RUSSIA'S ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN SLOVAKIA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONTINUING CRISIS IN UKRAINE

TOMÁŠ BĚLONOŽNÍK AND MIROSLAV MAREŠ

Abstract: This paper aims to evaluate and predict the impact of the Ukraine crisis on Russian economic interests in Slovakia. It argues that the crisis has caused a profound change of the discourse that frames EU-Russian relations. The shift from the rhetoric of integration and partnership towards the securitisation of mutual relations could have significant implications for Russian economic interests in the European Union. Over a long period, the Slovak government of Robert Fico has been successfully working on the “reactivation” of friendly relations with Russia. However, we believe that even Slovakia could be influenced by the strategic shift in discourse towards Russia that occurred at the EU level. The main part of this paper tries to predict the implications of the Ukraine crisis for three specific projects of strategic importance in Slovakia that could involve Russian companies – the planned sale of the company that operates most of Slovakia’s power plants, the construction of new reactors at the Jaslovské Bohunice nuclear power plant and a broad-gauge railway construction project.

Keywords: Russia; Slovakia; European Union; nuclear power plants; broad-gauge railway

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Introduction

The current crisis in Ukraine profoundly impacts the system of international relations, both globally and specifically in Central and Eastern Europe. It also affects Russia's relations with some former communist countries. Whereas some of them, such as Poland and the Baltic states, feel immediately threatened by Russia's aggression and stress the pro-Western elements in their foreign policy, others, such as Hungary and Slovakia, seek to balance their obligations towards the EU and NATO by developing and capitalising on their relations with Russia.

Under the government of Prime Minister Robert Fico, Slovakia has always adopted a relatively pro-Russian foreign policy, and today ranks among those EU member states that are the most conciliatory towards Russia. Despite the friendly approach of Mr Fico's government, the shift in EU relations with Russia may have consequences for Slovakia. The aim of this paper is to suggest why and how the crisis in Ukraine may impact Russia's economic interests in Slovakia. In the first section we describe in detail Slovakia's foreign policy towards Russia and the shift that has occurred in EU-Russian relations. In the next section we focus on the consequences of the crisis for three strategically important projects that have the possible or intended involvement of Russian companies – a broad-gauge railway project; the planned sale of the company Slovenské elektrárne and the project to construct additional reactors at the Jaslovské Bohunice nuclear power plant.

An analytical framework for contemporary Russian-Slovak economic relations

Slovak-Russian relations are asymmetric, which is caused by the different geopolitical positions of the two countries. After the disintegration of Czechoslovakia, some Slovak politicians perceived Russia as a possible ally in a situation where Slovakia was criticised by EU and NATO countries for its non-democratic excesses during Vladimír Mečiar's regime (the so-called "Mečiarism"; Kopeček 2006: 196–197). Later, a pro-Western orientation prevailed and Slovakia acceded to both the EU and NATO. Nevertheless, as a country on the Eastern border of

both organisations, Slovakia has been exposed to relatively strong Russian influence, and Russia has preserved its economic interests there as well.

The crisis in Ukraine has impacted Slovakia considerably. The situation, which began with demonstrations against President Yanukovich's regime, has over the course of several months developed into an armed conflict with thousands of casualties among combatants and civilians alike. Two broad currents of opinion clash in the attempt to explain the events unfolding in Ukraine. The first interprets the annexation of the Crimea and the fighting in Eastern Ukraine as an act of Russian military aggression, a manifestation of that country's expansionist policy or, in a more radical view, of irrationality on the part of the autocratic president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin. By contrast, the second current either marginalises or justifies Russia's involvement in Ukraine. Those who marginalise it tend to emphasise the authenticity and legitimacy of the demands made by the pro-Russian populace on the territory of Ukraine; in this view Russia had to defend this populace after politicians who were inimical to it came into office in Kiev. Those who justify Russian intervention point to the alleged arrogance of the Western powers, an arrogance these countries have supposedly displayed in their attempts to enlarge the military and political bloc of NATO towards the East. In this view, Russia's operations in Ukraine are the result of its fear of encirclement, and a direct consequence of the exclusion of Russia from a world order controlled by the United States of America.

Let us leave aside on which side the elusive "truth" is to be found in this dispute. The objective fact is that the first interpretation is the more common one in political discussions within the EU, partly due to the historical experience of the twentieth century. The events in Ukraine therefore fundamentally affect the present and the future of Russia's relations with the countries of the European Union, because the impact of these events strengthens latent centrifugal tendencies that have existed in these countries for a long time. Some post-communist countries in East-Central Europe continue to be strongly linked to Russia in economic terms; a situation derived from their history, geopolitical position and their not-completely-achieved economic transformation. In order to understand contemporary Slovak dilemmas we need to clarify the dynamics of the development of Slovak-Russian relations in recent years.

The consequences of the crisis in Ukraine on Slovakia's and the EU's relations with Russia

Slovak foreign policy towards Russia

During the 21 years of Slovakia's independence its relations with Russia have gone through several phases. The government of Prime Minister Dzurinda, which administered Slovakia in the eight-year period 1998–2006, focussed its foreign policy on developing relations with the West and integrating the country within the structures of the EU and NATO. Thus, despite the continued existence of an extensive network of economic links, it can be stated that during that time Russia lost its privileged position as a priority area for Slovakia's foreign policy (Marušiak 2013: 48–50). Change was only brought about by the victory of the Smer party in the 2006 election. In its government policy statement, Smer cited the cultivation of relations with Russia as one of its objectives. Indeed, the chair of Smer, Robert Fico, had expressed his pro-Russian stance since he first entered politics. Back in 2001, when as a chair of a non-parliamentary party he wielded little political influence, he was invited to visit Moscow, where he was received at the highest level.

However, the foreign policies of governments headed by Mr Fico have not been one-dimensional. His cabinets have long been relatively successful in balancing Slovakia's priorities: Europeanisation on the one hand, and deepening bilateral Slovak-Russian relations on the other. Indeed, a straddling of these two aims was noticeable as the Ukrainian crisis unfolded in 2014: on the one hand, Prime Minister Fico harshly criticised the sanctions against Russia in the media, and Slovakia successfully lobbied for their partial mitigation;²⁹ on the other, Slovakia approved the sanctions and officially denounced the annexation of the Crimea. It can be expected that the EU will continue to influence the relationship between Slovakia and Russia into the future. What is the nature and level that this influence can be expected to take?

²⁹ As Robert Fico divulged in an interview on *Rádio Slovensko* on September 6, 2014, it was thanks to Slovakia's initiative that the possibility was preserved for the Russian banks affected by EU sanctions to bail out their subsidiaries abroad should these find themselves in difficulties.

Common EU foreign policy and its impact on member states

From the introduction of European Political Cooperation in 1970 to the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, European states have made substantial progress in their attempts to unify their foreign policies. However, the member states of the EU still act largely independently in exercising them. Indeed, under the present institutional set-up of the EU, there is no capacity for setting foreign policy for individual member states centrally, as there are no mechanisms in place for coercing obedience from members. Most decisions of the European Council are taken consensually. It is true that the Lisbon Treaty allows certain decisions to be taken using qualified majority voting, but there is also an “emergency brake” built into the system. This allows any member of the European Council to block the voting process by making a reference to the fundamental interest of its own national policy; the decision then has to be consensual (Verola 2010).

A problem of common EU foreign policy highlighted by Bindi and Shapiro (2010: 340) among others is that no clear overview of its objectives is available in any of the organisation’s official documents. Although the EU is relatively consistent in promoting certain values and attitudes, it lacks an explicit “grand strategy”.³⁰ The European Security Strategy of 2003 has shown some ambition in this respect, yet this brief document is insufficient to serve as a basis for Europe’s grand strategy, not least because it has not been updated for the last 11 years.

The above shows that at present the EU foreign policy institutions are much more substantial than the policies they actually produce. Therefore these institutions cannot be perceived as loci where a common policy, binding for the member states, would be produced; rather, they tend to provide a space where political discourses are created and shaped – and where they also clash.

³⁰ The notion of a “grand strategy” has been traditionally understood as a set of supreme principles guiding a war effort (see e.g. Hart 1967), but today tends to take the meaning of a worldview adopted by a particular actor. For instance, Ikenberry (2001: 25) claims, “Grand strategies are really bundles of security, economic and political strategies based on assumptions about how best to advance national security and build international order.”

The set of ideas that emerges victorious from this discursive competition might be subsequently reflected in the specific policies of the individual member states. Cox (1981: 135–138) understands the system of international relations as resulting from a configuration in which three kinds of forces exert influence: material capacities, institutions and ideas. In his heuristic model, all of these forces are mutually interlinked and no element can claim a role superior to others. Cox's model provides a guideline as to what we should focus on in observing the changing relations of the EU and its member states vis-à-vis Russia, in the context of the present crisis in Ukraine. As the EU member states are rather in a position of an actor who responds to events not under his control, we can assume that ideas are transformed first, which, subsequently and with some delay, may be reflected in changes in material capacities and institutions.

The discursive complexes applying in the relationship between the EU and Russia were recently analysed by Kratochvíl and Tichý (2012). Although the focus of their work was on energy policy, the principles operating at the cores of the individual discourses are doubtless valid for the entire spectrum of mutual relations between the EU and Russia. Kratochvíl and Tichý identified three basic approaches towards Russia in the documents they analysed: integration, liberalisation and securitisation.

The integration discourse is focused on the economic aspects of cooperation between the EU and Russia, in which the latter is perceived positively, as a trade partner enjoying a special position vis-à-vis the EU. Within the integration discourse, the future of relations between the two partners is viewed through the prism of mutual dependence. Awareness of this dependence should motivate both the EU and Russia to work hard at removing points of friction and facilitating the gradual rapprochement of their political systems. In this aspect the EU considers itself the dominant player, expecting Russia gradually to adopt its standards. The liberalisation discourse shares an emphasis on the economic dimension of relations, but considers the advantages stemming from economic cooperation, rather than a rapprochement between the systems, to be crucial in decreasing the potential for conflict.

The securitisation discourse is very different from the previous two, emphasising security rather than the economy. In this view Russia is understood as an antagonist, and any dependence on it is interpreted

as negative. Looking into the future, this discourse focuses on how to decrease this dependency; for instance, in the context of energy relations, by diversifying energy supplies.

Table no. 1: *Overview of discourses and their main characteristics*
(source: Kratochvíl and Tichý 2012: 100)

Discourse	Model of relations between EU and Russia	Symmetry/asymmetry	Dominant aspect of relations	Theoretical concepts
Integration	Teacher and pupil	Asymmetry	The economy	“Normative Power Europe”, mutual dependency
Liberalisation	Trade partners	Symmetry	The economy	Comparative advantages, neoliberalism
Securitisation /diversification	Rivals, potential enemies	Symmetry	Security	Zero-sum game, securitisation

Kratochvíl and Tichý (2012: 108–109) state that, as far as EU-Russian energy relations are concerned, the integration discourse dominates under normal circumstances, but the securitisation discourse grows in strength at times of crisis. Shifts towards the securitisation discourse occurred in connection with the crises caused in 2006 and 2009 by restrictions on, or even the interruption of, supplies delivered by the gas pipeline passing through Ukraine. However, in both cases the problem lasted for only a limited time: four and 20 days respectively. After the normal volume of supplies was resumed, the securitisation discourse receded, to the benefit of the integration discourse.

The present crisis in Ukraine has provided a new impetus to the securitisation discourse, an impetus that might well prove the most important one for decades. Unlike the representatives of NATO or US President Obama, EU officials do not yet describe Russia as a “threat”, but many top politicians in EU member states view the security aspects of EU-Russian relations with a wary eye. Indeed, the very fact that

economic sanctions were imposed on Russia is telling in terms of evaluating the strength of the discursive complexes: if the liberalisation discourse had been the strongest, sanctions would probably not have been introduced.

Perhaps most importantly, we can now expect the securitisation discourse to prevail for some time. As the Russian Federation annexed the Crimea, the assertions of some theoreticians to the effect that in the second half of the twentieth century borders became frozen and could no longer be redrawn by engaging in war, were shown to be merely an illusion (cf. van Creveld 2006). Whereas the crisis over gas supplies only entailed a short-term threat to the energy security of European states, these can justifiably perceive the annexation of the Crimea as an alarming interference in the stability of the whole international system. The next section, which considers potential Russian investments in Slovakia, suggests how the inclusion of security aspects into the negotiations about possible cooperation may affect the behaviour of both sides.

Projects connected with Russia's investments and interests in Slovakia

The planned sale of Slovenské elektrárne

The planned sale of the largest producer of electricity in Slovakia is probably the most important opportunity for Russian investment at present. Slovenské elektrárne (SE) owns a total of 37 generators (including the two nuclear facilities in Slovakia) with a total installed capacity of 4,992.6MW, supplying about 20TWh yearly to the grid. Slovakia's consumption being about 29TWh per year, electricity supplies by the company cover about 70 per cent of domestic consumption (Slovenské elektrárne 2014a).

The majority shareholder, with a 66 per cent stake in the company, is the Italian power company Enel, which obtained its shares in SE for EUR 839 million in 2006 when Mr Dzurinda's government privatised the utility. At that time Enel pledged to construct two additional blocks at the Mochovce nuclear power plant (NPP) and invest EUR 1.9 billion into the company. However, since privatisation the new construction at Mochovce has become a sensitive issue and a source of dispute between Enel and the Slovak government which holds the remaining 34 per cent through a national property fund.

The original agreement between Enel and the government also stated that dividends would not be paid until 2012; instead, profits were supposed to be invested into the construction of the new blocks. This mechanism was designed to prevent Enel from rerouting the promised EUR 1.9 billion of investment back to itself. However, in subsequent years the construction of the new blocks was much delayed and costs spiralled. According to the original plans, the first block was expected to be put into commission in late 2012 at an estimated cost of EUR 2.78 billion. Today the date mooted is the turn of 2016/2017, the price has climbed to EUR 4.6 billion and the moratorium on dividend payments has been extended until 2017. Enel justifies the delays and growing costs by arguing that the safety requirements have increased since the Fukushima disaster. However, there have also been voices critical of Enel, arguing that the company is rerouting monies from SE through contracts awarded to allied construction companies, which practice, it is alleged, ultimately earns Enel more than if it were to commission the plant, given the present low level of electricity prices (Leško 2013; 2014).

In July 2014 Enel announced its plan to withdraw from the markets of Central and Eastern Europe – which entailed the sale of its share in SE – and to use the money thus obtained to lower its level of debt which exceeded EUR 40 billion. However, it must be emphasised that despite its substantial debt, Enel currently looks relatively healthy according to its financial reports, and thus will not have to rush the sale. The decision to sell its assets in Slovakia was probably also informed by other considerations; for example, Enel might be wishing to improve its standing with rating agencies. Indeed, Standard & Poor's has downgraded Enel's rating twice since its Slovak investment (from A- to BBB) due to circumstances outside the company's control – in particular, falling energy prices and the poor economic situations in Italy and Spain, Enel's main markets. The decision might also have been affected by the poor relations between Enel and Prime Minister Fico's government, which has long criticised the privatisation for undervaluing SE. The tensions between Enel and the Slovak government have been exacerbated by the delays to construction at the Mochovce NPP.

The value of the majority share in SE is difficult to quantify due to the issues with the Mochovce facility. Given the relatively high profits of the company (EBITDA for 2013 reached EUR 710 million), the sale

might raise up to EUR 3 billion for Enel, according to some estimates. However, as expenses continue to mount on the construction of the new blocks at Mochovce NPP (which plant will probably be loss-generating when commissioned), more cautious analysts claim that the value of Enel's share is less than EUR 1 billion and, according to others, might even be negative.

Considering the range of potential buyers for Enel's share in SE, the following three scenarios can be envisaged:

- Acquisition by the ČEZ Group;
- A partnership between the Slovak government shareholder and a private company;
- Acquisition by Russian interests.

The Czech energy group ČEZ has long been presented to the general public as the Slovak government's favourite buyer for SE and has submitted an official bid. Indeed, ČEZ was already interested in the company at the time of its privatisation, but was outbid by Enel. In technical terms, it would be an undemanding acquisition by ČEZ, which could easily link SE to its assets in the Czech Republic, and has experience with running nuclear power plants. However, the deal would be highly problematic in economic terms. The involvement of ČEZ in the expensive construction work at Mochovce NPP might ultimately lead to ČEZ paying smaller dividends, which constitute an important source of income for the Czech budget (every year at least CZK 15 billion). The acquisition also does not fit very well with the new strategy of expansion abroad which ČEZ announced in September 2014, the objective of which is to increase operating profit and secure a high dividend. Last but not least, a move into Slovakia would probably negatively influence ČEZ's credit rating, something which the Fitch agency publicly warned ČEZ about on November 21, 2014. Therefore, in negotiating a possible purchase, ČEZ might seek an accommodation which would remove the completion of the Mochovce plant expansion from the deal. However, the minister of the economy, Pavlis, has said he is against such an agreement; neither is such a conditional sale in the interests of Enel.

The Slovak government holds a key position in the negotiations over the sale because as a minority shareholder it has the pre-emptive right to buy Enel's shares. Mr Fico's government contemplates exercising this right and buying an additional 17 per cent of SE from Enel in order to

obtain a majority share. Aside from the potential costs the government would incur in this transaction, it would also have to find a partner who would be willing to buy the remaining 49 per cent share of the company. That partner, if found, would probably demand managerial control over the company – and this would neutralise the advantage for Slovakia of holding the majority share. Energetický a průmyslový holding (EPH) might become such a partner and, according to one of its owners, Daniel Křetínský, EPH has “carefully monitored” the situation surrounding the sale (E15.cz, November 12, 2014). Yet given EPH’s high indebtedness, it is not a very serious candidate for buying Enel’s share in its entirety. A factor that might strengthen EPH’s position as a potential partner for the government in a deal over SE is that the owners of the J&T Finance Group (who hold a one-third stake in EPH) are allegedly on very good terms with the political party Smer which is in government. The administration of the Slovak gas utility SPP – in which the state holds a 51 per cent stake and EPH 49 per cent as well as managerial control – has been satisfying for both sides. Existing synergies might also play a role: for example, EPH owns the power plant Opatovice nad Labem, selling most of the electricity produced there to SE (Elektrárny Opatovice 2014: 9). Although neither the Slovak government nor EPH have yet submitted an official bid, Slovakia will have the last word in the process, as it will be given the opportunity to buy Enel’s shares for whatever price Enel agrees with another party.

It would make sense for the Rosatom company, directly controlled by the Russian government, to buy SE, not least because nuclear reactors in Slovakia – both operating and under construction – are of Russian design and run on Russian fuel. Furthermore, Rosatom is aiming to strengthen its position in Central Europe, and has entered into an agreement to construct additional reactors at the nuclear power plant in Paks, Hungary. An important factor that might strengthen the position of the Russians is that in July 2014 SE opened a credit line of EUR 870 million with the Russian Sberbank. With this step, SE became partially dependent on Russian capital and it is probable that during negotiations Sberbank gained access to various internal documents about the state of SE, documents that would provide a distinct advantage to any company with which the bank shared them.

If the international political situation were stable, Rosatom would probably be the most likely buyer for SE due to its rich experience of constructing nuclear power stations and the existence of SE's line of credit from Sberbank. However, the securitisation discourse has already influenced the process of selling SE. For instance, the minister of the economy, Malatinský, said before his resignation that strategically the sale of the company to Rosatom would not be a desirable step. More importantly, it seems that Enel excluded Rosatom in advance from the circle of potential buyers due to pressure exerted by the EU, as reported by the Bloomberg agency on August 7, 2014, citing well-informed sources (Campbell and Baigorri 2014). Although Enel subsequently denied the story, further developments in the bidding process suggest that it might have been true.

A surprising offer was submitted by a consortium of the Hungarian state-owned MVM Group and Slovnaft. This offer was not conditional upon any division of SE's property and includes the assumption of all company risks including those incurred in connection with the construction of the new blocks at Mochovce NPP. According to some observers, it may be that in the proposed transaction MVM Group would act on behalf of Rosatom, which itself cannot directly take control of SE. At present Russian-Hungarian relations are very good and MVM Group has been collaborating with Rosatom on the construction of the already-mentioned Paks NNP.³¹

Enel has not yet announced a deadline for acceptance of non-binding offers to buy SE. In addition to ČEZ and MVM Group/Slovnaft, another offer was allegedly made by a party not yet identified, which according to speculations might have been Finland's state energy company Fortum. Another possible development is that Enel will not ultimately sell its share in SE, as in November 2014 it offloaded its shares in Spanish company Endesa for EUR 3 billion, thus making a significant stride

³¹ The planned construction of new blocks at Paks NPP offers another explanation of why MVM Group was interested in SE. According to the opinion of energy expert Karel Hirman published in the Slovak daily *Pravda* on November 24, 2014, MVM Group could gain access to data about the construction of the Mochovce NPP, which it could subsequently use in its own project at Paks (Toma 2014).

towards its goal of decreasing indebtedness by EUR 4.4 billion. If the sale of SE is to happen at all, the steps taken by the Slovak government will be of crucial importance. So far, the government has refused the idea of splitting up the assets of the company; but without that, ČEZ will probably lose interest in the project, and ČEZ is in other respects perhaps the most acceptable partner for Slovakia. Thus, if no other seriously interested party comes forward with sufficient financial backing to assume the risks entailed by completion of the construction of the Mochovce NPP extension, Slovakia has two options. Either it has to find a partner and the necessary funds to exercise its first option to buy, or it must accept that a Hungarian-owned company will take control of SE. Until recently, Slovak-Hungarian relations were not good, and the second option would run the risk of admitting Russian influence due to the capital ties between SE and MVM Group.

Planned construction at the Jaslovské Bohunice NPP

The possibility of building a new block at the Jaslovské Bohunice NPP was first mooted by Robert Fico's government in 2007. On coming into office, Mr Fico's cabinet inherited the commitments undertaken by the previous prime minister, Dzurinda, during the EU accession negotiations, under which Slovakia had to shut down the first reactor at Jaslovské Bohunice V1 by the end of 2006. This meant that Slovakia was no longer self-sufficient in terms of power generation (the second reactor at V1 was shut down at the end of 2008; the V2 block remains in operation). By 2008, the project to build a V3 block at Jaslovské Bohunice had been prepared officially, and a construction company was to be chosen by tender. However, the Slovak government later designated the project as strategically important, abandoned the tender process and chose the partner to construct V3 directly, opting for the Czech energy group ČEZ.

At the outset of the V3 project, ČEZ partnered with the Nuclear and Decommissioning Company (Jadrová a vyradovacia spoločnosť, JAVYS) to form the Nuclear Power Company Slovakia (Jadrová energetická spoločnosť Slovenska, JESS), in which JAVYS received 51 per cent and ČEZ 49 per cent of the shares. In financial terms, JAVYS was to pay for the land and infrastructure, while ČEZ was to fund the actual construction.

However, the latter gradually lost interest and pulled out of the project. According to statements made by ČEZ representatives, this was in order to focus on the construction of new reactors at the Temelín NPP in the Czech Republic, although the decision might also have been influenced by decreasing electricity prices and a drop in ČEZ's profits. Thus in early 2013 ČEZ began to negotiate the transfer of its stake in JESS to Russia's Rosatom.

No agreement was reached with Rosatom at the first stage, as the Russian company demanded from the Slovak government a guaranteed purchase price for electricity of EUR 60–70 per MWh, something that the minister of the economy, Malatinský, announced was unacceptable. The last time electricity was so expensive was in 2008, and its price has been decreasing ever since. In 2014, it was traded at the Prague Power Exchange at about EUR 36 per MWh. By guaranteeing the price demanded by Rosatom, Slovakia would expose itself to the risk of financial losses amounting to hundreds of millions of euros per year.³²

In 2014 the positions of the Slovak government and Rosatom came closer in terms of whether the expansion of Jaslovské Bohunice NPP represented good value for money. In January Rosatom announced that it no longer insisted on a guaranteed price for electricity and would consider other forms of state support for the project. When in July Pavol Pavlis replaced Malatinský as the minister for the economy, one of his first announcements was that he did not see a problem in setting a guaranteed purchase price for electricity, as long as all relevant European and Slovak regulations were observed (Holeš 2014a; 2014b).³³

³² Assuming that the new reactors with installed capacity 1,000 MW would supply 7,500 GWh yearly, i.e. an amount similar to that produced by Mochovce NPP or Jaslovské Bohunice V2 NPP (Slovenské elektrárne 2014b), and the wholesale price of electric power were to remain at the present level, Slovakia would be paying to Rosatom about EUR 225 million per year more than the market price.

³³ However, in another interview two weeks later for the TASR agency, Minister Pavlis was sceptical about a guaranteed purchase price. The question is to what extent was the change in his position affected by contemporary events – the interview was given five days after flight MH17 was shot down over Ukraine. The current position of the Ministry of the Economy on guaranteeing a purchase price is unclear.

The Slovak government has stated that it is not against Rosatom's involvement in the expansion of the power plant, but in the present international situation, Rosatom's participation in the project might produce an unfavourable response from the European Union, especially given the fact that the French company Areva has expressed interest in the project, according to a report in the Slovak daily *Pravda* on October 30, 2013. Thus, the EU might seek to block any agreement between Slovakia and Rosatom, citing either competition laws (the project was not put out to tender) or Slovakia's obligations stemming from its membership of Euratom. In early 2014 the agreement between Russia and Hungary on the enlargement of the Paks NPP was examined in the same manner (Kovács 2014).

Thus far, the project in Slovakia has been proceeding as planned, even if no agreement with an investor is in place. JAVYS has been buying land and an environmental impact assessment (EIA) is now in train, scheduled for completion in the first quarter of 2016 (JESS 2014: 10). The law stipulates that only once an EIA is complete can an application be submitted for approval of the siting of a nuclear installation, which step precedes an application for a building permit.³⁴ The final decision about the investor can therefore be easily delayed until the EIA is complete. The involvement of Rosatom is still a possibility, even if it is not often publicly discussed, not least due to the situation in Ukraine.

If the decision is not made until 2016, there is a serious risk that the conclusions of the EIA and the discussion about the choice of a partner to build the new plant will become salient issues in the general election scheduled for March of that year. This is something the ruling party Smer would probably want to avoid, as energy dependency on Russia is considered by Slovak voters to be undesirable and the issue of a high guaranteed purchase price for electricity might also prove controversial.³⁵

³⁴ The exact procedure is laid out in detail in the "Atomic Act" No. 541/2004 Coll., particularly in Annex 1.

³⁵ In an opinion poll undertaken by the FOCUS agency on a sample of 1,025 respondents, published in the daily SME on June 24, 2014, 71 per cent of those approached agreed with the following statement: "It is important for Slovakia to decrease its energy dependence on Russia."

If the scenario outlined here is realised, we can predict with reasonable confidence that the publication of the EIA results will be delayed until after the election. If, in that election, Smer should win another clear victory, and the new government were successful in its communications with the various EU agencies, then Rosatom would stand a serious chance of being chosen as the partner for the Jaslovské Bohunice NPP.

Broad-gauge railway project

Among the long-term economic objectives of the Russian Federation is to develop and control a Eurasian transport corridor providing high-quality railway links between China and Europe that would be much faster than the shipping routes that currently dominate. However, rail transport through the corridor also has some disadvantages, of which the most serious vis-à-vis the object of our study is the incompatibility of railway gauges. Whereas in Central and Western Europe the standard is 1,435mm, in Russia railways began to be constructed in the 1830s to a 1,524mm gauge. A change to the narrower European gauge was briefly considered in 1920–1921, when plans to modernise the railways became the key (and practically the only) point in Russia's programme to restart its economy. However, representatives of the army and Cheka sharply rejected the plan, seeing in the broad gauge a safeguard against the railways being used by potential invading armies, hence broad gauge remained the Russian standard (Heywood 2004: 58). Today the incompatibility of gauges presents a serious logistical problem, because goods have to be transferred to carriages equipped with appropriate underframes at the point where the two systems meet, thus lengthening journey times.

Three possible variants of expanding the broad-gauge railway westwards can be considered:

- Modernisation and extension of an existing route leading to Sławków, Poland;
- Construction of a route from Košice, Slovakia to Vienna;
- Construction of a route from Záhony, Hungary to Vienna.

The advantage of the Polish option is that the 395km broad-gauge line to Sławków is already in place, and it is the spur of the broad-gauge railway that extends furthest to the west. However, the track would need

serious modernisation. It was originally designed to serve the Katowice Steelworks and, given its underdeveloped infrastructure, cannot handle more than 10–11 trains a day (Szygulski 2014a). The placement of the existing track also militates against the development of a broad-gauge railway through Poland. Katowice is not particularly well connected to other large cities, and the modernisation of this railway might negatively influence the volume of goods carried by the corridor Moscow-Warsaw-Berlin.³⁶

From the two options of constructing a broad-gauge railway to Vienna, the Slovak variant is the more advantageous, necessitating the laying of about 450km of new track. The option through Záhony in Hungary is at least 80km longer. Slovak governments led by Robert Fico have welcomed the project, the main problem being how to secure funding.

In May 2011 a “pre-feasibility study” was published by an international consortium of companies, which estimated the cost of a new single track with 12 passing loops at EUR 6 billion (Breitspur Planungsgesellschaft 2011). This was for the construction only, and did not include such items as new railway engines, equipment for maintaining the new railway, the construction of terminals or the necessary modernisation of existing sections. Furthermore, the project did not envisage possible additional expenses due to construction delays. If all these were taken into account, the costs of the project might exceed EUR 10 billion, a gigantic investment comparable to the construction of a two-block nuclear power plant.

Essentially, three models of financing can be envisaged:

- Funds from public – national or EU – budgets;
- A private investor;
- A public-private partnership (PPP).

However, none of these options is currently feasible. Given the size of the investment needed, funding from the public Slovak budget would be beyond the means available. EU money cannot be counted on either: although the EU does support railways, it refuses to fund broad-gauge development, focusing on other standard-gauge projects (Kallas 2013, Pynnöniemi 2012).

³⁶ Goods transported through this corridor may ultimately originate from China, via the trans-Siberian railway. They arrive in Poland having been transferred to standard-gauge rail in Brest, Belarus (Vinokurov, Dzhadrallyev, and Shcherbanin 2009).

So far no private investors have shown serious interest in the project, which for them would only make sense economically if they could conclude long-term contracts with credible clients for the necessary volume of goods to be transported via the railway (Breitspur Planungsgesellschaft 2011). So far the only indication in this respect has come from Mikhail Goncharov, advisor to the president of Russian Railways (RZD), who said at the May 2012 meeting of the group *Strategic Partnership 1520* that his company might attempt to find a way of financing the project from its own resources (Smith 2012).

If the project were funded by a public-private partnership, the Slovak and Austrian governments could provide the private partner with the necessary guarantees in terms of volume of services to be rendered by the railway. The Slovak deputy prime minister for investment, Lubomír Vážny, who is a supporter of PPPs, would carry the fundamental political responsibility for the project. However, a private investor is yet to come forward, in part certainly due to the technical demands and the expense that would be incurred by the project, in part due to the fact that in Central Europe PPPs are insufficiently proven.³⁷

If the broad-gauge railway project from Košice to Vienna is to happen, it will probably require both the interest of private investors and a non-returnable subsidy from public budgets – according to the pre-feasibility study, the railway would not be able to pay back the initial investment in construction even after 30 years of operation (see Breitspur Planungsgesellschaft 2011: 10–12). After years of discussions, a solution to the issue of funding does not appear to be any closer, and the project thus seems to be a political chimera, even without considering the impact of the crisis in Ukraine. Despite the rather negative purport of the pre-feasibility study, the planning continues, and a larger feasibility study should be completed in late 2015.

³⁷ In Slovakia PPPs only started to be discussed at the governmental level in 2005 and those that were implemented have not been without controversy. Two out of the three motorway construction projects so far begun were suspended over accusations of overcharging in 2010 when Ivana Radičová's government came to office.

The events in Ukraine have not changed the position of either the Slovak or the Austrian governments, who continue to support the project, but the crisis might affect it in various ways. At one level, it is apparent that the crisis introduces further non-negligible risks into a project whose economic viability is uncertain. Goods to be transferred through the Košice-Vienna section would necessarily have to transit through Ukraine. Ukrainian Railways clearly wishes to continue to participate in the project, as shown by the presence of the company's representatives at a meeting in Vienna, reported on August 18, 2014 by the UNIAN agency. Given the unpredictability of future developments in Ukraine, it is impossible to say today whether the international political situation in the region will affect transit traffic through Ukraine in the future. Trains continue to run between Russia and Ukraine, but the volume of traffic has been much reduced both in consequence of the fighting in Eastern Ukraine and because the Russian rail operator has allegedly not been supplied with engines manufactured by factories in Luhansk, Ukraine (Frolova and Kiselev 2014).

It is also possible that Russia will lose interest in the project, as the country's preliminary budget for 2015 includes plans "to finance new railway tracks that bypass Ukraine" (Reuters 2014). However, no details about the plan have been published and one may assume that Russian state investment into railway infrastructure will be directed to the Crimea rather than elsewhere. According to *The Moscow Times* of November 6, 2014, Russia's Ministry of Transport intends to invest about EUR 2.4 billion in the Crimea by 2020. The alternative according to which Russian Railways would cover the costs of the construction of the broad-gauge railway to Vienna from its own resources also looks less plausible today. According to Russian Railways' official statements for 2014, the company's profit decreased significantly since the previous year, and the possibility of Russian investment abroad has been harmed by the deteriorating exchange rate of the rouble.

An alternative, paradoxical, view is that the crisis in Ukraine might actually move the project of broad-gauge railway forward and give it a new impetus. In developments so far, Poland has been the most radical European critic of Russia and its role in Ukraine; Poland's stance has also made it the first target of Russian retaliatory sanctions on food imports. Previously, Poland's representatives have criticised the planned

extension of the broad-gauge railway, accusing Russia of deliberately wishing to bypass Poland, as it did with the Nord Stream gas pipeline. Now that Schetyna has replaced Sikorski as Poland's minister of foreign affairs, if Poland continues to promote within the EU a strong, even "hawkish", foreign policy, a concentrated effort to start up the broad-gauge railway project might represent for Russia a possible retaliation. The railway to Vienna, if operational, would probably cause direct economic losses to Poland. These would most likely appear in consequence of the decreased volume of goods transported through the Moscow-Warsaw-Berlin corridor, rather than on the existing broad-gauge track to Sławków, as that route is mostly used for goods for particular clients in and around Katowice (Szygulski 2014b).

Conclusion

The discourse of securitisation has become more prominent in the EU's relations with Russia, but that does not mean that Russia's economic interests cannot be realised in Slovakia (or indeed other countries). However, the character of the relations is now different, and this influences how both sides act, as their manoeuvring ability is now limited, especially as concerns Russia's involvement in commercial deals of strategic importance.

Perhaps the shift can best be observed in the circumstances surrounding the planned sale of SE, for which Russia's Rosatom would be the best buyer, but whose involvement the EU is allegedly attempting to block. The present situation also complicates Rosatom's position vis-à-vis the project of building new reactors at the Jaslovské Bohunice NPP, and the company may be waiting for a more favourable international political situation to emerge. As far as the construction of the broad-gauge railway is concerned, the shift in discourse towards securitisation has probably hardened the position taken by the EU, which will not grant a subsidy for the project, without which it will be very difficult to realise. However, the change in the strategic situation created by the crisis in Ukraine might yet move the project forward. If Russia were able to capitalise the project on its own, it would not only enlarge Russia's geopolitical sphere of influence, but perhaps also weaken Poland, the main opponent of Russia's steps in Ukraine.

It remains to be seen whether the securitisation of economic relations between the EU and Russia can truly influence and limit the dependence of EU member states on Russia. Even if Russia is not allowed to enter Slovakia's power industry by investing capital there, Slovakia's nuclear power plants are still dependent on fuel supplies from Russia. Although in November 2014 SE concluded an agreement on supplies of enriched uranium from an unnamed non-Russian firm, the fuel still has to be prepared for use in the power plants by the Russian state company TVEL. Similarly, although Slovakia has large uranium deposits, and the securitisation of relations might weaken the strong resistance of the Slovak population against mining, there is currently nowhere in Slovakia to process the uranium, which would probably have to be exported into Russia or Ukraine for the purpose. Thus, at present the dependence of Slovakia's nuclear power industry on Russia is unavoidable.

In the near future, economic cooperation between the EU and Russia will probably continue as before in many sectors. However, there are signs that the securitisation discourse will establish itself as the dominant one and its axioms come into use within the EU in the formulation of strategies and other long-term plans. Such a turn away from the policy of rapprochement and towards a cold cooperation informed by calculations of the balance of power might have fundamental consequence.

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IS THERE A THREAT OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE?

MIROSLAV MAREŠ AND LUKÁŠ VISINGR

Abstract: This article analyses the threat of nuclear proliferation in Central and Eastern Europe, taking into account the potential impact of the contemporary crisis in Ukraine. The authors start by describing the historical attempts made by Central and East European countries to obtain nuclear weapons during the Cold War and the post-Cold War period. The main focus is on current trends, including a prediction of possible future developments. The policies of state as well as non-state actors are considered, including nationalist calls for nuclear armament. The authors conclude that the risk of proliferation in this region should not be overestimated; equally, however, certain ‘early warning signals’ should be not ignored.

Keywords: Proliferation, Central and Eastern Europe, crisis in Ukraine

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Introduction

The current crisis in Ukraine has once again caused international tensions to rise in Central and Eastern Europe. Following its earlier turbulent transition from Communism to democracy, the area seemed to be relatively stable only a few years ago. Russia's substantial show of force against its Western neighbour has alerted multiple security sectors. One consequence of the Ukrainian crisis is that discussions have begun among countries in the region concerning their defence provision for the future. In this context, calls for nuclear armament have been voiced, with varying intensity, in some of these countries. Proliferation of nuclear weapons in Central Europe seems unlikely at present (with the possible exception of Ukraine). However, since the security situation is developing dynamically, it is worthwhile monitoring this area for potential WMD proliferation, within the framework of predictive research. In this article, current discussions regarding security are placed in a historical context, mapping attempts to attain nuclear status to date in those countries where the issue has been the subject of serious political and expert debate. The paper then analyses the present situation and associated perspectives, mainly emphasising attempts being made by Central and Eastern European countries to build their own nuclear armaments, rather than accepting the placement of nuclear weapons on their territories by foreign powers.

From the methodological point of view, the key assumptions check technique is used (Heuer, Pherson 2011: 183–188). The neorealist approach is combined with theories of domestic sources in this article. According to William C. Potter and Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova, neorealism “predicts a lengthy nuclear proliferation chain that extends to as many states as have access to technical know-how and material to build nuclear weapons. The main reason to abstain from nuclear weapons, according to neorealist tenets, is the availability of security guarantees from a powerful ally (Potter, Mukhatzhanova 2010: 7). Main domestic sources of proliferation are leadership psychology and regime survival (Potter, Mukhatzhanova 2010: 8–9).

The period until the end of the Cold War

Thanks to the large uranium deposits within the territories of the present-day Czech Republic and Poland, Central and Eastern Europe played an important role in nuclear weapons research and development during WW2 and shortly thereafter. These deposits assisted German nuclear research, were used at the inception of the Soviet nuclear research, and facilitated the first nuclear tests by the latter. However, the conducting of programmes for nuclear weapons development only emerged in this space with the outbreak of the Cold War and the specific arrangements and relationships within the Eastern bloc. From today's perspective, the key point is that there is a tradition of such programmes in Central and Eastern Europe. It must be mentioned here, that between the 1950s and the early 1980s, several countries in this region (Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, and Poland) acquired latent capabilities to manufacture nuclear weapons. (Meyer 1984: 41) Although the USA sometimes overestimated the information they received about nuclear weapons development, and this was true about the intelligence they had concerning Czechoslovakia and Poland during the 1960s (Davis 2009: 3), this does not mean that nuclear weapons proliferation was a trivial issue in these countries.

As a hegemonic power in the area, the Soviet Union did not want its satellites to have their own nuclear arsenals. However, given its strategy of massive strikes against Western Europe, in which the Warsaw pact armies were expected to attack the West supported by both tactical and strategic nuclear weapons (Mastný 2006: 1–12), the Soviet Union did place nuclear weapons on its allies' territories. The strategic forward placement of a nuclear strike capability outside the territory of the Soviet Union proper was also important, and it was instrumental in Soviet decisions to intervene in Communist countries whose leaders did not wish to act on Soviet instructions. (Fidler 2003: 144)

Also anticipated was the furnishing of air forces, artillery, and tactical missile forces; providing the Soviet Union's allies with Soviet nuclear weapons. (Mohyla et al. 2012: 17) Essentially, this was similar to the system of 'nuclear sharing' of US nuclear weapons with European NATO members. The Soviet Union placed nuclear weapons on the territories of at least four states: Poland, Czechoslovakia, Eastern Germany, and

Hungary. All these were also equipped with weapons systems that could be employed for the delivery of nuclear weapons, whether they be ballistic missiles, nuclear-capable artillery, or combat aircraft. (Schofield 2014: 64–65) For example, three nuclear weapons storage facilities were located on the territory of Czechoslovakia; they were controlled by Soviet soldiers, although the Czechoslovak army knew how to use them. Nevertheless, there was a carefully observed agreement between the Soviet Union and the USA that these weapons would only be issued to allies of the Warsaw Pact and NATO respectively if war were to break out. (Vacek 2004: 74)

In the countries of the Eastern bloc, considerations of nuclear weapon ownership and manufacture, and the commencement of preliminary development programmes, were linked to efforts on the part of these countries to obtain strong positions in foreign politics and to emancipate themselves from Soviet dominance. (In Yugoslavia, the nuclear programme played a specific role, as the country was not member of the Warsaw pact, and its programme was intended to deter both the West and the Soviet Union.) Not only had the Soviet leadership not supported these programmes; it endeavoured to suppress them. Many aspects of them remain classified to this day. The findings they obtained could potentially be put to use, however, should these programmes be restarted in a new geo-political climate.

Poland

In the Polish People's Republic, the possibility of obtaining nuclear armaments was first discussed in the late 1950s, during the rule of Władysław Gomułka, who had to some extent resisted Moscow's pressure. In addition, the Polish public hoped that Gomułka would carry out systemic reforms. Apparently, at this time Polish politicians had discussed, in strict secrecy, the possibility of developing atomic weapon to defend Poland's independence in the face of Soviet pressure; therefore, the fundamental theoretical work was carried out. However, Gomułka subsequently changed his stance towards Moscow, eventually becoming a vassal to the Soviet Union with no interest in resisting the Soviets. Therefore, the work on the Polish atomic bomb (which in any case had been in the earliest stages) was abandoned.

In 1968, towards the close of the Gomułka era, Zbigniew Puzewicz, a Professor at the Military University of Technology, produced a study showing how a thermonuclear weapon could be made. His design proposed initiating the hydrogen fusion with powerful lasers rather than by a nuclear fission explosion. The proposal attracted the attention of the Head of the University, Professor Sylwester Kaliski, who presented the idea to the new General Secretary of Poland's Communist party, Edward Gierek (in office from 1970). Gierek had been brought up in France, and counted General de Gaulle as among his role models. Within the Eastern bloc, he apparently sought for a relationship between Poland and the Soviet Union that mirrored that enjoyed by France and the USA within the Western bloc, i.e. a greater measure of independence for the country. He believed Poland having its own nuclear capability might significantly facilitate such a plan. (Szopa 2008) Thus, the project of a thermonuclear weapon gained Gierek's support, and was developed in top-secret in the Warsaw-based Institute of Plasma Physics and Laser Microfusion. Despite the secrecy, the Soviet Union soon found out about the plan, although it feigned ignorance. The Soviet conviction that the path taken by Poles was wrong, or practically unfeasible, explains this disinterest. Professor Kaliski died in a car crash in 1978, which in effect ended the project. The strange circumstances surrounding the crash led to speculation about possible KGB involvement, suggesting that in technical terms the Polish thermonuclear bomb project perhaps did actually have genuine potential. (Matusiak 2014)

Czechoslovakia

Although the idea of developing the nation's own nuclear armaments was floated in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia's Central Committee at some point in the mid-1980s, it is not known how seriously it was intended. Initial theoretical work on designing nuclear weapons was apparently undertaken at the Institute of Nuclear Research in Řež, but details are unknown. Also speculative is the theory according to which the pumped-storage hydroelectric power plant Dlouhé Stráně, constructed in a very peculiar fashion in the Jeseník mountain massif, was perhaps intended to serve as a source of power for a hidden system of uranium-enrichment centrifuges. If there was a Czechoslovak nuclear

weapon programme, its documents remain classified. (This information was obtained during personal communication with an individual employed in the Czech Republic's security apparatus, whose name remains in secret by mutual agreement.)

Romania

In the Socialist Republic of Romania, a military nuclear project was begun in 1978, as one of the three components of the Danube Programme (Programul Dunarea), whose aim was to develop WMDs (the second arm of the programme focused on chemical and biological weapons, and the third on medium-range ballistic missiles). Inspections carried out in Romania by the IAEA after the fall of the Ceausescu regime demonstrated that attempts were made to manufacture plutonium and to enrich uranium, mostly using technologies obtained in the West. Allegedly, Romania had all the technologies necessary to manufacture a nuclear weapon in May 1989, but as it lacked sufficient fissile material, a plant capable of producing 1kg of plutonium per year was ordered for construction. (Forum.msk.ru 2009) In July 1989, Hungary's foreign minister Gyula Horn accused Romania of preparing the production of nuclear, and other missiles. (Kamm 1989) In summer 1989 the Romanian armed forces aimed ballistic missiles at Hungarian nuclear power plant Paks. (Vilček 2014) The overthrow of the Ceausescu regime ended the project.

Yugoslavia

In Yugoslavia, the military use of nuclear power was first explored in 1948, when the Boris Kidrić Institute of Nuclear Sciences (today known as Vinča) was founded in Belgrade. This was followed in 1950 by the creation of two more institutes in Zagreb and Ljubljana. In 1955, the Federal Commission for Nuclear Energy was established and led by the highly influential Aleksandar Ranković; his other positions included Yugoslav Minister of the Interior and head of the country's secret service. Another strong supporter of Yugoslavia's nuclear armament was Edvard Kardejl, at the time he was the Foreign Minister and very close to the Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito. The main motivation for obtaining nuclear weapon was, as an attempt to strengthen the independence

of Yugoslavia from both the East and West; in particular, to increase its ability to resist pressure from Moscow. (Mukhatzhanova 2010: 205–208)

In addition to domestic research, links were forged with other countries such as Norway; Yugoslavia was an important recipient of assistance within the framework of the US initiative Atoms for Peace, which sought to distribute technologies for the peaceful employment of nuclear energy, whilst limiting proliferation of nuclear weapons. Although the programme provided Yugoslavia with some technologies, ultimately it effectively curtailed the country's nuclear programme; the establishing international links led many important scientists to leave the project, and in some cases, even the country. (Hymans 2012: 157–202)

Indisputably, despite the number of uranium enrichment and plutonium manufacturing experiments undertaken, no results that would enable actual construction of a nuclear weapon were achieved. Moreover, the project was very expensive, and relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union improved significantly in the interim. (Potter et al. 2000: 63–70) The Federal Commission for Nuclear Energy was disbanded, which for all intents and purposes meant the end of the programme. The fact that Aleksandar Ranković was removed from power in 1966 was a contributory factor. However, the programme was restarted in June 1974 in response to the detonation of India's first atom bomb. At a meeting in December, the Yugoslav leadership allegedly made the decision to build nuclear weapons. Called 'Project A', the programme was later headed by Admiral Branko Mamula, who became the Minister of Defence in 1982. Reputedly, he was a strong supporter of nuclear armaments for the Yugoslav national army, which was understood to be one of the pillars of the regime. The objective of the project was to create a plutonium implosion bomb, but the programme struggled; it faced technical difficulties and chronic mismanagement, the latter being to some extent a consequence of the efforts to divide everything among the individual republics of the federation. Consequently, the project was spread too thin, and the second Yugoslav nuclear weapon development programme was quietly shelved in 1987, apparently without ever producing anything of practical utility. (Mukhatzhanova 2010: 209–210 and 220–221)

The decade after the Cold War

In the evolving security environment after the fall of Communism, part of Central and Eastern Europe found itself at least temporarily in a power vacuum. States were seeking to secure a position of power for themselves as international relations became rearranged. The post-Soviet republics in particular were in a specific position, mostly prominently among them the Ukraine, which was in a position to preserve nuclear arsenal as part of the Soviet Union's legacy. The 1994 Budapest Memorandum guaranteed Ukraine's territorial integrity. The Ukraine, for its part, pledged not to have nuclear weapons. Throughout the 1990s, the idea of attaining nuclear status was occasionally floated in other countries in the area, but never had any serious impact (even less so after the accession of several post-Communist countries to NATO). The period following the Soviet and the Balkan wars was characterised by chaos; weapons and nuclear materials were thought to have been smuggled. Information had also appeared about the nuclear ambitions of certain countries, although it was later disproved (see below for the case of Yugoslavia).

Ukraine

It is often stated that after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan became nuclear powers de facto, although they had voluntarily given up 'their' nuclear arsenals. Such a view is very skewed; although in terms of the number of nuclear weapons located on their territories, these three countries occupied the third, fourth, and eighth place in the world ranking of nuclear powers, this was not the truth in reality. Not a single government or army of the newly-created countries controlled the nuclear weapons, and although in theory they might have had the opportunity to seize the nuclear tactical warheads, they were quickly moved to Russia. The subsequent negotiations concerning strategic weapons were something else, though, as silos for intercontinental ballistic missiles existed within the territories of all three countries. All the Soviet nuclear warheads were removed from the territories of Kazakhstan and Belarus by 1995 and 1996 respectively. (The Nuclear Weapon Archive 2001)

In this sense, the Ukraine posed the greatest problem: originally, 1500 to 2500 Soviet warheads were located on its territory, alongside a significant segment of the Soviet nuclear industry (for instance, the Kharkov Institute), as well as important uranium deposits. Although officially the new Ukrainian leadership rejected nuclear weapons, and sought to have them removed to Russia, many cases and processes were documented, casting some doubt on their resolve regarding the correctness of their original decision. In February 1992, the removal of nuclear warheads to Russia was suspended without warning and only resumed two months later. During negotiations about the Treaty establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Ukraine blocked the wording that stated Russia was the 'only' nuclear power in the CIS. In 1992, the Ukrainian government announced that it considered the nuclear weapons located on its territory its property. It demanded means to construct a facility in which nuclear warheads could be dismantled from the USA (rather than removal to Russia to be dismantled there); of course, such a facility could also be used for assembly. Finally, it demanded to accede as a party to the START treaty. However, all this seems to have been intended as a form of pressure to manipulate negotiations with both Russia and the West, rather than an expression of Ukraine's genuine wish to retain a part of the Soviet nuclear arsenal. The last Soviet nuclear warheads were removed from Ukraine's territory in May 1996. (Sokov 2010: 256–267) There were multiple reasons for Ukraine to give up its nuclear weapons: principally to become accepted into the fellowship of Western liberal democracies; also its dependence on trade with the West; and the security guarantees which the nuclear powers (including Russia) at the time applied to a non-nuclear Ukraine. (Sokov 2010: 271–281)

Poland

Whilst visiting Poland in 1992, the Ukrainian Minister of Defence, Konstantin Morozov, received a very peculiar offer, reported in the memoirs of Jan Parys, who at that time served as Poland's Minister of Defence. The Polish President Lech Wałęsa proposed to Morozov that Ukraine sell several of 'its' nuclear weapons (i.e. the originally Soviet weapons that were still located on Ukraine's territory) to Poland, which would mount them on its own ballistic missiles. The shocked Parys

pointed out to Wałęsa that ownership of nuclear weapons would damage Poland's reputation and forestall its rapprochement with the West. Moreover, most probably the only warheads remaining in Ukraine at the time were those used on strategic missiles, for which Poland did not even have suitable carriers. Wałęsa's proposal testified to the fact that the Polish desire for nuclear weapons endured, and was informed by the country's aspiration to be a great power, and also manifested itself in politicians opposed to the Communist regime. (Przybylski 2014)

Czechoslovakia

Following the demise of the Eastern bloc, Czechoslovakia also put forward the possibility of creating its own nuclear arsenal. The main proponent of the idea was General Radovan Procházka, who in 1990 became the Head of the Civil Secret Service (called at the time Foreign Intelligence Service (Vnější zpravodajská služba)), and in March 1993 was named the Chief of the Military Intelligence Service (Intelligence Service of the General Staff of the Army of the Czech Republic (Zpravodajská správa Generálního štábu Armády ČR)). He became known for his promotion of so-called circular defence or 'defence in all directions': at the outset it remained unclear what course developments in neighbouring countries would take, whether the Soviet armies would be withdrawn, and if so, when and how. (Pacner 2010) In addition to a broad network of spies focused in all directions, Procházka devised 'Project Hammer' (projekt Kladivo), which envisaged the manufacture of several dozen tactical nuclear weapons, most likely designed as aerial bombs. President Václav Havel repeatedly strictly rejected any such plan, however, and Procházka's insistence was allegedly one of the reasons for his removal from the post of intelligence chief. (This information was obtained during personal communication with an individual employed in the Czech Republic's security apparatus, whose name remains in secret by mutual agreement.)

Yugoslavia

In November 1993, a news report appeared according to which the Yugoslav National Army (at that point, already the de facto Serbian army) owned four nuclear warheads. Allegedly these had been acquired

from an officer with Soviet forces in East Germany. They were intended primarily for operational and tactical ballistic Scud missiles. The warheads were supposedly deposited in secret storage facilities in the mountains of Montenegro, from where the missiles, with their 300km range, could pose a threat to several states including Italy. The fact that, at that time, Italy urgently requested the USA to deploy Patriot surface-to-air missiles on Italy's Adriatic coast for defence, lent some credence to the story. In the preceding week shrill statements were heard from Belgrade that Serbia would use 'all available means' to strengthen its defences. However, it seems that this was merely Serbian propaganda and bluff. (Vreij 1993)

Twenty-first century

In the early twenty-first century, the proliferation of nuclear weapons into Central and Eastern Europe appeared to be a problem resigned to history. All the countries in the region have been and continue to be signatories to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. However, with NATO enlargement and US plans to place components of its missile defence systems in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania, tensions between Russia on the one side, and the Central and Eastern European countries on the other, have risen, and remain high, despite President Obama's abandonment of the plans in 2010.

This led to the idea of placing nuclear weapons on the territories of some new NATO member states. Meanwhile, isolationist forces have been stimulated in these countries; they cite a desire to leave NATO and to construct their own national defences in the form of nuclear armaments. Placing a few exceptions aside, these movements have been marginal. However, the crisis in Ukraine opened a new chapter in this kind of thinking, as the West's stance towards Russia seemed insufficiently vigorous to some politicians in Poland. Fears were voiced as to whether the aid provided by its partners would really be effective if the Russian aggression were to continue, and the question of Poland's own nuclear arsenal and that of placing a US nuclear arsenal on Poland's territory were raised. Ukraine remains a highly specific case; in particular its domestic politics and the ongoing clashes between its pro-Western, pro-Russian, and isolationist nationalist forces.

Ukraine

When the last Soviet nuclear weapons were removed from Ukraine's territory, the sector briefly went mostly quiet; since the turn of the century, louder calls for the renewal of the country's nuclear status have been heard. These became more intensive during the three periods of crisis, when Ukraine felt obviously threatened. In 1999, i.e. during the conflict in Kosovo, the Ukrainian parliament adopted a resolution according to which the country abandoned its non-nuclear status. During the territorial dispute with Russia over Tuzla Island, which lasted from September 2003 to June 2005, repeated proclamations were heard calling for the build-up of a nuclear arsenal to deter Russia. Finally, in December 2005, at the peak of one of the 'gas crises' involving the Ukraine and Russia (when there was even a short interruption in natural gas supplies), the Ukrainian Prime Minister Yekhanurov stated that the danger to Ukraine's economy might eventually lead the country to re-evaluate the obligations stemming from the 1994 security guarantees. Whilst the Budapest Memorandum (in which three nuclear powers (Russia, the USA, and the United Kingdom) pledged to guarantee the boundaries of a non-nuclear Ukraine) fundamentally contributed to Ukraine's decision to renounce nuclear weapons, opinions were later heard in Ukraine (and sometimes even in the highest political circles) claiming that relinquishing its nuclear status was a mistake. These voices, which mostly originate from the politicians of the 'anti-Russian' camp (centred around Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko), urge that the country should become nuclear again and manufacture its own nuclear weapons. In general these sentiments have been classified as populist proclamations, made by individuals or parties whose approval ratings had dropped, to regain the lost support of the electorate. (Sokov 2010: 268–270) Indeed, the election programme of the Ukrainian nationalist party Svoboda (originally the Social-National Party of Ukraine) explicitly mentions nuclear rearmament. (Olszański 2011)

The events that unfolded in Ukraine in late 2013 and 2014 escalated into a full-blown internal conflict accompanied by a covert Russian armed intervention. These actions have changed Ukraine's approach to the issue of nuclear weapons in a fundamental way. The perception of Russia as the main culprit of the crisis and as the enemy in the conflict

led to a sharp rise in the number of statements made by Ukraine's political and military leaders concerning the nuclear armament of the country. As early as 28 February 2014, Mikhail Golovko, a Svoboda MP, said, in response to the annexation of Crimea, that Ukraine will once again become a nuclear power. (Navigator 2014) Two weeks later, another member of the Ukrainian parliament, Pavlo Ryzanenko, (Koren 2014) voiced a similar sentiment, and on 1 September, the highly popular general of the Ukrainian army Volodymyr Ruban proclaimed:

'You might remember that Ukraine used to own nuclear weapons. It had given them up, on the condition, or in exchange for, that the West ensures the security and integrity of Ukraine. [...] Or are we to return to nuclear weapons? I don't know whether the West realises at all that by its own behaviour it is forcing us this way. [...] Ukraine is a country of great possibilities, and has not forgotten its nuclear know-how. I would even say that we could renew Ukraine's nuclear status very easily... This is a scenario which we must consider, unless aid is provided to us, as promised, with binding effect, years earlier.' (Gazdik 2014)

In September, Ukraine's minister of defence Valeriy Heletey also confirmed that Ukraine is seriously contemplating building its own nuclear weapons arsenal. (ČTK 2014b) In view of international events, these proclamations should probably be taken much more seriously than those cited previously, although they too might be largely intended 'merely' to threaten and provoke.

It is an unhappy truth that in 1993 a source in the USA predicted that the Ukraine would eventually be penalised for relinquishing its nuclear weapons, by becoming the victim of Russian expansionism, disguised as Russia's defence of human rights of ethnic Russians 'oppressed' in Eastern Ukraine. As recently as 2010, this prediction was described as very much exaggerated, with the argument that in terms of its security, Ukraine would take enormous risks by owning nuclear weapons, ultimately decreasing rather than increasing its internal security. (Sokov 2010: 260–261) It is very difficult to argue today how exactly a Ukrainian nuclear arsenal would have altered relations between Russia and Ukraine, although indubitably the entire evolution of those relations would have differed wholly from the outset. Counterbalancing the opinions of the Ukrainian politicians and generals cited above (i.e. those who seem to believe that Moscow would not dare to attack a nuclear Ukraine),

one might argue that the present crisis would have perhaps been even more dangerous. In the past, powers owning nuclear weapons were attacked by other countries, and some of them had nuclear weapons, while others did not. In other words, nuclear armament on its own should not be understood as eliminating the threat of attack. Furthermore, a conflict between Russia and a nuclear Ukraine would carry the significant risk of unleashing a real nuclear war. (Růžicka 2014)

The question whether Ukraine would be in a position to manufacture nuclear weapons on its own must clearly be answered in the affirmative, obviously with the proviso that this would take a relatively long time to achieve, would involve a significant financial outlay, and would require the perseverance of political will. Certainly though, Ukraine already has most of what is needed to manufacture a nuclear weapon (such as deposits of uranium, research institutes, and nuclear power plants). In the foreseeable future, it could obtain uranium enrichment plants and produce weapon-grade plutonium. Although one cannot expect the mainstream Russian media to be impartial vis-a-vis Ukraine, the claims of several Russian scientists in the daily *Izvestiya*, who assert that the Ukraine could manufacture a nuclear weapon within ten years seem fairly realistic. (ČTK 2014b) However, other expert estimates envisage a much shorter timeframe; one estimate claiming that Ukraine could start to manufacture nuclear weapons within six months. (Sokov 2010: 257) Although it might find it difficult to obtain a fully-fledged nuclear arsenal with real military effect, within a few years it could probably build a more or less 'symbolic' nuclear arsenal (similar to that owned today by North Korea, i.e. a few warheads). A 2010 evaluation states that in a situation where Ukraine is not a member of NATO and/or the EU, and finds itself under the pressure of Moscow (which is the case now), the probability of its initiating a nuclear armament project is low (5 per cent), but certainly not impossible. (Tertrais 2006: 573–574)

Poland

The Ukrainian crisis is often understood as a manifestation of Russia's expansion, and as such has unsurprisingly led to a surge of interest in nuclear weapons in other countries, including Poland. It seems that former President Lech Wałęsa never quite abandoned the idea, and in

September 2014 he suggested that Poland “borrows” nuclear weapons, placing them on its territory. He appeared to mean that Poland should join NATO’s nuclear sharing programme, that is, it would have US tactical nuclear weapons located on its territory (most probably aerial bombs), which, in the event of war, it could take charge of and use. (ČTK 2014a) Polish F-16 fighter planes could easily be adapted to carry nuclear bombs; it might even be that these planes have had this ability from the outset, as is alleged to have been requested by Poland. (Braw 2014)

Irrespectively of what is going on in Ukraine, there is a very important question over whether Poland intends in the long-term to obtain its own nuclear arsenal. A 2006 study declared this scenario to be almost impossible in the short- to mid-term horizon (2010–2025), putting its probability at one per cent. Such a wild card might be played in a situation involving a weakened NATO, extreme Russian pressure, and a Polish administration seeking an alternative way to ensure its security. (Tertrais 2006: 575)

Medium- and long-term future seems a different affair, however, if we consider prognoses according to which Poland will emerge as a new regional or continental great power, seeking hegemony in Central and Eastern Europe. In such a scenario, it would be realistic to expect that Poland would strive to become a nuclear power. (Friedman 2009: 198) Interestingly, there is already a foundation in place in Poland to fund a domestic nuclear programme. (Krakauer 2012)

Czech Republic

There is a small but probably not entirely negligible possibility that the Czech Republic would consider joining the NATO nuclear sharing programme. This has been a matter for some speculation in the past. For example, in April 2010 the controversial journalist Karel Dolejší wrote that when the country’s lease on a fleet JAS-39 Gripen fighter planes expires, the Czech right-wing government might choose US-made F-16s instead and ask the USA to move twenty of its ‘shared’ nuclear aerial bombs from Germany to the Czech Republic. (Dolejší 2010) Remarkably, in April 2014 the Czech deputy Prime Minister Jiří Schneider indirectly admitted the possibility that Prague might in some way participate in the European nuclear deterrent. (Braw 2014) The possibility

that the Czech Republic would create its own nuclear arsenal remains a matter of pure speculation. On this issue, it is worth noting that in 2007 the extreme right party National Unity (Národní sjednocení, today the Conservative and Social Movement, Konzervativní a sociální hnutí) proposed that the Czech Republic (possibly in cooperation with Poland) construct its own nuclear deterrent. (Národní sjednocení 2007)) In purely technical terms, as a country that has uranium deposits, a developed civil nuclear programme, and a very good scientific and technological foundation, the Czech Republic is undoubtedly numbered among those countries that would be able to independently develop and manufacture nuclear weapons within a few years. (Janouch 2006)

Hungary

As far as one can tell, Hungary has never seriously entertained the idea of building a nuclear weapon. In October 1999 however, the Prime Minister Viktor Orbán attracted attention for making a threat to Russia to the effect that Hungary might join the NATO nuclear sharing programme, or have US nuclear weapons placed on its territory. (Arms Control Association 2011) Now, one might speculate that Viktor Orbán's policy, which is evidently increasingly authoritarian, nationalist, and populist, might in the medium to long-term future lead the country to consider the possibility of embarking on its own nuclear armament programme. This might also happen should some other country in the region such as Ukraine or Poland obtain nuclear weapons. However, today such a scenario is purely a hypothetical 'wild card'.

Serbia

In the late 1990s and in the first decade of the twenty-first century, a theory appeared sporadically regarding Serbia's aim to obtain nuclear weaponry. Despite the failure of Yugoslavia's Tito-era nuclear programme, a significant scientific and technological potential remained in place in Serbia, one that could have been used to initiate the development of a nuclear weapon. Moreover, there was still a stockpile of enriched uranium in the Vinča institute. Some argued, especially following the 'Allied Force' operation in 1999, which led to the de facto defeat of Serbia, that the regime (which emerged from the conflict not just defeated, but

also isolated and tarnished) would seek to obtain a nuclear arsenal to serve as a deterrent. The aim of such a deterrent would have been the prevention not only of possible future international attacks, but also of the potential loss of Kosovo in its entirety. (Potter et al. 2000: 63–70) However, the stockpile of enriched uranium was secured and removed in 2003, thanks to a joint US-Russian initiative. In 2006, the probability that Serbia would commence a nuclear weapons programme was still calculated at the same level as for Ukraine (5 per cent); although this is most relevant if the nationalists of the Serbian Radical Party were to come to power. (Tertrais 2006: 574) Although this party met with some success, the Serbia ruled by democrats has adopted a pro-European direction, thereby effectively removing any rationale for an interest in nuclear weapons. Thus, if the probability of Ukraine seeking nuclear capability increased significantly in recent months, in Serbia, by contrast, it has practically decreased to zero. (Mukhatzhanova 2010: 209–210 and 220–221) The possibility that Serbia's nuclear programme might be restarted could be entertained if efforts to integrate the country into the EU structures were to fail utterly, and Serbia were to reorient itself politically towards Russia.

Conclusion

Proliferation of nuclear weapons in Central and Eastern Europe is an issue that has arisen at several points in modern history with varying degrees of intensity. The present discussion is narrowly linked to the so-called Ukrainian crisis. Ukraine was already an important subject of, and participant in, nuclear proliferation debates during the 1990s. Today, as the so-called Budapest memorandum on Ukraine's territorial integrity has been violated, serious attempts to obtain nuclear weapons for Ukraine have become a concern. Poland's response to the Ukrainian crisis has included the voicing of a need for US nuclear weapons to be deployed in Poland; some have even suggested that Poland should obtain its own nuclear arsenal. In the Czech Republic, some pro-American internal political forces have sought, so far not very clearly, to articulate a vision of "shared nuclear responsibility" within NATO. However, they argue with pro-Russian circles, concentrated especially around

President Miloš Zeman. A potential shift in Poland towards nuclear status would be motivated by the country's fears of Russia, while potential Hungarian and Serbian nuclearisation is informed by disagreement with the anti-Russian stance of the West, and by endeavours on the part of some in Hungary and Serbia to secure a relatively independent position for themselves (favouring Russia). Thus far, the spiral of nuclear proliferation in Central and Eastern Europe only emerges in political discussions and might never be triggered. However, in view of historical experience, both present and future trends demand careful attention.

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SUMMARY

The authors of this publication deal with various aspects of regional security interdependence. This concept is outlined in the introduction by Miroslav Mareš and Tomáš Šmíd. The papers are focused on two main areas – interregional interdependence in the Middle East and Central Asia and in East and Central Europe. Tomáš Kaválek analyses the development of Turkish foreign policy towards Iraqi Federal and Kurdistan Regional Governments (IFG and KRG) since the US invasion to Iraq in 2003. Iveta Hlouchová focuses on Iran's foreign policy towards Iraq and towards Afghanistan in the pre-Islamic State period. The changes of the geopolitical position of Kazakh terrorism are described in the paper by Martin Laryš and Miroslav Mareš. Mareš and Tomáš Bělonožník analyse the Slovak-Russian economic relations in the shadow of current Ukrainian crisis (particularly in the field of economy), Mareš and Lukáš Visingr assess the threat of nuclear proliferation in Central and Eastern Europe. The knowledge of regional security interdependence has been deepened thanks to all papers in these proceedings.

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REGIONAL SECURITY INTERDEPENDENCE

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This workshop (and proceedings) deals with regional security interdependence. It is an important part of contemporary security studies, where the theories of regional security complex and international interdependence were elaborated. Approaches used in these proceedings are integrating both the above mentioned concepts. Papers are focused on two main areas – interregional interdependence in Middle East and Central Asia and in East and Central Europe. Broad spectrum of contemporary security threats and issues is analysed – foreign policy, guerrilla warfare, terrorism, energy security, nuclear proliferation etc. Authors are connected with strategic and security studies at the Department of Political Science (Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University, Brno).