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Geopolitics

USA - what next?

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Biden Administration – Effects on Multilateralism

Heinz Gärtner

India and China: Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific Decade (I)

Velina Tchakarova

Der Kaschmir-Konflikt - Neue Fronten am Fuße des Himalayas?

Simon Hartweger

Nagorno-Karabakh and Eastern Partnership – is there a Role for the EU?

Anna Steiner

Konflikt in Nordäthiopien – Wege zur Konfliktbeilegung

Matthias Leitner

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In einem immer anspruchsvoller werdenden internationalen Umfeld brauchen Entscheidungsträgerinnen und Entscheidungsträger in Politik und Wirtschaft ein breites und ausgewogenes Wissen hinsichtlich der maßgeblichen Trends, Akteure, Themen und strategisch relevanten Regionen. TDHJ setzt sich zum Ziel, Entwicklungen einzuordnen und nüchtern zu bewerten. Dazu schlägt das Magazin die Brücke zwischen verschiedenen akademischen Disziplinen und kombiniert wissenschaftliche Einsichten mit praktischer Erfahrung. TDHJ versteht sich dabei insbesondere auch als Medium, um jungen Expertinnen und Experten eine Plattform für ihre Gedanken zur Verfügung zu stellen.

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EDITORIAL

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,
ist Joe Bidens Amerika Garant für Weltfrieden? Wird Chinas herausfordernde Rolle überschätzt? Welche Rolle kann die EU im Konflikt zwischen Armenien und Aserbaidschan einnehmen? Sind die bewaffneten Auseinandersetzungen in der Region Tigray in Äthiopien nur Vorboten eines lange schwelenden Konflikts? Dem und einigem mehr ist die First Special Edition des Journals unter dem Fokus GEOPOLITICS gewidmet.

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Dear Sir or Madam,

Is the new Biden Administration a guarantor for world peace? Do we overestimate China's role in global affairs? What will be the EU's in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan? Is armed conflict in Tigray/Ethiopia sign of a protractive bigger aggravation? The Defence Horizon Journal's First Special Edition will treat these and other questions under the focus GEOPOLITICS.

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INHALT / CONTENT

- 6 The Biden Administrations Geo-Economics – a Challenge for Europe, by Josef Braml and Ulrich Schlie
- 10 What does Biden's presidency mean for multilateralism?, by Heinz Gärtner
- 14 India and China: Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific Decade – Part I, by Velina Tchakarova
- 18 Der Kaschmir-Konflikt – Neue Fronten am Fuße des Himalayas?, von Simon Hartweger
- 22 Nagorno-Karabakh and Eastern Partnership – is there a Role for the EU?, by Anna Steiner
- 26 Konflikt in Nordäthiopien – Wege zur Konfliktbeilegung, von Matthias Leitner
- 29 Preview: Call for Papers – Nächste / Next Special Editions

The Biden Administration's Geo-Economics A CHALLENGE FOR EUROPE¹

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Abstract: On 20 January 2021, Democrat Joe Biden Jr. was inaugurated as the 46th President of the United States. Democrats now control the White House and enjoy majorities in both chambers of Congress, the House of Representatives and the Senate. However, they will not have a free hand to govern – as many political observers in Europe falsely expect. Because Democrats do not command of the qualified majority (of 60 votes) needed to avert blockades in the normal legislative process. Republicans will be able to block the Biden administration's ambitious legislative agenda with the same obstructionist strategy that prevented most of Barack Obama's initiatives. While many of President Biden's social and economic priorities – such as improving health care, the Green Deal, and tax increases – can be thwarted by congressional Republicans, there is a bipartisan consensus in the United States on foreign policy vis a vis rival states. The United States will continue to use economic resources for geostrategic goals – especially against China and Russia. America's geo-economics will also force its allies in Europe and Asia to think and choose strategically.

Bottom-line-up-front: The geo-economic rivalry between the United States and China will affect European interests and should as well give the Europeans reasons to think more geo-strategically. In order to improve its capacity to act and defend its interests and values, the European Union should move from the illusion of unanimity towards a more realistic consensus-finding in the form of qualified majority voting in foreign and security policy.

Problem statement: Given the obvious social and economic problems in the United States, European observers mistakenly expect the next US government to mainly focus on domestic issues and to neglect foreign policy.

So what?: Europeans should realize that Republican obstruction in the domestic field will lead the Biden administration to use its greater room for manoeuvre in foreign policy. The United States will continue to use their economic weapons against rivals such as Russia and China – which will also affect European interests.

INTRODUCTION – STATE OF PLAY

Democrat Joe Biden was elected president of the United States by nearly 80 million US voters, with far more votes than any other candidate before him. Despite fears of a contested election raised by his predecessor, Donald Trump, Biden was ultimately elected president on 14 December 2020 with a clear majority of 306 of the electoral college's 538 electors and was sworn in on 20 January 2021. With the new incumbent in the White House, many European political and economic leaders are pinpointing their hopes for a more predictable and for them more advantageous domestic and foreign policy of the world power. But even after the presidential and congressional elections, the political situation in the United States will remain difficult and volatile.

FURTHER POSSIBLE POLITICAL BLOCKADE

In the US political system, the legislature and the executive branches of government are more "separated" not only by various electoral acts. The system of "checks and balances" is also characterized by the fact that political powers compete with each other and hence control each other.² Thus, the US Congress does not automatically adopt the political agenda of the executive/president, even if, in the case of the current "unified government"³ when the White House and Capitol Hill are "governed" by the same party.

Democrats have retained control of the first chamber of Congress, the House of Representatives, but unexpectedly lost many seats and will have a smaller majority in the future. Since President Biden has nominated three Democratic lawmakers for executive posts – namely Cedric Richmond as Senior Advisor to the President and Director of the Office of Public Liaison, Marcia Fudge as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and Deb Haaland as Secretary of the Interior – the Democratic majority is likely to be even narrower until their seats will be replaced by special elections in Spring 2021. By then, Democrats will have only one or two seats more than the 218 votes necessary for the majority, depending on how quickly the nominees will be confirmed by the Senate for their Cabinet posts, and thus have to resign their congressional seats.

In the absence of a "blue wave", Democrats failed to win the more important second chamber of Congress, the Senate. They lost decisive races in Maine, Iowa and other states. But in the runoff elections in the state of Georgia, the Democrats still managed to win both seats. This allowed them to secure control in the Senate. With an even split

of 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans, Vice President Kamala Harris can cast the decisive vote to break a tie.

That makes it all the more difficult for the new Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer to lead the Senate. In this chamber, a single senator with permanent speeches, a so-called "filibuster", can stop legislative business – as long as a qualified three-fifths majority of 60 senators does not shut him up. "To invoke cloture" is the maneuver to avert a "filibuster".

Since in November 2013 Democrats with their simple majority quickly changed the Senate's rules of procedure – opting for what Republicans called the "nuclear option" – blockades on personnel nominations can now be lifted with a simple majority. However, the normal legislative procedure is excluded. It still takes 60 votes to lift a blockade. That is why the Senate must provide incentives to satisfy as many as possible of all 100 senators. Pressure, on the other hand, would do little. Asked about the "power" of the Senate majority leader, former Democratic senator and "majority leader" George J. Mitchell replied, "You have the power to kiss 99 butts".⁴

More powers has "Madam Speaker of the US House of Representatives". House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has more resources to keep the albeit shrinking majority of her party in line: she can determine the chairmen of committees and subcommittees that are particularly attractive to interest groups and their campaign finance donations, decide through a procedural committee, the rules committee, whether and on which committees or subcommittees a legislative bill is being dealt with, and to what extent amendments are allowed. The rules of procedure are therefore used by the speaker as effective instruments of power. Nevertheless, because of the lack of party discipline, the speaker in the US House of Representatives does not have the enormous means of sanctions that a group leader has in a parliamentary system of government, as in Germany.

In the absence of party discipline, the president is also often urged to "buy" the support of members of Congress even from his own party with appropriate aid for the constituencies or individual states of the courted representatives and senators. As president, Biden will now have greater difficulties to maintain the unity of his Democratic Party. After Trump's removal from the White House, the external "enemy" is now missing, which helped to close its own ranks during the campaign. There are already tensions between progressives and moderates over who is responsible for the congressional losses – and, accordingly, a dispute over the Democrats' future course of government.

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Unsurprisingly, Biden assembled a cabinet that includes the various factions of his coalition, including progressive and moderates. Thanks to the Democrats' control of the Senate, the president's personnel decisions can be approved swiftly, without the Republicans' blocking options, thereby maintaining the Democrats' intraparty arithmetic.

However, in the absence of a Democratic supermajority in the Senate (60 votes out of 100), and the possible obstruction of Republicans in the normal legislative process, the comprehensive legislation on health care, tax reform, financial regulation, climate and energy policy, demanded particularly by progressive Democrats, is not to be expected.

To be sure, Biden has 36 years of work experience in the Senate and is known for his ability to work in a bipartisan manner. But his legislative cooperation and successes were a long time ago – they were at a time when consensus was still possible and was rewarded by voters and interest groups. A partisan Republican blockade of his legislative agenda could force President Biden to govern ad-hoc by executive order, without the long-term binding force of laws, as his two predecessors, Trump and Obama, did.

IMPACT OF THE POLICY BLOCKADE

The financial world was relieved that the future president would not be able to call all the shots. Stock markets reacted with price rises to the fact that there will be no Democratic-controlled legislator that could regulate businesses and raise taxes. However, a government that is limited in its ability to act is also a cause for concern, given the country's serious social and economic problems. Foremost, legislative action would be urgently needed to address the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact.

While there is reason to hope for an improvement since two companies, notably Moderna and Pfizer, announced coronavirus vaccines in November 2020, promising more than 90 percent efficacy in clinical trials. However, it will take many months for the vaccine to be distributed to people who are not classified as “highly vulnerable” because of their work, age and health conditions.

The human and economic losses of the COVID-19 pandemic are particularly severe in the United States. By the beginning of 2021, there were already more than 350,000 deaths caused by COVID-19. Because of the increasing number of confirmed cases, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

have recommended further restrictions on personal and economic life. The tightening of COVID-19 rules in many places, especially travel restrictions and shop closures, will continue to weigh on the US economy. The scale of the crisis so far is unprecedented: the pandemic has caused both a demand, supply and financial shock.

Given the dramatic socio-economic situation in the United States, a bill to provide COVID-19 economic relief for households and businesses was passed by Congress and signed by outgoing President Trump. Business leaders' calls for government support softened the previous blockade of Senate Republicans and averted Trump's veto threat. Looking ahead to the next midterm elections, which will already take place in two years, Democrats have equally strong incentives to create better conditions for economic recovery, especially now, with a Democrat in the White House. In this situation, a compromise was reached, in which fiscal conservatives agreed to a package of \$ 900 billion and Democrats, for their part, accepted previously rejected conditions, such as exempting employers from liability for COVID-19.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND TAX REFORM PLANS

The necessary response to the economic consequences of the coronavirus could also provide political backing for the adoption of an infrastructure package in the future. There is now a bipartisan understanding that many areas of the US infrastructure system need to be renovated and renewed. In addition to investing in roads and bridges, Biden's infrastructure plan covers water infrastructure and broadband access.

Infrastructure programs to mitigate the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic could also serve as a legislative vehicle for the Biden administration to achieve at least part of its climate and alternative energy agenda. First and foremost, progressive Democrats will seek to allocate more resources to energy sector reform, electric vehicle systems, public transport, and thermal insulation of buildings.

But already in the past Trump years, fiercely contested funding debates in Congress have prevented a bipartisan agreement on infrastructure spending. By linking his infrastructure plan, worth more than \$ 2 trillion, to tax reform, his successor, Joe Biden, has made this formidable task even more difficult politically. During his presidential campaign, Biden promised to fund domestic spending programs through tax increases by repealing various components of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA). Still, Biden plans

not to raise income taxes for people earning less than \$ 400,000 a year, but to raise the corporate tax rate from 21 to 28 percent.

The Biden administration could also try to provide tax incentives to prevent companies from moving their operations abroad by levying a minimum corporate tax rate of 15 percent on book income. It could also seek to oblige those with an income of one million dollars or more to pay the same rate on capital gains as on salary.

While congressional Republicans would surely unite to prevent Biden-led Democrats from significantly raising taxes, Senate Republican Minority Leader Mitch McConnell would have a much harder time maintaining unanimity against a Biden stimulus program if stimulus was achieved primarily through middle-class tax cuts. The Republican blockade on public spending could also be softened if the Biden administration provides “pork barrel” incentives by directing government investment in states whose senators are needed for the vote count.

Biden has also sent protectionist signals, highlighting the role of American industry in the economic recovery. A four-year, \$ 400 billion “Buy American” plan aims to create more manufacturing jobs, focus federal funds on American companies, and prevent offshoring.

GLOBAL GEO-ECONOMIC RIVALRIES

Under the new president and Congress, not only the “Buy American” provisions will be pursued. The United States will continue to apply (secondary) sanctions to force its allies to buy “freedom gas”, for example. As early as December 2019, the US Congress, with bipartisan support, passed the so-called Protecting Europe's Energy Security Act (PEESA). The law initially halted the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which was supported by the German government, because the sanctions targeted the operators of the special ships that laid the pipes for the pipeline. With the budget authorization for the US Department of Defense, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the US Congress gave the next US president the authority to impose even further sanctions on active supporters of the project. The decision provides for punitive measures both against insurers of companies and ships involved in the further construction of Nord Stream 2 and against technical certification companies.

The United States will continue to argue from a geopolitical point of view that this pipeline would make US allies such as Germany

dependent on Russia. That is why political and economic decision makers need strategic patience and the longer breath of better economic and geostrategic arguments: America's short-sighted geo-economic action against the main competitors in the international oil and gas markets – be it Saudi Arabia, Russia, or Iran – is not only at the expense of the economic interests of allied countries like Germany. It harms the United States itself in the long run and helps its global rival, China.⁵

The geo-economic rivalry between the United States and China is going to be reinforced by the Biden administration. The next US government will continue to manage or manipulate data, trade, energy, and financial flows, especially through (secondary) sanctions. The game of forces in “free” markets will continue to be politically undermined by the United States and will only be accepted as long as it serves the political goal of geostrategic dominance.

The conflict between the United States and China is mainly fought in the technology sector. On the 5G/Huawei conflict issue, the United States will remain relentless with its allies. In the struggle for technological spheres of influence, in which future economic and military dominance is at stake, Washington will increase pressure on third countries such as Germany and its companies and put them before the choice of either disclosing business with China or the United States.

TURNING TO ASIA

America's “Pivot to Asia” course already taken under the Obama/Biden administration, will continue – again at the expense of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). For President Obama and then Vice President Biden, to the annoyance of Europeans, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) initiative was more important, with which they intended to contain China in trade policy and take economic toll on its allies.

ENDNOTES

1. This article elaborates on a previous publication: Josef Braml, “Amerikas Geo-Ökonomie unter Biden – Europas Risiken und Chancen,” ifo-Sch nelldienst 1/2021: 28-32.
2. Richard E. Neustadt describes the US political system as a „government of separated institutions sharing powers“. Charles O. Jones specified Neustadt's idiom: „separated institutions sharing and competing for powers“. Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (New York – Toronto: The Free Press, 1990), 29; Charles O. Jones, *The Presidency in a Separated System* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2nd ed., 2005), 24.
3. James L. Sundquist, “Needed, A Political Theory for the New Era of Coalition Government in the United States,” *Political Science Quarterly*, 103 (4): 613-635; Weaver & Rockman also differentiate “regime types”: Weaver, Kent R. Weaver, Bert A. Rockman, “Assessing the Effects of Institutions,” *Political Science Quarterly*, 103 (4): 1-41.
4. Ross Baker, *House and Senate* (New York – London: W.W. Norton & Company, 4th ed., 2008), 91.
5. Josef Braml, „Transatlantic Action Plan: Energy Policy and Climate Change“, Nicholas Burns et al. eds, *Stronger Together: A Strategy to Revitalize Transatlantic Power* (Harvard Kennedy School: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs) December 2020. <https://www.belfercenter.org/publications/stronger-together>

What does Biden's presidency mean for multilateralism?

Author: Univ. Prof. Dr. Heinz Gärtner is lecturer at the University of Vienna. He chairs the Advisory Board of the International Institute for Peace (IIP). He was director of the Austrian Institute for International Affairs. Among others, he chairs the Strategy and Security advisory board of the Austrian Armed Forces.

Abstract: President Trump's presidency not only was unsuccessful but left the world in disarray. He abandoned multilateralism and polarized the international system. Just as in the second half of the 19th century, the world today is witnessing a breakdown of a ruled based order. Under the Trump administration it became visible that the US has ceased to be the leading world power. This relative decline of the US implies that Europe will have to engage in world affairs. President Joseph Biden will certainly cooperate within some multilateral organizations. He will act more diplomatically. Tensions with China and Russia will remain, however. The emerging bipolarity will be structural. The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 can be model for global cooperation. The world has now the choice: 1914 or 1975.

Bottom-line-up-front: Multilateralism will witness a certain revival. The Helsinki Final Act stands as a model.

Problem statement: Has the USA already ceased to be the leading world power? What about remaining tensions with China and Russia? Will bipolarity be structural?

So what?: Europe should seize strategic opportunity to use a bigger room of manoeuvre the Biden administration would open up.

MULTIPOLARITY WITHOUT MULTILATERALISM

New actors are emerging in the World after Cold War-bipolarity and US-unipolarity. The world is becoming more multipolar. More competing poles may lead to more polarization and (nuclear) arms race unless it will be accompanied by a strong multilateralism. However, multilateralism is in decline. Europe and Asia have to find their roles in this new world. The US-debate tends to ignore Europe's importance in the world while China's threat is often exaggerated. Asia itself is heterogeneous and consists of multiple political, economic and cultural centres. China is the most powerful state but Asia is not China led. Multipolarity with no or little multilateralism is a dangerous mix for the world. Europe's history offers some analogies for possible scenarios for the future.

TRUMP'S FOREIGN POLICY LEFT THE WORLD IN DISARRAY

Just as in the second half of the 19th century, the world today is witnessing a breakdown of multilateralism, the emergence of nationalistic and ethnic xenophobia, the demonization of adversaries, the depreciation of international institutions, withdrawals from international agreements and treaties, and an expanding arms race. It is a breakdown of values in slow motion of what Europe holds dear: effective multilateralism, working international institutions, interdependence and interconnectedness, military restraint but peace support, engagement of adversaries, common and cooperative security. Simultaneously the world moves to a Great Power Conflict. The conflict of the US and China is not new but US President Donald Trump increased tensions with China.

President Trump's presidency not only was not successful but left the world in disarray.¹ He abandoned multilateralism and polarized the international system. President Trump left most of the international agreements, like the nuclear deal with Iran (JCPOA) and the Treaty on Intermediate Missiles (INF) and he attacked multilateral institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Paris Climate agreement. The Great Power

Competition with China and Russia became priority and he imposed heavy sanctions on Iran. He threatened European companies with secondary sanctions if they do business with Iran although the Europeans considered the JCPOA a masterpiece of "effective multilateralism". All the sanctions did not change Iran's behaviour according to his request. Neither "maximum pressure" nor friendly relations between Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong Un led to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. But already before Trump, America had resisted international consensus on land mines, cluster bombs, the rights of women, and more, failing to ratify treaties, even when it signed them.²

The Europeans feel betrayed. Over decades they have built up a very positive image of the US. The US intervened in both World Wars, was the leading Western power against the Soviet bloc and provided the Marshall Plan for some European states. They remained mostly silent in the face of the brutality of the Vietnam War. This was not possible anymore when George W. Bush intervened in Iraq in 2003 under false pretenses. As former Secretary of Defense Ronald Rumsfeld observed that there was a division between "old and new Europe". Under the Trump administration again most parts of Europe felt that the US has ceased to be the beloved leading world power.

In addition, internal weaknesses of the US have become visible. Bad management of the Covid-19 crisis, a dysfunctional health system, a crumbling infrastructure and cities, social inequality and underfunded high school. In the Freedom of Press index the US ranks 45th!³ Joseph Nye's "American soft power"⁴ was losing attractiveness. "Soft power" was selectively concentrated on elite America, elite universities, high tech companies, famous popular culture, anyway.

GREAT POWER CONFLICT

Every ten years there is debate in the US whether the US is in decline. Joseph Nye⁵ argued that it was a normal offset by Germany and Japan, whose economy had been destroyed during the Second World War, gained a larger share in the world economy. During the Trump administration it became visible, however, that decline goes beyond

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the economic dimension and comprises political, social and cultural dimensions. To be clear, the US will not lose its Great Power status but it will cease to be the exceptional or indispensable superpower and become a normal state.

This relative decline of the US implies that Europe will have to engage more in world affairs. The debate so far has been focused on enhancing European military capabilities. More importantly is Europe's political role. During the Trump administration it left the Middle East to the Kushner-Plan which abandoned the Two-State-Solution. On the Korean Peninsula, Europeans watched first the Kim-Trump war of words and then their love affair.

US-Russia relations were dominated by US internal affairs which had an impact on European-Russian relations. Also, Europe should develop its own China policy independent from the US-China Great Power Conflict. Europe was not able to keep the JCPOA functional because it was afraid of Trump's secondary sanctions. Europe should seize the opportunity to use a bigger room of manoeuvre the Biden administration would open up. Higher defence spending is not the solution for Europe to get a bigger leverage in the world but political engagement. The EU has not been very successful in getting engaged in international conflicts, however. Also, a European army would not be able to address these issues. It is becoming an excuse for European political deficiencies. Europeans must learn to manage international crises themselves – not without the US, but also not by waiting for the US to do so. If Europe is not in the position to take on this role either, we can expect a more dangerous and polarized world.

The historian Graham Allison⁶ found that in 75 percent of Great Power Conflict when a declining power is challenged by a rising power war occurred. He calls this Thucydides trap. Most countries in the world do not want to be entrapped in a future great power conflict. What will be Europe's options? In such a military conflict Europe will not side with China but to be drawn into a Great Power Conflict, which is not in its interest, on the side with the US would be disastrous as well. A rational choice would be to stay neutral. Some NATO members, however, will observe the security commitments (Article V) of the

Washington Treaty. If the EU stays neutral, NATO will likely become divided. Austria will be obliged to remain neutral according to its neutrality law.

Fareed Zakaria⁷ argues that the existence of two great power does not necessarily lead to war. "You can have bipolarity without war." He is referring to the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War. Counter examples would be the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta or the Carthaginian War between Rome and Carthage.

UNDER BIDEN'S PRESIDENCY SAME MULTILATERALISM WILL RETURN, GREAT POWER CONFLICT IS HERE TO STAY

Will President Joseph Biden change course? Biden will not bring the US back to the exceptional status. Many changes are structural. Trump was not only an aberration. Richard Haass speaks of a "disruptive superpower"⁸, Michael Beckley of the "illiberal superpower"⁹. Biden will certainly cooperate within some multilateral organizations like the WHO, the WTO and return to the Paris Climate Agreement. He will act more diplomatically. There will be no new international treaties, however, because they would require two thirds of the votes in the senate. Republican Senators will not support a treaty that has been negotiated by a democratic president. Presidential directives would still be possible instruments; they can be abandoned by the next president, however.

Joseph Biden will be more committed to NATO and work with US-allies in Europe and Asia. He also announced to create an "alliance of democracies". Let alone the definition of democracy (what about the US-allies Saudi Arabia or Egypt?), this alliance or association would exclude powers like China and Russia. This concept undermines per definitionem multilateralism which is comprehensive and not exclusive. Tensions with China and Russia will remain. The polarity too, is structural. Biden could, however, wage a big step like US-President Nixon took, when he visited Mao's China 1972. This was one of the most successful summits in post Second World War history.

THE MULTILATERAL NUCLEAR DEAL WITH IRAN (JCPOA)

As presidential candidate Joseph Biden said that he would return to the JCPOA if Iran also abides by the agreement. It is still not clear whether he would attach further conditions since the Congress will put pressure on him to take a tough position towards Iran. Iran for its part said it will not accept that the JCPOA will be renegotiated. Nevertheless, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani expressed the expectation that the newly elected US-President will correct the failures of the previous administration and return to international law and treaties. Probably, Joseph Biden will address the missile issue. Referring to the experiences of the war with Iraq, Iran argues it needs missiles for its defence. Therefore, Iran's missile program cannot be singled out. Saudi Arabia's missiles e.g. already have a longer range than those of Iran. In the framework of Iran's Foreign Minister Javad Zarif proposal of regional dialogue, Iran could agree to regional arms control negotiations if all actors of the region will be involved, however. A multilateral regional dialogue would leave the JCPOA untouched.

President Trump wanted to prevent the next president to restore normal relations with Iran. He made Iran responsible for all the tensions in the region. The killing of General Soleimani and the alliance of Arab states with Israel should isolate Iran politically and diplomatically. If President Biden thinks within a larger context, he could ignore Trump's policies and offer new diplomatic relations with Iran in order to save the nuclear deal. Such an initiative would go beyond Obama's rapprochement with Iran. In order not to be isolated, Iran itself could request that all the regional powers cooperate on the basis of the Arab Peace Plan of 2002 that would recognize Israel but only within the borders of 1967. This would not alienate the Palestinians and would keep the door open to a Two-State-Solution which Joseph Biden supports. Trump's current peace plan for the Middle East confirms Israel's occupation of the West Bank and ignores the rights of the Palestinians.

In sum, on the one hand Biden's foreign policy will be more diplomatic and multilateral. He could establish some diplomatic relations with Iran. On the other hand great power competitions will remain and maybe even tensions will increase. Iran itself could offer multilateral regional arms control talks and confidence building. It could also get back to a regional dialogue with the Arab states if they returned to the Arab Peace Plan of 2002 that allows diplomatic relations with an Israel within the 1967 borders.

1914 OR 1975?

A historical analogy could be the CSCE-Helsinki Final Act of 1975. Even developments during the East-West conflict have been influenced by the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. For example, the principle of mutual recognition of systems stood the test of heightened tensions during the Cold War: In spite of US-president's Ronald Reagan harsh rhetoric and references to the Soviet Union as the "evil empire", he and his successor George H. W. Bush conscientiously respected the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, acknowledged parity between the superpowers and different systems during their various historic summits in the eighties.

China is not only a geopolitical power but engages in various institutional, political, economic and financial multilateral levels. It goes without saying that it tries to influence and shape the process according to its own political and economic interests - but so do other countries. Abandoning multilateralism means abandoning common values. Values can change environments.

It is the Helsinki-document which expresses best European values. It does not identify enemies or threats, not even opponents or adversaries. It requests cooperative security and analyses that security is indivisible. The Final Act is not only a guideline to reduce the tensions in the whole of Europe but can be model for other conflict areas in the world, for example the relations between the two Koreas. The EU itself has to be realigned to the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. The world has now the choice: 1914 or 1975.

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India and China: GEOPOLITICS IN THE INDO- PACIFIC DECADE – PART I

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Abstract: It is the Asian continent that is anticipated to surpass North America and Europe in terms of demographics and economic power, with the two giants being at the centre of this global power shift. No other corner of the world faces the presence of three nuclear powers in the immediate vicinity, marked by unresolved security dilemmas and zero-sum game mentality. The question is whether China and India are going to rise peacefully in the emerging bipolarity rooted in a systemic competition between Washington and Beijing.

Bottom-line-up-front: Two asymmetries characterise the fragile Sino-India relationship: Beijing sees itself as a rising global power facing a systemic competition with the USA in all relevant socio-economic fields and key industrial sectors, while India is considered as a significant regional power in possession of nuclear weapons, but with limited power projection. Beijing has also managed to develop a long-term oriented geo-economic relationship with the New Delhi's direct rival – Pakistan.

Problem statement: Who are the future “indispensable powers”? Did complexity of current global affairs leads to the emergence an Indo-Pacific Decade? Isn't competition between India and China already in full swing?

So what?: India's growing economic self-reliance strategy and approach towards a reconfiguration of the global supply chains away from China are part of the systemic decoupling processes between Washington and Beijing. To tensions adds a new China-Pakistan alliance creating a significant geopolitical imbalance in the Indo-Pacific region. Arenas of diplomatic clashes and future geopolitical scenarios will be discussed in part II.

COMPLEXITY OF CURRENT GLOBAL AFFAIRS AND THE INDO- PACIFIC DECADE

Following the COVID-19 virus outbreak¹, the new year marks the beginning of the Indo-Pacific decade, in which China and India are destined to become “indispensable powers”², as their rise will shape the emerging global order in one way or another. It is the Asian continent that is anticipated to surpass North America and Europe in terms of demographics and economic power, with the two giants being at the centre of this global power shift. The rapid unfolding of regional centres of power creates a delusive impression of multipolarity, while in fact a new systemic bipolarity³ between the USA and China has been in the making for quite some time now. With India being on its path to becoming the third-largest economic power by 2025⁴, the Indo-Pacific region is slowly but surely becoming the main arena for global power competition in the 21st century. Gurpreet Khurana describes this geopolitical space as stretching from the Indian and western Pacific Ocean to the littorals of West Africa and East Asia⁵. The traditional South Asian security dilemma triangle between China, Pakistan and India as well as the imminent reconfiguration of the global supply chains due to COVID-19 crisis, provide a fertile soil for a profound tectonic shift in their relations.

No other corner of the world faces the presence of three nuclear powers in the immediate vicinity, marked by unresolved security dilemmas and zero-sum game mentality. The pioneer of realpolitik, August Ludwig von Rochau⁶, outlined a concept of state power reflecting on the historical political theory of nineteenth-century European affairs. He developed a new way of understanding (geo)politics and the distribution of power, based on which the British historian A. Taylor defined realpolitik as “the true motor of international relations with moralism serving at best as a pious smokescreen for a battle for power”, or as he also described it in one of his books “for the struggle of mastery in Europe”.⁷ Two hundred years fast forward, the relations between China and India are reflective of Taylor's maxim to a great extent, given that realpolitik is the true motor of global affairs serving at best as a pious smokescreen for the struggle for mastery in the world. Against this background, geopolitics and geo-economics are the two main pillars of realpolitik, as the former presupposes the use of political tools and instruments based on geographic conditions, while the latter relies on the economic mechanisms and instruments for the same reasons. The rationale behind geo-economics implies that states stick to the logic of trade by applying a wide range of economic tools to attain geopolitical objectives and, more importantly, weaken their rivals and competitors.

How will the global power shifts impact the relationship between China and India based on the geopolitical realities in the Indo-Pacific region? Are Beijing and New Delhi going to rise peacefully in the emerging bipolarity rooted in the systemic competition between Washington and Beijing? This piece explores the geopolitical approaches of the two Asian rivals and identifies the main points of contention based on realpolitik thinking⁸. Moreover, the paper in part II will present two future scenarios based on strategic foresight and evaluates the potential trends considering their bilateral relationship in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

CHINA AND THE RETURN OF REALPOLITIK

Since their foundation, China and India have been increasingly engaged “in a monumental battle for geopolitical supremacy”⁹, based on still unresolved issues and disputes such as the McMahon Line¹⁰ as well as the competition for strategic access to the Indian Ocean. In the global context, however, China is faced with the unique chance of becoming the first Asian global power in the modern history of international relations. Beijing's global rise will primarily be determined by the outcome of the Fourth Industrial Revolution of cyber-physical systems as well as the willingness and capabilities of China to establish its own global networks of finance, trade, energy, economics and diplomacy in global affairs. In this regard, China seems to currently be in a unique position, as it pursues to become the first “heartland” and “rimland” power at once.

British geographer Halford Mackinder¹¹ developed his theory on the struggle for power between sea-based and land-based powers at the beginning of the 20th Century. His approach claims that the geographic position of a country does influence the state interests, goals and decisions. While geography is a main factor, he also acknowledged the role of technology and technological breakthroughs as a determinant of state power.

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“Two asymmetries characterise the fragile Sino-India relationship: Beijing sees itself as a rising global power facing a systemic competition with the USA in all relevant socio-economic fields and key industrial sectors, while India is considered as a significant regional power in possession of nuclear weapons, but with limited power projection. Beijing has also managed to develop a long-term oriented geo-economic relationship with the New Delhi's direct rival – Pakistan.”

The main theoretical premise implies that the state power that controls the World Island (large parts of Europe, Africa and Asia) would also control the world in terms of demography, technological superiority, economic productivity etc. Thus, the world map is split into “heartland” and “rimland” (a term later introduced by Nicholas Spykman) territories. While the “heartland” realm is mostly sea-locked with a vast land connectivity as well as flat and open terrains (e.g. Russia and Central Asia), the “rimland” is characterized by a sea access and naval power capabilities (e.g. Western Europe, East Asia, India etc.). Nicholas Spykman developed further the theory based on Mackinder’s “heartland concept” by claiming that a state power with control over the “rimland” would have better access to natural resources, trade routes, and a larger population, which would enable global power projection.¹²

Mackinder also claimed that China could become a major player in global affairs one day because of its geographic location stretching from “heartland” to “rimland terrains”. Derived from Mackinder’s theoretical premises¹³, China seeks to establish a terrestrial connectivity through Eurasia¹⁴ with the industrial heart of Europe – Germany, France and Great Britain. Moreover, Central and Eastern Europe is the key to winning “the heartland”, whereas the control over the “heartland” in Eurasia would enable global power projection. From the prism of Mackinder’s theory, one could assess the launch of China’s One Belt One Road in 2013, which later became the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)¹⁵. BRI entails meanwhile two terrestrial connectivity routes to Central and Eastern Europe – one through Russia, and another one through Central Asia and Turkey. In addition, Beijing introduced various political and economic platforms for engagement and cooperation with the countries from this region, with the 17+1 initiative being the most famous among them¹⁶. Based on Spykman’s theoretical premises, China is also building up its military presence in the South China Sea and the Indo-Pacific realm, while it has developed the “string of pearls” approach in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to create a network of friendly ports and trade posts in India’s direct neighbours as part of the maritime connectivity within the BRI. Andrew Michta describes Beijing’s endgame as a “global inversion” of the interconnected trade flows, “which currently favour maritime routes, a setup that relies on U.S. naval power as enforcement. If China can develop a cross-Eurasian supply chain and protect it, it won’t need to match America in the maritime domain”.¹⁷ This paper argues, however, that China pursues simultaneously the formation of alternative routes via maritime and terrestrial connectivity, an

approach combining Mackinder’s Heartland and Spykman’s Rimland theory.

Two decisive asymmetries arise from China’s geopolitical perceptions of the relationship with New Delhi. First, Beijing sees itself as a rising global power facing a systemic competition with the USA in all relevant socio-economic fields and key industrial sectors, while India is considered as a significant regional power in possession of nuclear weapons, but with limited power projection. Second, Beijing has managed to develop a long-term oriented geo-economic relationship with the New Delhi’s direct rival – Pakistan. The realpolitik calculus behind their economic and trade ties coupled with an immense financial funding for Islamabad is part of China’s maritime connectivity strategy aimed at establishing an access to the Indian Ocean. However, this new reality of the China-Pakistan alliance created a significant geopolitical imbalance in the Indo-Pacific region, detrimental to India’s geopolitical interests.

There has been a profound shift in the mutual perceptions about the foreign and security policy of the two Asian rivals following the second mandate of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2019, which was described by Chinese scholars as embarking on a ‘riskier’ foreign policy approach¹⁸. One of the major topics in Chinese academic literature is India’s shift towards the USA following the COVID-19 crisis outbreak. China endorses India’s objective of taking a leadership role in shaping the global affairs towards ‘reformed multilateralism’, however, it also becomes detrimental to Chinese geopolitical interests due to India’s rapprochement with the USA in the Indo-Pacific region and an enhanced security and defence cooperation with Japan and Australia within the QUAD¹⁹ (see also Hartweg in this Special Edition). Furthermore, Chinese experts carefully follow India’s growing economic self-reliance strategy and approach towards a reconfiguration of the global supply chains away from China as part of the systemic decoupling processes between Washington and Beijing²⁰. China’s view on the Sino-Indian relationship has experienced a further shift following the bilateral skirmishes in the Ladakh region in 2020. These events primarily shattered any expectations on both sides for stability and predictability in the bilateral relationship. Since India has voluntarily pulled out of the negotiations on a deal with China’s Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)²¹, Beijing’s expectations for the Indian economy to become steadily integrated into the industrial and supply chain networks in Asia with China at the centre have become too unrealistic²². The common understanding currently is that it may take long for the Sino-

Indian relationship to normalize following the Ladakh episode in the summer last year²³. Furthermore, China considers the bilateral relationship with India as an asymmetrical non-zero-sum relationship, whereas India sees itself involved in a zero-sum relationship between two equally powerful countries in South Asia. India’s perception of China is that Beijing takes the central position in the direct neighbourhood and increasingly in the IOR, while China perceives New Delhi as the major geopolitical factor with considerable naval capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region²⁴.

INDIA’S GEOPOLITICAL APPROACH TOWARDS CHINA

For India, the possible outcome of the systemic rivalry between Washington and Beijing will be decisive for its path towards becoming an established regional power in the Indo-Pacific region. If China emerges as the winner of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and manages to establish itself as a second global centre of power, this systemic process will have a negative impact on India’s geopolitical interests and goals. Thus, it is in the immense interest of New Delhi to build strong ties with as many regional actors as possible in Asia. Beyond that, India seeks to strengthen the security and defence ties with various allies close to the USA, particularly in the maritime domain together with the QUAD. The quadrilateral cooperation between India, USA, Japan, and Australia is aimed at boosting security and defence ties between the four Indo-Pacific countries while counterbalancing China’s rise in this region.

It remains so far open whether the Indian government will pursue a policy of non-alignment amid the systemic rivalry between Washington and Beijing. Rather than that, it seems likely that India would not be given the option to remain neutral this time. In this geopolitical context, the deepening of relations with the USA towards a comprehensive strategic alliance seems to be only a matter of time. A decisive factor for this calculus is China’s behaviour towards its big neighbour. Beijing is currently faced with the option that the Chinese leadership either adopts a more assertive approach towards India resulting in further tensions along the line of actual control (LAC) and the IOR or it succeeds in mitigating the antagonistic relationship with New Delhi via diplomatic channels and geo-economic incentives, in order to prevent a second major conflict arena while dealing with the USA in other parts of the world.

The two asymmetries pointed out in the previous chapter are enshrined in India’s geopolitical approach towards China.

New Delhi anticipates a geostrategy of encirclement through the so called “string of pearls” approach by Beijing. While Beijing treats New Delhi as a second order rival due to its predominant focus on the systemic competition with USA, India considers China as the most existential threat to its geopolitical and geo-economic interests in the Indo-Pacific region. Furthermore, India sees itself confronted with two nuclear powers which are direct neighbours and close economic partners.

New Delhi follows a two-fold approach with both a terrestrial and maritime component in its geo-economic strategy, with a particular focus on the contested Himalayan borders with China and Pakistan. The country seeks also to expand the maritime component due to its geostrategic positioning in the IOR. This means a strategy aimed at creating a counterbalance to the growing Chinese presence in the IOR and the direct neighbourhood by expanding the network of regional and bilateral partnerships, alliances, and various security and defence constellations, “while playing as well, carefully but with dedication, the card of the Indo-Pacific.”²⁵ As a “middle power” positioned between Washington and Beijing with ambitious regional power projection capabilities, its main goal is to establish partially a strategic autonomy in the relations with other key players such as the USA, Russia, Japan, Australia etc., while carefully navigating through the complex relationship with China and Pakistan. Ultimately, India’s approach aims to partially replace China by cutting domestic dependencies and simultaneously attracting foreign investors which pursue a similar goal of diversifying supply chains, production processes, and trade ties away from Beijing.

China and India have also become more active in various international and regional organisations, with Beijing being in the lead once again. Even though New Delhi has actively participated in China-led organisational formats such as e.g. BRICS²⁶, AIIB²⁷ and SCO²⁸, it refrained from a participation in trade blocs such as RCEP²⁹ due to geo-economic considerations. RCEP represents meanwhile the world’s largest trading bloc with ASEAN countries with the participation of Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand et al.³⁰, while excluding major economic powers such as the USA, the EU, and India³¹. India pulled out of the treaty due to fears of unequal competition with China in addition to its boycott of Chinese products, services and technology solutions (apps, software etc.). Considering the enhanced multilateral platforms, the regional and international organisations will become another playground for India and China to seek relative advantages. The United Nations Security Council would likely become one of the arenas for diplomatic clashes in the next two years since New Delhi is a non-permanent member until 2023.

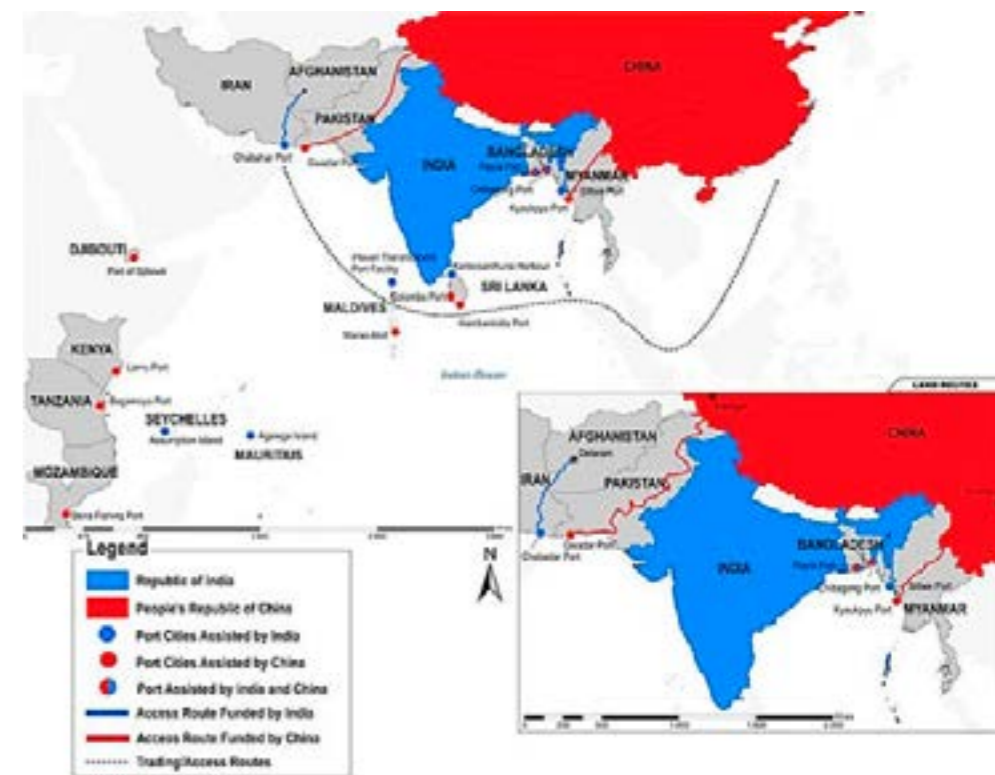


Figure: China and India in the Indo-Pacific Region³²

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Future Indo-Pacific geopolitical scenarios will be discussed in Special Edition II in April this year

Simon Hartweger

Der Kaschmir-Konflikt - Neue Fronten am Fuße des Himalayas?

Author: Simon Hartweger, Student der Rechtswissenschaften an der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, schreibt zurzeit an seiner Diplomarbeit zum Thema Kaschmir – Entzug des Sonderstatus und Auswirkungen auf die Stabilität in der Region Südasien.

Abstract: Seit Sommer 2019 spitzt sich die Lage im Kaschmir-Gebiet erneut zu. Anlass dafür war der Entzug des Sonderstatus Kaschmirs, der bis dato Autonomierechte auf Grundlage des Artikels 370 der indischen Verfassung zugestand. Ferner sollte durch diese Entscheidung der Bundesstaat Jammu und Kaschmir in zwei getrennte Unionsterritorien aufgeteilt werden. Ein kurzer Blick in die Vergangenheit zeigt aber, dass Indien, um Autonomiebestrebungen Einhalt zu gebieten, seine Bundesstaaten immer schon geteilt hat („divide et impera“). Somit war die Teilung Jammu und Kaschmirs in diesem Zusammenhang keine neuartige Herangehensweise. Die Teilung wurde sowohl auf nationaler als auch internationaler Ebene als innenpolitische Agenda deklariert.

Abstract Englisch: The Kashmir conflict has shaped South Asian regional security since its inception. India and Pakistan have been fighting over the mountainous region since the emergence of the two countries that were previously under British control. The borders are still not officially drawn which leads to numerous incidents. The two countries fought four wars which left the region in uncertain circumstances ever since. The withdrawal of the special status of Kashmir by the Indian government led to new tensions with new parties to the conflict. China’s global rise also spreads into the Himalaya region and leads the Kashmir conflict into a new decade. This article is about China’s influence and the possible impact of the upcoming partnerships around the region.

Bottom-line-up-front: Atomwaffenproblematik, komplexe regionale, Beziehungen, insbesondere die Rolle Indiens, Chinas, Pakistans und Afghanistans sowie internationale Dimensionen tragen zur Komplexität des Konflikts bei.

Problemstellung: Welche Folgen hat die Teilung Kaschmirs und Entzug der Autonomierechte gem. Art. 370 der indischen Verfassung von Sommer 2019?

Was nun?: Vermittlungsversuche der US-amerikanischen Trump-Administration scheiterten. Weitere Initiativen externer Akteure sind durch die regionalen Ambitionen wichtiger Nachbarstaaten blockiert. Eine Einladung zur Vermittlung seitens der Konfliktparteien scheint aus derzeitiger Sicht unwahrscheinlich.

.....
“Atomwaffenproblematik, komplexe regionale Beziehungen, insbesondere die Rolle Indiens, Chinas, Pakistans und Afghanistans sowie internationale Dimensionen tragen zur Komplexität des Konflikts bei.”

1914 OR 1975?

Mit dem Entzug des Sonderstatus von Kaschmir mittels Streichung zweier Verfassungsartikel vom 5. August 2019 wurden die Autonomierechte der ansässigen Bevölkerung beschnitten.¹ Damit fiel auch die staatlich geregelte Zuwanderung von Hinduisten in die mehrheitlich muslimische Region. Indien verfolgt mit diesem Schritt eine ähnliche Politik wie sie China in Tibet vollzogen hat. Hintergrund könnte daher der Versuch sein, den indischen Einfluss durch eine aktive Siedlungspolitik zu stärken.

Die Dimensionen, die diese Entscheidungen nach sich ziehen sollten, waren in Bezug auf Pakistan absehbar. Dass sie auch in China auf derartigen Gegenwind stoßen würden, war für die indischen Entscheidungsträger wohl nicht so offensichtlich: Sowohl Islamabad als auch Peking veröffentlichten seither Karten, die mit der indischen Auffassung über die Aufteilung des Gebietes nicht übereinstimmen und gegensätzliche Grenzverläufe zeigen. Mit der Entscheidung der indischen Regierung leitete man im Kaschmir-Konflikt eine neue Zeitrechnung ein. Der bekannte Konflikt zwischen Indien und Pakistan um die Kaschmir Region droht sich nun mit dem Grenzkonflikt zwischen Indien und China zu vermischen.²

BLICK IN DIE GESCHICHTE

Der Hintergrund: Der Kaschmir Konflikt kann auf eine lange und bewegende Geschichte zurückblicken. Die Kernursachen, die für den heutigen Kaschmir-Konflikt relevant sind, beginnen jedoch erst mit der britischen-niederländischen Ostindiengesellschaft im 18. Jahrhundert. Durch die imperialen Visionen der europäischen Mächte kam es ab dem 16. Jahrhundert zur Errichtung von Brückenköpfen auf dem indischen Festland. Durch die Befestigungen sollte eine intakte Infrastruktur geschaffen werden, um die lukrativen Güter des indischen Subkontinents leichter zugänglich zu machen. Weite Teile des Gebietes wurden mit Hilfe indischer Söldner erobert. Aber die Auslagerung der militärischen Angelegenheiten der Ostindiengesellschaft an Söldner sollte sich noch als Fehlgriff herausstellen. Dieser äußerte sich nämlich im „Großen Aufstand“ von 1857. Der Aufstand hatte mit der Ostindiengesellschaft wohl sein bekanntestes Opfer gefunden; sie wurde letztendlich 1858 vom britischen Staat vollständig übernommen.

Mit dem Untergang der Ostindiengesellschaft war der Weg für nationalistisches indisch-hinduistisches Gedankengut geebnet. Mit der Verfassungsreform 1909 sollte im Gegenzug ein Minderheitenschutz für Muslime gewährleistet werden, die in mehrheitlich hinduistisch geprägten Regionen lebten. Das Modell der separaten Wählerschaften funktionierte in den Regionen mit muslimischen Minderheiten sehr gut, jedoch wurde das Modell auch auf Regionen ausgeweitet, in denen Muslime die Mehrheit waren. Dies hatte zur Folge, dass die kandidierenden muslimischen Kräfte einen Interessenseparatismus betrieben, der bei der eigenen Wählerschaft großen Anklang fand. Die Einführung der „separaten Wählerschaften“ war also der bedeutendste Meilenstein, der letztendlich zur Teilung Britisch-Indiens führen sollte.

Die „Zwei-Nationen-Theorie“ war die Antwort auf die Frage, in welche Richtung sich das Staatsgefüge Britisch-Indien entwickeln sollte. In dieser Theorie wurde festgehalten, dass Muslime und Hindus zwei verschiedene Nationen darstellen und somit auch zwei Nationalstaaten geschaffen werden sollten. Einer friedlichen Koexistenz von Hindus und Muslimen in einem mehrheitlich hinduistischen Staat wurde mit dieser Theorie eine Absage erteilt.

Da die endgültige Grenzziehung als Reibungspunkt galt, wurde der britische Beamte und Rechtsanwalt Cyril Radcliffe damit beauftragt, diese durchzuführen. Als Ausgangspunkt wurden dabei die Volkszählungsdaten 1941 herangezogen und Pakistan wurden nur jene Regionen mit muslimischer Mehrheit zugesprochen. Radcliffes Entschluss war ein sehr weitreichender, denn er schloss nur die britisch-indischen Provinzen ein, nicht aber deren Fürstentümer. Diese konnten frei entscheiden, welchem Staat sie sich anschließen wollten. Hätte der Richterspruch auch die Fürstenstaaten miteingeschlossen, wäre es aufgrund der mehrheitlich muslimischen Bevölkerung in Kaschmir nie zu einem Kaschmir-Konflikt, wie wir ihn heute kennen, gekommen.

Als sich die britischen Kolonialherren 1947 endgültig zurückzogen, erklärte Pakistan am 14. August und Indien am 15. August ihre Unabhängigkeit. Gandhi sprach sich gegen eine Teilung aus und nannte sie passend eine „Vivisektion Indiens“. Der Vielzahl an Fürstenstaaten blieb es selbst überlassen, sich einem der beiden neu gegründeten Staaten anzuschließen oder von der Unabhängigkeit zu träumen. Indien bot den Vertretern der Fürstenstaaten die

Möglichkeit an, Teile ihres Landbesitzes zu behalten, was die Fülle an unterzeichneten Anschlussverträgen zugunsten Indiens erklärt. Im Fürstentum Kaschmir, das bei muslimischer Bevölkerungsmehrheit von einem hinduistischen Maharadscha regiert wurde, gab es jedoch Bedenken. Durch die geographische Nähe an gleich vier Staaten - Indien, Pakistan, Afghanistan und China - schob der Maharadscha seine Entscheidung vorerst auf. Nach dem Einfall pakistanischer Aufständischer, die bald von der pakistanischen Armee unterstützt wurden, wandte sich der Maharadscha an die indische Regierung und bat um Beistand. Die indischen Gruppen griffen aber nicht bedingungslos in die Kämpfe um Kaschmir ein, sondern forderten im Gegenzug den Anschluss Kaschmirs an Indien. Diese Drucksituation veranlasste den Maharadscha schließlich dazu, den indischen Bedingungen zuzustimmen und sich in weiterer Folge Indien anzuschließen. Was folgte, waren vier Kriege um die Kaschmir Region, die tiefe Gräben zwischen den Anrainerstaaten Indien, Pakistan und China schufen und somit das Erbe einer post-kolonialen Teilung. Nach Jahren der Entspannung spitzt sich die Lage seit der Wahl Neandra Modis zum Premierminister Indiens 2014 wieder zu³.

DIMENSIONEN DES KONFLIKTS UND KONFLIKTPOTENTIAL

Ein Faktor, der die Dimension des heutigen Konflikts neben den historischen Wurzeln erheblich mitprägt, ist die Atomwaffenproblematik. Sowohl Indien als auch Pakistan sind seit den 1990er Jahren offiziell im Besitz von Atomsprengköpfen. Fakt ist aber, dass beide Nationen schon Jahrzehnte davor mit der Technologie vertraut waren. Bemerkenswert an der Atommacht Indien ist, dass das Militär bei der Entwicklung zu keiner Zeit involviert war. Zuständig für den Gewahrsam ist eine eigens geschaffene Atombehörde. Der Grund dafür ist ein simpler: Durch die zivile Kontrolle soll einem Präventivschlag der indischen Armee vorgebeugt werden. Damit, so die Annahme, wird sichergestellt, dass die Sprengköpfe nur dann zur Anwendung kommen, wenn Indien bereits unter nuklearem Beschuss liegt. Die indische Herangehensweise wird als „minimal credible deterrent“ – also eine minimale ernstzunehmende Abschreckung bezeichnet. Wenn man die Atomprogramme der beiden Nationen vergleicht, ist festzustellen, dass Indien durch sein Weltraumprogramm einen enormen Vorteil gegenüber Pakistan hat. Mit seinem Weltraumprogramm kann Indien stetig auf

die neueste Technologie im Bereich Raketen zurückgreifen ohne einen externen Lieferanten zu brauchen. Seit der Machtübernahme Narendra Modis im Jahr 2014 kristallisierte sich das muslimische Pakistan wieder als Feindbild Nummer 1 heraus. Dies lässt sich nicht nur an verbalen Provokationen ablesen, sondern auch die Militärausgaben sind seit der Machtübernahme Modis sprunghaft angestiegen. Dies deutet darauf hin, dass Modi seine hinduistische Gefolgschaft, mit militärischer Potenz gegen den Erzfeind Pakistan, hinter sich vereinen will. Pakistan versteht sich als Schutzmacht der Muslime in der Region, die durch die indische Vorgehensweise unterdrückt werden. Denkbar wäre also, dass Pakistan seiner „selbstaufgelegten Schutzpflicht“ nachkommt und die instabile Lage der Region nützt, um erneute Truppenbewegungen über die „Line-of-Control“ zu forcieren⁴.

Weitere Faktoren sind die Nachbarschaft und die internationale Ebene. Nicht erst seit dem Entzug des Sonderstatus der Region Jammu und Kaschmir zeichnet sich eine erhöhte Bereitschaft für eine Neuausrichtung der Bündnispolitik am südasiatischen Kontinent in alle Richtungen an. China setzt dabei - unter dem Deckmantel der neuen Seidenstraße - auch in der Kaschmir-Region auf eine häppchenweise Aneignung von Gebieten und „besetzt“ diese durch militärische Infrastruktur, wie etwa auch im chinesischen Meer. Es liegt daher nahe, dass sich die wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit zwischen China und Pakistan seit dem Entzug des Sonderstatus auch auf politische- und militärische Zusammenarbeit ausweitet. Dabei gilt es, im Kaschmir-Konflikt eine geeinte Position gegen Indien zu vertreten. Diese „Ausweitung“ der Zusammenarbeit spiegelt sich auch in der neuen Kartographie der beiden verbündeten Nationen wider, bei der beide eine Einschränkung der Gebietsansprüche Indiens vorsehen⁵.

Fest steht, dass der Entzug des Sonderstatus eine dramatische Verschlechterung der bilateralen Beziehungen nach sich zieht, sowohl der Beziehungen zwischen Indien und Pakistan wie auch jenen zwischen Indien und China. Dabei ist erstere durch das ständige Auf und Ab zwischen Indien und Pakistan nichts Neues, letztere aber sehr bedenkenswert und zerstört die bilaterale Annäherung, die in den letzten Jahren verzeichnet werden konnte (siehe Tchakarova in dieser Special Edition). China und Indien könnten sich somit nicht nur auf wirtschaftlicher, sondern auch auf militärischer Ebene in Zukunft im Kaschmir-Gebiet einen Schlagabtausch liefern. Einen weiteren Unsicherheitsfaktor in der Kaschmir-Region stellt die Durand-Linie im Norden des Gebiets dar. Afghanistan kommt dabei eine entscheidende Rolle zu, da es vor allem Pakistan als Rückzugsort dienen könnte. Die innenpolitischen Spannungen zwischen Regierungsvertretern und Taliban konnten bis heute nicht vollständig beigelegt werden. Die Verfügbarkeit von moderner Waffentechnologie rund um die Konfliktregion erhöht das Risikopotential und es droht eine erneute Eskalation des Konfliktes.

Auch die USA, die eine Nahebeziehung zu Indien hegen, bleiben in diesem Zusammenhang nicht untätig. Die Trump-Administration versuchte, sich als Vermittler im Konflikt zu positionieren. Allerdings wurde dieser Versuch von Seiten Indiens als unerwünscht abgelehnt. Die USA geben ihren Kampf um die Vormacht im indopazifischen Raum jedoch noch nicht auf, sie verlieren aber im Gegensatz zum Konkurrenten China ständig an Boden. Somit, wie in vielen Fällen, verdichtet sich ein Stellvertreter-Szenario zur negativen Internationalisierung eines hochexplosiven fragilen Komplexes: Der Kaschmir-Konflikt wird um die Facette der geopolitischen Dimension erweitert.

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Nagorno-Karabakh and Eastern Partnership – IS THERE A ROLE FOR THE EU?

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Abstract: Once again, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh proved not to be "frozen" in 2020. While the EU is linked with both Armenia and Azerbaijan through its Eastern Partnership, it did not play any role in mediating the ceasefire. Is there a role for the EU in the immediate post-conflict era? A stronger focus on humanitarian issues and on common goals would not only create trust in an EU that takes the concerns of either side seriously, but could also build trust along the front lines, especially if the EU sticks to an inclusive peace-approach. Connectivity is key, thus the EU should press especially for the implementation of the respective point in the agreement that provides for the restoration of transport and economic links. In order to finally find its role in Nagorno-Karabakh, the EU certainly needs a clearer vision on how relations with Russia and Turkey should look like in the future.

Bottom-line-up-front: In regard to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, the EU focuses on supporting existing UN and OSCE frameworks. Multilateralism was, however, further marginalized when Russia unilaterally brokered the ceasefire. If the EU wants to raise its profile, it should do so quickly, focus on humanitarian issues and connectivity - and find a consistent *modus vivendi* in its relations with Russia and Turkey.

Problem statement: The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh proved not to be "frozen" in 2020. While the EU is linked with both Armenia and Azerbaijan through its Eastern Partnership, it did not play any role in mediating the ceasefire. Is there a role for the EU in post-conflict care?

So what?: The EU member states have to agree on a clear vision of what its relations with Russia and Turkey shall look like in future, as there can be no strategy for lasting peace in Nagorno-Karabakh without the involvement of regional players. The EU should direct its financial support under the Eastern Partnership more specifically towards providing humanitarian assistance and implement projects in which the parties to the conflict work towards common goals, thus contributing to trust building on a more subliminal level.

ARMENIAN – AZERI WAR IN 2020

In regard to the long-lasting conflict on Nagorno-Karabakh, the EU, between parties to the conflict Armenia and Azerbaijan, focuses on supporting existing UN- and OSCE frameworks. Multilateralism was, however, further marginalized when Russia in November last year unilaterally brokered the ceasefire. If the EU wants to raise its profile, it should do so quickly.

Many of those who went to war in the fall of 2020 were not yet born when the last full-scale war over Nagorno-Karabakh raged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union². As part of the former Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, Nagorno-Karabakh, inhabited mainly by (Karabakh) Armenians, remained de jure part of Azerbaijan, while Armenia exercised de facto control over it. Without reconciliation efforts on both sides, the conflict has neither been transformed, nor "frozen". This is why the term "frozen conflicts" is regarded to be inappropriate and hypocritical in a situation where the danger of a new escalation is neither frozen nor on hold, which is why "protracted conflict" or "unresolved conflict" better describes the actual situation³. The OSCE's Minsk Group has been negotiating basic principles for peaceful conflict resolution.

Additionally, the OSCE has installed a Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office on the Conflict Dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk. Kasprzyk has been actively and overall successfully engaged in managing the conflict. He has been assigned, together with his teams, to monitor along the line of contact and can perform rapid interventions at all levels to immediately contain ceasefire violations.

Nonetheless, instead of building on multilateralism, Azerbaijan created facts by military means in the fall of 2020. Not least, the Corona crisis contributed to this hostile environment. As late as in January 2020, the Co-Chairs were relatively optimistic after their meetings with the foreign ministers, as substantial negotiations (=sequencing the steps defined in the Madrid Principles) had been agreed upon in a retreat⁴. COVID-19 worked against these efforts. Although the Co-Chairs continued to hold online meetings with ministers, they were unable to sustain the positive momentum. Serious ceasefire violations already occurred in July, most likely triggered by Armenia⁵. In this hostile environment in autumn of 2020, instead of building on multilateralism, Azerbaijan

created facts by military means.

The majority of analysts agree that the aggression in autumn came from Azerbaijan, with the aim of bringing the territory back under its own control⁶. During the six weeks of bloodshed, Thomas de Waal explains the timing of the attack very conclusively⁷ Turkey provided military support to Baku in this regard, whereby in particular the drone technology used was decisive⁸. Russia, Yerevan's protecting power, had supplied arms to both parties in the past. The renewed flare-up of the conflict put the OSCE in danger of being further marginalized. Its Minsk group has not played a role in bringing about the ceasefire agreement, which was mediated by Russia in coordination with Turkey and signed on 9 November. Nevertheless, it must be noted that large parts of the truce are actually based on negotiations within the OSCE framework⁹. A peace settlement would most likely be guided by the Madrid principles, too. Russia is very aware of this fact. Hence it is likely that Moscow will soon pass the ball to the Minsk Co-Chairs again. Furthermore, the contacts and his deep understanding of the situation on the ground, which the Personal Representative Kasprzyk has been able to build up in his 24 years of service, could now be of inestimable value for achieving a peace settlement.

In this hostile environment in autumn of 2020, instead of building on multilateralism, Azerbaijan created facts by military means. The majority of analysts agree that the aggression came from Azerbaijan, with the aim of bringing the territory back under its own control. Thomas de Waal explains the timing of the attack very conclusively¹⁰ Turkey provided military support to Baku in this regard, whereby in particular the drone technology used was decisive¹¹. Russia, Yerevan's protecting power, had supplied arms to both parties in the past. The renewed flare-up of the conflict put the OSCE in danger of being further marginalized. Its Minsk group has not played a role in bringing about the ceasefire agreement, which was mediated by Russia in coordination with Turkey and signed on 9 November. Nevertheless, it must be noted that large parts of the truce are actually based on negotiations within the OSCE framework¹².

EU'S ABSENCE AT THE NEGOTIATIONS TABLE

This further weakens the position of the EU, which has confined itself to supporting existing UN and OSCE frameworks. Accordingly, also the mandate of its Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia is limited to supporting UN and OSCE mechanisms¹³. Calls for stronger EU involvement within the Minsk group, for example by converting the French into an EU co-chairmanship, have not prevailed. Although desirable, a EU co-chair seems out-of-sight today, as France has made clear it was taking on its role as sovereign state, not as a representative of the EU¹⁴. It would be all the more important now to return to the negotiating table to hammer out a peace agreement based on the Madrid principles of 2009 addressing six key elements for the settlement of the conflict. Besides a return of territories to Azerbaijan, a corridor for Armenia and a rigorous right to return for IDPs and refugees, an interim status for Nagorno-Karabakh providing guarantees for security and self-governance and future determination of the final legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh through a legally binding expression of will had been key to negotiations. Again in 2020, external negotiators would also have to advocate for a multinational OSCE (instead of purely Russian) peacekeeping force, to which the OSCE's HLPG was already mandated in the 2009 Madrid package.

SANDWICHED BETWEEN EASTERN PARTNERSHIP AND REGIONAL ACTORS

The EU's Neighbourhood Policy was complemented with the Eastern Partnership (EaP) after the Russian-Georgian war¹⁵. Within the EaP, political cooperation and economic association are offered to partner countries. For the states of the South Caucasus, however, enhancing relations with the EU means a balancing act, if not a tightrope, with Russia. Admittedly, it is also difficult for the EU to find the balance between necessary flexibility and justified toughness toward its partners¹⁶. All in all, the EU member states have indeed to agree on a clear vision of what its relations with Russia and Turkey shall look like in future, as there can be no strategy for lasting peace in Nagorno-Karabakh without the involvement of regional players. Especially as long as Russia does not perceive the EU as a partner, it will not have a role to play.

The latest briefing by the International Crisis Group Europe also speaks in this direction¹⁷. The ICG points out that Western actors – while understandably critical – cannot ignore the fact that Russia’s leading role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is in fact based on a long tradition: Moscow played a central role in the 1994 agreements and has been the most active mediator since then. Thus, transforming the conflict without Moscow is unrealistic. At the same time, success will probably only be achieved if Europe, the U.S. and multilateral institutions seize (and vehemently demand) the opportunity to become more actively involved.¹⁸

CONFIDENCE BUILDING VERSUS HUMANITARIAN AID?

In line with the bilateral ENP Action Plans, confidence building measures are a central part of the EU’s agenda¹⁹. The implementation of such measures in Nagorno-Karabakh was however not desired by the Azerbaijani side²⁰. In general, using “confidence-building” as the catchphrase among societies that deeply distrust each other most likely does nothing to encourage participation in EU activities. The example of Abkhazia shows that it is more purposeful to focus on humanitarian issues instead of on sole confidence building²¹. Even more in the context of Nagorno-Karabakh, where weapons have just been silenced, such an approach might give the impression of the EU firstly neglecting the conflict context and secondly exerting an anticipatory influence on the status issue over Nagorno-Karabakh. A focus on humanitarian issues therefore has better chances of creating trust in an EU that takes the concerns of either side seriously. In the long run, building trust between (Karabakh) Armenians and Azeris is, of course, the benefit one wants to see when they work together on common goals. Be it activities directly related to the conflict (exchange of prisoners of war, search for missing persons, ...) or projects in the fields of environment or agriculture along the front lines and beyond.

Point 9 of the ceasefire agreement signed in November 2020 provides for the restoration of all transport and economic links. The EU within its (limited) possibilities should press in particular for the implementation of this point, as connectivity could be key in transforming the conflict. Should Armenia’s borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan actually be opened in the future, the EU could find its role in reconstruction and infrastructure programs and thus support exchange²². It may prove helpful that Moscow also attaches particular importance to this point, as evidenced by the results of the summit meeting between Putin, Aliyev and Pashinyan

on 11 January 2021. Putin was able to secure the signing of a joint declaration that not only cements the November agreement but also, among other things, provides for the creation of a trilateral working group on Point 9 that is to present concrete plans for the development of the region’s transport infrastructure and economy²³. To sum up, the EU should direct its financial support under the EaP more specifically towards providing humanitarian assistance and implement projects in which the parties to the conflict work towards common goals, thus contributing to trust building on a more subliminal level.

AT LEAST, A MORE COORDINATED APPROACH

In both Armenia and Azerbaijan, nation-building has strongly been based on demarcation from the respective enemy²⁴. It will be crucial to develop projects that put the one-sided historical memory of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkey into perspective²⁵. Support of independent media is one of the EaP’s “cross cutting issues”²⁶ is important in this respect, but no less attention should be paid to the prevention of disinformation²⁷.

Building sustainable peace requires broad social inclusion²⁸. Two years ago, the Council of the EU adopted a new strategic approach to women, peace and security (WPS)²⁹. Not least in Nagorno-Karabakh, the EU could prove that it is ready to apply this approach comprehensively within the EaP.

Finally, if the EU were to adjust its role in Nagorno-Karabakh and upgrade it from payer to player, it would need a more coordinated approach of all its member states and a coherent diplomatic strategy towards Armenia, Azerbaijan and the regional actors involved³⁰. To come back to what has been said at the very beginning, a clearer more than *modus vivendi* vision of how the EU’s relations with Russia and Turkey are to be shaped in the future would be required.

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“In regard to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, the EU focuses on supporting existing UN and OSCE frameworks. Multilateralism was, however, further marginalized when Russia unilaterally brokered the ceasefire. If the EU wants to raise its profile, it should do so quickly, focus on humanitarian issues and connectivity - and find a consistent *modus vivendi* in its relations with Russia and Turkey.”

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Konflikt in Nordäthiopien: Geopolitik und regionale

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Abstract: Die Militäroperation Äthiopiens gegen die TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front) in der Provinz Tigray im Norden des Landes markiert einen tiefen Einschnitt für das Horn von Afrika. Während das Eskalationspotenzial der Region hinreichend bekannt ist, stehen stabilisierende Maßnahmen gemeinsam mit betroffenen Nachbarstaaten noch am Anfang. Kleinere vertrauensbildende Schritte könnten dabei helfen, mit IGAD und EU-Partnern einschließlich Österreichs ein Überspringen des Konflikts zu verhindern und Solidarität in der Region greifbar zu machen. Dies vermag die geopolitischen Rivalitäten zu bremsen und externe Einmischung zu verhindern. Es gilt zunächst, Expertise in humanitärer Hilfe und den Schutz der Zivilbevölkerung bereitzustellen sowie einen konzertierten diplomatischen Gesprächskanal zu eröffnen, durch den IGAD einvernehmlich den Boden für Dialog vorbereitet.

Abstract Englisch: Ethiopia's military operation against the Tigray People's Liberation front (TPLF) marks a watershed for the Horn of Africa. Yet while escalation potentials are evident, less attention has been devoted to stabilization measures together with regional neighbours. Small steps including confidence building measures in partnership with IGAD Member States and EU partners including Austria could provide a way forward and open doors to dialogue in northern Ethiopia, before external powers and geopolitical rivalries become enmeshed in this new conflict. Humanitarian expertise could be leveraged and assistance to ensure protection of civilians. Opening a dedicated information sharing channel with IGAD might prepare the ground for moving to African Union mediated talks and peaceful conflict resolution, with inputs from Austria based on its long-standing engagement in Ethiopia.

Bottom-line-up-front: Ist eine Ausstrahlung auf Region zu erwarten? Erscheinen regionale Vermittlungsversuche von / mit Unterstützung von IGAD aussichtsreich?

Problemstellung: Was hat den aktuellen Konflikt ausgelöst? Bedeutet das möglicherweise langdauernde bewaffnete Unruhen? Welche humanitären Probleme stellen sich? Wie kann der Konflikt „bearbeitet“ werden?

Was nun?: Humanitäre Hilfe für Flüchtlinge und Intern Vertriebene, Hinwirken und Stärkung regionaler Mediationsversuche, vertrauensbildende Maßnahmen und Dialog auf politischer Ebene, Wasserprojekte und klimaverträgliche Landwirtschaft, um Rückkehrende schneller zu integrieren.

VERLAUF DES KONFLIKTS

Nach vierwöchigen Kämpfen nahmen am 28. November äthiopische Truppen Mekelle ein, die Hauptstadt der Provinz Tigray im Norden von Äthiopien. Erst am 12. Dezember erreichte der erste internationale Hilfskonvoi Mekelle¹, wo die medizinische Versorgung nahezu völlig zum Erliegen gekommen war. Zwar wurden blutige Straßenkämpfe vermieden, doch sprachen UN-Beobachter Anfang Dezember von andauernden Kampfhandlungen². Die TPLF berichtete noch Ende Dezember von Gefechten³. Für die äthiopische Regierung handelt es sich um eine interne „Polizeiaktion“ gegen abtrünnige TPLF-Führer, die einstigen Machthaber im Land bis 2018. Ein vollständiges Bild der Lage in Tigray und den Opfern unter der Zivilbevölkerung fehlt, weil noch immer viele Kommunikationskanäle unterbrochen sind. Laut Regierungsberichten wurden bis 13. Januar 2021 mindestens vier hohe TPLF-Funktionäre bei Militäreinsätzen getötet und andere gefangen genommen, darunter der frühere äthiopische Außenminister Seyoum Mesfin⁴. Die Gewalt in Nordäthiopien kann leicht auf Nachbarstaaten übergreifen und erhebliche regionale Instabilität bewirken, was die Errungenschaften für demokratische Öffnung am Horn von Afrika zunichtemachen würde. Premierminister Abiy Ahmed wurde 2019 der Friedensnobelpreis für seine Annäherung mit Eritrea verliehen; der Sudan und Südsudan schlossen mit ihren bewaffneten Oppositionsgruppen Frieden.

SCHWELENDER KONFLIKT UND PREKÄRE SICHERHEIT DER ZIVILBEVÖLKERUNG

Alles deutet darauf hin, dass die Eskalation in Nordäthiopien keineswegs eingedämmt ist. Die TPLF-Partei verfügt weiterhin über ein erhebliches Waffenarsenal und gilt als besonders erfahren im Guerillakrieg auf eigenem Boden⁵. Sollte der Konflikt andauern, steht der Zusammenhalt Äthiopiens selbst auf dem Spiel, beispielsweise in der Provinz von Oromia im Umland von Addis Abeba, wo es seit Herbst 2019 periodisch zu ethnischen Unruhen kam⁶. Der populistische Führer Jawar Mohammed machte sich gegen Ende 2020 zum Wortführer junger Aktivisten in Oromia, indem er den Einmarsch in Tigray kritisierte.

In der Provinz Tigray wurden nach neuesten Angaben äthiopischer Behörden zusätzlich 414,00 Menschen durch den Konflikt vertrieben⁷.

Die Bevölkerung von Tigray war bereits vor dem Konflikt mit Dürreperioden und Ernährungsengpässen konfrontiert, vermehrt durch den Klimawandel. Eine Heuschreckenplage im Sommer 2020 befahl auch Landstrichet in Tigray. In Tigray leben zudem nahezu 100,000 Flüchtlinge aus Eritrea. Ein Massaker im Grenzort von Mai-Kadra⁸ im Westen von Tigray am 9. November wurde von der Menschenrechtskommission Äthiopiens bestätigt. Die UN-Hochkommissarin für Menschenrechte Michelle Bachelet forderte am 22. Dezember ungehinderten Zugang zu Tigray, damit unabhängige Beobachter die Berichte über Verbrechen an Zivilisten und Bombardierung von Siedlungen verifizieren können⁹.

Hilfsorganisationen bleibt humanitärer Zugang zu den nördlichen Bezirken verwehrt, obwohl die Regierung am 19. Januar 2021 tätige Nothilfe und Koordinationsmechanismen bestätigte¹⁰. Weitere noch unentdeckte Gewalttaten an Zivilisten können eine Spirale von Racheakten auslösen. Nach Prognosen des Weltwährungsfonds liegt das Wachstum 2020 bei nur 1.9% und bei null für 2021¹¹. Mit einer Schwächung der Elite in Tigray, die auch landesweit wirtschaftlich bestimmend unter anderem im Importgeschäft ist, ist daher auch Äthiopiens Resilienz angegriffen. Es bedarf schneller Normalisierung, um weitere Gewalt zu verhindern, gerade auf kommunaler Ebene zwischen ethnischen Gruppen.

DOMINOEFFEKTE IN DER REGION UND GEOPOLITISCHE RIVALITÄTEN

Unmittelbar betroffen ist der Sudan, wo über 50,000 Flüchtlinge aus Tigray¹² Zuflucht gesucht haben und UNHCR zusätzlich 150 Millionen US-Dollar für Nothilfe anfordern musste. In den ersten Tagen des Neuen Jahres kamen noch weitere 800 Flüchtlinge im Sudan an und es wurde damit begonnen, sie in ein zweites Lager weiter von der Grenze entfernt bei Ghedarif umzusiedeln. Sudan steht noch am Anfang seiner politischen Transformation und hat viele irreguläre bewaffnete Gruppen, die sich die Gewalt jenseits der Grenze zu Nutze machen können¹³. Im umstrittenen Farmland von Al Fashaqa an der östlichen Grenze zwischen Sudan und Äthiopien kam es im Zuge des Tigray-Konflikts zu Spannungen, die Mitte Dezember militärisch eskalierten.

Die Regierung von Eritrea hegt seit langem regionale Ambitionen und leistete Äthiopien direkte militärische Rückendeckung. Der ehemalige Verteidigungsminister von Eritrea Mesfin Hagos¹⁴ hat diese militärische

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Kooperation detailliert beschrieben. Äthiopien und Eritrea hatten sich 1998-2000 einen blutigen Grenzkrieg geliefert, der über 100.000 Opfer forderte. Soldaten aus Eritrea überschritten im neuen Konflikt mit Tigray an einigen Stellen die Grenze¹⁵. Weil es nie zu einer Demarkierung kam, bergen ungelöste Probleme wie der Status der Örtlichkeit von Badme als strategischer Position Zündstoff. Noch am 28. November schlugen weitere Raketen aus Tigray am Flughafen von Asmara ein¹⁶, der Hauptstadt von Eritrea, nachdem die TPLF zuvor von Eritrea aus mehrmals auf Ziele in Äthiopien gefeuert hatte.

Mit Somalia teilt sich Äthiopien die südliche Grenze in der Region ‚Haud‘, die das Militärregime von Siad Barre 1973 gewaltsam annektieren wollte. Schwächung der äthiopischen Militärpräsenz in Somalia ist ein Risikofaktor, da die Terrorgruppe Al-Shabaab dort während der sensiblen Periode vor den Präsidentschafts- und Parlamentswahlen für 2021 erneut an Einfluss gewinnen kann. Am Horn von Afrika gilt lediglich Djibouti unter dem Präsidenten Ismail Omar Guelleh als relative Oase der Sicherheit, nicht zuletzt wegen der fünf ausländischen Militärbasen¹⁷ nahe der wichtigen Wasserstraße von Bab-el-Mandeb.

Das Rote Meer sowie das Nilbecken sind die Vektoren für externe Interessen, die zusätzlich den Konflikt in Tigray aufladen können. Ägypten hat ein lebenswichtiges Interesse am Wasser des Nils und die zähen trilateralen Verhandlungen mit Sudan über den neuen „Grand Renaissance-Damm“ (GERD) Äthopiens illustrieren tiefes Misstrauen. Die Vereinigten Arabischen Emirate (UAE) unterhalten eine Militärbasis im Hafen von Assab (Eritrea) für Luftschläge an der Seite der Koalition mit Saudi-Arabien im Jemen; der Einsatz von Kampfdrohnen gegen die TPLF in Tigray von Assab aus wurde jedoch nie nachgewiesen.

CHANCEN FÜR INTERNATIONALE VERMITTLUNG UND STÄRKUNG DER ROLLE VON IGAD ZUM DIALOG

Premier Abiy hat wiederholt internationale Mediation im Konflikt mit Tigray ablehnt. Während TPLF bedingt Bereitschaft zum Dialog signalisiert hatte, bleiben die Fronten insgesamt verhärtet. Eine hochrangige Vermittlergruppe unter der Führung der Afrikanischen Union (AU) wurde bereits am 21. November vom Vorsitzenden der AU, dem südafrikanischen Präsidenten Cyril

Ramaphosa, bestellt¹⁸. Jedoch gelang es den „A-3 Staaten“ (Niger, Tunesien und Südafrika) im UN-Sicherheitsrat erst am 14. Dezember, den Tigray-Konflikt auf die Tagesordnung des Rats zu setzen, und zwar mit Schwerpunkt auf die humanitäre Situation (unter „Any Other Business“). Die regionale Staatengemeinschaft IGAD („Intergovernmental Authority on Development“; derzeit unter dem Vorsitz von Sudan) hatte erstmals im November mögliche Gespräche sondiert, war aber von Äthiopien abgewiesen worden. Sudans Premierminister Abdallah Hamdok¹⁹ versuchte ein zweites Mal am 13. Dezember auf seinen äthiopischen Kollegen einzuwirken, blieb aber erfolglos. Weil IGAD-Staaten eminent von der Eskalationsgefahr in Tigray betroffen sind und IGAD wie keine zweite Organisation in der Region über Instrumente der „Soft Power“ verfügt²⁰, sollte deren Potenzial für Vertrauensbildung mit Äthiopien als Vorstufe für den Dialog mit TPLF-Dissidenten systematisch genutzt werden. Auf der 38. Außerordentlichen Versammlung der IGAD Staats- und Regierungschefs am 20. Dezember in Djibouti spielte die Lage im Norden Äthiopiens neben den Punkten zu Sudan und Südsudan jedoch nur eine untergeordnete Rolle²¹.

Dadurch wird Koordination von humanitärer Hilfe durch UN-OCHA wirkungsvoll unterstützt und die gemeinsamen Sorgen lassen sich an die äthiopische Regierung herantragen. Aufgrund der Erfahrung Österreichs mit komplexen Krisen und seiner Tradition von Neutralität ist Österreich gut platziert, um auf friedliche Streitbeilegung im Konzert mit IGAD hinzuwirken. Zudem ist Österreich durch seine langjährige Präsenz in Äthiopien als Schwerpunktland der österreichischen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit in Afrika und speziell der delegierten Kooperation für die Europäische Kommission mit der IGAD aufgerufen, Dialog- und Handlungsoptionen aufzustellen sowie eine Anpassung der Programme zur Resilienz-Steigerung vorzunehmen. Die EU rief in einer Erklärung als berufener Freund von Äthiopien dazu auf, den Konflikt beizulegen und einen Dialog aufzunehmen²², und hatte zuvor 90 Millionen Euro an Unterstützung für Äthiopien suspendiert. Nach dem direkten telefonischen Kontakt zwischen den Außenministern Österreichs und Äthiopiens vom 1. Dezember 2020 zur Lage in Tigray und der sehr positiv zu bewertenden Besuchsdiplomatie und aktiven Vermittlungsbemühungen durch eine Reise des österreichischen Außenministers Alexander Schallenberg Mitte Jänner 2021 in die Region könnten die folgenden Maßnahmen ergriffen werden:

1. Sofortige Bereitstellung von technischer Hilfe und Finanzmitteln für lebenswichtige Notversorgung gefährdeter Bevölkerungsgruppen und Flüchtlingen in Tigray im Sudan durch die österreichische Bundesregierung.
2. Österreich kann mit der EU auf engere Abstimmung zwischen IGAD-Nachbarn und Äthiopien hinwirken und ein ad-hoc Sekretariat zum Informationsfluss durch Expertise unterstützen. Im Bereich Frieden und Sicherheit sowie zum Schutz der Zivilbevölkerung sollten zusätzliche Kapazitäten für IGAD mobilisiert werden, auch im Hinblick auf die laufende Unterstützung Österreichs für Kapazitätsentwicklung bei der IGAD ‚Peace and Security Division‘ (Addis Abeba).
3. Österreich könnte weiters seine renommierten Forschungs- und Bildungsstätten in ziviler Krisenprävention und Konfliktmanagement sowie im Politischen Dialog der AU-Vermittlergruppe zugänglich machen und eine Außenperspektive für weiteres Vorgehen anbieten.
4. In der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit mit Äthiopien und speziell für den Wiederaufbau in Tigray kann die Expertise Österreichs durch ADA-Programme in Wasserprojekten und klimaverträglicher Landwirtschaft verstärkt eingebracht werden, damit Rückkehrer schneller integriert werden.

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