

South-East Europe and the Emergence of a New World Order



A paper on the Regional
repercussions of a rapidly transforming
International Environment

Dissertation for a Master's Degree on South East European Studies

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Abstract

The following endeavor is an attempt to shed light on the dynamics developing around the Region of South East Europe under the Emergence of a New, Post Modern International World Order. Initially, the precise Methodological and inclusive Literature layout is presented, so as to provide a thorough and easily comprehensible environment. Then, Research proceeds to the presentation of the International Actors involved- namely China, the United States, the European Union and Russia- as well as to a depiction of their current interconnected relations on the field. To provide an even more stable and accurate foundation for the reader, a concise case study on Sub-Saharan Africa is presented. Finally, attention shifts towards extracting tendencies, prospects, conclusions and further inquiries on the initial Research Question. To reach this goal, three theories are introduced to interact with the previously outlined reality: Hedley Bull's 'Neo-Medievalism', Samuel Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' and Graham Allison's 'Thucydides Trap' are mobilized in a successive manner to securely develop an array of predictions and further inquiries on the future of the South East European Region in the International System under formulation.

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Introduction: China, South East Europe and the New World Order

The theoretical framework of the International Relations studies is unique in its vastness: Despite the wide range of both analytical and descriptive theories scientists may rely upon, there is no “mega-theory” up to date. (Tsardanidis Ch., 2006) When attempting to approach an International Phenomenon, a selective procedure of multiple tools has to be made in order for the Phenomenon to be analyzed thoroughly. Thus, despite the academic community’s inability to produce a consolidated, full-fledged “passe-partout” to be applied in a positivist manner, there is a wide selection of such tools. From the Waltzian notion of a neo-realist structure based upon State Power in an Anarchic International environment to a neo-liberal approach that argues in favour of Institutions, non-state actors and Honesty in Cooperation for the International Order (Lamy S., 2011), arguments are produced and pointed against each other in competition for the sake of Truth.

On the other hand, there is always the option of selecting specific “sub” theories-with the prefix being distinctive and not judgmental. The notion of a “Clash of Civilizations” (Huntington S, 1996) as opposed to an argument for “The End of History” (Fukuyama F, 1992) for instance, does not attempt to shed light upon all International Politics, but to critically describe a specific phenomenon occurring on a specific time span-and to theorize its consequences on a pre-existing reality. This specific theory may become crucial on a specific task of the present essay: Drawing the border and the characteristics of a possible Clash over the Region under consideration. Huntington does provide a detailed framework on how and why the Major Geopolitical Actors are simultaneously Great “Civilizational” Actors that are pre-destined to Clash over achieving local and global Hegemony. A more detailed presentation will be offered in the corresponding part of the present essay, but the notion of such “Clashes” as a replacement of the Cold War Ideological segregations is internationally gaining ground lately – after decades in relative obscurity.

A third category of literature reference stands in between: Stemming from attempts of mega-theorization, while also based on unfolding events and their case-study, authors combine both to achieve a result that may be surprisingly predicting, but also extremely susceptible to empirical deviations in the process. A work on that spectrum is Hedley Bull’s notion of Neo-Medievalism (Bull H, 1977), a relatively unacclaimed

theory arguing-among other theses- that the emerging post-modern world is becoming increasingly similar to the complex, overlapping and incomplete sovereignties between the Church, the Nobility and the States during High-Medieval Europe. A scheme that may suit, for instance, the recent Catalan and Scottish cases (Grigorakis G, 2017), but is no viable mega-theory when applied to instances where uneven Globalization and Modernization trends are present (e.g. when examining the brewing relation of the European Union with South-East Asia). A more recently perceived and specifically directed theory of that kind could serve well as an examining tool of the developing relation between an established “West” and a rapidly rising (far) “East”. That could not be other than the notion of a Thucydides Trap sprawling and devouring major Global adversaries, dragging them to different types of Wars, even if their initial intention was not to follow such a heated pathway (Alison, G., 2017). All in all, the current Postgraduate Dissertation’s purpose is not to deviate from the widely acclaimed ways in literature fundamentals. These norms should be preserved to the maximal possible level, thus allowing the “cherry picking” of a decently postmodernist approach: Theories and theses from a wide variety of disciplines will be used to explain and describe issues presented in situ.

The World is constantly evolving, and this fact has never changed. The differentiation of our Time is that we have to cope with a constantly rising **pace** of change. The world order of 2018 is almost a ‘foreigner’ to the world order of 2009, while **that** world order was not **so much** different from that of 2001. Following the outbreak of the global financial crisis of 2008, a stagnating Western Europe and an increasingly weakened (though still dominant) North America cannot help but watch the rise of other Powers, in a new and reshaping Global Order (Kissinger H., 2014).

Based upon that widely acclaimed argument, the Dissertation will proceed on examining how that trend applies in the relation between the South East Europe and the People’s Republic of China. By examining this phenomenon, we may extract some useful generalizations not only on the monetary and financial-aspect of their *stricto sensu* relations, but also on the possibly appearing general trend of a perceived Western-European Union and NATO decline and an Eastern-Shanghai Pact rise (Raptis K, 2018).

In a nutshell, after describing the fundamental literature approaches to be used and the general context of the Dissertation, only two tasks remain before the main part of this

attempt starts: How will this endeavor unfold in terms of methodology, and why was such the selection of the topic. The answer to the second inquiry of a perceived reader stems not only from the already mentioned literature, but also from two major contemporary and currently developing events.

Firstly, it was the announcement of the “One Belt – One Road” initiative by the Chinese president Xi Jinping in 2013 and the intensification for its realization from 2016 onwards. Through this very important development, China vows to become the industrial – exporting powerhouse of the Globe, through a vast infrastructure project of diverse land and sea export routes. The main target of this endeavor will be the developed West of Eurasia, namely the countries that constitute the European Union nowadays. The Chinese narrative for “mutual benefits” and a “worldwide community of trade” (XinHuanet.com, 2018) will render South-East Europe one of the main Gateways for Chinese products towards Europe. Thus, a very bright opportunity for a Balkan re-emergence in international importance is at bay, after the continuously diminishing importance the Region suffered by the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Secondly, it was the West’s (through the European Union and NATO) change of stance towards this area that became marginalized in the Post Cold-War Environment. Driven by a diverse set of reasons, the two organizations vowed for a greater say, role and Integration for the area, following a deafening silence that occurred after the 2008 great financial crisis. From the sealing/fencing of the Balkan Refugee and Immigrant Corridor between 2015 and 2016, to the brink of civil war that the F.Y.R. Macedonia experienced, and through Turkish instability, Greek anchoritism, Brexit and the row of failed states in the Neighborhood (mainly Syria, Libya, Iraq and, to a certain extent, Lebanon and Egypt), the West understood that SE Europe is no longer an irrelevant area for the interests and safety of the European Union (Edward J. et al, 2016).

Additionally, one should never underestimate the increasingly strained relations with Russia and the always looming new sanctions against Iran – two flashpoints that mainly threaten European Energy Security more than any other Security.

On the procedural aspect of the Dissertation at hand, the endeavor will rely upon two pillars: The first one will be descriptive and factual – mainly based on the fields of history and economics. Sources of a descriptive nature (official reports and figures, reportages etc) are to be of most use during that part. Its purpose will be to roughly

present the current standing of the International Actors under examination: China, South East Europe and a perceived “West”, comprised by the European Union and the United States. The first actor will receive most attention, since it is considered a game-changing variable, without whom this Essay would not exist. Case-studying the only behavioral example of that actor (Sub-Saharan Africa) may also provide some very punctual insight on how the brewing relation with SE Europe may develop. At this point, it should also be clarified that references to the geographic area of “South East Europe” points at all States in the region, not just those that fall under the category of members of the European Union. This rough categorization may ignore the official historiography under construction in the Union, but serves as a solid geographical compass – therefore closer to a global/foreigner viewpoint than a mere Eurocentric one. All in all, this chapter’s layout and purpose will mainly be that of a presentation to be used as the basic layer for the ensuing argumentative chapter/attempt to answer the research question posed.

The second pillar will attempt to reach the core of the research question by “connecting the dots” of the previous chapters: **Which are the symptoms of the rising World Order on South East Europe and what could their repercussions be?**

Of course, even the most positivist research may also lead to other, sub-topic results and/or relevant stimuli for further investigation. The quest for answers will contain applications of different –and maybe diverse - sub-theories stemming from literature on the field of International Relations. As mentioned above, the absence of a mega-theory obliges research on the field to be diverse and inclusive. The research methodology used will also attempt multi-sided approaches: The One Belt – One Road initiative forwarded by China and its possible outcomes will be examined not only on the *stricto sensu* Region of SE Europe (possibly serving as a *gateway*), but also on a *lato sensu* perceived notion of the whole European Union as a very important International Actor and the biggest single market of the Globe. Possible results, new research pathways discovered and personal remarks on the procedure will be contained to a “Conclusions” section that will be the cornerstone of the present attempt.

The rise of China

The historical appearance of the Chinese state under examination in the present dissertation is situated after the civil war of 1945 – 1949. An alliance under the Communist Party, led by Mao Zedong managed to successfully drive the Nationalist party of Kuomintang out of the Chinese mainland, to the island of Formosa, and proceeded to proclaim the People's Republic of China.

Despite Marxist and Leninist previous predictions, the revolution did not occur in a highly industrialized Nation with a thoroughly organized proletariat. China of the 19th and early 20th centuries was almost completely rural, based on pre-modern social and economic structures and governed by an aging, corrupt and fragmented sum of warlords competing for local power. Any influences of Modernity were confined to a few coastal cities with strong Western Influence, such as Shanghai, Guangzhou and Tsingdao (Gonick, L., 2007).

The following years of strict Communist – Maoist control (1950-1976) bare great similarities with the period following the victory of the Red Army in the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia. Projects towards a rapid modernization of all aspects of the Chinese state and society were undertaken, leading to a significant drop of illiteracy, better infrastructure and productivity. However, the model of a completely totalitarian state of collectivization with a completely centralized planning in economy demonstrated their limits in a great famine that took the lives of at least 36 million farmers (Mirsky, J. , Dec 7 2012).

That turbulent era of socialist experimenting in China is claimed to have ended with Mao's death in 1976. According to a theoretically Marxist viewpoint, provided by Raymond Lotta (Lotta, R., 2009), the Chinese Communist Part, now led by Deng Xiaoping, rapidly switched towards embracing a Capitalist model of development, rendering China an only nominally Socialist state. However, it is worth mentioning that the country had separated from the Soviet hegemony since 1972, when the rapprochement with the United States solidified the Sino-Soviet split that had occurred six years later. (Farley, R., March 6 2017)

Despite differentiations among scholars concerning the onset of the Chinese emergence, the aforementioned Marxist analysis on the rise of China proposes a

consolidated materialist (thereby rather rational) insight on how that rise took place: The unmatched competitive advantage of China was mainly comprised of its vast and –now mostly literate- workforce that began to flow towards the great industrial cities of the East and Southern coast following the Communist policies of collectivization and forced industrialization of the formerly primitive economy. The country progressively became the global powerhouse of the World’s Industry, with a median of more than 10% annual GDP growth. Based on Outsourcing foreign investments by –initially- mainly American multinational companies such as General Electric, the country’s production moved slowly but steadily to a more sophisticated and elaborate mode of production through importing and developing Technology.

Between 1990 and 2005, the country doubled its annual production of goods and services (GDP) and by 2009 it was consuming 25% of the total global demand for metals (mainly iron, steel, aluminum and copper), was the largest holder of United States Dollar reserves, and at the same time was responsible for more than a third (34%) of the total annual increase for crude oil demand globally. Chinese Foreign Direct Investment, one of the main measuring tools to be used in the present essay, skyrocketed from 1,8 billion dollars in 2003 to 16,1 in 2006 and to 241 in 2016 (Bloomberg, 2018). These remarkable successes were made possible by a peculiar combination of state-run Banks and Industries that make up to 35% of the total Chinese economy, with the rest, more minor players, being under the realm of the private sector.

The positive results of this growth are clearly depicted on a political economy perspective nowadays. China is constantly becoming an IT Hub, focusing on cutting-edge technology in infrastructure and production, a move dubbed as the “New Economy” because of the innovation and considerably higher added value it entails – in contrast to the “Old Economy”, which mainly comprises of development on Agriculture, Construction, Mining, Chemical and Manufacturing Industries. New Economic sectors of focus for the Chinese are Finance, Property, Entertainment, the Internet, production of Automobiles, Aeronautic Industry and Telecommunication solutions (Bloomberg, 2018).

Negative results of this unprecedented growth and transformation of the Chinese economy and Society from an industrializing-‘third world’ nation to an

industrialized-“first world” nation, vary from widespread pollution and exceptionally toxic urban atmospheres, to the destruction of whole ecosystems due to the development of Mega-Projects, such as the Three Gorges Dam.

According to another, more recently presented viewpoint (Kai, J., October 23 2017), China is now entering a second (“2.0”) New Era of Rise, after the aforementioned one of Industrialization. Mainly due to the leadership of General Secretary Xi Jinping, the country shifts from sheer development on the Interior, to a much more Extroverted “international community-building process” with benefits for all participants. In other words, China is preparing itself for a New World Order of strong Chinese presence internationally. There is no doubt that this is a viable new goal for a country that surpassed the United States in Purchasing Power Parity per person in 2016 and had already left them behind in productivity for another ten years (Smith, N. October 18, 2017).

China in Africa: A concise case study.

Up to now, we have seen how the Chinese actor evolved in internal-structural terms and transformed itself from a fortified socialist experiment to a constantly more open market economy with an exceptionally centralized/controlling state. We have also witnessed how the nation pursues one more radical transformation of its industrializing economy to an industrialized – developed one, seeking imports of technology and massively investing in R&D projects at home and abroad.

What is lacking, in a dissertation attempting to shed light in the dynamics of the International Relations among specific actors, is the presentation of a similar parallel transformation that took place in China during transition to a functioning market economy from 1976 onwards: The exchange of a “Socialist” foreign policy, based on supporting revolution and emancipation abroad, for a “Pragmatist” (Neo-Realist?) approach (or “Imperialist”, as some of the already presented Marxist literature would argue). And there is no better reference for such a presentation than how the Chinese–Sub-Saharan African relations developed.

An astonishingly well written -and very recently published- paper by (Eisenman, J., Shinn, D., 2018) summarizes previous work by other esteemed researchers on the dynamics of China as an emerging grand international actor, such as Patrick Tyler, Bruce Larkin and Samuel Kim – among others.

The authors clearly distinguish two different phases in Chinese interaction with Sub-Saharan Africa (thereby “Africa” for the rest of the present sub-chapter). Initially there has been a phase of Maoist Legacy, lasting up to the late 1960s. During that timespan, revolutionary China supported various liberation movements in the rapidly de-colonizing Continent, including –but not limited to- those in Angola, Sudan, the Mozambique and the Congo. Zhou Enlai, the iconic Maoist Premier travelled to Africa to meet with those (ideologically very close at the time) groups, provide consultation and political support in exchange for similar benefits from their side once (if) they seized power. In short, Chinese foreign policy has been mainly Political; Marxist, to be precise.

On the other hand, authors argue that after China turned “pragmatist”, or “imperialist” (Raymond, L., 2009), the engagement changed completely in both attitude and magnitude. First of all, an international body of engagement was formed under President Jiang Zemin in 2000. The Forum on China – Africa Cooperation (or FOCAC) overwhelmingly focused on economic cooperation, not only between the States, but also between the Chinese private Capital and its African receivers. The main “benefit” of this vibrant introduction was the very limited financial and humanitarian constraints of liberal nature demonstrated by the Chinese side when doing business with those countries. In other words, while private and public adherents to the Western, Liberal International Order, would be hesitant on investing in African Illiberal Regimes, eastern Asian counterparts would not be.

During the following years, Chinese aforementioned “Era of Rise 1.0”, or the era of rapid industrialization, was completely compatible with what the Administration was mainly interested on doing in Africa: Authors argue that five main pillars constituted the Chinese economic expedition there.

First of all, it was a primary need for raw materials. The country was experiencing unprecedented growth levels in industrialization and the amount of materials essential for production was ever growing. Previous (before FOCAC) bilateral agreements

were simply not enough. The main industrial commodities the Chinese were after were Crude Oil, Minerals, and Hardwood Timber. By 2009, China surpassed the United States in the total amount of trade with Africa. As far as the European Union was concerned, between the years 2000 and 2005, the annual growth rate of trade between that actor and Africa was around four times (400%) lower than the growth rate of Chinese trade with Africa. (Broadman, H., 2008). The former colonizer and exploiter of Africa fared poorly in direct competition with the Asian newcomer trade adversary.

The second pillar of Chinese focus in Africa was the exact opposite to the previous. With more than a billion consumers, relatively low market exploration by other powers, a constantly and stably growing middle class and eagerness for politically neutral business, Africa was deemed by China a first-class export market. Indeed, according to the authors, the Chinese products of that time also suited the needs and capabilities of the local middle and lower classes- a factor that may be convenient in explaining why the European Union and (more modestly) the United States failed to compete effectively for dominance in those markets.

However, not everything was strictly Economical, despite the declarations and public aspirations of the FOCAC platform. Authors argue that China wanted to secure African support for its political endeavors in the International Field – either that support was for the debatable Chinese environmental policies of that time, or for disputes with the World Trade Organization (WTO). Other political issues included support for the Chinese positions on Tibet (or, at least, lack of support for the Tibetan Cause) and a request for rhetoric African opposition to/condemnation of the East Turkestan Islamic Party actions and terrorist operations in the Uighur Muslim majority Chinese region of Xinjiang.

The fourth pillar was also political and combined with the previous one. China at that time was on a precarious relation with the aforementioned Republic of China that was contained in Taiwan/Formosa after Communist victory in the Chinese civil war. The Republic was threatening to relinquish claims on mainland China, but at the same time to declare Independence as a sovereign State. The People's Republic deemed that a Casus Belli, an act of secession. African countries at the time were roughly one fourth (25%) of the whole General Assembly of the United Nations and simultaneously held thirteen out of forty-seven (13/47) seats on the Human Rights

Council. China was obviously calculating on their decisive support on the International Scene in case UN Resolutions condemning China were to emerge. The final pillar was mixed political and economic, and was related to the minimization of illegal activities in Africa that could both harm stability in the region (thus Chinese interests) as well as pose a threat to the Chinese internal affairs. These activities were mainly Piracy, Terror Organizations, Organized Crime and Trafficking, as well as Drug producers and Cartels. That pillar would later extend to the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) becoming one of the main forces after 2010 to get summoned by African Countries in order to fight pirates in the Gulf of Aden. The latest development on that very important hard-power pillar was the historical agreement for the first modern Chinese Naval base outside Asia, in Djibouti. A move that caused severe uproar from the United States, which warned of "Severe Consequences" if that base were to become a reality (Ali, I., Stewart, P., March 6 2018). It is worth mentioning that the United States already maintain a multi-thousand personnel military base in the same country.

However, authors also argue that the "Chinese baring presents" also bare some problems for both the local communities and environment they deal with. One, "pragmatical" branch of the critique claims that the Chinese private investors- the bulk of Chinese FDIs in the Continent- disregard labor rights and safety complaints, as well as the protection of the environment. What is more, they also tend towards tax evasion, with tech giants such as ZTE occasionally deemed guilty by local Tax authorities (Okoth, E., September 25 2016). After all, there is also an incentive for corruption in countries where living standards are very low and companies are usually bribing their way out of obstacles they may face with much less hassle than the legal/ bureaucratic approach.

A second branch of "political" critique stems from the last century's dependency and colonialism studies: Chinese investment is considered just another expression of Neo-Colonialism that is little different to the one Africa experienced immediately after independence of most of its ex-colonial States in the 50s and 60s. This way of thinking is widespread especially among young, educated and emancipatory elites in the Continent. They argue that China takes their low added value, labor-intensive raw materials and consequently sells them back to the African Markets as more valuable, technology-intensive products. There is also a sentiment of China attempting to create

“debt-traps” out of loans and investments in Africa, so that countries may get forced to become puppets of Chinese interests in the future. Chinese officials and President denounce these claims, pledging even to voluntarily relief debts to countries facing severe issues with them (Blanchard, B., Shepherd, C., September 4 2018).

Finally, and more theoretically, a liberal critique on the Chinese actions in Africa is that by being “politically neutral” and promoting free trade even with sanctioned possible war criminals, such as Sudan’s Bashir – among others- liberal and democratic values are undermined in the most unfree continent of the Globe. (EIU Democracy Index, 2017)

In a nutshell, Africa has been a rather successful cornerstone in China’s attempts to establish itself as one of the modern Great International Actors. It is now among the leading investors, traders, political and media influencers in African reality, having surpassed the European Union and rapidly converging (to the point of competing) with the United States (Economist Infographics on FDI stocks and Trade, 2018).

Additionally, Africa is deemed very important for the Chinese political elite. The first trip of current president Xi Jinping was in Russia, but the second was a visit to the African counterparts of his nation. Traditionally, the first trip of every new Chinese Foreign Minister is to Africa. This obviously widening soft-power display tends to produce a hard-power presence in terms of military and naval bases in strategic spots of the Continent, safeguarding the ambitious Land-Sea route of the OBOR initiative, all the way from the Indian Ocean to Suez and to Europe.

The fall of the Balkans

Contrary to the lively and linearly positive events that took place during the last three decades in China, the other side of Eurasia did not share much of that success. Quite the contrary: The South-Eastern part of it -the Balkan peninsula- rapidly descended

into chaos and violence, becoming a fertile ground for instability, fragmentation, even genocide – the first to happen in European soil since the Second World War.

Failure of the European Union soft power to guarantee security in its own neighborhood (and relying on the other side of the Atlantic to intervene with hard power) was combined with failure to contain the instability caused by the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. Or, in Haris Silajdzic's (former president of the Bosniak entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina) remarks: "When the Berlin Wall came down, it landed on Yugoslavia" (Edward, J. et al, 2016).

All countries of the peninsula (with the exception of Greece) were forced to follow an unprecedented transition from 1989. For some, like Romania, Albania and Bulgaria, it was a double transition. It meant that these countries had not only to exchange their economic system (Central Planning) with Free Markets, but also to transform their political systems from Totalitarian, One-Party Regimes to Multi-Party, Pluralist Democracies. But these were not the worst cases: Yugoslavia, the main (and un-aligned) power of the region, a multi ethnic nation of more than 23 million people, was embroiled in an astonishingly violent civil war that lasted in total for more than eight years. By 2000, when everything was over, the geographical space of the former country was divided among five states, most of them existing for the first time in modernity. These five nations (Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, F.Y.R. Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina), that later became seven, with the addition of Kosovo and Montenegro, had not only to safeguard the completion of their own double transition, but also the establishment of their ethnicity and brand-new Nation State by painfully severing the old social and ethnic ties of Yugoslavia, rendering the procedure a "triple", much more complicated transition (Offe, C., 1991).

Following the decade of destruction and at least two "Responsibility to Protect" NATO missions in Bosnia and Kosovo, the Balkans were gradually out of the global headlines. Peace in the Western part of the peninsula was maintained by a status quo imposed by Euro-Atlantic presence, both militarily and politically. With the short-lived exception of the F.Y.R. Macedonian ethnic clashes in 2001, the area was facing an obscurity unprecedented in its history: It would not any longer serve as a fragile

“cordon sanitaire” between a –then declining- Russia and the West. The initiation of the War on Terror after the September 11 of 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States would sink the Balkans into Obscurity. (Edward, J., 2005)

However, despite their relative anchoritism, in comparison with the previous status quo, the United States did never actually lose the grip they have managed to maintain on the area after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. Namely, most countries of the SE Europe nowadays (2018) have become members of NATO. Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania, the only countries of the area not consumed in ethnic strife previously, were the first to join in 2004. Albania and Croatia followed in 2009, while Montenegro was the last to join in 2017. F.Y.R. Macedonia was and is technically able to accede, but any such discussion is postponed until a solution to the naming dispute with Greece is resolved (Bieber, F., 2018).

Despite some progress, the countries of the Balkan peninsula still face a rather uncertain future through a non-linear economic and political course: A combination of overextended state employment, obsolete technology, poor transportation and shadowy ownership in private property, along with severe issues of populism, clientalism and widespread corruption in the aforementioned political systems led to what is claimed “a backsliding” of Democracy (Bardos, G., 2016). There are numerous incidents used to support this ever expanding phenomenon (Bieber, F., 2018): Serbian trains head to Mitrovica, the capital of ethnic Serbs of Kosovo with “Kosovo is Serbia” signs clearly demonstrated. At the very same town, Serb agitator Oliver Ivanovich gets assassinated in January 2018.

For years, F.Y.R. Macedonia faced ethnic unrest among a vast Slavic majority and a geographically concentrated and solid Albanian minority. The conflict almost resulted in Civil War in 2001 – a catastrophe averted when NATO and the United Nations intervened to force through the sides a peace deal with concessions for both sides (Ohrid Agreement). The country was then witnessing a clear phenomenon of State Capture by the ruling populist party of VMRO-DPMN, which was accused of wiretapping political opponents and jailing unfavorable journalists. The political change of 2016 almost led again to a civil war, after the parliament was stormed by far-right protestors against the election of an ethnic Albanian -and alleged war criminal- to the position of the Speaker of the Assembly of the country.

The West to the Rescue

Involvement of the United States

Since this turn of very warning events, the United States moved in a way that reaffirmed their hegemony on the area: They did act as mediators in crisis management, a procedure that had almost vanished since the early 2000s. A combination of skilful management and projection of soft power paved the way. In the F.Y.R. Macedonia, a political transition was made possible after ill application of a (mainly EU brokered) deal that led to the local US embassy admitting that they “keep contact” with the parties participating in the power struggle (Marusic, S.J., May 11 2016). Moreover, political leadership in major NATO countries soon understood that the exhausted country would not remain intact if it lost again the train for the coalition accession. It was after those events that not only the US, but also France and Germany solidified their support for a solution in the name dispute with Greece – the very same dispute that led to a Greek-brokered veto to F.Y.R. Macedonian accession almost ten years earlier.

In Bosnia’s Republika Srpska, notorious leader Milorad Dodik significantly lowered the volume of his independence-calling after he was among the lists of foreigner names to be sanctioned. (Bieber, F., 2018)

Finally, in the Albanian political crisis of 2017, when the conservative opposition threatened to boycott the upcoming parliamentary elections, in a move that could greatly destabilize the NATO country, the Deputy Assistant US Secretary of State, Hoyt Brian Yee travelled to the capital of Tirana to “make all efforts to have the participation of all parties” bearing from Washington a “fresh point of view”. His mission succeeded and the elections did smoothly take place (Mejdini, F., May 15 2017).

Part of the literature (Bardos, G., 2016) hints on why did the United States had to deal with these emerging problems mostly in a bilateral way, with little help from their European counterparts: The European Union, by being a decentralized organization ridden with overlapping and vague internal and inter-state distribution of powers and competences, (remarks on a possible “Neo-Medieval” order in Europe to be presented

on the last chapter of the present essay) failed to develop a unified stance and purely neo-realist national interest prevailed. For instance, some of the Western Balkan states, such as F.Y.R. Macedonia, had managed to snatch support in their European aspirations, by individual states, such as Austria, only after they had sealed off the main refugee route towards Central Europe in 2016. Moreover, the Serbian leadership under populist leader Vucic met with German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and received German support for their country's accession only after amelioration of the relations with Kosovo was promised- with a simultaneous "turnback" of the country towards Russia (Bieber, F. 2018).

The European Union: Trapped under the burden of Enlargement Fatigue.

On the present endeavor to study the placement of the Balkans in the New World Order that is under formation, the European Union could not be absent. Despite aforementioned shortcomings, this unique, multinational and still prosperous formation of independent States is not only geographically very close to the Balkans, but is also immensely interconnected with those States in terms of history, politics - even division of labor and production. Moreover, it is already home to five nations of the area. Greece (1981), Slovenia (2004), Bulgaria, Romania (2007) and Croatia (2013) have all become members. Greece and Slovenia enjoy a membership status that situates them on the core of the project, by also being members of the Eurozone and the Schengen Area.

The rest of the states that also fall under examination by the present essay, pose a different challenge. Despite the landmark EU-Western Balkans summit of Thessaloniki back in June 2003, and the very positive future framework of EU support for the Region outlined as a result, history developed in an unpredictably negative way (O'Brennan, J., 2014): The Eurozone's deep economic crisis -post 2008- and subsequent introspection, is severely augmented by the phenomenon of "Enlargement Fatigue", a generic term that stands for citizens' uncertainty over EU future, anxiety over precarious and continuous enlargement and consequent lack of belief and conviction on the necessity of the whole project (Devrim, D., Schulz, E., 2009). This trend was not one sided. The Western Balkans also lost appetite and

capacity to implement EU mandatory for accession measures and reforms, contributing to the aforementioned “Backsliding” of Democracy in the Region (O’Brennan, J., 2014).

Nowadays, the scenery from a European Perspective continues to be vague. Despite a (relatively) renewed interest for Europeanization in the Balkans, Albania, F.Y.R. Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro may have received status of “Official Candidacy” but there is no definite timeline for their accession, while Kosovo and Bosnia – Herzegovina are nominally Potential Candidates, but no formal procedures on accession have being for the time initiated (Europa.eu on Neighbourhood Enlargement, 2018).

The policy that the European Commission proposes to be followed by the other European institutions (the Parliament and the Council – among others) is contained in a yearly Report- Communication, which is a very useful insight on how the Union will be inclined towards those States. According to the most recent Report (2018 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, 2018) the situation in the Balkans from a European perspective is mixed.

On the one hand organized crime and corruption persist as endemic problems to those countries. With the exception of F.Y.R Macedonia, that fares relatively better than the rest and has been recorded as making clearly positive steps, all others have a long path ahead.

On the issue of complete transition to a pluralist, democratic political system, Montenegro is considered by the report as the weakest part of the West Balkan chain on that sector. It couldn’t be much different, since strongman Milo Djukanovic is exchanging his position between President, Prime Minister and informal strongman even before the country’s independence in 2006. Montenegro is otherwise one of the bright examples in the report under presentation.

The report also entails three major problems that are particularly troubling from a European perspective: Kosovo, the Macedonian name Issue and the situation in Bosnia. The first two have seen some steps forward in 2018 (see above), while the last is left behind in its extreme complexity. Such a complexity that, according to the Commission’s Report, it is the primary cause for Bosnia’s inability to grow, attract investments and proceed with a stability that would drag its population out of the severe relative poverty it suffers in comparison with its European counterparts.

Finally, on the case of Albania, apart from the Balkan endemic problems of corruption and organized crime, the Commission points at the very defective transition of the country towards a functioning Market Economy. Indeed, Albania's economy is still based on labor-intensive agricultural production with immense tax evasion and shadow economy, even for Balkan standards.

However, there are also some bright spots recorded. The Commission acknowledges that the countries have made significant progress in endorsing the *Acquis Communautaire* – especially in the fields of human rights, external policy, fiscal reforms and transition to pluralistic political systems (with the exception of Montenegro). In other words, these countries tend to get *Europeanized* in a slow, but stable pace, albeit still far away from convergence with the formally Europeanized nations in the neighborhood.

Concluding, the same established viewpoint in literature also claims that the state actor of Russia is not nearly close to what is portrayed across the European political and media spectrum, at least in the Balkans: Russia may be actually launching campaigns of disinformation and may truly support “thuggish” political affiliates in the SE European countries (with the inclusion of Greece and Bulgaria at this specific occasion) but there doesn't seem to be a cohesive plan to meddle decisively on the Balkans. After all, literature nowadays points towards two key factors in nowadays Russia: First and foremost, it is considered a country that underwent a successful transition from a hard-power based Soviet Union doctrine, to a doctrine of soft-power in the Balkans. Secondly, by constantly becoming an economically integrated Russia that does not see the SE European orientation towards the European Union as an obstacle for its interests in the area. Russia is no more in search for domination in the region, but rather in a quest for financial, economic and strategic benefits in coexistence with other powers (Headley, J., 2008). In complete differentiation with the Russian immediate periphery of Ukraine- Belarus and Caucasus, the “Balkan” maximum capacity of this major international actor extends up to following an opportunistic game in order to maximize economic benefit wherever vacuums of Western control can possibly appear. The aforementioned narrative also suits previously introduced literature arguing that China chooses deliberately the Balkans for OBOR expansion as a region of much less geopolitical interest and capacity to Russia than the Caucasus – Ukraine potential Route (Van der Putten, F.P., 2017).

South East Europe at the Crossroads

The One Belt – One Road project’s repercussions for SE Europe are receiving increasing academic interest since the project’s acceleration in 2016, after a three year period of relative reluctance. The Clingendael Institute pointed several characteristics of this phenomenon (Van Der Putten, F.P., 2017). Firstly, the Balkan Peninsula is deemed strategically situated by the Chinese administration. Along with the Black Sea, it is the crucial point where the Central Asian “Land” Corridor of the Initiative will meet the Indian Ocean “Sea” route towards the European Union.

Apart from the positive geographic elements, the region entails another characteristic for the Chinese analysis: An increasingly autonomous Turkey, along with Balkan states that are not under the direct and complete sphere of influence of other great powers, such as Russia and the US, do form a multi-party and fragmented corridor that will lessen Chinese reliance upon these other Great Powers. As a matter of fact, China seems to work also geo-politically, against the established perception of a solely monetarist player. The preference of a generic direction “Turkey – SE Europe – European Union” over the alternative “Georgia – Russia – Ukraine – European Union” takes severely into consideration the respective Russian sphere of influence and truly seems willing to avoid friction with that power.

As the project per se unfolds, some other interesting characteristics have been traced by the same institute. For instance, China seems to rely upon the previously mentioned fragmented Balkan scene to accomplish beneficial bilateral treaties with each country separately, instead of having to deal with a centralized group of some form – a much stronger collective form of negotiation. The only multilateral instrument used by China and its Central – SE European counterparts is the “CEEC 16+1” initiative, nominally the “Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries”. Formally initiated in 2012 at Warsaw Summit, this multilateral platform took a long road of summits (Bucharest in 2013, Belgrade in 2014, Suzhou in 2015 and Riga in 2016) until the European Countries participating had managed to start actual contributions to the framework and guidelines of the project. The latest

Summit of Budapest, in November 2017, concluded that the 16+1 platform had finally evolved towards being a functioning mechanism of coordination between ministries, after five years of buildup (Kizekova, A., 2018). According to the latest available Reports (July 2018) , China plans to inaugurate (through CEEC 16+1) a three billion euro programme to support infrastructure projects all around SE and East Europe, with the main focus being directed towards motorways, ports, industrial parks and new technological infrastructure (IN.gr, 2018).

However, it is through the aforementioned bilateral approach that China has revealed its full intentions. Infrastructure in the Western Balkans and Turkey, the Energy sectors of Romania and Greece, as well as the very important port-management in the latter, form the core of Chinese investment interest in the region. But this interest is not one sided, the authors claim: OBOR comes with a new engagement model. Parties wishing to participate in the initiative have to pave some of the way themselves in order to persuade the Chinese side on the maturity and benefits from a possible OBOR inclusion. An example of that is the Greek construction works of the new Athens – Thessaloniki railway. The project started in the early 1990s aiming to transform Greek trade with the Balkans and force a land corridor towards the rest of the European Union. Despite promises for a much faster and electrified network to be inaugurated by 2004, almost all construction work was stalled until 2015. Renewed Chinese interest in the port of Piraeus, along with planned construction of a similar line from the Greek border to Belgrade and Budapest forced the new Greek administration to accelerate the works to a point that regular service is expected to start as early as Autumn 2018, nearly tripling freight rail trade capacity of the country(trenose.gr, 2018) .Additionally, calculations conclude that there major developments will not only greatly augment the capacity of the Greek-Balkan-Central European Gateway, but also its total competitiveness; product travel time from Piraeus to Skopje will decrease by three hours and costs will fall by 20% (Foteinos, F., 2018).

Chinese interest on a European Level is not something new. According to a consolidated and rigorous full reportage of the relation by Bloomberg, Chinese investment in parts of the aforementioned “Old” Economy has been extensive before 2007. However, since the transition of Chinese Focus towards developing the “New” Economy, Investment in the European Continent surged to a total of 318 billion

dollars in the decade between 2007 and 2016, roughly 45% more than the United States Investment in Europe on the same time span (Bloomberg Infographics, 2018). The differentiating factor on this occasion is the significant Strategic Investment in South East Europe also. Chinese Companies, with a common characteristic of being either State-owned or State-sponsored, have succeeded in numerous acquisitions in the Balkans – an area almost completely out of the Chinese spectrum two decades ago. For instance, the Tirana International Airport in Albania was completely acquisitioned by China Everbright Ltd. in 2017 up to at least 2027. And if the notion of an Albanian – Chinese post modern rapprochement does not bring revolting effects in the Area, the acquisition of the Piraeus Port Authority by China COSCO Shipping Corporation (finalized in 2016) maybe does. With little more than a billion of investment, China aspired to render Piraeus the “dragon head” of the “Belt and Road” Initiative (Horowitz, J., Alderman, L., August 26 2017) to penetrate towards Central and then Western Europe through an economical and time saving combination of Shipping and Rail. By 2016, COSCO had turned Piraeus from a small Port of the European Periphery to a rapidly growing hub, eager to contest Europe’s most important Ports. From 880.000 TEUs (20-foot equicalent units / a measure of container throughput for Ports) it rose to more than 3,36 million (Georgiopoulos, G., August 10 2016). Further Investment plans and technological intensification of the facility are rumored to be planned by the Company, in order for the Capacity to reach more than 10 million TEUs in the near future, rendering Piraeus – which is already Europe’s 7th Busiest Port – one of the main Port- Actors in the Continent (Foteinos, F., 2018).

The example of Cosco is a clear depiction of Chinese aspirations, with Greece at the center and other South East European Strategic assets as the periphery (for example, the acquisition by COFCO Corporation of the Romanian Cereal Terminal in the historically very important Black Sea Port City of Constanta in Romania). This type of Chinese Company is overwhelmingly State Owned and/or Sponsored, serving as a “battering ram” for political and economical entrance in the areas under consideration. As it became evident with the Sub-Saharan African Case Study, China is seeking a “win-win” situation where the receivers of investment return political favors for the Chinese regime, as the Greek government actually did in 2016 (Horowitz, J., Alderman, L., August 26 2017). Undoubtedly, the political benefits go hand in hand with the geopolitical goals of the Chinese OBOR initiative: Challenging

European Dominance in Shipping, at the very Center of it – not in a distant part of the Globe (Bloomberg, 2018).

Despite Greece being the bareback of the Chinese Global aspirations in Europe, other countries also receive (or vow to receive) their fair share of “win-win” benefits.

Outside the aforementioned framework of the CEEC 16+1, Serbia and Bulgaria also attempt to bilaterally play their part. Serbia’s President Vucic confessed in July 2018 that a Serb delegation meets twice a week with the Chinese ambassador in Belgrade, in order to formulate plans. Bulgaria’s aspirations have double orientation: One the one hand, infrastructure projects that will connect its pivotal port cities in the Black Sea with the Greek Aegean Sea, Romania and Serbia alike. On the other hand, the construction of a new nuclear power plant in Belene, that will replace the outdated and increasingly dangerous Kozloduy Nuclear Plant (IN.gr, 2018).

Ports, rail and general transportation infrastructure aside, Chinese investment in South East Europe is less intense, but not negligible. Investments include, but are not limited to, Strategic Energy sectors (such as the purchase of the Greek State Grid Company ADMIE by the State Grid Corporation of China in 2016) and a steadily increasing Private Chinese interest towards Tourism and Real Estate – mainly in Cyprus and Greece.

Of course, there is no such engagement without drawbacks and problems. Despite aforementioned Chinese interest in the Greek, Romanian and Serbian cases, as important possible trade gateways to Central Europe, progress still remains slow. The OBOR approach is a foothold establishment and step by stepone. Progress is relatively sluggish, a truly evident fact if someone does actually focus on two cases: Firstly, the almost 10year aforementioned procedure of achieving a strong Chinese-owned foothold in the Greek port of Piraeus (2008-2016) and secondly, the Belgrade – Budapest railway (officially the “Land-Sea Express Route”) stalling by the EU Commission, since the project did not meet the European Union procurement standards and rules. The latter project was scheduled in 2015, to be completed by 2018, but now the best possible outcome would be to expect finalization by 2023 (SEEnews, June 11 2018). Despite the shortcomings, this pivotal project will become one of the most Symbolic marks of Chinese intervention in the area, since the operation of a completely modern and highly competitive railway from Athens to Budapest will signify that this emerging Actor managed to create an environment of

cooperation and effectiveness that the European Union did not manage to inspire after the breakup of Yugoslavia (IN.gr, 2018).

“Experimenting” on the Challenges and Prospects of a New World Order

Up to this point, the present research endeavor has presented most (if not all) the considered as required descriptive and factual parts. Starting by the presentation of the Methodology to be used, along with the basic references on which the research will rely on, focus turned on the main question initially posed: Under a ‘New World Order’, fragmented and multi-polar regime of International Relations and Community, what could the future uphold for South East Europe?

Every –even slightly- positivist research ends up in the ultimate essence of Science: the Experiment. The unusual occasion of the Social Sciences, and especially the International Relations, is that there is no laboratory (or any kind of enclosed chamber) that can emulate the phenomena in order for the scientists to observe and approve or dismiss the original hypothesis. The Experimenting field lies on combination and critical correlation of previous established work with field observations being made.

The present research does not attempt to deviate from the established scientific course. All previous chapters aspired to deliver an eagle-view point of how dynamics develop on all major actors over the Balkan Peninsula.

Firstly, attention turned towards the Chinese actor. Literature stemming from Neo-Realist, Liberal and Marxist viewpoints was quoted, in order to present how that actor gradually transformed not only its political and economic compasses, but also the way it acts internationally. In order to provide a clearer picture, a case study was deemed necessary to conduct. By examining how China fared in Sub-Saharan Africa historically, but most importantly, in contemporary times, the reader can get a first insight and familiarization with how relations and dynamics have been formed, what were and are the key characteristics of an emerging Global Power in accordance to its priorities and strategic goals – and of course, the Anti-Colonialist and Liberalist

critiques that may accompany them. Moreover, this specific Case – Study may argumentatively play an important role in potential results after the aforementioned “experimentation” in the current chapter.

Secondly, the very receiver of the Actors’ behavior (SE Europe) was put under the lens, since it forms the pivotal “playground” where established and emerging dynamics tend on. Through a historical and contemporary examination, there has been an attempt to familiarize the reader with notions such as the double - triple transition schemes, the backsliding of Democracy, local peculiarities and the whole distinctive complex that constitutes the contemporary SE European Economical and Political reality. Specific cases mentioned in recent Journalistic and Academic reports were quoted in order for a clearer picture of the challenges and prospects the Region entails – as well as in order to further justify the researchers’ claim of a revived interest in an area previously sank into obscurity.

Proceeding further in the descriptive part of the essay, there was an attempt to summarize how the “status-quo” (sic) actors in the Region fared in the very recent past and present in order to stand up to their international prestige and existing dominant presence in the region. On the one hand, a journalistic and academic hint of the United States (and NATO) efficient dominance through orchestrated neo-realist bilateral diplomacy was introduced. On the other hand, the European Union actor was presented in an as-naturalistic-as-it-could way: Suffering from enlargement fatigue, under heavy burdens of an almost decade-long financial and fiscal crisis and fragmented into increasingly right-wing populist nation-state lines. But, at the same time, a pillar of democracy, institutions and a politically stabilizing / economically savior “carrot” for which SE European States are eager to force through reforms and unpopular measures that will allow them to accede – rendering the Union a *de facto* regional epitome of soft power.

Last but not least, a concise sub-chapter on the Russian actor was deemed necessary. Short enough to only develop a literature tendency that puts this former Great Power in its actual, contemporary dimensions. Dimensions of a realpolitik that may not be the most flawless neighbor, but is still a lot distant from the propagated (and sometimes propagandized) Russian meddling in almost every conceivable difficulty the European Union and (to a lesser extent) the United States face in the area and elsewhere in the Globe – even in their internal audiences.

The next, and last descriptive chapter, focused on the brewing economic and - to a certain extent- political influence the new “variable” of China bares to the *status quo* in the Balkan Peninsula and the established major Actors- partners of the Nation States in the area. This chapter serves not only as an appendix that would provide some useful insight for the readers that would like to indulge more into the formulated local dynamics, but also as a vivid and vibrant supporter of the argument that the aforementioned influence is present, increasingly growing at an even faster yearly pace and ultimately could prove ambitious enough to challenge the existing order.

The above resume serves as a brief and dense reconstruction of what was presented up to now. Attention now moves towards the undeniably most important and pivotal part of the dissertation at hand: After reconstructing and depicting reality in text – or ‘setting’ the experimentation ‘chamber’, focus shifts towards running the “experiments” that will possibly be able to produce answers and further inquiries on the initial research question. How could the previously recorded tendencies transform South East Europe?

A neo-medievalist International order in Europe?

Sovereignty is regarded as one of the most important pillars of the post-Westphalian International Order, that of States with declared borders and their Webberian monopoly of legitimized violence in them. There is, however, a possibility that this tendency of the last some hundred years may be actually backsliding. In other words, the International System could be heading towards a revival of complex, overlapping and incomplete sovereignties among non-State actors, a phenomenon named Neo-Medievalism by its inceptor, Hedley Bull (Bull, H., 1977, p. 324) – also one of the founders of the English School in International Relations Theory.

Bull, in a scientific attempt that initially aimed to strengthen his argument in favor of the survival of the Nation State, did set some prerequisites that would essentially mean a relapse of the Christian Medieval International Order.

Firstly, he argued that Regional Integration – especially in the way it was moving forward in Europe and mimicked in other parts of the world – was effectively creating an intermediate stage, before total integration, where competences would be

incomplete or overlapping. At this point, National authorities would be in complex relations, or even power struggles with the Central authority in a way that would be disintegrating and generally hazardous not only for the future of the endeavor, but for the national States themselves (ibid, p.326). The aforementioned stagnation of the European enlargement and deepening -due to the ensuing Fatigue- could be in line with that argument: Europe, according to that scheme, is in a never-ending stage of overlapping competencies and authority. And even worse, the European States linger between uncertain own authorities and an uncharted set of competences resting abroad.

Secondly, the disintegration of States towards even more fragmented Nation – States, would also be a signal of a Neo-Medieval period. The new authorities would have to make their transition from being regions of a previous (or defunct, as in the case of Yugoslavia) state, to fully independent and sovereign new States. If embroiled in a long transition period, the new States would be in an immediate danger of failure (ibid, p.327). This argument clearly points to the separatist tendencies in the West of the European Union, namely Scotland and Catalonia. But it also points to the Balkans. With Kosovo already having declared independence and the Republika Srpska of Bosnia and Herzegovina increasingly heading in the same path, the danger of another Neo-Medievalist element threatening peace and stability may be imminent – though not as pressing as other such elements.

Thirdly, Bull considers the undermining of the State as the sole legitimized body to use force, to be a reminiscent of the private armies of the medieval nobility – thus a Neo-Medieval element in modern times. The European Commission report that was analyzed on a previous stage of the essay underlined thoroughly that the most common obstacle in the Europeanization of the Western Balkans was organized crime. And indeed, the existence of non-state violent (and even legitimized, as in Kosovo) actors inside transitioning States, is a threat towards the current Order. In addition, it is further claimed (ibid, p.331) that a similar threat undermining the sovereignty of the nation-state is the possible rise and prevalence of actors such as multinational companies and NGOs. According to Bull, their 70s counterparts were not an immediate threat, since he argued that their magnitude was not even close to the East India Company, a private entity that would control a vastly rich and sizeable sub-continent. However, thirty eight years after Bull's passing, a multinational company nearly exceeded in total worth the combined Gross Domestic Product of two

secondary Powers of the “Old” Order: Sweden and Argentina- also constituting 5% of the total US GDP(Krishna, M., August 2 2018).

Last but not least, the author claimed that the technological unification of the world and the dramatic shortening of distances that followed the technological revolutions of mankind from the onset of Modernity could also become a factor leading to a Neo-Medieval Order. The infamous “Global Village” of Marshal McLuhan found itself in an agitated and immensely interdependent situation that also tends to promote new tensions and misunderstandings, confusion and fragmented identities due to shifting patchwork boundaries and postmodern cultural images (Cerny, P., 1998, p.55)

More recent research upon the technological factor on Neo-Medievalist tendencies was conducted by Stephen Kobrin (Kobrin, S., 1998). In his paper, written during the digital revolution Bull did not live enough to study, it is claimed that the digitalization of trade and communication disconnects commerce and borders from their geographical location, leading to a confusion on distinguishing what is internal and what is an external affair, domestic and foreign, part of national or extra-national sovereignty (p.10-11). In a continent where 70% of the youth and 55% of the elderly shop online at least once in a year- a rise of more than 15% in each group since 2007, the aforementioned tendency could head straight to realization (Eurostat, 2017).

All in all, it seems that this first chapter of experimentation in solely European Issues has produced a first Conclusionary insight. Stagnating Europeanization and Enlargement, rising separatist elements in the European Continent (even inside the EU), endemic organized crime, lack of regulation on multinational company activity and increasingly less distances (commercial, social etc) due to digitalization may lead towards a continued decline of the European Idea and its subsequent ability to retain and project its hard and soft power. In other words, in *ceteris paribus* International Order trends, the European Union would end up too incompetent to play a distinguished role in the power politics of South East Europe – even if the most dystopian of Kobrin’s predictions (privatization of security, walled communities of the “noble” etc, p.30) seem too far away - to the point of overextension.

The United States and China: An impending Clash of Civilizations?

After completing the first theoretical experimentation in the case of the European Union and its possible descend to the status of a secular yet Neo-Medievalist International “playground”, attention shifts to the two remaining Actors in future competition for dominance on the field of South East Europe, the United States and China.

As mentioned in previous parts of the present essay, the former is with little doubt the established Actor – not only on a Regional, but on a Global level. In political and economic means, there is however, a significant attempt from the latter for a breakthrough towards creating a more favorable status quo in the periphery of the “West”. As the Case Study of Sub-Saharan Africa demonstrated, Chinese Neo-Realist intrusion in spheres neglected by its adversaries can be very efficient and –on a later stage- even result in purely military affairs, such as the Chinese Base in Djibouti one. This whole array of phenomena that were described in earlier parts of the essay seem to match with the much debated theoretical work of controversial Samuel Huntington, and more specifically, with his theory of a Post-Cold War International Order embroiled in conflict among Civilizations (opposed to the previous segregation of Ideologies and the proposed post-modern assumption on “the end of history” and prevalence of the Liberal Order, by Francis Fukuyama). Huntington divided the World among nine civilizations, all competing with each other for dominance (Huntington, S., 1996, p.27). With the given supposed split between Europe and America (or just the hard power lack of the former) the latter is therefore considered the Pillar of the “Western” Civilization, with China being of course the leader of the “Sinic” Civilization.

The theoretician proceeds on devoting a whole sub-chapter on a possible direct clash of Interest of the two sides, and also manages to put the whole argument in historical perspective. According to him, explosion in trade and industry in East Asia from the late seventies onwards does not constitute a peaceful and interconnected future for all, as a Liberal viewpoint would argue. On the contrary, economic rise and inclusion of

these countries in the International Scene and Division of Labor leads to some very alarming developments (ibid, p.218).

Firstly, it leads to the exchange of previously peasant, underequipped and under-educated armies with educated, urbanized and technologically sophisticated personnel. What is more, ambitions grow; uncertainty follows the same way, and soon enough, rivalries with origins even before the Cold War stop being suppressed and are consequently brought forth.

As a matter of fact, the author claimed that Chinese rivalry with the United States is brought forward. Putting developments in a historical perspective, Huntington implies that this is not so much about the Chinese specifically, but East Asia in general.

Starting with a precedent of the nineties (ibid, p. 222), he argues that the same attitudes we witness under Trump's "Republican" administration against China, were present in the "Democrat" Clinton administration against Japan. More specifically, it is reminded that the then President threatened even to raise tariffs up to 100% on Japanese car imports, on a general framework of a trade war. On the other side of the Pacific, the Japanese questioned even the status quo of American presence in their homeland.

Concluding his then present-day remarks, Huntington reminds us that the architect of the previously mentioned Chinese transition from Maoism to "Imperialism", Deng Xiaoping, publicly considered the emerging situation as a "New Cold War" in 1991 (ibid, p.223). By 1993, China was publicly considered as the second most important threat towards America, only second to the Islamic Republic of Iran, and by 1995 the lowest point ever quoted in bilateral relations was recorded after the United States sold arms and pledged full support towards Taiwan ("Republic of China") and South Korea, the remaining "Western footholds" in mainland East Asia.

The most intriguing is what follows that short introduction. Huntington inserts a range of possibilities on the future World Order. He argues that there will be either a multipolar system centered around Russia, Japan, the United States, China and possibly India attempting to balance each other, or a bipolar struggle between Beijing and an axis of Tokyo – Washington attempting to contain the former. Alternatively, the author argues that it is highly possible the Order returns again to the traditional Unipolar moment of Beijing as the center of the hierarchy of power (ibid, p.229). He then hypothesizes that the higher the levels of Chinese GDP growth in the coming years, and the smoother the transition towards a post-Deng Xiaoping era gets (it is

reminded the book was published in 1996), the closer we will move towards the last of these possibilities. As presented in previous chapter of the present essay, this has been actually the case, with Chinese unhampered growth and smooth succession among Chairmen since Huntington's prediction.

In conclusion, the author proceeds with one more prediction, this time based upon historical precedent: China, in terms of demographic dynamism, solid economic growth and continuous technological progress resembles the rise of the Wilhelmine Germany previous to the First World War. The difference is that the Chinese scale is much larger in area, population and total economic output. Thus, power projection of that Actor will render it the "biggest humanity ever experienced" (ibid, p.231).

Huntington concludes with a strategic dilemma that will unavoidably occur: The West (mainly the United States) will either have to contain China, risking war and failure, or accept the fact they will be no longer a Hegemon in Asia – hence losing their status of a Superpower. As of now, with Trump administration waging the aforementioned almost all-out trade war with China, and underlining the firm US grasp on SE Europe, less and less arguments can be presented in favor of the latter outcome: The United States are not going to abandon their established Global role without a fight.

Towards a Thucydides Trap?

In the previous two applications of theory on the already presented International Situation, the paper did not attempt to directly provide answers on the original research question. Instead, the results of these applications pointed towards a general direction where our answers may lay. Up to now, there has been strong indication that in the emerging World Order, the European Union, as a consolidated actor, will probably continue to struggle by having complex issues of sovereignty and will not replace the United States as the most pivotal Power in the area of South East Europe –

even if most of the area manages to accede and Europeanize at some extent. Moreover, it became established that China is an ambitious power willing to challenge US hegemony at home and abroad – an ambition based on fundamental cultural differences with its adversary and not on temporary opportunistic circumstances. What is left is an attempt to shed light on the actual possibility of that power struggle, as well as its possible repercussions on the South East European field.

In 2015, almost a year before Donald Trump's rise to the US presidency, esteemed and established American academic, Graham Allison (with various crucial contributions on Strategic and International Relations studies), coined the term "Thucydides Trap" on an article published on the [theAtlantic.com](http://theatlantic.com) (Allison, G., September 24 2015). His main argument was a simple, but statistically intriguing one: When a rapidly rising power starts becoming visible, and there already exists a regional or global superpower, the latter feels threatened and War is very possible to occur. So much possible that, according to Allison, in out of sixteen established such cases in History, only four did not result in War (a detailed catalogue of the cases is cited on the appendix). Examples of the War scenario include World War One, the France – Hapsburg war and of course the Peloponnesian War, the first such conflict, in which the rise of Athens alarmed the existing Hellenic power of Sparta and made War inevitable, according to historian Thucydides.

Allison did sound pessimistic in his article. He argued that the United States and China are the Spartans and Athenians of our time. War was almost inevitable (or extremely difficult to avoid). This assumption was based upon realization that China grew from 10% of the US GDP in 1980 to 60% in 2007, 100% in 2014 and – if the trend continues - to 150% by 2023 and 300% by 2040, directly challenging US supremacy. He also did not omit to underline that even the closest of relations, even blood, do not seem to deter conflict when the Trap sets itself. For instance, he quotes German Kaiser Wilhelm just before the First World War, being cordial with what he considered his second home: England, the very same nation that would become a fierce adversary in years to come. Allison's remarks made such an impact, that even the Chinese president, Xi Jinping argued that there will be no Thucydides Trap among his nation and the US.

Less than two years later, Allison returned with that article transformed to a full-fledged research – the same path Huntington's theory on the "Clash of Civilizations"

followed. In that book (Allison, G., 2017), the author appeared more reluctant to preclude that War between the sides is inevitable. Despite arguing that Donald Trump and Xi Jinping would not find better replacements to themselves if Hollywood was having them starring a movie on an America vs China based conflict scenario (ibid, p.5), most of his research now reflects on how War can be avoided.

By examining some of the most vibrant cases of Thucydides Traps (and why did they sprung or not), he concludes that there are roughly twelve important points that come out of experience, and tend to de-escalate tension when the Trap is set. These include, but are not limited to, adherence of the parties to higher authorities (such as the pre-secular Pope and modern United Nations), the existence of Nuclear Deterrence and Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) and strong interdependence between the parties (raising the costs and minimizing the benefits of conflict). Notably, he adds that despite all of the above, leaders must – most importantly – be prepared and able to risk waging the unthinkable War, even if it means annihilation of billions of humans (ibid, p. 167-190).

The true hot-point of this theory rests on Allison's last chapter. The author there suggests four possible outcomes based on his previous findings that could avert the possibility of such a catastrophic war. The first is accommodation (ibid, p.196), which essentially means that there should be necessary American compromises in spheres of influence that would not displease the Chinese. The second is undermining (ibid, p.197) which essentially is the traditional tactic used by the US against the Soviet Union. By funding opposition in China and brewing instability, the US could harvest an inward looking and demoralized opponent. The third option is a negotiation of a long peace, similar to the *détente* of the seventies between the USSR and the US. Both powers would agree to some basic rules of the hostile game, and would exercise competition in areas less dangerous for humanity (ibid, p.199).

The last, but not least, proposal by Allison is a Redefinition of the Relationship between the countries (ibid, p.201). The author seems to pledge his support for that solution- given the fact he analyzes it the most. According to his viewpoint, both powers could agree to a new *modus Vivendi* of relative cooperation in order to tackle their common and general humanitarian problems: Nuclear Anarchy (possession of nuclear weapons by a large number of states), large scale Terrorism and the pressing problem of the Climate Change (also given the fact that the US and China are the world's two worst emitters).

Each one of Allison's proposals could find their way on the South East European level- apart from the obvious ensuing destruction an armed confrontation would create. In case the accommodating scenario prevails, the Balkan States could end up chips in a poker game, as an exchange for Chinese concessions in Taiwan, the South China Sea or in a possibly denuclearized Korean Peninsula. In the case of the Undermining scenario, susceptible to terrorism states of the Region, such as Kosovo, Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bosnia- Herzegovina could end up with new brewing civil wars. Islamist Organizations from Xinjiang played an instrumental role in the Syrian Civil Strife. There is no guarantee that the same networks will not infiltrate the Balkans after their rise in China's periphery. What is more, the Refugee problem that almost destroyed the Schengen Area in Europe back in 2015 was caused by a nation with total population of less than twenty five million people. If instability prevails in the Chinese People's Republic of 1,4 billion, the consequences will be cosmic.

The long peace agreement could signify the movement of antagonism to other areas of the Globe, sinking the Balkans back to the Obscurity described previously. This leaves the Redefining of Relationship as the most ideal solution to the Thucydides Trap being set. However, with Trump's aforementioned trade war intensification towards China, and Xi's firm grip and ambitious plans, it is also a highly implausible one.

Conclusionary Remarks

In the previous Chapters of the present Essay, research was systematized to produce a linear sequence towards extracting useful insight on the initial question posed. But no procedure was initiated without bearing in mind the most important factor in the Essay: The reader. Starting from a Methodological and Literature Reviewing chapter, an individual in minimal contact with the Social branch of Sciences could identify how this work would proceed and familiarize themselves with basic notions and theories to be discussed. The basic "scenery" was set: The emerging New World Order, and its repercussions on the area of South-East Europe.

Later on, the reader was presented with a depiction of the current turn of events in the Actors and Area defined previously. The rise of China –as the primary establisher of the New Order, the decline of South East Europe, the firm “declaration of dominance” by the United States in the Area, the setbacks of the European Idea and the anchoritism of Russia were all presented in a way that was deemed suitable for the unfamiliar readers to be situated in the Question under Research. This attempt was strengthened by a Case Study on Sub-Saharan Africa that was considered necessary to establish how the Chinese Actor fared in a previous circumstance of its rapid rise.

Having established its rules of procedure and its “environment”, Research focused on the “experimentation” that would produce answers to the initial Question – or at least some further inquiries for further Research. In that final and crucial Chapter, three very important theories were introduced.

Firstly, Hedley Bull’s Theory on a rise of a Neo-Medievalist International Order as one of the possibilities of the late Modernity, updated by Stephen Kobrin’s later addition on the Technological Revolution’s further effects. According to the combined work of these two Academics, present Research concluded that if (a) the Enlargement and Deepening Procedures of the European Union continue to remain sluggish, combined with (b) centrifugal elements in both the West and South East of the Continent and (c) the backsliding of the Rule of Law observed in Eastern Europe, **then** the European Actor as a whole will be too fragile and internally divided to play an important Role in SE Europe and its influence there might gradually diminish. It was therefore considered established that for the time being, the European Union is not an equivalent competitor to the US or China in terms of Hard Power, despite remaining a Soft Power influencer in the Region.

Secondly, Samuel Huntington’s notorious theory of an impending Clash of Civilizations was introduced, as a theory that attempted to propose some consolidated arguments in favor of an impending conflict of the two remaining actors in the Area under consideration, namely China and the United States of America. By correlating Huntington’s predictions of the mid nineties with what actually happened since then, Research was able to locate astonishing similarities: China indeed managed to sustain its’ remarkable growth, gradually shifted towards a high-added value economy instead of the previous industrializing model, and averted political instability by

smooth transitions between Chairmen, under the grip of a centralized, totalitarian, One Party State. The realization of these circumstances meant for Huntington that the United States will either try to challenge China, or accept failure. However, the aforementioned Trade War seems to render the first possibility much more plausible: The United States will not abandon their global Hegemony without losing the fight for it. China, on the other hand, is no longer in a position to accept US Hegemony in either its close or distant periphery.

Hence, since a (hot or cold) confrontation (“Clash”) was found by research to be highly possible, attention shifted on the terms, possibilities and a general theorization of how that confrontation would take place (or would be averted). In this endeavor, Graham Alison’s very recently published work (2018) on the notion of a “Thucydides Trap” was introduced. After a presentation of his most significant arguments, based upon International Experience, and combined with already established points in the present Research, the Essay concluded its last –and most crucial- part: Both possibilities of the Trap’s fate (sprung or avoided) would very probably involve the area of SE Europe, either as (a) a field of direct conflict, (b) a group of countries (or even individual countries) used as bargaining “chips” in an International Exchange of Spheres of Influence resembling the one that followed the partition of Europe after the Second World War or (c) a receiver of terrorist networks, immense numbers of refugees and general turmoil and instability. The only less grim possibility stemming from the presented Argument is that of SE Europe returning to a status of Obscurity, due to a possible (but not plausible up to date) détente agreed by the two to-be Conflicting Parties.

At this point, it can be safely claimed that the paper at hand reached a point of conclusion. An array of possible consequences of the New World Order emergence on South East Europe has been outlined. From a personal viewpoint, the author would like to underline that despite the grimness of the results, there could be a brighter alternative for the Region.

However, this other path requires from the European Union to act in an unprecedented manner of political consolidation and cohesion, with an outward looking mentality and severe enhancement of its’ Hard Power. Combating the existing and alarmingly

fully-fledged precursors of a Neo-Medievalist Order could be the differentiating factor between a grim and a bright future. Between a weakened Union of declining States and a major International Actor. In any case, further and more rigorous research would be -of course- required in order to formulate proposals that would turn the tide in favor of one of the most ambitious projects in the Western World.

Appendix

Graham Allison's (2018) detailed chart of all Thucydides Traps being set since the renaissance. War seems to clearly prevail, but the experience of late modernity (20th Century onwards) offers a much better statistical outlook (war reduced to 50% of the cases instead of a much grimmer 70% if all Traps are examined).

	Period	Ruling power	Rising power	Domain	Result
1	Late 15th century	Portugal	Spain	Global empire and trade	No war
2	First half of 16th century	France	Hapsburgs	Land power in Western Europe	War
3	16th and 17th centuries	Hapsburgs	Ottoman Empire	Land power in central and Eastern Europe, sea power in the Mediterranean	War
4	First half of 17th century	Hapsburgs	Sweden	Land and sea power in northern Europe	War
5	Mid- to late 17th century	Dutch Republic	England	Global empire, sea power, and trade	War
6	Late 17th to mid-18th centuries	France	Great Britain	Global empire and European land power	War
7	Late 18th and early 19th centuries	United Kingdom	France	Land and sea power in Europe	War
8	Mid-19th century	France and United Kingdom	Russia	Global empire, influence in Central Asia and eastern Mediterranean	War
9	Mid-19th century	France	Germany	Land power in Europe	War

10	Late 19th and early 20th centuries	China and Russia	Japan	Land and sea power in East Asia	War
11	Early 20th century	United Kingdom	United States	Global economic dominance and naval supremacy in the Western Hemisphere	No war
12	Early 20th century	United Kingdom supported by France, Russia	Germany	Land power in Europe and global sea power	War
13	Mid-20th century	Soviet Union, France, and UK	Germany	Land and sea power in Europe	War
14	Mid-20th century	United States	Japan	Sea power and influence in the Asia-Pacific region	War
15	1940s-1980s	United States	Soviet Union	Global power	No war
16	1990s-present	United Kingdom and France	Germany	Political influence in Europe	No war

Sixteen major cases of rise vs. rule. Explore the Harvard Thucydides's Trap Project and access additional materials by visiting <http://belfercenter.org/thucydides-trap/>.

1. PORTUGAL VS. SPAIN

Period: Late fifteenth century

Ruling power: Portugal

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