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Relevance of Nationalism and Identity Building in Current Era

Farinaz Aryanfar

Abstract

The rise of the far-right parties in the executive power of west European countries in the last few decade, and their anti-migrant or anti-Muslim public agendas is remarkable. These agendas then will partly form the national security discourses and change the identity building within these countries. Whether these new security discourses will then be actually helpful to secure these countries or will work reversely is the question. This paper will thus be looking at the question 'to what extent are nationalism and a national narrative useful in securing a nation from external / internal threats?' In order to do that I will conceptualize the term nationalism by using secondary data. A combination of different empirical researches that have already been conducted are collected, in order to form a new hypothesis about nationalism. This paper is thus a theoretical analysis, rather than an empirical research paper.

Keywords: nationalism, security, state, identity, ontological security, Islamophobia.

Introduction

In the last decade, we have seen politicians in parts of West-Europe and United States try to exclude Muslims from the national identity narratives. Examples include an interview with Geert Wilders – the chair of the PVV (Freedom Party in the Netherlands) – after the Paris attacks in 2015 (De Telegraaf, 2015) and another interview with the Times (Bruno Waterfield, the Times, 2016), in which he stated that Europe and the Netherlands should be de-Islamized because Islam is an 'imported monster'; Sweden's Democrat's chair, Jimmie Åkesson's opinion piece in 2009 about how Islam is ruining the Swedish and European culture (Åkesson, 2009); and president Trump's executive order that closed the United States' border for the seven majority Muslim countries, that included American permanent residents (The Guardian, 2017). There are studies that show that

the anti-Muslim rhetoric has fueled Islamophobia, as well as discrimination based on Islamic-appearances, around Europe as well as the United States (Perry 2013, Awan and Zempi 2015, Awan 2016, Bayrakli and Hafez 2015). The Islamophobic rhetoric used by the politicians is becoming a part of these states' security narratives and can eventually lead to polarization and internal conflict in these states.

Polarization and internal conflict can thus occur, despite the fact that the initial use of these discourses is to form a national narrative in order to fight a threat of some kind against the country; in the Sweden's Democrats' case it is fighting extremism, a segregated society, and defending the Swedish culture and standard values against the 'invading Muslim / immigrant culture' (Iconic, YouTube, 2016). In the case of the Netherlands' Geert Wilders, it is securing the 'freedom' and 'safety' of the Netherlands against the Islamic ideology, which according to him is against these values as well as against democracy (NOS, 2016). In the case of president Trump's order, it is in order to 'keep the Americans safe' from 'terrorism' (The White House, 2017). Therefore, these proceedings lead to the question whether having a national identity which is formed by the national narrative and discourses, is useful in securing a nation.

While the initial reason for forming the national narrative is to secure the country against outside threats, we see in the previously mentioned examples that the internal citizens that follow Islam as their religion also get discriminated through these national narratives and discourses. This paper will thus be looking at the question 'to what extent are nationalism and a national narrative useful in securing a nation from external / internal threats?' In order to do that we will first conceptualize the term nationalism by using secondary data. A combination of different empirical researches that have already been conducted will be collected, in order to form a new hypothesis about nationalism.

Theoretical Discussion and Analysis

Let us first explain what nationalism is and whether far-right parties such as the Dutch PVV, the Sweden's Democrats, and Trump's anti-Muslim policies belong within any of the nationalistic groupings. After this, we will examine what part identity plays within nationalism. This will bring us to the dilemma that nationalism is facing during the current era; that is, the exclusion of a particular group of citizens from the nationality narrative, which will alienate them from the feeling of belonging to the nation.

Nationalism is a shared sense of identity based on shared sources such as ethnicity, language, religion, culture, history, and geographical proximity and a political aspiration (Kassem, Talbott, and Snarr 2012, 37; Mendieta 2003, 408; Taylor 1989, 27). These shared sources generate a shared feeling of belonging to a certain group (ibid). When this shared feeling becomes a political goal to self-determination and control over a certain territory, it is called nationalism (Kassem, Talbott, and Snarr 2012, 37-38).

There are different kinds of nationalism: civic nationalism versus ethnic nationalism, and pro-state nationalism versus anti-state nationalism (Kassem, Talbott and Snarr 2012, 43-44; Smith 1991; Greenfeld 1993). Civic nationalism is based on citizenship rather than ethnicity, and its main principle of unity is based on civil rights and legal codes for all members of the society regardless of their ethnicity or race. However, ethnic nationalism is based on ethnicity where the main elements are the native history, a collective memory, common language and values, shared religion, myth, symbolism, all of which are considered unique to the group.

Others see nationalism as either pro-state and supportive of the existing government (pro-state nationalism), or rather opposed to the official nationalism of the state (anti-state nationalism). Many scholars (Smith 1991, 6-9, 100; Kassem, Talbott and Snarr 2012, 37) claim that civic nationalism is predominantly a Western conception of nation while ethnic nationalism is an Eastern European, Asian, African, and Latin American conception of nation. It is argued that this can be found within the history of these countries; Western European countries have gone through the period of enlightenment, which had

the value 'equality' at its core. Furthermore, the whole idea that people can become part of a nation and change nationality is based on the civic nationalism, while it is not possible to become part of an ethnic nationality, as people are born within this sort of nationality. However, these far-right parties are using arguments from ethnic nationalism within their civic nation-states.

While Netherlands, Sweden, and especially the United-States are civic nationalities where one can obtain the nationality of these counrties through accepting the civil rights and legal codes, these parties talk about finding the core values of being a Dutch, a Swede or an American, making it about having a particular religion or being part of a particular race instead. These kinds of discourses belong to the ethnic nationalism instead of the civic nationalism.

Furthermore, nationalism is about power and controlling a state: one of the reasons why nationalism emerges, is to maintain the integrity of a sovereign country (Breuilly, 1993). While maintaining the integrity of the sovereign country is called physical security, a state also needs ontological security (Mitzen, 2006, p. 342). Ontological security, according to Mitzen, is a terminology rooted in psychology that refers to the subjective sense of who one is and that which motivates actions (ibid., 344).

In international relations, ontological security refers to the state's identity, how a state defines itself and how it separates itself from other states, as well as how it wants to be seen by others (Steele, 2008, pp. 1-3), which happens through maintaining a national-narrative (ibid., 3). In order for a state to separate itself from other states, it needs to be exclusive and needs to use a (security) narrative where there is a distinction between 'us' and 'them' (Stern, 2006).

In David Campbell's words (1998), one of the unifying tools of a collective is to create an external threat. The (security) narrative is thus socially constructed and has a 'reality-making' effect (Jackson R. , 2005, p. 148). An example is how the Iraqi invasion of Iran in 1980 was not perceived as a security threat to the United States, but Iraq's war with Kuwait in 1990 was. The security narrative is that what separates 'us' from 'them'. Thus

nationalism is exclusive; that is, it excludes members that are not part of the nation (Kassem, Talbott, & Snarr, 2012, p. 37), in order to make a distinctive 'self'.

Furthermore, ontological security is thus very much in correlation with the state's identity since there is an 'us' in the making through the discourses made by politicians that needs to secure itself from the 'others' or 'them' (Stern 2006, 187). This 'us' and 'them' dichotomy is seen in the 'war of terror' discourse used by the Bush administration (Jackson R. , 2005) as well as media's misrepresentation of Muslims (Pop 2016, L. Jackson 2010, Dixon and Williams 2015, Harris 2009).

However, as Maria Stern puts it, 'it is not possible to make a perfect all-encompassing narrative. The trick is to find the most real representation of the people' (Stern, 2006, p. 200). When being Muslim is used as a factor of being part of 'them' instead of 'us', a factor that separates who belongs to our nation and who does not, Muslims within these nations are also being alienated. This kind of discourse excludes part of the nation itself, while the whole point of making a security narrative is to unite the nation against some evil threat from outside. The narrative thus seem to collapse, since it starts to attack a group of its own citizens – which will eventually lead to polarization.

Many scientists believe that polarized countries have a higher risk of civil war than non-polarized countries (Elbadawi, 1999) (Elbadawi & Sambanis, 2000). Therefore, nationalism in the form of using a security narrative to exclude Muslims from the nation-state, is not only alienating part of the society but can also lead to polarization, internal civil conflicts, an in its most extreme case, to civil war. This means that a security narrative which was meant to unite the country, is rather segmenting the country, thereby leading it to conflict.

In all likelihood, one of the causes behind this problem is that ethnic nationalism was historically meant for a time when people inside the physical borders of a country were more or less similar. In the Netherlands, for example, when the United Netherlands was built and the South Netherlands (current Belgium) and the Northern Netherlands were united, the population all spoke the same language. When the two countries separated, it was because the Southern part could

speak French – which was then an elite quality – and wanted to separate itself from the Northern Dutch that only spoke Flemish.

However, it seems these distinctions were clearer back then, and that is how it was possible to create such ethnic nationalities based on language or religion; Northern were Protestants while the Southerners were Catholics.

In the current globalized world that we live in, where immigration is much more standardized than back in the nineteenth century, where Middle Class people can reach different parts of the world with only a few ours travel time; where within seconds news around the world can be reached through television and internet; where nations are more multicultural, it is not easy to find a security narrative based on ethnicity that can represent the people of a country.

Therefore, nationalism needs to be based on civic nationalism – not only in name but also in practice and discourse – and not on ethnic nationalism.

Conclusion

While national identity is a crucial factor for the integrity and amalgamation of sovereign countries, globalization has given rise to challenges in finding the right narrative and discourse to identify an 'us' to secure from outside threats.

Concluding, state identity dichotomies are needed in order to have ontological security. However, because of globalization, many people can travel into different countries, and countries are not merely made of one particular religious group or ethnicity. Therefore, these dichotomies can become too simplified and superficial, not taking into account that the profiling also encompasses a part of the population that lives inside the nation.

This leads to security threats within the country in the form of polarization and conflict, instead of the unity that the 'us' and 'them' dichotomy is supposed to bring forth. This will then distance different groups inside a state and, in the worst cases, to civil wars.

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Title: Relevance of Nationalism and Identity Building in Current Era

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Iran's Political Culture, Internal Development, and International Environment after the End of Sanctions

Hassan Beheshtipour, Tuomo Melasuo

Abstract

This article concentrates on the development of the political culture in Iran after the end of international sanctions due to the agreement with the international community in the summer of 2015. The lifting of sanctions began in mid-January 2016. The development of Iranian political culture depends on its internal socio-economic development and domestic political life as well as on the international relations of the country.

The election of the Parliament and the Assembly of Experts in February and April 2016 were very important for the years to come. In the parliamentary election, the reformists and the moderates close to President Hassan Rouhani won 140 out of 290 seats. This means that the Parliament is balanced in the sense that negotiations between different political forces are needed in order to realise any of the reforms planned by the reformists. This results in progression in the political culture because a new kind of dialogue becomes necessary.

Iran's international relations also have an important impact on the country's political culture. They determine how much Iran can open itself up to the world. Two dimensions are essential here. These are the development of difficult crises in the region: firstly, the civil war in Syria and relations with Saudi Arabia, and secondly, the outcome of the nuclear deal and the ending of the sanctions.

As a player in the Syrian civil war, Iran supports the regime of Bashar al-Assad, believing that if it is toppled, it will be replaced by extremist groups such as Islamic State and/or Jabhat al Nusrah. This might cause the dismantling of the country and the destabilisation of the whole security architecture in the region.

Similar issues concern relations with Saudi Arabia, which, in reality, does not so much indicate Shi'a-Sunni antagonism, but rather competition between the two dominant regional powers.

The realisation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is very important for Iran and for the country's political culture. As Iranians fulfil their part of the deal, they require the international community to do the same. Failing to do so would have a very negative impact on Iranian domestic policy; it would re-enforce the ultraconservatives and hinder the opening up of the country.

Introduction

This article studies the general tendencies of the political development in Iran and asks to what degree the removal of sanctions leads to a significant development in Iranian political culture and a new phase in Iran's international environment.

The development of Iran's political culture is difficult to predict. As such, we need to understand the country's historical realities and to analyse its internal political processes. However, understanding Iran's socio-economic development is even more important. The emergence of a new political culture can be seen in the interconnection of the domestic and international spheres.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iranian nuclear programme was reached in mid-July 2015 in Vienna. In mid-January 2016, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) published its report stating that Iran had respected all the requirements of the agreement. This opened the

door for the lifting of the sanctions.[1]

During the six months from the nuclear agreement until mid-January 2016 many things changed rather dramatically, including things that will have an impact on Iranian –and regional– opportunities to truly benefit from the end of sanctions. This period ended with the Iranian elections at the end of February 2016. President Hassan Rouhani's reformist camp was successful in the parliamentary elections in the whole country, but in the election of the Assembly of Experts,[2] the reformist camp won only in Teheran. Nationally, most of the seats in the Assembly of Experts still belong to the conservatives close to the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei.

While this six month period saw many important, rapid, and dramatic changes, the whole preceding decade witnessed important, often structural changes in Iran and Iranian society, including increasing urbanisation, demographic development with a new kind of age pyramid, economic hardship due to international sanctions, and high inflation.

All in all, the perspectives in March 2016 were very different from what they were supposed and expected to be in the middle of the summer 2015 when the nuclear agreement was reached.

Ordinary Iranians, especially the youth, have been waiting for relatively rapid progressive changes in society and particularly for fast economic growth and increasing national prosperity. These expectations should be observed in the light of the country's internal development, which takes place in its regional and international environment. Specific attention should be paid to the economic conditions where these developments occur.

Diminishing oil prices and thus much lower oil revenues than were expected even in the summer of 2015 are having a huge impact on the entire Iranian economy. Furthermore, the US, and especially its Republican Party, are trying to hinder and create obstacles to the lifting of the sanctions, which is perceived very negatively by the Iranians and regarded as a very unfair act. If this kind of behaviour continues, not only will it negatively influence Iranian economic development; it will also have a regrettable impact on Iran's attitudes towards the outside world.

Reduced revenues mean fewer investments and thus slower economic growth and development. This domestic economic development is very important and sensitive for the political regime and for the political power struggle between the three major political factions: the reformists, the moderates, and the conservatives.

The elections for the Majlis (the Iranian Parliament) at the end of February and the complementary round at the end of April 2016[3] were won by the reformists of the Rouhani camp. However, due to the results of the elections for the Assembly of Experts, they cannot govern without compromising, for instance, with the different elements of the moderate conservative camp. This means negotiations and political struggle for most of the reforms President Rouhani and his supporters want to pass in the Parliament. They concern domestic policies and civil society, but also Iran's opening up to the world and the international community. As a matter of fact, we can presume that the issue is about how much the policy making is based on the population's expectations and how much is based on the ideological values of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

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1. Information Note on EU sanctions to be lifted under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Brussels, 23 January 2016. http://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/pdf/iran_implementation/
information_note_eu_sanctions_jcpoa_en.pdf. La fin des sanctions va permettre à l'Iran de récupérer ses avoirs gelés, « Le Monde.fr avec AFP et AP », Paris, 19 January 2016, www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2016/01/19/l-iran-va-recuperer-ses-avoirs-geles_4849564_3210.html.
2. This Assembly of Experts will select the next Supreme Leader after the death of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.
3. Iran elections: Hardliners lose parliament to Rouhani allies, BBC News, 30 April 2016, www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-36178276.

In the vicinity of Iran, the international context is also changing very rapidly, and often in an unpredictable way. Two issues dominate this environment. The civil war in Syria is having a very negative impact on all kinds of relations in the entire region. It is an obstacle to any kind of normal and sane development in any of the fields. With varying intensity, Iran is backing Assad's regime in Damascus. Without having to take a position on this issue, it is obvious that Iran would definitely be better off without the civil war in Syria. From an external point of view and in the long run, this is a burden for Iran's foreign relations, as it is for the whole region.

The civil war in Syria is also, at least partly, connected to the worsening relations Iran has with Saudi Arabia, which supports the anti¬¬¬-Assad opposition and its different armed groups. At the same time, Saudi Arabia has been trying to build up and lead a kind of Arab coalition of Sunni nations at odds with the Shi'a world that is supposed to serve Iran's interests. Besides the Persian Gulf, this is said to be happening in the Yemeni civil war, where Iran and Saudi Arabia back opposite sides. The sad thing here is that, besides its negative impact on Iran, this rivalry might somehow result in the whole region losing the opportunity to benefit from the positive impact of the end of the nuclear controversy and the lifting of the Iranian sanctions. Instead of useless competition, one might consider how this new evolution could help to resolve the Syrian catastrophe, as well as the conflict in Yemen.[4]

The entire international community is, of course, affected by the nuclear agreement and the lifting of the sanctions against Iran. The opening up of the Iranian markets after almost ten years of sanctions is of interest to political spheres and the business world globally. The number of official high level delegations and commercial expeditions visiting Iran is astonishingly important. Almost everybody is interested in getting a share of the market and offering services. In certain fields of the Iranian economy and social life, this is

particularly important. These interests are also bound to more general features in international relations. The US and Europe have, at least partly, different understandings of their relations with Iran, and Russia is playing its own cards rather originally with its long standing support of Iran. Russia's massive involvement in Syria since September 2015 and its sudden partial withdrawal in March 2016 make things unclear. This means that it is also difficult for Iran to predict Russian policy in the region. It has been argued that the main result of the Russian campaign was to show that there is no military solution to the Syrian crisis and to bring the stakeholders back to the negotiation table in Geneva.[5]

All this forms the context in which Iran has been evolving since the spring of 2016 onwards. Many things are very difficult to foresee, and we currently lack serious scientific research and analysis of several different critical fields. The development of a new Iranian political culture can be seen in the interconnection of four dimensions: the internal development in Iran and the three concentric circles constituting the country's international relations.

Internal dimensions in Iranian development

Since the revolution in 1979, and especially during the last ten years, Iran's political life has been very dynamic. All recent election campaigns indicate that the bases for popular participation in the political process exist, and there is also possibly the option for partial political change. The end of the sanctions and the implementation of JCPOA are having a significant impact on the political atmosphere in Iran, and these have started a new cycle in the country's political life. How the local actors will react to these changes is one of our main research questions.

The whole six-month period between the nuclear agreement in July 2015 and the elections in February and their complementary round at the end of April

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4. The US Secretary of State John Kerry invited Iran on 7 April 2016 to help end the wars in Yemen and Syria. It is worth on noting that the US recognised the importance of Iran in these peace processes just before meeting his counterparts from the Gulf Cooperation Council in Bahrain, "Al-Arabiya –AFP", Lon-

don, Paris, 7 April 2016.
5. At the panel Joining Hands for Syria's Future: Prospects for Cooperation between the EU and Russia?, University of Tampere, 4 April 2016, by Dr. Ekaterina Stepanova, Institute of World Economy and International Relations, IMEMO, Moscow.

2016 witnessed the preparations for those elections. Besides the political debate on the main issues that were at stake in the elections, such as economic reforms and the opening up to the outside world, the particular character of Iranian electoral system became the subject of debate, particularly the so-called Guardian Council of 12 members, which vets all candidates for President, Parliament (Majlis), and the Assembly of Experts, and states if the candidates are qualified to run or not.

Apparently, there seems to be increasing pressure to reform or even to get rid of this system of disqualifying electoral candidates. In August 2015, President Hassan Rouhani stated that there is no place in Iran for disqualifying qualified persons who want to serve their country based on their political faction.[6] The Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei did not favour this approach. Nevertheless, during the electoral campaign, President Rouhani tried to make it more difficult for the Guardian Council to reject reformist and moderate candidates. Concerning the Assembly of Experts, this issue has been continued by the discussion of the criteria that the next Supreme Leader should fulfil, the conservatives trying to add new criteria to those mentioned in the country's constitution.[7]

In the 26 February 2016 Majlis elections, the Guardian Council approved only 4,700 candidates of an original 12,000. In the case of the Assembly of Experts, only 161 were accepted out of 800 candidates. There were very few reformists among those selected.[8] It is obvious that this question of vetting candidates and disqualifying an important number of them will be an issue for political debate in the future of Iran for years to come and a challenge for all the political stakeholders. The country certainly needs a lot of creativity and imagination in order to overcome this dilemma while respecting the values of the Republic. This is already a sign of a new political culture in the making.

The 26 February 2016 Majlis and Assembly of Experts elections were a success as such for the Islamic Republic of Iran. They were peaceful and without serious incident. The turnout was about 62%, which is more or less the same –even a little higher– than previously.[9] This shows that, in fact, most people have understood that their votes will be counted and will have an effect. For the Assembly of Experts, which has 88 members, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammed Khatami's list, both former presidents and close to Hassan Rouhani, won about 50% of the members, all of whom belong to the moderate camp. Concerning the Majlis, the moderates won almost half of the seats, altogether 140 out of 290 seats, which is a remarkable result. However, their number is not enough to govern alone, especially if they want to realise political, economic, and social reforms or to have an open foreign policy.[10]

For this reason, the time is ripe for a profound and accurate assessment of the performance of all three camps –the reformists, moderates, and conservatives– and it would be better for the reformists not to become euphoric about their victory. Instead, they should understand the current conditions in Iran and realise the need for cooperation in the new parliament in order to solve the people's problems.

This is especially true because the new Parliament will need cooperation between all factions in order to start parliamentary interaction in the post-

6. Shahir Shahidsaless, The road to choosing Iran's new leader, "Middle East Eye", 26 December 2015, www.middleeasteye.net/columns/road-choosing-iran-s-new-leader-688361433.
7. Ibidem.
8. Ghazal Golshiri & Louis Imbert, Le succès diplomatique ne renforce pas M. Rohani, « Le Monde », Paris, 19 January 2016, www.lemonde.fr/proche-orient/article/2016/01/19/le-succes-diplomatique-ne-renforce-pas-m-rohani_4849617_3218.html. Louis Imbert (propos recueillis par), Ayatollah Youssef Saanei 'Où sont les actes de Hassan Rohani?', « Le Monde », Paris, 27–28 February 2016.

9. Elections en Iran : premiers résultats encourageants pour les réformistes, «Le Monde.fr avec AFP, AP et Reuters », 27 February 2016 at 14:34, updated 28 February 2016 at 07:46, http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/international/article/2016/02/27/elections-en-iran-le-depouillement-a-commence-participa-tion-d-environ-60_4872943_3210.html, www.moi.ir/portal/File/ShowFile.aspx?ID=1ceb57f0-1b7c-4f3a-8331-4fdc300e8fe5.
10. Hassan Beheshtipour, Lessons and Opportunities Result-ing from Iran's Elections, in "Iran Review", Teheran, Friday, March 4, 2016, www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Les-sons-and-Opportunities-Resulting-from-Iran-s-Elections.htm.

JCPOA era. If all the factions manage to engage in constructive interaction, they will be able to provide strong support for the presidential administration in its bid to promote constructive interaction with the world, without having any concern of being accused of dependence on foreign powers.

At present, unlike in the past, reformists and moderates know that the conservatives are an undeniable reality in Iranian society, and this might facilitate the political power game and also result into more balanced relations between different political camps and more realistic expectations for the future.

The second political issue in the 2016 elections dealt with the challenges of the economic reforms and the opening up of the country to the world. It also concerned the content of the nuclear agreement and the meaning of economic relations after the end of the sanctions. One of the big questions asked was what kind of cultural impact this opening up to the world would have. In practice, this question refers to how much control and limitation there should be concerning the Internet, for instance. This is an important issue in Iran, where the population is very young.

From a demographic perspective, Iran is a youthful country: about half of Iran's 80 million inhabitants are under 35 years old, and the median age in Iran is 30.1 years.[11] In Iran, the youth is the largest part of the population compared to any other country in the world, with 35% of the population aged between 15 and 29 years. This fact is at least partly due to the baby boom in the early 1980s after the Islamic Revolution. This high percentage of youth will start to reduce from 2020 onwards.[12]

This large, youthful population means several particularities in social, economic, and political life. From 2008, due to global crises and sanctions, the difficult economic situation and its negative impacts on ordinary people started to increase. In the same year, demographic pressures also became more important. This especially concerned the Iranian youth, particularly those from lower income families. This group is still suffering the most from inflation and international isolation.

In Iran, the youth forms 60% of the electorate and young people played a crucial role in the election of President Mohammed Khatami already in 1997 and again in 2001. In 2009, the youth questioned the results of the elections. Today, it is said that the Iranian youth is more interested in social and cultural fields than in politics.[13] In this, Iranian youth is following a global tendency where there is a kind of disinterest and disappointment in politics, but this might be only temporary and we should expect that the youth in Iran will play a major role in the country's new political culture in the future.

The Iranian youth is well educated: universities and other higher education establishments enrol an increasing number of students. Today, students number some 4. 5–5 million young people.[14] It is also worthy of note that about 60% of higher education students are female.[15] Nevertheless, even good quality education is not solving most of the difficulties young people face in Iran.

Perhaps the two most important challenges the Iranian youth faces today are employment and marriage –that is, being able to start a family. These two items somehow determine many other issues in young people's social and individual lives within

11. Worldometers, 2016, www.worldometers.info/world-population/iran-population/.
12. Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, Iranian Youth in Times of Economic Crisis, in "Iranian Studies", International Society for Iranian Studies, Routledge, 2011, Vol. 44, No. 6.
13. www7.irna.ir/fa/News/81980211/, and www.ilamtoday.com/article/article.asp?n=166.
14. Ayse, Valentine; Nash, Jason John; Leland, Rice (January 2013). "The Business Year 2013: Iran". London, UK: The Business Year: 162. ISBN 978-1-908180-11-7, and Over 350,000 Iranians studying abroad: Education Minister, "Teheran Times", 9 January 2014, www.payvand.com/news/14/sep/1002.html, and www7.irna.ir/fa/News/81935217/.
Today the number of Iranians studying abroad is about half a million.
15. Florence Beaugé, Les Iraniennes ne désarment pas, « Le Monde Diplomatique », No. 743, 63è année, Paris, February 2016.

Iranian society. These phenomena also result in something known as "waithood",[16] which means that young people must wait increasing periods of time – sometimes several years– before filling a job vacancy after completing their studies and before forming a relationship.

The general unemployment rate in Iran is high: it is about 11% officially, but in reality it is estimated to be at least 30%.[17] Among the youth, even official figures are much higher: about 25% of young males and 46% of young females are unemployed. For those young people who have a university degree or diploma, unemployment is an even more serious problem. Although varying very much across different fields, it can be about 30% for men and more than 50% for women in some cases.[18]

One of the reactions to unemployment has been young higher educated Iranians leaving the country for the Persian Gulf countries, Europe, North America, and Australia. In all, after the 1979 Revolution, the Iranian diaspora consists of about 5 million people, and those with an academic education form an important part of it.[19] Today, after the end of sanctions, they seem to have started returning to Iran, hoping, of course, that they can restart their life in their own country.[20]

The question of forming a couple and starting a family is an important issue in all North African and Middle Eastern societies, and this is the case in Iran also. The debate on the marriage market is certainly very serious, but at the same time a little amusing. All the savant calculations on different age tranches and suitable spouses seem a little too "statistical" in their rigid categorisation. For our understanding, besides "true love for ever", the question of employment –that is the possibility to sustain a family– and housing – that is where to live with the family– are essential. If young people cannot form a couple, or need to wait excessively long to do so, this is a real and unfair problem for the whole society. In Iran, there is relatively a lot of discussion on the unbalance between the sexes and the lack of males –there is about a 25% deficit at marrying age.[21] However, there still seems to be surprisingly little discussion on housing concerning this issue compared to other countries in the Middle East and North Africa, where it is an important obstacle to forming a family.[22]

As stated earlier, the Iranian youth is more interested in their socio¬economic living conditions and in cultural affairs than in politics. Often the main issue concerns civil liberties in the domain of culture and creation, and how much, for instance, the foreign websites and TV and radio channels are controlled. This might be a false issue in the sense that in reality it is so easy to bypass all of these restrictions, and young Iranians are well educated enough to know how to do it.[23] Perhaps it would just be wiser to trust this educated generation

16. Navtej Dhillon & Tarek Yousef (eds.), Generation in Waiting: The Unfulfilled Promise of Young People in the Middle East, Brookings Institution Press, Washington, DC, 2009.
17. Florence Beaugé, Un pays grippe, « Le Monde Diplomatique », No. 743, 63e année, Paris, February 2016. According to some sources, the official rate of unemployment is about 19%.
18. Nader Habibi, Iran's Overeducation Crisis: Causes and Ramifications, "Middle East Brief", Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University, No. 89, February 2015, Waltham, Massachusetts, www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB89.pdf, and Tara Vishwanath, Ouvrir les portes: égalité des sexes et développement dans la région de MENA, « Afrikar / idées. Revue trimestrielle pour le dialogue entre le Maghreb, l'Espagne et l'Europe », No. 48, Winter 2015/2016, Estudios de Política Exterior S.A, Madrid & IEMed, Instituto Europeo del Mediterráneo, Barcelone.
19. www.iranicaonline.org/articles/diaspora#pt5.
20. Nader Habibi, Iran's Overeducation Crisis: Causes and Ramifications, "Middle East Brief", Crown Center for Middle East

Studies, Brandeis University, No. 89, February 2015, Waltham, Massachusetts, www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB89.pdf, and World Population Review 2016.
21. www.sabteahval.ir/en/Page.aspx?search=Statistics%20marriage&mID=13468&Page=search/advancedsearch&mDefId=.
22. Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, Iranian Youth in Times of Economic Crisis, "Iranian Studies", Vol. 44, No. 6, Routledge, London, 2011, www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00210862.2011.570510. As a matter of fact, Djavad Salehi-Isfahani is one of the few scholars to thoroughly describe the patterns of the Iranian marriage market and the difficulties the youth has in forming a relationship.
23. www.parsine.com/fa/news/236827/%D8%A2%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%B6%D8%B1%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%87-%DA%A9%D9%86%D9%86%D8%AF%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%87-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86.

of Iranians and believe that due of their high level of education and attachment to their own civilisation they can "read" the foreign media critically enough and analyse its weaknesses and positive contributions. Regardless, in the new period after the end of sanctions and the international isolation of Iran, the youth of Iran will be fully integrated into the global society, at least in the medium term.

The attachment of the Iranian youth to their own civilisation has been seen, for instance, in the way how they have appropriated the traditional cultural events such as Norooz (Nowruz) or even different religious holidays by creating their own manners of celebration. Also of note is the richness of Iranian cinema and film production, the large number of daily newspapers (400) as well as the country's remarkable efforts in translating foreign literature, one of the greatest in the world.[24]

It is more than obvious that this kind of cultural landscape means that the Iranian youth and young people should be taken very seriously into account by the political regime and political leaders. Economic reforms might require the reduction of the Revolutionary Guards' role in the country's economy. Still, it seems that the conservatives have no intention of giving up their power in the economic field. Conservatives are afraid that economic openness brings with it Western cultural penetration, especially for the younger generations. Khamenei at least partly shares this view, and this remains a real dilemma for the regime.

During the 2016 election campaign, President Hassan Rouhani promised "a better future" for young Iranians and this is something he and the country should take very seriously and try to accomplish. The new Iranian political culture will most probably be a combination of the expectations of the young people and the ongoing result of the political factions' power struggle in the context of the new international environment.

Iran's immediate vicinity

There are three principal circles in the international relations of Iran. The immediate neighbours in the Persian Gulf constitute the first set of partners. Relations here are extremely important but very difficult. The six Arab countries of the Persian Gulf each have an individual approach towards Iran, which differs from their common opinion within the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Of course, the relations of Iran with the Arab countries in the Persian Gulf are today very dependent of the attitude of Saudi Arabia, which is trying to dominate the whole Sunni Islam part of the Arab world, if not wider. In practice, this situation might be more complex, especially when we take into consideration that many Persian Gulf partners have a long peaceful history with Iran and that they have no interest in any kind of animosity in the near future.

The neighbours to the north and east of Iran – Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan– are important, but perhaps less problematic than those of the Persian Gulf. Two of them –Afghanistan and Pakistan– may be the most crucial. Afghanistan is, of course, problematic because of the security situation in the country. As for Pakistan, it is notable that there are millions of Pakistani workers in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf countries. Still, Pakistan did not accept a request from Saudi Arabia to send troops to Yemen. After the end of sanctions in 2016, the construction works for the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline, which were started in 2010 and later interrupted, have resumed. There is competition between different regional actors, with India and China participating in the construction of harbours in Iran and Pakistan. Pakistan has also tried to mediate between Iran and Saudi Arabia.[25]

In more general terms, we can presume that the nearby vicinity of Iran is certainly not without problems,

24. Erik Nyström & Kambiz Ghafouri, Kansan valitsema presidentti, "UP – Ulkopolitiikka", No. 1, Helsinki, 2016, and Esmaeil Haddadian-Moghaddam, Literary Translation in Modern Iran: A sociological study, "Benjamins Translation Library", No. 114, KU Leuven, John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2014, https://

benjamins.com/#catalog/books/btl.114/main, as well as www.radiofarda.com/content/f12_noruz_under_pressure_from_government/25313815.html.

25. Jean-Luc Racine, Le Pakistan cherche sa place dans une région tourmentée, « Le Monde Diplomatique », No. 744, 63e année, Paris, March 2016.

but at the same time, being realistic, these countries are looking, at least partly, for positive relations with Iran. Some of the Persian Gulf countries have a kind of Iran phobia that is accentuated by the attitude of Saudi Arabia. The development of the crises in Syria and Iraq will, most probably, have an impact on their attitudes. This takes place, of course, in the more general context of the international relations in the Middle East.

It is not often noticed, but Iran has one of the largest refugee populations in the world. The country officially hosts more than three million refugees, mostly from Iraq and Afghanistan; the number from Syria is not known.[26]

Middle East

The second circle of Iran's foreign relations consists of the Arab countries in general plus Turkey. This is the most difficult element for Iran. Here, the development of a positive approach is crucial, and it does not depend solely on the Iranians; for instance, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain play also an important role. Of course, this second circle overlaps with the first one concerning the Persian Gulf, but this second circle includes the whole of the Middle East.

This domain is marked by two sets of problems. The first set consists of the civil war in Syria and the internal situation in Iraq as well as the crisis in Yemen. Iran is involved in all of these conflicts. We need to analyse how the end of the sanctions will affect these contexts and impact both the internal development and the external relations of Iran.

It is clear that the civil war in Syria is the most difficult issue for Iran. After the Iran Iraq War (1980–1988), in which Europe and the USA supported Saddam Hussein's Iraq, it is not at all surprising that Iran remains extremely hesitant and suspicious concerning all the security challenges that are taking place in the country's vicinity.

The war in Syria is damaging all kind of different relations and developments across the Middle East. It has become clear for all parties, especially after Russia joined the war in September 2015, that there is no military solution; military action can only support the political process.[27]

In the war in Syria, there seems to be different attitudes and a whole variety of opinions concerning Iran's participation and strategic goals. Some studies estimate that Iran is, since March 2016, following the Russian example and reducing its engagement in Syria. Ayatollah Youssef Saanei has even publicly criticised the country's military presence in Syria. Those who are close to the conservatives and especially Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps strongly support the Iranian presence in Syria, saying that if they do not fight the violent jihadists –Islamic State and Jabhat al-Nusra– today in Syria, they will have to face them at home in about five years.[28] Iran is also afraid that if the Assad regime is toppled, Syria will share the destiny of Libya and the battle between different radical entities will dominate the Syrian scene. Iran is also afraid that the Assad regime could be replaced by a government with closer ties to Israel and thus drastically change its security environment.

The fragile cease-fire in February 2016, the partial withdrawal of Russia, and the participation of Iran in the Syrian peace talks might contribute to a situation where the Syrian stakeholders are more eager to start a political process that might lead to a more sustainable solution. For Iran, participation in the peace talks might consolidate a political culture that values dialogue and mediation in solving social issues.

In the vicinity of Iran, a second set of problems concerns relations with Saudi Arabia and the whole Shi'a-Sunni confrontation, which is, in some degree, artificial –or at least ideological, overemphasised,

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26. World Population Review 2016.
27. Cécile Hennion & Madjid Zerrouky (interviewers), Jean-Marie Guéhenno 'L'Etat islamique et Al-Qaida ne seront pas vaincu de l'extérieur', « Le Monde », Paris, 10–11 April 2016.

28. Louis Imbert (interviewer), Ayatollah Youssef Saanei 'Où sont les actes de Hassan Rohani ?', « Le Monde », Paris, 27–28 February 2016, and Louis Imbert, Les Iraniens unis face à la guerre en Syrie, « Le Monde », Paris, 13–14 March 2016.

and exaggerated– because as it is so old, it cannot serve anything other than contemporary political passions. As a matter of fact, this Shiʿa-Sunni confrontation is a fig leaf, camouflage for the regional power struggle taking place between Iran and Saudi Arabia.[29]

Historically, Saudi Arabia and Iran were competing partners, and their "cooperation" mainly served both countries' domestic and foreign policy goals. In the 1970s, during the hot years of the Cold War, the Western alliance (NATO) referred to Saudi Arabia and Iran as the "twin pillars" in the region.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran changed all this, however, and Iran grew ever more isolated in both the Middle Eastern and international spheres. In this context, Iran increasingly emphasised relations with different Shiʿa minorities, especially in Iraq and in Lebanon, where she supported Hezbollah. This support was justified as the desire to help the Palestinians and all those who fought the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. In Iraq, the support aimed to bolster the Shiʿa majority neglected by Saddam Hussein's regime.

It is difficult to estimate how serious the claims are of Iran's wish to form a kind of "Shiʿa empire" and expand its zone of influence. These kind of pretensions have been present since the Islamic Revolution. Still, as many specialists have stated, the evidence of history show us that there has not been an attempt to form an Iranian empire since the pre Islamic Sassanid Empire. Today, it seems that Iran has neither the will nor the capacities for an empire. Furthermore, the country's military expenditures are far behind those of the other Persian Gulf states.[30]

The so-called Arab spring, the civil war in Syria and the new attitude of the US towards Iran has resulted in a situation where Saudi Arabia has been seeking a leadership role in the Sunni world and has created an Arab coalition to intervene in the Syrian civil war, one which is fighting Islamic State but also backing some anti-Assad forces. The relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia deteriorated drastically in early 2016 after the execution of a Shiʿa religious scholar by Saudi Arabia and the retaliatory sacking of the Saudi embassy in Teheran. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were frozen, and the situation remains extremely worrying as there are very few signs of detente.

Without delving too deeply into the details we can, of course, ask: Is the Iranian regime really trying to solve this problem? If Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries are reluctant, can Europe or the international community help them to accept a resolution to this impasse? This is a very important question because so many stakeholders in the international community are putting much too much emphasis on this Iran-Saudi Arabia dichotomy today. Once again, outside actors can play a role, but only by taking into the consideration the local forces and accompanying political processes. It is certainly a domestic issue for Iran and for the country's new political culture in the making. In the case of Saudi Arabia and the difficulties it faces –for instance with the war in Yemen– there is a possibility to clearly demark where the limits of military adventure and attempts to dominate lie by reducing arms delivery.[31]

The role of Turkey also remains a question mark for Iran. Besides the Syrian civil war, the issue of the differing ambitions of the Kurds might be a

29. Ari Kerkkänen, Syyria ja Lähi-itä. Havaintoja nykypäivästä ja heijastuksia historiasta, "Pystykorvakirja", Suomen Rauhanpuolustajat & Like, Riika, Helsinki, 2015.
Besides theological and religious differences, it is obvious that there is also a clear historical issue between the Sunni and Shiʿa that explains today's controversy.
30. Riccardo Alcaro, The West and the Middle East After the Iran Nuclear Deal, "IAI Working Papers 15/25", IAI, Istituto Affari Internazionali, Rome, July 2015.
When the Muslim Arabs invaded Iran during the Sassanid Empire, they had

not yet expanded to the Roman and later to Muslim empire in Andalusia and North Africa.
According to the definition of Empire in political science, the concept and the principle of the Shiʿa empire in the current state of global and regional issues in the Middle East is virtually impossible.
31. Rouzbeh Parsi, The Middle East and the Deal: In Search of a New Balance, in Paolo Magri & Annalisa Perteghella (ed.), "Iran After the Deal: The Road Ahead", ISPI (Italian Institute for International Political Studies), Edizioni Epoké, Milano, 2015.

problem. This is something which seems to change every six months. The foreign policy of Recep Tayyip Erdogan has become increasingly difficult to foresee as the regime has become more authoritarian. On the one hand, Syria remains an issue between Turkey and Iran, and the Kurds' interests might lead to the issue becoming even more serious. On the other hand, Turkey is challenging Saudi Arabia as the leading Sunni power. This might align it closer to Iran's position.

In some way, we could hope that in the medium term, the whole region will enter a new era where the positive elements of the Arab Spring and the end of sanctions against Iran prevail.

The International Community

As for the third circle of Iran's foreign relations, the development of the whole international community will have a multiform impact on the country after the end of the sanctions. If the implementation of JCPOA is done correctly, it will impact the overall relations in the international context and contribute positively to the solution of the ongoing difficulties. It is obvious that this will influence Iranian internal development and, in the long run, Iranian political culture. The interaction of these three foreign relation circles with the internal development of Iran will determine the country's future in the coming decades.

After the end of the sanctions, two issues are becoming crucial for Iran's development. The first is – as already stated– the implementation of JCPOA and its economic options. The second concerns world politics more generally, in particular the impact of relations between Russia and the US, and the role of China and the BRICS.[32]

In the first issue, the progressive lifting of the sanctions started 16 January 2016. This meant the release of the Iranian financial assets in international banks. There are different estimations of their worth starting from 32 billion US dollars,[33] but the figure could be very much higher in a rather short period of time, up to 100 milliard US dollars. The SWIFT code was re-established on 3 February 2016 at nine international banks, making financial transactions possible. The process of lifting the sanctions has different effects in Europe and the US: some political circles (right wing Republicans) in the US are trying to hinder the lifting of the international sanctions. Furthermore, in the US many unilateral sanctions still remain in place and new ones are being created because of Iranian human rights policy and the issue of ballistic missiles. Many European and international banks are hesitant to start business with Iran as the US Treasury has the possibility of pursuing them legally.[34]

In this new situation, Iran is looking for foreign investments and hoping her own oil and gas incomes will increase. The fluctuating and the eventual low level of the price of oil on the world market has cut Iranian incomes by half compared to the calculations made in July 2015. This has, of course, a negative impact on the expectations of rapid growth and prosperity by the population. Today Iran produces about 2.8 million barrels a day, and the goal is to increase daily production by half a million barrels.

Since the second half of 2015, but especially after the end of sanctions, an important number of foreign official and commercial delegations have visited Iran. President Hassan Rouhani himself visited Italy and France at the end of January 2016. The German Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel was the first European minister and Chinese president Xi Jinping the first foreign head of state to visit Iran following the nuclear agreement. A number of important treaties were signed during these visits. Chinese commerce is expected to grow tenfold in the coming decade. France has signed contracts worth about 15 milliard euros, while those signed by Italy are worth 17

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32. BRICS: the "emerging countries" of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

33. La fin des sanctions va permettre à l'Iran de récupérer ses avoirs gelés, « Le Monde.fr avec AFP et AP », Paris, 19 January 2016, www.lemonde.fr/interna-

tional/article/2016/01/19/l-iran-va-recuperer-ses-avoirs-geles_4849564_3210.html.

34. Louis Imbert, L'"eldorado" iranien peine à voir le jour, « Le Monde », Paris, 26 April 2016.

milliard euros. The French energy giant Total, Airbus, PSA Peugeot Citroën, and Paris Airport are among those who signed large, long term contracts.[35] Similar agreements will be signed with Austria, Switzerland, and Spain in the coming months. Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has stated this spring that US companies can also participate in Iranian tenders, but added that several political issues will be considered beforehand. Obviously, this can be seen as an offer to negotiate.

The implementation and careful respect of JCPOA is of great importance to Iranians. If Iranians do what is required by the agreement, they naturally presume that the international community will do the same. This is important for the prestige of the regime and also for common Iranians in terms of national pride, and perhaps even more for the economic dimensions of everyday life.

After 37 years of difficulties, the nuclear deal is a golden opportunity, and this is a kind of test case for the model of an organised agreement. If executed well, it will very positively affect substantial international agreements regarding other political matters.

As a matter of fact, this dilemma largely surpasses the case of Iran. It concerns the whole credibility of the international community and the prestige of the UN Security Council: the world needs to trust the agreements that are concluded by the "major players". Here, the visit of Barak Obama to Cuba has some importance, as it shows the world that the unhappy politics of sanctions can be overcome.

From an Iranian point of view, international relations at large consist of the roles played by USA and Russia, primarily in the Middle East. Russia's intervention in Syria at the end of September 2015 and its surprise withdrawal in March 2016 made Russia perhaps the most important foreign player in the Syrian and Middle Eastern context. Russia backing for the Assad regime and the USA arming and training the opposition is a kind of proxy war between the two, but this is a very dangerous and cynical game in which US prestige in the Middle East and the Russian profile on the international stage are at the stake. Russia is clearly hoping to find a fresh start after the failures of Ukraine and the Crimea, and the country seems to have succeeded only very partially. The US hopes to maintain its influence without investing too heavily. The nuclear agreement with Iran is very important for the US and it must somehow succeed to balance this agreement with the dissatisfaction of the unhappy Arab states.

A different kind of military cooperation and arms delivery becomes very problematic in this scenario, and Europe has more or less the same kind of dilemma. Some of the European countries are very keen to restart relations with Iran, both politically and economically. At the same time, they must try to satisfy their partners such as Saudi Arabia, some of the Persian Gulf emirates, and Egypt with important arms deliveries and direct military cooperation without compromising relations with Iran, which are, in the long run, very important. This arms trade is very problematic: despite the cease-fire, the US is arming Syrian rebels and Russia is delivering a modern anti-aircraft defence system to Iran.[36]

The nuclear agreement between Iran and the international community is irreversible, since it involves the interests of both parties. Even if the future US president is a Republican, he/she will most likely implement JCPOA. Failure to do so would alienate the US's allies in Europe and Asia. It would also provoke irritation in Iran and most importantly,

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35. James M. Dorsay, China & the Middle East: Tilting Towards Iran?, "RSIS Commentary", No. 20/2016, 28 January 2016, RSiS, S. Rajaratman School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, 2016, and Visit d'Hassan Rohani à Paris: des contrats à profusion, « Economie », RFI, Radio France Internationale, 29 January 2016, as well as Italy and Iran Cooperation Agreement, "Bridgewest", LawyersItaly.eu, 3 February 2016, www.lawyersitaly.eu/blog/2016/02/italy-and-iran-coopera-tion-agreement.

36. Louis Imbert, La Russie livrerait des missiles S-300 à l'Iran, « Le Monde », Paris, 13 April 2016.

it would isolate the supporters of opening up the country to the world.

Ultimately, the question is about the nuances concerning the attitudes Europe, the US, and Russia have towards Iran on the one hand, and towards Middle Eastern crises more generally –Syria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia as well as Libya and Egypt– on the other. There are also new actors, such as the BRICS and especially China. Both Iran and China are eager to develop bilateral cooperation, not only in economic fields but also in the military and political domains, as shown during the visit of President Xi Jinping.

If all the stakeholders –Iran, local actors, and international partners– are really interested in benefitting from the nuclear agreement and the end of sanctions, they should seriously and collectively try to address the main problems of the regions mentioned above. This requires cooperation, moderation, and flexibility. It will take time and will have to be established step by step. However, it also means that the new political culture in Iran –which will be based on the interests of the majority of the Iranians– is just the beginning. It should be extended to the whole region from Cairo to Teheran. In a way, this political process could be compared with the European reconstruction era after the Second World War. Let us hope that it does not lead to a new Cold War, but to a new political culture, one more positive for Iran and for the whole region.

Title: Iran's Political Culture, Internal Development, and International Environment after the End of Sanctions

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Chinese Students' Perception of President Xi Jinping in terms of Transformational Leadership

Asad Ullah, M. Ahsan Jamal, Greta Pesce, Yuan Yuan Mei

Abstract

The outline of this project begins with the exploration of basic idea of leadership and further linking it with Chinese political environment. Subsequently the transformational leadership model is used to analyze Chinese students' perception of President Xi Jinping, while the traits of followers — in this case Chinese students — are defined using Robert Kelly's followership model. The central piece of this research was to conduct survey among Chinese students, while the survey questionnaire was analytically designed to reveal the follower's level of agreement with Xi Jinping's policies as well as overall popularity. The survey data also helped indicate the types of followers and to examine relevant connections to their viewpoints, which aided in investigating their perception of Chinese president as a leader. This framework would conceivably be an effective attempt to indicate that how followers define themselves and how their standpoint conceives leadership. This study can not only help identify the popularity of Chinese leader among students but also evaluate the effects of policies introduced by Xi Jinping. Finally, a note of assessment is included to understand to what extend current policies meet students' expectations, which can predict the trend and help weigh future reforms, formulation of new policies and development of the governing system.

Introduction

The core incentive of this research is to explore the concept of leadership, especially transformational leadership and behaviors of followers in China. To begin with, the basic idea of leadership and personality traits are defined as well as explored in Chinese context, while connecting it with the traits of followers and their view of modern China's most powerful man Xi Jinping. To define and categorize the followers, this research uses Robert Kelly's model of followership, which is most relevant and applicable for identifying the different types of followers – Chinese students, and how their perception of current Chinese President evolves according to their adherence to certain principles.

In different cultures, leadership is viewed in different ways, in some cultures, in order to be seen as a leader, one might need to take strong, decisive action, while in other cultures consultation and a democratic style may be the preferred approach to exercising effective leadership.

Traditionally, in some cases, Chinese leaders are expected to rank ethical considerations above the achievement of profit (Ahmed, Kung, & Eichenseher, 2003). While, in other situations leaders are considered as the role models of social order (Lee, 1987, p. 30). Under Confucian values effective leaders must take two roles, to maintain both order and harmony in the social structure because leadership is similar to the concept of headship, such as the head of a family or the head of a clan. As a result, leaders in these roles can expect respect, deference, and obedience from their followers without coercion (Littrell, 2007).

Nowadays, the notion of leadership in China is based on several factors, including past experiences, social-cultural values and philosophical ideas, therefore current Chinese political leadership also falls under certain criteria, and their actions as well as motives behind certain policies are deeply rooted in their own experiences and traditional values.

Since Xi Jinping became the supreme leader of the People's Republic of China, the world witnessed some changes in China's internal and foreign policy. Xi's move to clean up corruption within the party greatly bolstered public confidence and support for Xi, contributing to his image as a strong leader. At the

same time, China under Xi shows a more proactive strategy and initiated an official propaganda inviting other nations to use the "China Model" as a reference. This is evidence that Chinese foreign policy has become more outward looking. Simultaneously, Xi's "proactive" foreign policy approach represents a remarkable departure from that of his predecessor, Hu Jintao, who was often seen as following a policy of "inaction" (Cheng Li, Eve Cary, 2011).

Xi's administration has adopted a hardline approach towards the disputed territories. China under Xi has also been actively engaged in the construction of new global economic and financial institutions. Moreover, "One Belt, One Road" and "Asian Security Concept" initiatives are an extension of the "China model" and "Chinese values".

Taking everything into account, Xi is considered as an 'action-man', and China under Xi does not wish to wait for favorable international conditions. The increase in China's national capabilities implies that it is not necessary for China to act strictly in accordance with the existing international situation. Instead, China under Xi's leadership now possesses the confidence to construct its own favorable international conditions to maximize benefits to itself.

Therefore, it is also interesting to explore how the locals in China view Xi Jinping, what are the opinions of Chinese people towards Xi being an ethical, innovative, committed, authoritative and respectable personality, as well as to examine how the masses can relate their interests with the policies introduced by their leader. To analyze these factors, set of questions are carefully designed and added to the survey questionnaire, which can not only help discover the attitudes of people but can also observe to what extent people view President Xi Jinping is a transformational leader.

In any society, students are considered as one of the core pillars, as they shape the ideas and are the driving force behind any movement in the social group, therefore it is important to evaluate the Chinese students' perception of leadership in China and how they view the Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Review of Literature

Having defined the research objectives and questions of inquiry, this chapter will delve into a detailed discussion of literature on leadership with a special emphasis on the 'Political Leadership' and the idea of 'Followership' in polities. Since the main objective of this research is to find out the perception of leadership, a section is dedicated to discuss the literature on leadership perception and what are some of the factors which shape the perceptions of followers.

While much of the literature has focused on leadership in private sector management, an important question is to find out what are the traits of political leadership and what does theory, research and practice has to inform us about the 'kind of leadership' which exists in a country and the corresponding 'followership' which it entails.

Most of the research and scholarly work on leadership has ignored the followership aspect especially when it comes to political leadership; therefore it is pertinent to understand followership in order to understand the perception of leadership and the particular type of leadership people associate themselves with. There is not enough research when it comes to political leadership perception in China especially in the eyes of university students.

The current research focuses on students with the aim to understand how younger generation views leadership and what traits of Xi Jinping they associate the most with when it comes to forming their perceptions of him as the political leader of China and what kind of a follower they believe they are.

The chapter is sub-divided into following sections:

1.   Theories of leadership & Political leadership
2.   Perception of Political leadership
3.   Leadership and followership
4.   Personality traits, perception and followership of political leaders
5.   Theories of Followership
6.   Robert Kelley's Model of Followership

Understanding Leadership and Political Leadership from a theoretical perspective

Leadership in the context of given study is assumed to mean political leadership. The biggest strength of this research is the lack of scholarly research on political leadership and followership. Based on discussions and reading of the idea of leadership, we have come up with the following model of leadership which will be used and understood interchangeably with political leadership throughout this paper
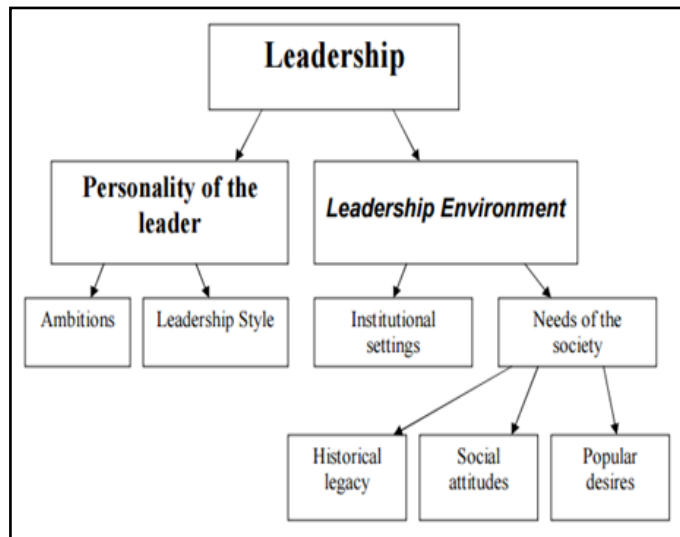
The above figure demonstrates the factors which determine leadership. The personality traits of a leader and how they are perceived by the public (followers) and the political, social and economic environment where this interplay takes place, determine the kind of leadership which exists in a group, organization or a society. The same holds true for political leadership. Most of the research on leadership in general and political leadership in particular has focused on either one of the two strands in the above model. Our review of the literature on leadership indicates that most studies have looked either at the personality traits or the environment in which leaders exercise their influence. There is a need to understand leadership based on both perception of the leaders and the kind of followership which follows.

In theory political leadership is best understood by James McGregor Burns (1978) whose distinction between transformational and transactional leadership in terms of personality traits of the leaders and their interaction with followers is central to this study. Burn's scientific study of leadership as a political phenomenon has become a currency in political leadership studies. Burns (1978) focuses

on the psychological and ethical dimensions of political leadership. Based on these dimensions he classifies leadership into two broad categories; transformational and transactional leadership. His focus is mainly on the relationship between leaders and their followers and a balance in this relationship (Burns, 2003). Transactional leadership is based on needs and is utilitarian in nature where leadership makes the provision of goods possible according to the bargain between followers and leaders.

On the other hand, transformational leadership has a moral component which demands a higher meaning or purpose. (Burns, 2003) defines transactional leadership as one, where 'one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things'. This is a kind of political leadership which is based on self-interest and basic needs, for example demand for votes. Transformational leadership is when leaders engage with followers in a way that they raise each other's moral ground and motivation (Burns, 2003). It is a type of political leadership that moves the society towards achieving higher long term collective goals with an understanding of the followers. According to (Burns, 2003), this is a kind of leadership which understands followers in such a way so as to define their values in a meaningful way so they could be moved towards a purposeful action. This typology of the concept of leadership has its basis purely in political science but has been borrowed by scholars working on leadership in management and other fields. Max Weber's idea of 'Charismatic Leadership' fits into this equation of transformational leadership and followership. He argues that, 'a charismatic leader is characterized by a strong personal appeal and determination, especially in crisis like situations and challenges. But for Weber (1946) if "leadership fails to benefit followers, it is likely that…charisma will disappear".

Much of the contemporary research on leadership has ignored the followership perspective. Our research aims to fill this gap by defining leadership perception in terms of followership as we shall explore later and provide a justification for. Similar views on charismatic leadership are shared by Willner (1984), Hollander and Offermann (1990) who studied charisma as a function of leader-followers bond. According to Willner (1984), it is not the leader or his qualities but the perception of leaders in the

eyes of people (followers) that counts in generating charismatic leadership.

Leadership as a function of followership in theory

Most of the scholarship on leadership has ignored the idea of followership as a means to measure and assess the type and perception of leadership respectively. The present section will review some of the major theoretical paradigms of leadership before introducing the literature on followership and how it defines leadership. The reader will have a clear idea of two concepts by the end of this discussion; furthermore, it will develop a base for the followership model we are using for the purposes of current research.

At the conceptual level, followership is described as a function of the follower, leader and situational variables (Thompson & Morris, 2006; Hersey, Blanchard &Johnson, 2008). It should be also noted that just like there is no universal definition of leaders, there is no succinct explanation of the idea of followership (Bass, 2008). Kelley (1992) has provided one of the most comprehensive models of followership and categorized followers based on the kind of engagement they have with leadership. Before exploring Kelley's model in detail, which also serves as a backbone to this research, it is important to explore research surrounding followership.

Chaleff's (2009) model suggests a characterization of followers according to follower support for the leader and the challenges they pose for the leader. Courageous followers actively participate in perceiving the leadership and associating themselves with them accordingly. This is closely in line with Kelley's (1992) model which divides followers into different categories. These followers know when to dissociate themselves from the leadership, especially when it becomes clear to them that the common goal is not being served (Dvir &Shamir, 2003).

Followers and followership are central to understand perception of leadership, after all the way followers identify themselves with a political leader in turn shows their perception of that leader whether it's due to the personality traits, charisma, policies, authority or popularity of that leader. While some theories of leadership do not accommodate followership in explaining leadership others do so cursorily, while yet others give more importance to it. By looking at the current scholarship we can classify leadership theories according to the degree of their emphasis on followers and followership.

a. Personality Traits Approach

Leader is at the heart of this approach. It takes into account the personal characteristics of a leader, for example; personality, motivation, physical appearance and intellect which enable individuals for leadership roles. (Kenny & Zaccaro, 1983; Harder, 2003) In the tradition of leadership research, traits approach hasn't paid much attention to followers and followership in understanding leadership. The basic assumption of this theory is that the success or failure of a leader is independent of followers and followership.

b. Transformational and Charismatic Leadership theories

The behavior of leaders is the main focus of these theories. Though they credit leaders for the success or failure of a group, these theories do not completely discredit the role played by followers. As discussed above, transformational leadership is the one which bring about positive changes in a group, organization or at the societal level. Burns (2003) argues that this process transforms followers into leaders, where both become effective and ethical. Charismatic leadership on the other hand sees leaders as yielding extraordinary powers of influence over followers, capacity to exert influence over followers through emotional attachment (Weber, 1947). An important aspect here is the followers' perception which is the key to maintaining the status of being a charismatic leader. Conger & Kanungo (1987) are of the view that to maintain this image, leaders must take risks, demonstrate their personal commitment and appear confident and knowledgeable.

c. Contingency Models

Contingency models rest on the assumption that leaders' effectiveness is contingent upon the situational elements, which includes followers too. There are two main theories towards that end. The Path-Goal Theory states that the leaders influence the perception of followers in terms of desirability of following a certain path to achieve a certain goal (House & Mitchell, 1974). If the followers are convinced that by completing a certain task they can achieve a desired objective, they will stay motivated. In a way this is how the followers perceive leadership, motivational or not. The style of leadership in this context (directive, supportive, participative or achievement oriented) is

determined by (me) followers' nature (needs, values, abilities and personalities) and (ii) nature of the task to be completed. Situational leadership theory posits that the most effective leadership style is a factor of level of readiness of followers, where readiness level is gauged by the ability and willingness of the followers to achieve a given task (Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson, 2008).

d. Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX)

LMX is a kind of parameter which measures the relationships between leaders and followers based on various variables (Goertzen & Fritz, 2004). In a high LMX (high quality relationship) there are high levels of trust, support and mutual influence between the followers and leaders, hence followers are more committed, productive and satisfied as compared to those with low LMX. (Grestner & Day, 1997)

e. Information Processing Theory

This theory examines the cognitive processes behind the behavior of leaders and followers. The followers make a sense of the world around them created by leaders (Brown, Scott & Lewis, 2004). Leaders make sense of the cognitive world to see what kind of behavior they should use while the followers judge the effectiveness of leadership based on the information which tells them whether leader is responsible for higher performance or not (Lord & Maher, 1991). This is particular relevant for the current research where economic performance of leaders is one of the main elements which help people make perception of leadership in China.

f. Social Identity Theory

This is the only theoretical framework in the context of given research which lays complete focus on the followers in defining and assessing leadership (Lord & Brown, 2004). Van Knippenberg & Hogg (2004) explain how the effectiveness of leadership depends on leaders' processing of followers' self-image.

Successful leaders tend to modify their messages and persona with the changing social identity of followers. Some followers are more self-centered, while others associate emotionally with the leaders. Lord & Brown (2004) have shown in their research that most effective leaders tend to shift the focus of their followers from more individualist concerns to collective goals and aspirations.

The purpose of exploring these theoretical frameworks was to understand the levels at which leaders and followers interact and perceive each other. A survey of these theories will help readers understand the rationale of the current research which combines perception of leaders with the relative followership using Kelly's (1992) followership model. Here is a graphical representation of above theories to understand their relative focus on followers.
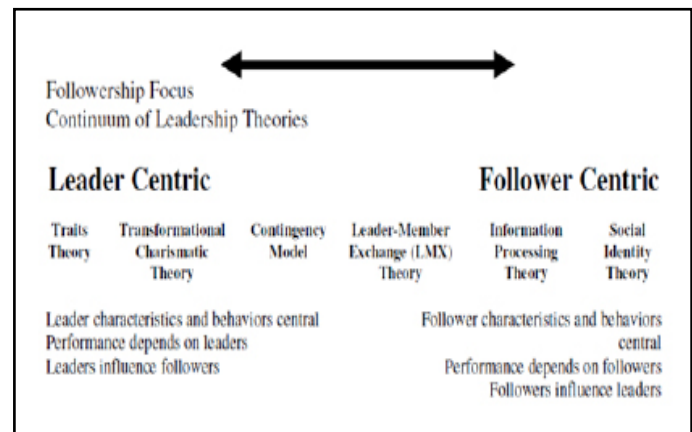
Personality Traits and Perception of Leadership

Most of the research on personality traits of political leaders hold true for democratic societies with electoral processes. Since the present study deals with China, which has an authoritarian regime with elements of democracy at the very lowest levels of governance we are assuming that most of the personality traits discussed here will serve as a general guideline for this study too. It will be interesting to discuss what the current and past research has to say about the role which personality traits of political leaders play in shaping the public perception of leadership styles and the corresponding followership which followers associate themselves with.

Personal Appeal has appeared time and again as one of the most important determining factor for the public perception of leadership style. From Weberian notion of Charismatic leadership to an investigation into the role played by appearance and visual imagery of the leaders have been discussed and concluded by researchers to influence their image building or personal appeal among the followers (Little et al, 2007 ; Lawson, 2010; Brusattin, 2012). Others have mentioned communication-style or emotional expression to hold equal water in determining the

public perception of leaders (Kaid & Johnston, 2001; Bystron e al, 2004; Stroud et al, 2005). Image-making and political branding also makes up the synthesis of much of the research in the field (Newman, 1999; Grabe, Bucy, 2009; Spiller & Bergner, 2011). But the question remains can we really generalize these research outcomes for any case? Which aspects of personality matters the most to the followers in deciding what attributes to attach to a political leader and kind of followership they assume? These questions will be answered by this research in the context of Chinese leadership under Xi Jinping.

Dinas (2008), Caliendo (2011) & Jones et al. (2013) have concluded that from the view point of political science, the notion of appeal could be attributed to the realm of electoral processes and strategic communication techniques used by political leaders. The concept of "appeal" as defined by Merriam-Webster Thesaurus refers to the power of irresistible attraction, magnetism, captivation and enchantment (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

The biggest gap in the literature when it comes to assessing the perception of followers on the basis of personality traits of political leaders is that they haven't defined and properly calculated those feelings. Even a specialized tool called 'Feeling thermometer' (Nelson, 2008); a survey tool popular among researchers to under the politicians public perception is not equipped enough to explain these feelings. Partisanship, ideology and social class have been the most widely used parameters in political science to gauge the personal appeal of politician and leaders. Hecker (2004) asserts that "the image of a candidate is essentially in the eyes of the beholder" and thus perception is driven by followers not leaders. What really matters is how the imagery and persona of a leader is perceived by the followers (Garzia, 2011).

The problem with literature on personality traits of leaders is that there is a lack of consensus over which qualities or attributes are processed by followers in shaping their perception of the leaders. One set of scholars has put too much emphasis on the following traits of leaders when it comes to political leadership and building public perception (Funk, 1996; Miller et al, 1986; Shanks, 1996; Hayes, 2005).

a.   Integrity
b.   Reliability
c.   Intelligence
d.   Leadership ability
e.   Empathy

Yet others have adopted a more comprehensive approach by using the "big five", which is a five-dimensional personality model (Gerber, 2011, John & Srivastava, 1999). In the Big Five Theory, following personality traits are defined as the most effective in shaping public perception of the political leaders:

a.   Extraversion
b.   Agreeableness
c.   Conscientiousness
d.   Emotional stability
e.   Openness to experience

These parameters capture the five major dimensions of human personality (John et al, 2008) Mondak (2010) who used this approach in his analysis of personality traits of political leaders is of the view that the Big Five Approach is an all-encompassing measure to aggregate the most essential traits of the political leaders which are processed by followers in the context of defining leadership styles. Among other advantages of this approach include its multi-disciplinary nature where it is being employed by political psychology (Caprara et al, 2002). One question comes to mind of a researcher here, how would charisma fit into this equation? There is a growing consent among scholars that charisma is not particularly a trait of leaders' personalities, but it has more to do with the relationship between leaders and followers (Shamir et al, 1993; Howel & Shamir, 2005). However in the research, the interaction between the five big traits and charisma is missing somehow. The current research will try to narrow this gap by assessing the perception of followers in terms of not only personality traits but also charisma. This brings us to the discussion of the concept of followership in literature and finally the model for current research which works in an opposite direction – defining transformational/charismatic leadership in terms of followership. It is highly misleading to put a tag of transformational, transactional or charismatic leadership without first identifying the type of followership which exists in a society (Chinese' students for the purposes of our research).

Followership

The maxim, "Always be a leader, never a follower!" is a thing of past and might sound true for bureaucratic and private organizations, but when we talk about polities, ground realities are different. Political leaders exist because there is an active followership, from which they drive legitimate authority and exercise influence and steer policies. Brown (2003) has observed that leaders in their respective organizations and fields (which also include polities) are no longer the only source of important information about functions and therefore can't expect to be followed blindly by their followers. The same is true for political leaders, even in a tightly controlled country like China where leaders feel pressured to be accountable to their followers and need to maintain an active followership for their policies and agendas to become a reality.

Therefore it's very important to understand the theoretical and practical aspects of followership in the context of leadership and perception of followers. The literature in followership can be roughly divided into three broad themes:

a.   Follower motivations
b.   Follower values and trusts
c.   Characteristics of active and inactive followers

Followers' motivation

According to Hughes (1998), most followers don't need leader to motivate them, but they motivate themselves. Motivation of followers depends on the relationship between the follower and the leader and how the personal traits (values) on two sides match up. Scholars have concluded that in case there is a similarity in the value systems of leadership and followers, the need to motivate followers might not be as high since the followers are already drive by the bond which exists between them (Mumford, Dansereau & Yammarino, 2000).

Research on Charismatic leadership have confirmed this point of view, suggesting that followers' self-concepts may also play a role in determining their motivations to follow certain leaders (Howell & Shamir, 2005). Green (2000) has outlined three conditions that must exist for the followers to stay highly motivated. First is the 'confidence' that they can do the job which is required of them. Second is the 'trust' in their leader to peg outcomes to their performance. Lastly, need to be 'satisfied' by the

outcome they get.

Follower Values

Values are very important to determine the preferences of followers for the different types of leaderships. Referring to our initial model of leadership environment, followers' values in addition to their personal traits can have an influence on not only their own effectiveness but also the climate in which they interact with the leadership (Hanges, Offerman, &Day, 2001). There is no debate on the fact that followers and leaders work better when their values match. Gardner et al (2005) is of the view that when leaders model their values, identity, emotions and goals effectively, there are more chances of an authentic followership.

Research by Ehrhart and Klein (2001) examined the relationship between leaders and followers to determine how values and personality influence this relationship. One of the most important finding of their research was that those followers who identified themselves as risk-takers and result-oriented preferred Charismatic leadership. The same could be held true for followers who indicated their interest in decision making.

Active and Inactive followers

A few scholars have looked into the characteristics of followers in order to distinguish between good, bad and the ugly. The most groundbreaking and influential research to date is the one carried out by Kelley (1988, 1992). Before discussion the Kelley's Model of followership, it is important to understand what other researchers have to say about the characteristics of followers and how it influences their perception of leadership and the style of leadership they correspond to.

Masciulli, Molchanov and Knight (2009) are of the view that it is the followers who create leaders. Leadership according to Smirich and Morgan (1982) is a socially constructed phenomenon. They argue that it is a product of interaction being the leaders and those led, in a political leadership environment. Considered that way, leadership is the ability to change the social reality of those led (followers). The followers in that sense have the responsibility to the reception of leader's direction and her reality. This process of interaction forces followers to surrender to the directions of the leader and shape their reality

according to the world created by leaders, especially political leaders. This acceptance is thus crucial for the success of organizations and political systems. It is for this reason that the current scholarship is focusing more on followership patterns to understand leadership than on leadership itself.

Model based on Robert Kelley (1988)'s categorization of followers under a leadership

Robert Kelley's Model
Robert Kelley (1988) was one of first researchers to hint upon the importance of followers in understanding leadership styles and perception. Before Kelley, most of the scholarship on leadership had ignored follower as active stakeholders in leadership studies. Kelley has created a scheme which distinguishes followers into five categories. He justifies on the basis that different followers can have different roles under leadership. These types are:

a. Sheep Followers:
Sheep followers never complain or criticize negatively about leaders and their decisions. They just obey the orders and do the tasks assigned to them. No questions asked. Due to this absolute obedience, they never tend to take responsibilities or initiatives. In the context of political systems, those people who never participate in government policy making or show indifference to the political decisions of the leaders, fall into this category. (Kelley, 1988)

b. Yes followers
Just as sheep people do not take initiatives, so do Yes-people. However, what distinguishes them is their complete acceptance of leaders and their decisions. They tend to consider leaders as a 'Source of inspiration (inspirational-motivational perspective)'. They are the ones who reassure leaders in practice of their leadership and the decisions they take.

In political systems, people who vote for the same political party or affiliate themselves with same leaders could be considered as yes-people. Speaking of China, people who affiliate themselves with the leadership of Xi Jinping and his decisions to reform economy and society without questioning could be put under this category. Yes-people believe that leaders are leaders because they are the most able people to govern.

c. Alienated followers
According to Robert Kelley, alienated followers tend to be independent thinkers and do not shy-away from criticizing the leaders and their decision-making. But despite their disagreements and frustrations, they do not make an effort to change the system. Some non-voters and people who are not active on the political scene could be regarded as alienated followers.

d. Survivor Followers
Those people who exists within an organization but tend to look for safety nets for the sake of their survival. Their position towards following leadership is oriented towards securing their social, political or economic position intact. They are very adaptable to changes, just to make sure their position is not jeopardized.

e. Effective Followers
They are essential to exist for the successful functioning of an organization or a political system. Robert Kelley (1988) thus defines them as enthusiastic, intelligent and self-reliant. In the context of political systems, these are the people who actively participate in political activism and show their interest in political decisions taken by leadership. In order to respect their own value-systems, they would stand-up to oppose the leaders.

This could be depicted in the graphical form as follows to serve as a model to understand followership and will be used for the purpose of the current study which will see what kind of followership exist among Chinese university students and what kind of traits they attribute to the leadership of President Xi Jinping.

Methodology

i. Rationale and Theoretical Framework

Based on Robert Kelley (1988)'s theory of followership, the basic assumption of this research is that leadership exists because there is followership. Kelley and many other researchers on political leadership have put a special emphasis on the ideas of followership, the qualities, characteristics and corresponding types of followers. For this purpose the research will assess how followers (Chinese students) perceive leadership (Chinese President Xi Jinping). Kelly has defined different categories of followers based on motivation, inspiration, charisma and engagement with leadership. Based on this relationship, he puts followers into following categories: 1. Sheep-followers, 2. Yes-people, 3. Alienated followers, 4. Effective followers

ii. Research design

The research surveyed 269 Chinese students from more than 50 cities to understand Chinese students' perception of leadership and current President Xi Jinping. The most part of survey was conducted using social networking app "WeChat", while the link was also shared on local portals to reach wide range of respondents in different Chinese cities. The questionnaire was translated into Chinese in order to provide better understanding to the respondents. In order to improve the accuracy of data and acquire honest and candid responses, the respondents were not asked to provide their names or affiliation with institution. Despite initial hurdles and some students complaining the questions to be sensitive, the overall response rate was good and finally after a struggling one month, required number of respondents successfully submitted their response.

The respondents included 141 males (52.41%) and 128 females (47.59%). The survey contains information such as age, gender, and education level. Variable "age" is an open question however the data which is over 30 and under 18 has been excluded so as to prevent from bias; variable "gender" would become a dummy variable and we take 1 as male and 0 as female; variable "education level" has been divided into 5 levels: college, bachelor, master, and Ph.D.

Beside personal information, the survey contains two parts, including (1) Political followership and (2) Perception of Xi Jinping, all of the questions are 5-points scale questions, where students have to indicate their degree of agreement with the statements, as of (1)extremely disagree to (5)extremely agree. From the first part we could determine the identity of our questionnaire subjects; furthermore, according to the first part, we could divide them into four types of follower (Sheep-Followers, Yes-People, Alienated Followers, and Effective Followers) in terms of leadership based on Robert Kelley's (1988) theory of followership. In the second part of the survey, we demonstrate Chinese students' perception of Xi Jinping, including different aspects such as whether he is admirable, respectable, or ethical.

iii. Measures

This research is using multi-regression to test the relation between followership and perception of leader. To sum up, we can describe the model by the following formula: leadership = f (followership). In the research, we use the questions of the second part (perception of Xi Jinping) as the independent variable, and the question of first part (followership) as dependent variable, to demonstrate each type of follower is related to what kind of perception of Chinese President Xi. Moreover, the research also used the regression between personal information and perception of Xi Jinping in order to understand the perceptions of different ages, gender, and education level.

Research Results

1. Overview

According to the data summary, the average age of our questionnaire subjects is 22.85, and the education level is between college and PhD level. Most of the respondent's education level is Bachelors (45.72%) and Masters (38.28%), whereas PhD and College students accounted for 9.29% and 7.06% respectively. For all the questions, the average score is between 2.23 to 3.86, which means people choose disagree and agree in general. The lowest average score (2.23) is the question of "How frequently do you report your problems to the concerned authorities to change the way things are?", and the highest average score (3.86) is the question of "Xi Jinping personality is respectable." On the other hand, the question of "

Xi Jinping is admirable." has the highest standard deviation (1.445), which means people are more tend to choose extreme answer, strongly disagree and strongly agree, compare to other questions; the question of "How influential have your friends and family been in your perception about Xi Jinping?" has the lowest standard deviation (0.847), which means people tend to choose the average score (2.76).

```
. sum

    Variable |     Obs        Mean    Std. Dev.      Min        Max

         age |     253    22.85375    3.415411        17         37
        male |     271    .5202952    .5005122         0          1
         edu |     271    2.498155    .7595054         1          4
  interested~c |   271    3.107011    .9267559         1          5
  family_eff~t |   271    2.756458    .8474935         1          5

 critisized~i |     271    2.538745    1.332421         1          5
    agree_xi |     271    3.162362    1.086715         1          5
       wrong |     271    2.405904    1.340744         1          5
  change_sit~n |   271    3.210332      1.2867         1          5
  report_sit~n |   271    2.232472    1.152058         1          5

  care_future |     271    3.789668    1.048828         1          5
   ethical_xi |     271    3.771218      1.2792         1          5
     trust_xi |     271    3.804428    1.274587         1          5
  respectable |     271    3.863469    1.250109         1          5
     admirable |    271    3.247232    1.445857         1          5

  motivates_~e |    271    3.678967    1.298247         1          5
  inspire_ch~a |    271    3.697417      1.3126         1          5
   commitment |     271    3.579336    1.333395         1          5
  xi_is_auth~y |    271    3.405904    1.368089         1          5
    innovative |    271    3.560886    1.289194         1          5

    xi_is_open |     271    3.501845    1.376723         1          5
  critical_h~s |     271    3.704797    1.164894         1          5
```

2. Effective Followers

The research use the questions of "Have you ever found that Xi Jinping is wrong?" and "How concerned do you feel about China's Future?" to recognize 'Effective followers'. According to the result, the variables "Xi Jinping motivates Chinese People" and "Xi Jinping is open to new ideas/approaches in order to solve problems" are significantly related respondents who are effective followers. The coefficient of "Xi Jinping motivates Chinese People." is -0.38, which means the more people think Xi motivates Chinese people, the less they are an effective followers. Moreover, the coefficient of "Xi Jinping is open to new ideas/approaches in order to solve problems," is -0.44, which means the more people think President Xi is open to new idea, the less likely they are an effective followers.

```
. reg effective_followers ethical_xi trust_xi respectable admirable motivates_people
inspire_china commitment xi_i > s_authority innovative xi_is_open critical_his_officers

      Source |      SS          df       MS            Number of obs =      271
                                                       F( 11,   259) =    10.03
       Model |  239.845136     11   21.8041033         Prob > F      =   0.0000
    Residual |   562.78955    259   2.17293263         R-squared     =   0.2988
                                                       Adj R-squared =   0.2690
       Total |  802.634686    270   2.97272106         Root MSE      =   1.4741

  effective_~s |    Coef.   Std. Err.      t     P>|t|     [95% Conf. Interval]

    ethical_xi |   .2676221   .1642231    1.63   0.104    -.0557603    .5910045
      trust_xi |  -.1645708   .1953573   -0.84   0.400    -.5492617     .22012
   respectable |  -.1841308   .1951227   -0.94   0.346    -.5683596    .200098
     admirable |  -.0786411   .1293824   -0.61   0.544    -.3334164    .1761342
   motivates_~e |  -.3866357   .1977263   -1.96   0.052    -.7759915    .0027201
   inspire_ch~a |   .2195562   .2098517    1.05   0.296    -.1936765    .6327889
    commitment |   .0410555   .1960723    0.21   0.834    -.3450432    .4271543
  xi_is_auth~y |  -.1190213   .1189098   -1.00   0.318    -.3531743    .1151318
    innovative |   .1677496   .1824921    0.92   0.359    -.1916076    .5271068
    xi_is_open |  -.4414075    .169311   -2.61   0.010     -.774809    -.108006
  critical_h~s |  -.0455583    .106978   -0.43   0.671    -.2562157    .165099
         _cons |   8.765398   .3395602   25.81   0.000     8.096748    9.434049
```

3. Yes-People

The research used the questions of "How influential have your friends and family been in your perception about Xi Jinping?", "Do you agree with all the decisions of Xi Jinping?", and "How frequently have you taken any initiative to change the way things are?" to identify 'Yes-People'. According to the regression result, the independent variable "Xi Jinping demonstrates commitment to goals of Chinese people" significantly positive related to Yes-people. The coefficient is 0.68, which means Yes-people believe that "Xi Jinping demonstrate commitment to goals of Chinese people."

```
. reg yes_people ethical_xi trust_xi respectable admirable motivates_people inspire_china
commitment xi_is_authori > ty innovative xi_is_open critical_his_officers

      Source |      SS          df       MS            Number of obs =      271
                                                       F( 11,   259) =     4.06
       Model |  158.274749     11   14.3886135         Prob > F      =   0.0000
    Residual |  918.204956    259   3.54519288         R-squared     =   0.1470
                                                       Adj R-squared =   0.1108
       Total |   1076.4797    270   3.98696187         Root MSE      =   1.8829

    yes_people |    Coef.   Std. Err.      t     P>|t|     [95% Conf. Interval]

    ethical_xi |  -.1931415    .209764   -0.92   0.358    -.6062015    .2199185
      trust_xi |  -.0049193   .2495321   -0.02   0.984    -.4962893    .4864507
   respectable |  -.1169512   .2492324   -0.47   0.639    -.6077311    .3738286
     admirable |  -.0314953   .1652616   -0.19   0.849    -.3569227    .2939321
   motivates_~e |   .2283435    .252558    0.90   0.367    -.2689851    .725672
   inspire_ch~a |   .1114818   .2680459    0.42   0.678     -.416345    .6393087
    commitment |   .6845136   .2504454    2.73   0.007     .1913452    1.177682
  xi_is_auth~y |  -.2704183   .1518848   -1.78   0.076    -.5695047    .028668
    innovative |   -.154235   .2330993   -0.66   0.509    -.6132461    .3047766
    xi_is_open |    .202991   .2162629    0.94   0.349    -.2228665    .6288485
  critical_h~s |  -.0271249   .1366442   -0.20   0.843      -.2962    .2419502
         _cons |   7.587869   .4337241   17.49   0.000     6.733795    8.441944
```

4. Alienated Followers

The research use the questions of "How frequently do you report your problems to the concerned authorities to change the way things are?" and "How frequently have you criticized Xi Jinping's decisions either publicly or privately?" to identified alienated followers, since alienated followers are more critical and disgruntle. According to the regression result, under α=0.1 level, independent variables "Xi Jinping can be trusted for the progress of China", and "Xi Jinping is open to new ideas/approaches in order to solve problems." are significantly related to alienated followers. Both of the coefficients of variables are negatives, which means alienated followers are tend to think Xi Jinping cannot be trusted for the progress of China, and Xi Jinping is not open to new ideas/approaches in order to solve problems.

```
. reg Alienated_followers ethical_xi trust_xi respectable admirable motivates_people
inspire_china commitment xi_i > s_authority innovative xi_is_open critical_his_officers

   Source |      SS       df      MS              Number of obs =    271
----------+------------------------------        F( 11,  259) =    7.41
    Model | 224.392718    11  20.399338          Prob > F      = 0.0000
 Residual | 713.42278    259  2.75452811         R-squared     = 0.2393
----------+------------------------------        Adj R-squared = 0.2070
    Total | 937.815498   270  3.47339073         Root MSE      = 1.6597

Alienated_~s |   Coef.    Std. Err.     t    P>|t|    [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+--------------------------------------------------------------
  ethical_xi | -.1440685   .184899   -0.78   0.437   -.5081653    .2200283
    trust_xi | -.3905294  .2199531   -1.78   0.077   -.8236535    .0425946
 respectable | -.1836601  .2196889   -0.84   0.404    -.616264    .2489438
   admirable | -.1174223  .1456718   -0.81   0.421   -.4042743    .1694296
 motivates_~e | -.3138759  .2226203  -1.41   0.160   -.7522522     .124504
 inspire_ch~a |  .269356   .2362723   1.14   0.255   -.1959033    .7346154
  commitment |  .1949986  .2207581    0.88   0.378   -.2397107    .6297079
 xi_is_auth~y | -.0647094  .1338807  -0.48   0.629   -.3283427    .1989239
  innovative |  .2856073  .2054682    1.39   0.166   -.1189936    .6902082
  xi_is_open | -.3181751  .1906276  -1.67   0.096   -.6935524    .057 2022
  critical_h~s |  .147209   .1204467   1.22   0.223   -.0899705    .3843885
       _cons | 7.124186   .3823114   18.63   0.000    6.371352    7.877021
```

5. Sheep Followers

Sheep followers are likened to sheep who do only what they are told and no more; therefore, the research use questions of "How influential have your friends and family been in your perception about Xi Jinping?", "How frequently have you criticized Xi Jinping's decisions either publicly or privately?" and "How frequently have you taken any initiative to change the way things are?" to identified sheep followers.

According to the research result, under α=0.1 level, independent variables "Xi Jinping is open to new ideas/approaches in order to solve problems." is significantly related to sheep followers, and the coefficient is 0.371. In other words, sheep followers

are tend to think Xi Jinping is open to new ideas/approaches in order to solve problems.

```
. reg Sheep_followers ethical_xi trust_xi respectable admirable motivates_people
inspire_china commitment xi_is_au > thority innovative xi_is_open critical_his_officers

   Source |      SS       df      MS              Number of obs =    271
----------+------------------------------        F( 11,  259) =   14.23
    Model | 451.186114    11  41.0169195         Prob > F      = 0.0000
 Residual | 746.799126   259  2.88339431         R-squared     = 0.3766
----------+------------------------------        Adj R-squared = 0.3501
    Total | 1197.98524   270  4.43698237         Root MSE      = 1.6981

Sheep_foll~s |   Coef.    Std. Err.     t    P>|t|    [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+--------------------------------------------------------------
  ethical_xi |  .0413901  .1891747    0.22   0.827   -.3311262    .4139064
    trust_xi |   .33614   .2250394    1.49   0.136   -.1069998    .7792798
 respectable |  .2618124  .2247691    1.16   0.245   -.1807952    .7044199
   admirable |  .1338993  .1490404    0.90   0.370   -.1595859    .423 3845
 motivates_~e |  .0607691  .2277683   0.27   0.790   -.3877444    .5092826
 inspire_ch~a | -.1937799   .241736  -0.80   0.424   -.6697981    .2822383
  commitment | -.0390129   .225863  -0.17   0.863   -.4837746    .4057487
 xi_is_auth~y |  .0766411  .1369760   0.56   0.576   -.1930885    .3463708
  innovative |  .0766043  .2102195   0.36   0.716   -.337 3527    .4905613
  xi_is_open |  .3714188  .1950357    1.90   0.058   -.0126389    .7554764
  critical_h~s | -.1303717  .1232319  -1.06   0.291   -.3730358    .1122924
       _cons | -6.592742  .3911521  -16.85   0.000   -7.362985   -5.822498
```

6. Regression of four followers base on basic information

According to the regression result, the younger questionnaire subjects are more likely to be effective followers and alienated followers, especially effective followers since it is significant at α=0.05 level. Moreover, male are more likely to be effective followers and alienated followers; whereas female are more likely are to be yes-people and sheep followers. Finally, lower educated people are more likely to be alienated followers in terms of leadership.

Coefficient of Independent Variables

Dependent variable	age	male	education
Effective followers	-0.1078**	0.9763**	0.139
Yes people	0.0522	-0.6054**	0.3269*
Alienated_followers	-0.0255	1.0622**	-0.7996
Sheep_followers	0.0616	-1.0957**	0.3246*

*=significant at α=0.1 level

**=significant at α=0.05 level

Conclusion

The result findings suggest most Chinese students are satisfied with President Xi Jinping's overall performance as a leader, and rather contended with his policies. Despite the fact that some respondents were reluctant to fill out survey as they considered the questions to be quite sensitive, most Chinese student's showed interest in the survey and eagerly participated.

The results of the survey indicated that most of the students, around fifty-percent, showed interest in politics, while nineteen percent answered that they are very interested in politics of China. Around 49% of the respondents believed that they have been somewhat influenced by their friends and family members in shaping their perception about Xi Jinping. While 30% of the students claimed to have been independent thinker and not been influenced by others. However, it doesn't indicate that they often criticize Xi Jinping, as most respondents, 32% 'rarely' and 25% 'never' publicly or privately criticized Xi's decisions. Furthermore most of the Chinese students seem to agree with Xi Jinping's policies and 32% of them 'never' and 29% 'rarely' found that Xi Jinping is wrong. Consequently, most of them 'never' or 'rarely' took any initiative to report their problems to the concerned authorities or take any action to change the way things are, which suggests that most fall under the criteria of sheep-followers or yes-people. However, there is positive indication that most of the students 45% very concerned and 26% extremely concerned about the future of China, which shows that there is a constructive trend among students to positively engage in politics.

Furthermore, the study reveals that most students believe that Xi Jinping is trustworthy, ethical and respectable leader, as well as rather critical regarding mistakes of his administrative officers in public, which clearly indicates that most respondents acknowledge and praise Xi's anti-corruption policies and 76% of the students consider Xi's as an ethical leader, while 77% of them believe that Xi Jinping can be trusted for the progress of China.

It is important to point out that most students can associate their interests with the interests and policies of their leader, as 73.8% of the respondents believe that Xi Jinping demonstrates commitment to goals of Chinese people. Moreover, 74% of the surveyed students believe that Xi inspire enthusiasm for the progress of China and at the same time motivates Chinese people, whereas 72% of the respondents consider Xi's policies to be innovative.

The results reveal that most of the respondents consider President Xi Jinping to be a transformational leader, with bold, charismatic and trustworthy personality traits. This indicates that Chinese president is effectively using policy tools and being a leader of world's largest population, enjoys the support of majority of his young followers. Under Xi's leadership China is emerging as a new political and economic power, while maintaining the rule of law, patriotism, dedication, and honesty under the banner of "Socialism core value". In the eyes of Chinese students, Xi Jinping not only remains committed to the development of country but also adhere to legitimacy and longevity.

Xi's governance is not only abiding the rule of law to meet China's current needs, but also sustaining the country's overall development and delivering improved living conditions to the ordinary citizens, which legitimize his position as a transformational leader and increasing support from his followers.

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Title: Chinese Students' Perception of President Xi Jinping in terms of Transformational Leadership

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Features of the New China Geostrategy in Central Asia

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Determinants of a new foreign policy of China in the countries of Central Asia cannot be considered in isolation from global dynamics of political and economic processes, and internal conditions of the development of China. Currently, the defining geopolitical trend is the process of making a new architecture of world order. The dominant features of this process are initiatives of transcontinental integration projects, which are based on revival of overland trade link between Europe and Asia.

Chinese project "Economic zone of the Great silk Road", which was announced in 2013, during the visits of the Prime Minister Li Keqiang and Chairman of the China Xi Jingping to South-East Asia and Central Asia, in comparison with the American project "New silk Road", European CAREC and TRACECA and the Russian Eurasian Union, is the most "young" and in many ways the most attractive to Central Asian republics. The attractiveness of this project is defined by the following characteristics, which, probably, were purposefully based on the projects-competitors' progress:

• the first, the design of free trade zones network as a reference point transport and logistics infrastructure, which is the basis of the project "Economic zone of the Great silk Road", can be combined with membership of a state in the framework of other integration structures;

• the second, proposals to transfer trade and economic cooperation on Yuan currency, in the conditions of "dollar crisis" looks attractive;

• the third, the refusal of the institutionalization of establishing trade and economic relations, without obligation to implement this or another course of foreign policy;

• the fourth, sustainable reputation of China as a major regional lender and investor.

These characteristics are especially distinguish Chinese project in the light of the instability in Afghanistan – the axis around which should be formed American "Silk Road", of course, the institutionalization of relations in the framework of the future Eurasian Union, which reduces the space for foreign policy maneuvers of the Central Asian countries, and lack of sufficient material resources experiencing financial and economic crisis of the EU to invest in large-scale transport and energy projects (the clearest example of the failure of the NABUCCO project).

Moreover, prospects of European projects are closely related to interest and investment of Beijing, which successfully synthesizes national interests with their European trading partners, pursuing a course aimed at strengthening of the Yuan and at the same time participating in the transport and logistics EU projects.

The scale of funding and implementation pace of Chinese "Economic zone of the Great silk Road" are impressive - multi-billion agreements in the transport and energy sector were signed during Xi Jingping visits to the Central Asian Republic. In addition, Beijing continues to lobby the idea of the SCO development Bank creation (Russian Federation tries to block this idea), where China is ready to invest 10 billion dollars. And such "generous" infusion and proposals the new leadership of the PRC makes in conditions of slower growth Chinese economy: from the usual 9-11% of GDP to the current 6-7%.

It seems that this behavior of the new generation of Chinese politicians is caused by a complex of endogenous and exogenous factors. The first should include the desire to transform the existing model of economic development of the country in the direction of export dependence reduction. China needs to boost domestic system of demand and supply, to reduce dependence on the world financial-economic cataclysms. So for the stabilization of the first wave of

the crisis in 2008-2009, Beijing had to adopt a package of measures to support export-oriented domestic producers in the amount of 600 million dollars. However, according to the Chinese unit of Swiss Bank UBS, China has enough means to another complex of such measures, but still doesn't use them. In this respect, it seems that on the one hand, China wants to avoid "inflate the credit bubble" that led to the crisis in Europe and the USA, on the other - to reallocate their investments.

In the latter case, probably, the most promising direction is to invest in transport and energy projects in Central Asia, which will enable China:

Firstly, economically bind strategically important, from the economy and security point of view region and contribute to the development of its Western provinces, what can turn into a major consumer of Central Asian hydrocarbons and importers of products.

Secondly, to reduce prices for Chinese necessary economic resources due to the growth of competition among suppliers due time limit of their raw material needs. In particular, Beijing has to buy the hydrocarbon raw materials from Russia on market prices, and Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan - on a more favorable rate that in the conditions of instability in the middle East and North Africa, where China gets more than 50% of the total energy resources, is one of the incentives to expand its presence in Central Asia.

Meanwhile, conducted policy tightening labor legislation in the context of reducing China's dependence on external conditions strategy - defines the maximum duration of the working week, the mandatory registration of labor contract and mandatory payments to dismissed employees - allows to reach the Chinese leadership triple effect:

• first, Chinese economic giants get a qualified workforce
• second, reducing the scale of the shadow economy,
• thirdly, Western companies will be gradually curtail production due to the rise in price of workforce, strengthening the position of the Chinese competitors. Taking into account that Beijing invests primarily in labor-intensive infrastructure projects of internal

(construction plans intercity railway networks) and external orientation (Railways of China - Kyrgyzstan - Uzbekistan) it appears that, on the one hand, despite the overall slowdown in economic growth, China will decrease the unemployment rate, on the other - systematic demographic penetration of China in the neighboring region will be laid.

However, the proposal of Guo Shenkun (the Minister of Public Security of China) at the chairpersons meeting of the heads of defense agencies of SCO member countries in Dushanbe to create a SCO Center countering security threats, the operation of which, in his opinion, should be organized in the format of rapid exchange of information between the law enforcement agencies of the countries-participants of the SCO, as well as regular joint exercises. This suggests that the Chinese leadership changes its view of the universality of economic instruments in foreign policy.

Probably the immediate impetuses for this shift in Beijing foreign policy rhetoric are the following external factors:

• the first, joining of Crimea to Russia. China fears that the existing tacit agreement on the division of influence zones in Central Asia with Russia, ultimately, on the background design of the structures of the Eurasian Union may lead to loss of the region from its sphere of influence.

• the second, China's need for a reliable rear in the Central Asian region in the light of the military buildup (first of all, in the form of air defense systems) in the South-Eastern Asia in connection with the trend of using tools of real politics in the system of international relations (war in Libya, Syria).

Meanwhile, there are a number of external economic prerequisites for the strengthening of China in Central Asia that "rebound" introduced competition in the triangle China - Russia - the U.S. in other regions of the world. As one of the preconditions that should be emphasized, is the failure of the project (for a total amount of 3 billion dollars) for the construction of a deep-water port in the Crimea with the joining of the latter to Russia. This port was of strategic importance to China, as it had to become an international sea hub

for goods transit from East to Europe in the framework of the "Economic zone of Great silk Road".

On the other hand, there is a gradual escalation of the Russian-Chinese competition in the Arctic, which is an additional irritant in relations between Moscow and Beijing in the region of Central Asia, the land routes through which along with the Northern sea way provide an alternative to the existing South sea connection of China with Europe via the Suez Canal. This unconditional leadership of the PRC in Central-Asian region can provide her independence from Russia in its relations with the EU, as the Northern way due to the geographical position of the Russian Federation in all hands will be associated with the need to negotiate the terms of its operation with Moscow. However, in Southeast Asia the United States is committed to make an economic blockade of China through the creation of Transpacific Ocean partnership, forcing the latter to speed up the search for alternative South sea lines of communications with Europe.

Thus, the new China's policy in Central Asia is determined by a range of external and internal factors. The external factors include: the escalation of geopolitical competition in the format of the proposed overland transport and energy projects, instability in the Middle East and North Africa - the major energy suppliers in China, events in Ukraine, resulted in the changes in Crimea - one of the most important transit areas in the Chinese project of revitalizing the Great silk road, the geographical advantages of Russia in the operation of the Northern sea route, the militarization of South-East Asia, and the U.S. plans for an economic blockade of China in the region.

Internal factors relate to the aspirations of the Chinese leadership to reduce the economy's dependence on global economic conditions due to reduction of export and increase of investment in internal and external infrastructure projects, "drain" competitors of Chinese companies, reducing their access to its domestic market and to reduce prices on imported resources, initiating the strengthening of competition between them.

The imposition of these factors determines the distinctive features of the proposed PRC economic integration of Central Asia in the framework of the developed large-scale project "Economic zone of the Great silk Road". Dynamic start of its implementation, and also expressing Beijing interest to ensure the military security of the region is an indication that China will gradually become in the terminology I. Kant in "thing for us", which was prepared by a preceding period of accumulation of research and financial base in the status of "thing-in-itself".

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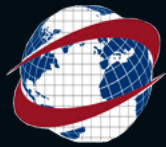
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