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DIPLOMATIC POWER WEAVING OF GLOBAL SYSTEMIC CHANGE: THE EUROPEAN UNION'S STEPS**

Abstract

This research seeks to provide a viable understanding of the main specificities of incongruences of reality with the theoretical assumptions on the working of the international by developing the concept of diplomatic power. The relational theoretical perspective on diplomacy as the peaceful search for the consent on just and commonised sharing of life, time, and planet affords the conceptualisation of diplomatic power as the non-episodic offering to others what they need, when, how, and for as long as they need it free from conditions and expectations of returns. The inquiry focuses on how diplomatic power is weaving out of several relational threads of relationships, the one of mutuality transcending the hegemonic “complex interdependence”. In this futuring process, the unfolding of diplomacy transforms the global relations system, prefiguring its emergent participatory democratic structures. The People’s Republic of China mobilised offerings to others of what they need conditionally free or non-rewarding for their conduct favourable to its interests have been the challenge to the European Union and the United States of America. Comparing their efforts, backed by the Group of 7, to counter China’s diplomatic power has proved impotent even when they combined their diplomatic power. Yet, the enlarged supply of options

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empowers long-marginalized states. The conflictual dynamics driven by the European Union and the United States of America competing with the People's Republic of China is undermining the possibility of mutuality as a new relational pattern to order the world safe for just humanity on a secure planet.

Keywords: diplomacy, relational theory, diplomatic power, will for relationships, mutuality, European Union, China, United States of America, Ordodemonium

“Man will never love their enemies until they cease to have enmities. The antagonism between the actual and the ideal, the spiritual and the natural, is the source of the deepest and most injurious of all enmities” (Dewey 1930, 293).

INTRODUCTION

This May, from 5th to 10th, Xi Jinping, the president of the People's Republic of China (China, PRC), was on a state visit to the French Republic, the Republic of Serbia, and Hungary. It was the red-carpet and pomp welcome in Paris. The greeting with the crowd cheering “China, China” and waving the Chinese flags in Belgrade. The warm reception in Budapest. The French host, President Emmanuel Macron, also organized trilateral talks with the President of the European Commission at that time, now, the next president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, to discuss EU-China relations. All comments addressed each state's prudently chosen visit dates to make the point. The gist of commentators' attitude is that Xi's European tour aimed to sow divisions and persuade the EU to cancel its de-risking, nearshoring, and friend – or ally-shoring strategies of remodeling its supply and value chains. If he attempted and failed to nudge President Macron and President Leyen to reconsider the allegations of Chinese over-capacity in renewables and EVs flooding the European market and the imposition of a new range of extra duties on top of 10% is much elaborated.

What is less noticeable is what different China he represented from what that country was 35 years ago. Then, in 1989, the Tiananmen Square protests were in full swing from April 15 to be brutally crashed on June 4. Was he successful or not in his personal diplomacy, whatever objectives he might have had for summitry performed were less significant

in a comparative view of what was working in the background. There is something less visible from all joint declarations and agreements signed in Paris (Élysée 2024), the signed joint declaration in Belgrade on “building a China–Serbia community with a shared future in the new era” (Vucic and Xi 2024), or also achieved upgrade in Budapest of China’s and Hungary’s bilateral relations to “all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership for the new era” (Xinhua 2024). The imperceptible humming of diplomatic power behind and beyond these visible high-level events moves the current reshaping of the global relations system.

Furthermore, Xi’s European tour is not a small matter just four years after the pandemic’s outbreak in China was mishandled at the start and covered up for too long, spreading outside the country. The then president of the United States of America (the U.S.), and, at the moment, the candidate for the same post, used to spill venom by calling the virus causing the COVID-19 pandemic the “Chinese virus”. Triggering an uneasy association of China with the “pathogen” agent is not that easy. However, humanity is still overly sensitive to even vaguely reminiscent signs of the pandemic’s perturbation. Numerous lives were taken. The living was shattered across the globe four years ago. Nothing is close to normal yet. Of course, if we know anything anymore about what normal is. There is hardly any traction of the solemn promise of “building back better”.

It was the mantra repeatedly pronounced during the pandemic. Back then, determination seemed to be present for not allowing the repetition of such calamity. The science of complexity made available knowledge for enabling foresight with proper methods to cope with this catastrophic manner of self-organizing systems reordering. Natural self-organizing systems and human-made alike “resolve” their thinning order by major catastrophes, bringing in new reordering through them. Human-made systems can manage their catastrophic disordering by conscious choices. Humans can reorganize themselves through negotiated solutions. To counter systemic disordering, they might jointly search for the consented, peaceful, and just sharing of life, time, and the planet instead of letting catastrophes do the “job”. We humans have, for that purpose, the institution of diplomacy.

During the pandemic, two types of relations became visible in the meshwork of relations. One is mutuality, the other is solidarity. In the end, both have proved that diplomacy is essential for making these relations span borders in the race to cross them faster than the

pathogen. The well-known relation of solidarity shaped European integration. Therefore, solidaristic “multilateralism is in Europe’s DNA” (von der Leyen 2019, 18). Relation of mutuality is also in the willpower for relationships. It slowly shapes attitudes, values, expectations, and demands, and sets into structuring diplomatic institutions. However, forging diplomacy structurally otherwise needs to be understood. The leading hypothesis is that diplomatic power is weaving global systemic change and the restructuring of diplomacy. The workings of diplomatic power in mutuality have started to weave global systemic change. One direction is undertaken by China. To rival its diplomatic power, the European Union has started to build its own in solidarity with Ukraine, not excluding Moldova and Georgia. It is employing its diplomatic power to overtake China in relations of mutuality by offering more to others beyond Europe through the Global Gateway and accepting the legitimacy of their claims now. It is in stark contrast to being deaf to them, for instance, just five years ago. The United States is also making efforts in that direction but still counting more on other types of power, still having a large reserve of coercive force, and counting on sharp power as effective even in the ongoing turmoil.

The research aims to conceptualize diplomatic power and test the developed theorization in the case of the European Union by comparative analysis of the texts of political guidelines for the period 2019-2024 and 2024-2029 by the candidate for the European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen. In the first part, the landscape of the world in times of “permacrisis” or “polycrisis” will be scanned, discerning the perceptible patterns incomprehensible otherwise than by some form of power, named as a diplomatic power. In the second part, the theoretical approach for conceptualizing diplomatic power will be elaborated and the concept will be theoretically and operationally assembled. For the empirical testing of the applicability of the concept of diplomatic power as the weaving loom of global systemic change the third part is reserved. In the conclusion brief outline of further research avenues of diplomatic power will be presented.

THE LANDSCAPE OF THE GLOBE IN TIMES ORDODEMONIUM

“Unknown unknowns” got public traction with elaboration given by former Secretary of Defence of the United States Donald Rumsfeld.

During the Defence Department briefing on February 12, 2002 (C-SPAN 2002), he ventured into interpreting this and other quadrants of the “Johari Window” (Luft and Ingham 1955). It is psychology’s help technique matrix of understanding the self-other relationship readjusted to strategic thinking by complexity science. Rumsfeld’s explications provoked judgmental responses and even mockery. In hindsight, it could be seen as the beginning of bringing into the open the unfolding of exhaustion of “*Pax Americana*” illusionary strength entailing unknowns.

Twenty years later, the known arrived. Coming definitively with Russia’s weapons and soldiers on a so-called “special military operation” blatantly confirmed the end of the global attraction force of liberal democracy and the might of the US deterrence. Almost date to the “unknown unknowns” of Rumsfeld’s saying, the Russian Federation committed aggression against Ukraine. On October 12 of the same year, the United States issued the National Security Strategy (The White House [WH] 2022) acknowledging the current time of “competition for what comes next” (6). Furthermore, the central axis of contention is again the “competition between democracies and autocracies” (8–9).

“The unipolar moment” (Krauthammer 1990/1991) was shredded. It was a good riddance. Even the metaphor was not appropriate, for that matter. The US riddance of the key rival in the Cold War immediately displayed the inability of America’s foreign policy elites to conceptualize this country’s role in the ongoing crumbling of modernity intertwined with the re-emergence of nature’s assertive dynamism triggered by human activities. Woven together powers in these two bound-together processes led to the Soviet Union’s amenability for the negotiated end of the confrontation in Europe and its subsequent dissolution more than America’s might. Therefore, unipolarity was the figment of imagination. Similarly to the non-occurrence of unipolar neurons in humans, unipolar moment neither occurs in a system of states. It seems that this requires constant relearning. It would have been better if a “unipolar moment” had never been thought of as occurring. Better not, since it brought the illusion of US omnipotence, however, briefly. Unfortunately, in its course, it begot unnecessary harm to the US domestically and internationally. Nevertheless, it proved that world-making with technology and war ran its course.

The United States has resignedly been coming to terms with the self-indulgent flight of hybris in the 1990s. The 2000s crushed it mercilessly. However, the new wave of declinists wrongly gauged it as

the downgrading of American power. We argue that neither power shifted through the rise of “the Rest” (Mahbubani 1992) nor got diffused or dispersed to congeal into new power poles. For the first time in human history, diverse powers got globally entwined amid human-induced bourgeoning nature’s activity, making jointly the power of mutuality relationships generatively creative. This novel human condition is named differently, as the power that invisibly works new tie-ins and linkups. From the point of depicting the prevailing emergence in the current “third modernity”, Zuboff (2019, 343) gloomily underlined “instrumental power”. On the contrary, Donati (2021) discerned in the ongoing crisis process of “transcending modernity” the encouraging growth of a “relational self” resilient power.

Gu (2022), agreeing with Albrow (1996), and forwarding Mayer’s (2019), pointed out globality. It means “a reflective process that conveys how we can see the world in a new way” (Mayer 2019, 1409 cited in Gu 2022, vii) to discern the ending of the Modern Age and becoming a Global Age prevalence of structural power creativity and resulting in globality of everything. Anne-Marie Slaughter (2009) underlined the world’s networked configuration and the networks’ ubiquity without direct reference to unfolding epoch-making change. She claimed that everything networked, diplomacy included, or actually everything being networked to diplomacy, primes the networked power as energetically humming in the background, producing unexpected effects in world politics. Henceforth, Slaughter consequently sets connectedness as the measure to gauge the networked power (94).

Hence, the “unrevealing of the American global order” (Cooley and Nexon 2020) or “the U.S.-led unipolar order fading away” (Yan 2021, 42) does not stop at this edge of power change dynamics in the international system and its ordering. Today’s “order without the progress” (Barnet 2021, 20) is woven together with the process of Western modernity crumbling down, intertwined with the human-induced nature’s derailing dynamics dubbed the “triple planetary crisis” (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC] 2022).

A sudden synoptic moment of rupturing world order with the unknown poses the problem of limits to diplomacy. From that angle, the late Henry Kissinger’s characterization of diplomacy seems more penetrating to get a sense of current global turmoil. According to the “Doctor of Diplomacy” (Schulzinger 1989), Henry Kissinger (1955, 7),

“diplomacy is the art of the contingent, the adjustment of ever-changing relationships within a framework considered as given”.

What is the present condition of humanity? Where is it heading? Why does the Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine persist since February 24, 2022? How was the peaceful end of the Cold War in Europe squandered? What is left of Europe “Whole and Free” 35 years after the “miraculous 1989”? Is it still remembered how sovereign people in then-Eastern Europe’s peaceful rise ultimately opened up possibilities for ending the Cold War peacefully? What did Europe, and consequently, the world, live through from 1992 to 2022? Was this period the thirty years’ crisis, reminiscing of one from 1919 till 1939? Has it been the prelude to an inevitable Third World War, as some have been opining, as “the twenty years’ crisis”, masterly portrayed by Edward Hallett Carr ([1939] 1946), was to the Second World War? How does “triumphant liberalism” (Fukuyama 1992), bulldozing the world by the “soft power” from 1989 onwards, compare to the rampant overreliance on “idealism” of the “power over opinion” (Carr [1939] 1946, 108–109) from 1919 till 1939? What might the unabated Hamas-Israel conflict incite in the Middle East and beyond? Is a war on the rise globally? What does everyday loss of precarious peace mean in the long run? Does the dynamic of worldwide rivalry and confrontations set in? Who is currently in the lead, and who is trailing behind? Who is gaining, and who is losing? What is that gain, and for how long can it last?

How can social cohesion be preserved with rising planetary inequality and deepening disparities within and between states? When the next pandemic breaks out, will states and societies be prepared to act timely and responsibly? Can the digital revolution be the “tide that raises all the boats”? Does the progress of artificial intelligence (AI) have, consequently, the eradication of truth? Can anyone get anything when the climate crisis worsens, biodiversity loss accelerates, and pollution exacerbates? What will come next? For the first time in the ascent of our species, do we, as humanity, know to justly govern ourselves in common for the shared well-being and nature’s wellness? Is humanity sustainable any longer?

In the ongoing turmoil, these are some pertinent questions. What is now known is that humanity is experiencing a profound change. Countless disturbances and trepidations unfolding globally afford the thinking of *nexilis*¹ change. What exactly is this change? Where is it springing

¹ *Nexilis* (latin), meaning tied or bound together, woven together, intertwined.

from? An epoch-changing process woven together within nature's resurgent activity induced by humans' actions unfolds. Continuous re-relating of what is ending and what is emerging is begetting confusing directionality. Late modernity crumbles while a new epoch emerges. This impresses the feel of time on the run, running, running off, running out. Concurrently, sudden, unexpected, unusual, creative, and undreamt-of possible beginnings spin time that is felt as new. Profoundly knotting, as is the unfolding of an epoch-changing process, leaves no temporal spatiality out of re-relating. Yet, all the bonding, tying, bounding together, intertwining, and weaving facets of moulding and ascending are remarkably protean.

Therefore, this change type of tightly fastened old and new in a nearly inseparable grip is dubbed the *nexilis* change. Such change of the very change is impervious to command power (power over). It is unamenable to soft power (power to). The *nexilis* change often upsets normative power (as the power of normal) and soft power (as the power of opinions or ideas). It even ridicules sharp power (as hard power "on steroids") or scorns smart power (combined power over and power to). The swirling of the world is increasing the run toward "unknown unknowns". What might the emergent epoch from the profiled change be named? A once famous diplomatic pun that is "too early to say," could be deemed appropriate to as related to China used to accentuate.

Who wields power over, power of, power with, power to, or power for in such circumstances? Is there a concentration of all these powers anywhere? What kind of power, how, and to what effect pervades the *nexilis* change? Present accelerated and intersecting flows augment more risk than Ulrich Beck (1992) singled out in the "second modernity". More fluidity is at play than Zygmunt Bauman (2000/2001) thought of. The current time is one of the unprecedented pervasiveness of flows across intra-physical, human territorial space coterminous with the planet as intertwined whole biosphere, cyberspace of humanity's technological making, and more and more outer space. Their bounding together and intertwining bring forth indeterminacy. Some prefer the term uncertainty as capturing better the unsettled present and murky future. Consequently, steering this whole mesh of relations in the predictable and desirable direction for humanity to have a future is a tough reality to understand.

Different understandings of diplomacy abound. As diplomacy is diverse and plural (Constantinou and Der Derian 2010; Cornago 2013; Stefanović-Štambuk 2010) so is its scientific conceiving. Sometimes,

variations can reach the extremes. This diversity might be seen as an enriching dialogue from diverse theoretical standpoints advancing common meaning. On the contrary, plenty of definitions can be considered as a failure of scholars to grasp diplomacies' specificity and uniqueness. Yes, diplomacy has always been plural. Currently even more so than ever before. It distinctly tells that diplomacy's very constitution defies easy pinpointing of what it is to whom, when, where, and how. These words are proven true time and again. Yet, contention and Never being free from contestations and divisions debating can hardly lead to a unified conception. In the same vein, the contemporary upsurge in studying diplomacy has brought a main debate about diplomatic actors and actorness to the fore. Yet, protean diplomacy slips again through and around theoretical and methodological grids.

On one debate's side are alleged proponents of the "traditional" conception of diplomacy "as a state-based affair" (Kuus 2015, 369). The other side is held by researchers focused on the involvement in the diplomacy of "actors other than states" (ibid.), Kuus exemplified the latter perspective through the works of Cooper, Hocking, and Maley (2008), Sharp (2009), Murray *et al.* (2011), and Bjola and Kornprobst (2013). The accent is on two converging recent trends pointing out how non-state actors' engagement in diplomacy "complicates the practice" (Kuus 2015, 369). Their common thrust is to frame diplomacy "as the broader social practice" (370).

In this interdisciplinary flow, one stream goes to the very practices (e.g. Neumann 2012, 2013; Sending, Pouliot and Neumann 2015; Pouliot and Cornut 2015). Since diplomatic practices have already been for a long time embedded organizationally "patterned actions in a social context" (Leander 2008, 18), they are easily put under investigation in alignment with the "practice turn" in International Relations. This research program is now well-established (Adler and Pouliot 2011a, 2011b; Brown 2012; Bueger and Gadinger 2014; Drieschova, Bueger and Hopf 2022). The practice also can be seen in the manner of Lechner and Frost (2018, 3) as "an institution which constitutes a meaningful framework for interaction". From this ground, the two authors ventured into researching global practices as holding us all together. Others prefer a microscopic view of practice or meticulous historical accounting for some practices to filter continuity factors.

Practice theory is an import from sociology (Bourdieu 1977; 2004) and social theory (Schatzki, Cetina and von Savigny 2001). Foucauldian

philosophy and Giddens' social theory also play an inspirationally large part in IR's practice turn. Excavating both philosophy and social theory deeper and further back in time for the conception of practices is often done. Germination of theorizing international relations through background knowledge, practices, and communities of practice constituting social orders has peaked with Adler's dynamic cognitive social evolution theory. The processual ontology and evolutionary epistemology, strengthened by concepts of complexity theory for averting succumbing, even metaphorically, to mechanisms of natural evolution, are taken as sufficient to explain "what orders social life" (Adler 2019, 8) or "makes the world hang together" (Ruggie 1998).

Undoubtedly, Adler's *World Ordering: A Social Theory of Cognitive Evolution* is already one of the 'greatest books' of IR together with Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* (1979) and Wendt's *Social Theory of International Politics* (1999). However, Adler left manifold questions unanswered. The first one is raised by evidence of current turmoil. The privileging of communities of practitioners' knowledge of practices and of performing them knowledgeably flies in the face of reality. From the ongoing unabated "triple planetary crisis" (UNFCCC 2022) to the COVID-19 pandemic, facts speak the truth to epistemocrats of practices. Plenty of shortcomings, from the virtuous performing of likely wrong practices to the lack of proper and sufficient knowledge of the right practices in the new conditions, profoundly disrupt everyday life. Transboundary crises, erupting one after another, have been congealing into a "polycrisis", which, after several predecessors, the World Economic Forum ([WEF] 2023) framed publicly in 2023 as the state of the globe.

THEORETISATION AND CONCEPTUALIZATION OF DIPLOMATIC POWER

One is the unlearning of stable, constant cause-effect patterns ascribed as effects to diverse types of power. Explaining the power instead of explaining by power is the viable research turn proposed by Katzenstein and Seybert (2018a, 2018b). The gist of their undertaking is persuasively stated in the invitation "to scholars and practitioners of power – in both domestic and world politics – to incorporate uncertainty into a more complex analysis of power dynamics" (Katzenstein and Seybert 2018a, 80). Katzenstein and Seybert named protean power "the results of practices of agile actors coping with uncertainty" (80). Working

along similar lines of inquiry into global affairs unfolding under the *nexilis* change indeterminacy, we faced the obstacle. Explaining the unpredicted, surprising, creative, innovative, and productive emergence of the patterning of global relations, begotten through agile relating of diverse actors across scalar varieties and with different organizing time beats and rhythms, entails taking totality into account. If the whole context from where indeterminacy springs up is not included, explaining the emergent relationalities of relations is precluded. When the totality is taken on board, unexpected emergent relations and relationships in the existing indeterminacy could result from intentional intra-actions of responsive actors relating to indeterminacy by unexpected relations.

Another requirement for explaining power in the ongoing *nexilis* change is to abandon atomistic or substantial “ethico-onto-epistem-ology” (Barad 2007) in various streams. When simultaneously two major transforming processes unfold within the unprecedentedly pervasive flows intra and across diverse spaces, only relational “ethico-onto-epistem-ology” with consistent methodology and proper research methods enable them to predominate in International Relations (IR), leaving an impression of theoretical diversity and analytical plurality. Although power is always relational, a relational “ethico-onto-epistem-ology” is rarely applied in totality. Furthermore, it is an unprecedented power straddling differing relationalities across humans and other-than-humans kind.

Despite arguments on the social cognitive evolution of humans, humanity’s condition and the state of social order look like what Edward O. Wilson insisted on. De Molina and Toledo (2024, 423) quoted his assessment of how “... we have a Paleolithic mind, with medieval institutions, and a technology that the gods envy”, advancing the point of what diplomatic practices are performed by competent practitioners when the unknown has been setting in Humanity is at the juncture when what matters is whether diplomacy as a human endeavour, institutionalized as it is now and informal in myriad ways, can save us from the immersive violence and unbounded use of force.

The power for relating in the outlined myriad relationalities toward intended telicity arises from the relational mesh. This is even harder to explain. Without the statistical probability of effectiveness, the power for relating directs the entangling of other relations in relational bundles. It ties them in practices or fans them further to relations with even reluctant others. It ebbs and flows, morphs, or dissipates. Its suddenness of emerging yet tied with indeterminate outcomes of active boundary

spanning, inweaving of differences inclusively and justly, and straddling differing relationalities across humans and other-than-humans kinds for becoming differently better possibly is puzzling. This power we named *diplomatic power*. It enabled humanity from homo sapiens' humble beginnings to the world-making nowadays by making relations through shared understandings. Reached on commonalities of negotiated interests for the mutual acknowledgment of diverse existence, some common good, joint action, exchange of somethings betwixt wanted to (un)conditionally and (un)reciprocated offering(s) from one, many, or all something that another(s) wanted. However, it is the power neither studied systematically nor seriously. This power is diplomatic power.

After the Cold War ended, the works on diplomacy proliferated in IR scholarship. However, all four main camps of thought are silent on this power. Realism, liberalism, and social constructivism, including the practice site as a safeguard from relationalism entry into the very core of IR as "American political science" (Hoffmann 1977), turn to study diplomacy. For them, it has been almost equal to the discovery of the "New World". The fourth tent of thinking is the English school with far better credentials in studying diplomacy by its 'three generations' (White and Butterfield 1966; Bull 1977; Watson 1982; Constantinou 1996). However, the best vantage point for inquiry into the puzzling diplomatic power is Harold Nicolson. His *The Evolution of Diplomatic Method* (1954) gives useful leads for negotiating today's diplomatic power towards reaching a valid explanation of its concept, ways of working, meaning, and surprising and unexpected effects under the conditions of nexilis change indeterminacy. Nicolson's saying that "[O]f all the branches of human endeavour, diplomacy is the most protean" (Nicolson [1933] 1965, 3, quoted in Steiner 2018, 2) has proved prophetic. Especially in the ongoing turmoil of the reignited strategic competition and rivalry.

Diplomatic power of making relations, in particular, the relation of mutuality "can move mountains". To ease the grasp of its potential Joseph Nye's tactic for persuading skeptics of soft power potentials is opportune. He underlined what they miss by the quip "[T]hose who deny the importance of soft power are like people who do not understand the power of seduction" (Nye 2004, 8). Similarly, it could be said to persuade likely those who do not understand the potential of diplomatic power that then they do not grasp the power of intimacy or deny the power of family ties or marriage.

Of many-faceted diplomatic power's puzzles, one lattice stands up front. It is the unexpected production of international system's change or world order transformation through forming the gravitational pull of the making of mutuality relations by one's offering something to another that another wants, when, how, and for how long that being wanted without any preconditioned values acceptance or regime following and with no side payments in return for what is being given. This is how wise and skillful actors, states in particular, can "walk on the high heels" of authority, legitimacy, morality, justice, and solidarity, outsmarting even stronger ones to go into the same arena of offering to make the relation of mutuality. Not only is every actor unable to offer the same unconditional or unrewarded giving and forced to find ways to adjust without giving up its diplomatic identity, but the less and least powerful states are also gaining the multiplication of choices. Hence, our interest is to deal with this diplomatic power of making mutuality relations by researching the meaning, the working, and the effects of China's diplomatic power of making relations of mutuality to understand the magnitude of change it produces in the international system and transforming world order.

Therefore, non-progressing, fading away, or unrevealing global order is just a thread of just one side of this unfolding *nexilis* changing tie-in. The simultaneous pervading dissipation of civilizational ordering of modernity and the burgeoning nature's disturbances impacted by humanity are bursting the knots of their myriad entwinements and tying different ones. Emergent new links, bonds, and ties now tie previously unknown knots of relations and relationships.

Hence, there is the ensuing indeterminacy, or, as often said, uncertainty. The difference between the two concepts made in quantum theory is significant. Most social scientists regard them as equivalent. However, reality conceptualized as indeterminacy or uncertainty, is not the forte of social sciences. Creative, often unexpected, and surprising occurrences of relating at different scales through the joint making of relations with different intensities of relationships at distinct places could not be easily embraced in social sciences. Their main strictures are still the close observance of the cause-and-effect relational paradigm of mechanical reality borrowed from the classical Newtonian natural sciences of modernity.

The ensuing problem is the lack of social sciences' capacity to observe *nexilis* changes determining characteristics as constant indeterminacy. Accepting that neither reality is stable nor our ways of

relating must be seen as repetitive from times immemorial to our days of modernity's crumbling. Relational patterns within nature's reemergence as an active and assertive force do not come easy in social sciences generally, and International Relations (IR) in particular.

This implies that social sciences, based upon the assumed separation of subject matters in special turfs, kept nature/society divide, causation, and linearity of change mainly as given. These, among the rest of the shortcomings, make up for their lack of ability to offer the correct understanding and explanations. Largely unavailable is needed knowledge of where the next knot of relating will burst, which new one and where is already knotted, and with what implications. As one of the makers and still guardians of modernity, social sciences are no longer a suave and safe guide through its crumbling. Even more important is that for the first time in the history of the ascent of humans, the whole of humanity is going through a civilizational change. At the same time nature, changed by humans but acting in its ways unknown yet to humanity, is reasserting itself as the mighty relator in the process. This outlines the depth of troubles with "unknown unknowns" when unipolarity, even as a moment is sought after or believed to be viable and valuable.

The existing international system made by the United States is mainly studied from ideas, mentalities, and biases. It prevalently holds firm and does not let off "a Paleolithic mind" to face at least "unknown unknowns" from the perspective of a "quantum mind" (Wendt 2015). International Relations (IR) still cannot offer an understanding of states' coping with the varying unknowns.

OPERATIONALISING THE CONCEPT OF DIPLOMATIC POWER IN THE EU CASE

Understanding and eventual explanations of diplomatic power are rarely provided in mainstream International Relations (IR). Nor in Diplomatic Studies, as a distinct subfield in this discipline devoted nominally to "diplomatic investigations" (Butterfield and Wight 1966), inquiry into diplomatic power as the distinct type, or "face" of power in the global realm, still awaits its researchers. Even classical realists in IR, at least Hans Morgenthau (1945; 1948), contributed more to grasping it than it was supposed to, come as an afterthought. Diplomatic history and history of international relations speak volumes of diplomatic power in different international systems. In the 'balance-of-power' system,

diplomatic power is understood as the ability of some states to form alliances compensating “for their relative power’s weakness” (Ferguson 2003). To that, Niall Ferguson draws attention. Entirely in agreement with his observation that no one better than Taylor, in his *Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848–1919* (1980), remains the classic study of diplomatic power.

For instance, to understand what is China’s diplomatic power in terms of what it means to whom, what this power does, how this power comes to mean, and how it is being able to do what it does (Guzzini 2005), which are metrics for power conceptual analysis and power conceptualization of social constructivism in IR what it means to whom, what this power does, how this power comes to mean, and how it is being able to do what it does, which are metrics for power conceptual analysis and power conceptualization of social constructivism in IR closest and how it works. Browsing through the National Security Strategy of the United States of America from October 12, 2022 (WH 2022) will provide solid facts to assuage skepticism about China’s diplomatic power.

Predominantly in research focus are visions, strategies, diplomacies, policies, and actions of the United States of America and the People’s Republic of China (PRC, China). Days of expecting close cooperation between America and China and vibrant and firm bilateral relations, almost in the way of a group of the two, or G2, albeit crucially embedded in the multilateral Group of Twenty (G20) (Garrett 2010, 29), currently look like distant past. One of the central puzzles is why their relations spiraled to “the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to advance that objective” (WH 2022).

Withering away from closeness during the heydays of the 2007-2009 global financial crisis and embracing the *nexilis* change, China has been deploying diplomatic power along the ancient Silk Road and beyond it. What its diplomacy operates and effectuates peacefully is unusual and puzzling. The reason is that diplomatic power is unrecognised and unresearched in the vast and discordant IR’s taxonomy of power (e.g., Barnett and Duvall 2005; Katzenstein and Seybert 2018a).

Among pertinent clarifications of the state of global affairs are those from the European Union (EU). One can be read in Josep Borrell’s June 2023 blog (Borell 2023). Borell holds the portfolio of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission. The shorthand for

this position is HR/VP. That is why what Borell, the “chief EU diplomat” – with a long formal title and its somewhat awkward abbreviation – has said about the state of the international system is important. In the mentioned post, Borell did not mince words. Neither was he evasive. He stated unhesitatingly, “[A]lready last year, I pointed out that in the world today there is not only a battle of narratives but a ‘battle of offers’”. Everything tackled thus far is the web of contextually entangled major tropes of this paper’s subject and the main research question it tries to answer. Nevertheless, let us go along the thread of Borell’s recounting of global relations and the state of the international system toward the very “midst of things”.

The respective reference in Borell’s blog is to his press remarks on December 14, 2022, given ahead of the Summit EU-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). This diplomatic gathering on that date commemorated 45 years of diplomatic relations. Asked about the way he would want to ensure that the EU will not be overtaken in this region by economic actors, in the first place, those like the People’s Republic of China or the United States of America (US), Borell replayed: “Engaging more. If you do not want to be overtaken by others, you have to engage more, to invest more, to partner more, to trade more, [and] to take very much into consideration their concerns. And these two Partnership and Cooperation Agreements [with Malaysia and Thailand] that I am going to sign are good examples of this strong engagement. There is a battle of offers, today, in the geopolitical arena – not only a battle of narratives, but a battle of offers. We have to offer more” (Borell 2022).

This statement on the necessity to “offer” is not solely the apt and succinct explanation of the current competitive triangular economic rivalry. It pinpoints the puzzle that we will deal with further on. Diplomatic power is generally puzzling (Stefanović-Štambuk 2011), particularly China’s diplomatic power. The puzzle of diplomatic power boils down to a particular enigma when “the face” of China’s diplomatic power is in question. The command power or “power over” others of an actor however capable, i.e. wielding hard power in international relations, could not always produce the desired effects on any other actor’s actions against that actor’s interests. Neither is effective in combination with “power to”, as the amenability of other actors to conform their interests and actions to the other’s interest and expectations produced by their “co-optation” to one’s actor worldviews, values, cultures, or institutions by being attracted to them.

The attractor could not manipulate attracted actors to conform to the attractor's expectations, taking those expectations to be in their interests. Therefore, "power to" or soft power cannot have the desired effects. "Power with", or working with others to jointly achieve desired outcomes, could be more effective. The problem in international politics is the circumscription of this power to areas precluding the application of the logic of hard power. For instance, areas of human rights, development, climate change, environmental concerns, or global health are considered the spaces of the "power with". Susan Strange (Strange 1994a; 1994b; 1995; 1996; 1997) distinguished "structural power" as the produced effect not stemming from a distinct "first mover" or operating in a distinct manner. She viewed the effects of leverage related to the structure without taking it as a power resource comparable to the material base of hard power and the ideation as a soft power resource. Despite criticism of structural power for the tautological fault of viewing structural power as a result or consequence of hard or soft power, there is the productivity of leveraging structures.

POSSIBLE FURTHER DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

In the vast literature on power, diplomatic power is an almost unrecognized power type. If this kind of power is unresearched, it is not non-existent. If this power type is too hard to discern and operationally caught in a scientifically viable manner for a thorough inquiry into it, it is the problem of existing apparatuses used. Neither of these difficulties implies the impossibility of bringing it into needed theoretical focus and working out the methodology to face it with scientific methods. "Faces" of power are difficult to detect since our recognition is "trained" to search with the inbuilt bias in the "search software". Namely, power is a highly contested concept mainly because every concept is tainted with the strong favouritism of a single "colour" of its "face". When searching for the "faces" of power is so prejudiced, the finding of diplomatic power 'face' in the assortments of power types fares similarly to the failure-doomed artificial intelligence facial detection 'thought' only on white persons' pictures for recognizing someone with another skin colour.

Epistemological representationalism as "foundational" philosophical "science's self-understanding" generally precludes ontological relationalism. Therefore, the failure to "see" the gentle "face" of diplomatic power stems from representationalism preferred substantialism. It makes the

power to be the “quality” or ability of an “entity”. Then common sense is introduced, postulating how the bigger the entity, the higher, stronger, and mightier its power over others is. Hence, power makes “the world go round”. Cooperation comes only in terms of the interest of power. Thus, the hegemonic amassment of power brings peace, safety, and security. It is the well-known plot of the “politics and international relations story” in the realist “school of thought” narratives.

Liberals and social constructivists hardly tell much different stories. For them, power is also “the stuff” of which international politics of states are made. They are yet trying more to “remedy” this power story by better accounting for the cooperation to look not anomalous when put on the continuum with conflict. Although some glimpse of hope that power is tameable by ideas, norms and/or institutions is allowed. Nevertheless, the shed light is too nimble. It is insufficient to make the generally dark background of international relations lighter for diplomatic power to become fathomable. When “the cart is put before the horse”, or an entity is not joined in relations that make it together and hold jointly, diplomatic power is nowhere in sight.

However difficult might be to understand diplomatic power as offering something that someone else exactly wants and in a timely manner is not impossible. Tough it is. But such an effort is worth the try. Several preconditions to theorize diplomatic power as “power for to” are already provided. Among them are incentives for the relational theoretical outlook forwarded in the recent ‘relational turn’ in International Relations and those relational understandings of power introduced within the Western academia’s political theory. They enable to be put in productive triologue with the conceptualized diplomatic power and its specific ideation and idiolect within the Thought on Major Country Diplomacy of Xi Jinping and the reality of Chinese diplomatic conduct. This research approach aims to lessen misunderstandings and misperceptions of China’s diplomacy, especially the Belt and Road cooperative projects, the Global Development Initiative launched in (Xi 2021), the Global Security Initiative from 2022 (Xi 2022), and the Global Civilizational Initiative (Xi 2023).

Expect that the concept of diplomatic power might at least slightly contribute to the diminishing of fiercely combative ideological passions wrongly entrapping the thinking either with the widely popularised “Thucydides Trap” (Allison 2017) or the less hyped “Kindleberger Trap” (Nye 2017) we theoretically platformed it holistically relationally. This leads to abduction as the methodology for negotiating its conceptual and

practical unfolding from Chinese instigation to the European Union's steps followed by America also backed by the G7. The method of content and discursive analysis of the official texts were applied jointly with the practice matters of procedures and actions unfolding China's diplomacy for accounting relationally for the made connective links, bonds, and ties materialising ideated global ordering.

Such evidence gathering can reveal how the grounds for a "security dilemma" are removed by potentialities offered even for the US and the EU to elevate their diplomatic power on a par with Borell's foregrounding in the above-quoted passage of the EU's striving in that direction. This weaving of diplomatic power might not just reduce indeterminacy and depletion of governability in the existing unsustainable international balance of power system shaking in a "permacrisis" state shadowed by the U.S. hegemony nested in nuclear deterrence. The likely horrific self-reordering of the complex human life system in "the triple global crisis" could only have "soft-lending" if the international system is jointly transformed into decentralized, mutually assured multilateral global governance of balanced and sustainable development. The exit to the present Ordodemonium is singly led by diplomatic power, not any other sort of power in human willpower for relationships.

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СПЛИТАЊЕ ГЛОБАЛНЕ СИСТЕМСКЕ ПРОМЕНЕ ДИПЛОМАТСКОМ МОЋИ: КОРАЦИ ЕВОПСКЕ УНИЈЕ**

Резиме

Овај рад истражује трансформативну улогу дипломатске моћи у међународним односима, наглашавајући њен потенцијал да допринесе мирним глобалним системским променама. Традиционалне теорије моћи често истичу принуду или доминацију, занемарујући нијансиране и релационе аспекте дипломатије. Концептуализовањем дипломатске моћи као способности да се понуди оно што је другима потребно без очекивања непосредне накнаде, ово истраживање представља сложеније разумевање начина на који државе утичу једна на другу и преобликују глобалне односе. Кључни фокус рада је дипломатска стратегија Народне Републике Кине. Она је посебно наглашена државном посетом председника Си Ђинпинга Француској Републици, Републици Србији и Мађарској 2024. године. Посета, обележена грандиозним церемонијама и стратешким дијалозима, није само приказ кинеских глобалних амбиција, већ манифестација њеног ширег дипломатског приступа. НР Кина користи стратегију која укључује пружање подршке и формирање партнерстава без захтева за непосредном реципроцитетом, тиме изазивајући традиционалне хегемонијске структуре и редифинишући глобалне односе. У поређењу с тим, истраживање такође испитује реакције Европске уније (ЕУ) и Сједињених Америчких Држава (САД) на растући кинески утицај. И поред њихових комбинованих напора и ресурса, ЕУ и САД се боре да достигну ефикасност кинеске дипломатије. Иницијативе ЕУ, као што је „Глобална капија” (“*Global Gateway*”), и ослањање САД на принуду и оштру моћ су анализирани у погледу њихове ефикасности у контрирању кинеском утицају. Резултати

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показују да, иако ЕУ и САД раде на јачању своје дипломатске моћи, и даље су ограничени традиционалним динамикама моћи и спорије се прилагођавају новим глобалним трендовима. Истраживање користи компаративну анализу политичких смерница ЕУ за период 2019-2024 и 2024-2029 како би тестирало теоријски оквир дипломатске моћи. Ова анализа показује да, иако ЕУ постиже напредак у коришћењу дипломатске моћи, њени напори често бивају спутани успостављеним структурама моћи и опрезним приступом дипломатији. Студија истиче како кинески приступ дипломатији, карактерисан неограниченим понудама и стратешким савезима, успешно нарушава постојећи глобални поредак и представља нови модел утицаја. Студија закључује да дипломатска моћ, како је концептуализована, игра кључну улогу у глобалним системским променама. Кинеска употреба дипломатске моћи, са нагласком на обострану корист уместо непосредне накнаде, успешно изазива тренутни хегемонијски поредак и преобликује глобалне односе. ЕУ и САД, упркос својим напорима, нису потпуно искористили потенцијал дипломатске моћи, настављајући да се ослањају на традиционалне методе утицаја. Будућа истраживања требало би да даље истражују улогу дипломатске моћи у различитим регионалним контекстима и њене последице за глобално управљање. Емпиријска истраживања треба да теже валидацији теоријског оквира и испитивању практичних примена дипломатске моћи у различитим међународним окружењима. Рад наглашава значај препознавања потенцијала дипломатске моћи у стварању уравнотеженијег и сарадничког глобалног поретка. Залаже се за ре-евалуацију традиционалних концепата моћи, наглашавајући потребу за релационим разумевањем међународних односа које ставља у први план узјамност и сарадњу као путеве ка одрживом глобалном систему.

Кључне речи: дипломатија, релациона теорија, дипломатска моћ, воља за односе, узајамност, Европска унија, Кина, Сједињене Америчке Државе, Ортодоксизам

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