

Bilateral relations between states are constantly changing, ranging from periods of close collaboration to armed conflicts. Change in the state of bilateral relations is something relatively easy to observe subjectively but more difficult to measure. Such a difficulty is challenging because states undertake various activities with the purpose of shaping their relations with other states, for example, within the spectrum of public diplomacy, by signing treaties, etc. Only a plausible and objective tool for measuring the current state of relations between specific states would allow equivocally say whether such initiatives worked. The proposed research seeks to fill this gap and develop a universal methodological tool based predominantly on quantitative data, allowing such measurement.

The research will be composed of several stages. The first stage will include collecting data from the available datasets and creating such datasets ourselves in case of several indicators. After that, relations between selected states will be measured using the method developed during preliminary study, with the use of a list of indicators (Engagement in a military conflict, Arms transfer and sales, Arms transfer and sales to third country in conflict with second, Political-military alliances and defense cooperation agreements, Sanctions, Breaking diplomatic relations, Preferential trade agreements, UN Voting Coincidence, Foreign visits by heads of states and governments) and their weights determined during interviews with diplomats and foreign service officers. Apart from that, the research will feature a qualitative study of all the relationships in order to compare more subjective assessments of the state of relations between specific states in specific periods with the results of quantitative measurement, and to determine the most important events affecting the shape of such relations.

Designing the research was motivated by the actual challenges encountered by international relations scholars, including the research team. After investigating specific occurrences in bilateral relations, they often have to rely on subjective judgments to say whether the relationship improved or deteriorated. The project seeks to equip scholars and practitioners with a way to avoid this challenge.

The most important effect of the study will be the development of a universal methodological tool that allows objectively assessing change in the state of bilateral relations between any two states and measuring the Bilateral Relations Index for selected states, which is expected to be useful both for scholars and for political leaders. Besides measuring the state of bilateral relations between selected states (China, India, Japan, United States, Brazil, Nigeria, France, Germany, Russia, United Kingdom, Ukraine, and Turkey) between 1992 and 2023, the project aims to develop a catalog of the most crucial events in bilateral relations, that is occurrences which have the strongest effect on the measurement of the state of bilateral relations.