

*”Those who have the privilege to know, have the duty to act.”* — Albert Einstein

# GEOSTRATEGIC PULSE

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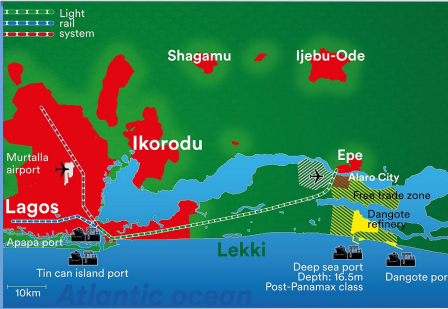
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## 1. EDITORIAL



# The Year 2024 – A Historic Year from an Electoral Point of View, that Will Shape the World and Decide the Future of Democracy

PhD. Eng. Stelian TEODORESCU

*“Persuasion is often more effectual than force”.*

*Aesop*

The year 2024 has already been given many suggestive names such as “a super electoral year” or even “the biggest electoral year in the history of the world”, this drawing even greater attention for the closely monitored elections that will take place in highly populated and important countries: the USA, Russia, Mexico, India and Indonesia, as well as in many other countries, where various electoral processes will be held this year. In 2024, more than 2 billion voters from 75 entities around the world are expected to go to the polls.

As a result, 2024 is seen as a historic election year. The political, economic, social and security issues in the past years have contributed to the current geopolitical volatility, cataloged by international analysts and prognosis environments as the most fragile evolution of the regional and global situation and, implicitly, representing the greatest risk identified so far.

Almost a decade after social networks developed their ability to influence the results of electoral processes held in various parts of the world, the use for other dubious purposes of today’s technological advances, such as artificial intelligence, contributes to the emergence of many new challenges. They also influence and speed up the evolution of the global situation, hence the need to raise the governments awareness, now more than ever, protect the election process and uphold democratic values.

We must emphasize that in 2024, general, parliamentary (including European Union parliamentary elections), presidential or local elections will be held in 76 entities, including the EU as I said before (Africa-16, America-12, Asia-16, Europe-28 and Oceania-4). In addition to these national elections, which began with those in Bangladesh, on January 7, and will most likely end with those in Senegal, on December 15, including parliamentary, presidential and local elections, other elections will be held - in international organizations.

So two widely reported electoral processes have already taken place in January. In Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, the prime minister and leader of the Awami League, which won 222 seats, has caused a largely



Source: <https://www.euronews.ro/articole/cinci-alegeri-care-vor-influenta-viitorul-europei-in-2024-miza-celui-mai-importan>

debated issue. It formed a parliamentary opposition. It was criticized because of irregularities on the election day. Thousands of opposition members were arrested. These events led to the conclusion that the elections were not free and fair. In the same context, according to Anchor Change, only 38% of the elections planned for 2024 could carry this label, while 75% are considered free or partially free. Another entity that has already held elections was Taiwan, which elected a new president, Lai Ching-te, but where the center-left Democratic Progressive Party remained in power.

Some countries with upcoming elections are victims of disinformation, this latter assessment referring to the deliberate spread of false information for political or other purposes. The World Economic Forum sees the issue as the biggest threat in India for example, out of other 34 risks. Over 1,000 experts were consulted. It is considered as the 6th highest risk out of 34 in the US and the 11th highest risk in Mexico and the UK. Earlier this year, the British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said that general elections would be held in his country in the second half of 2024. The British Prime Minister emphasized that following speculations he was getting ready to call early elections.

There are also other electoral processes under scrutiny. In Burkina Faso, the recent coups have raised big questions about whether the general elections will take place. Chad's parliamentary elections have already been rescheduled several times before setting the current date - October 2024. The presidential elections, which held at the same time as the parliamentary elections, have as a candidate, the son of the deceased president, Idriss Deby Itno, who had come to power, after a coup d'état. Presidential elections in Mali were also on meant to be held but have been postponed. While parliamentary elections last year did not go as planned, a new constitution was adopted. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has said he would not hold elections during martial law—the country has been under ever since the Russian invasion. Elections are also being held in Somaliland<sup>1</sup>, an autonomous and relatively stable part of Somalia.

As I pointed out earlier, in 2024, elections will take place for the UN Security Council (mid-2024), during the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, in New York. The elections are for five non-permanent seats on the UN Security Council, for two-year terms, starting January 1, 2025. In accordance with the Security Council's rotation rules, whereby the ten non-permanent seats of the UN SC rotate between various regional blocs, the UN member states traditionally divide their seats for vetoes and representation purposes. The five available seats are allocated as follows: one for Africa (candidate Somalia and Mauritius) one for the Asia-Pacific Group (candidate Pakistan), one for Latin America and the Caribbean (candidate Panama) and two for the Western European Group and others (Denmark and Greece). The five voted states will be non-permanent members of the Security Council, between 2025-2026.

These many electoral processes, which are planned during the course of a year, will take place in democratic countries, in developing states, and others will actually take place in autocracies, where there are little real options to choose the electorate. However, amid growing concerns and scrutiny that democracies as a whole are dying - international concerns continue to emerge that the elections from this mixed pack of nations represent a turning point for democracy itself and, implicitly, for the new world order which has been looming for some time.

From rising ethnic violence to measures aimed at weakening the judicial and executive powers, the threats to democracy are real, many global experts say. However, we must not lose our optimism in the context in which the popularity of democracy in the ranks of international public opinion remains high. A survey conducted by Open Society Foundations in 2023, on more than 36,000 respondents from 30 countries attests to this. More than 80% of survey respondents said they wanted to live in a democracy, but we must admit that this positive position now faces the toughest test in the whole world which will take place during a single year. This extensive electoral process around the world, but especially the key elections in certain states, could shape the world and the future of democracy, in the current context of political, economic, social and security developments worldwide.

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<sup>1</sup>Somaliland is an autonomous region that is part of Somalia. The self-declaration of independence of this region is not recognized by any state or international organization. Somaliland borders with Ethiopia to the south and west, Djibouti to the northwest, the Gulf of Aden to the north, and Somalia's Puntland Autonomous Region to the east.

## 2. GLOBAL SITUATION



### Can We Talk about Pre- and Post-Election Coordination between Putin and Trump?

PhD. Eng. Cristian-Marcel FELEA

*“The mob will always shout to be led by a ‘strong man’, by a ‘great leader’. Because the mob hates the society where they feel excluded.”*

*Hannah Arendt – “The Origins of Totalitarianism”*

When I am writing this, less than twelve hours have passed since the Russian authorities publicly the announcement the death of the dissident, Alexei Navalny, held in a special regime penitentiary colony, “Polar Wolf”, in Harp, Yamal-Nenetia. Ten days before the sad announcement, Vladimir Putin had welcomed the American journalist Tucker Carlson to the Kremlin, for an interview that formally aimed to cover an alleged “information vacuum” thus labelled by the Western public opinion, who could not listen to the other side that - as they say - is the public villain in this picture.

Was the death of Alexei Navalny an unwanted accident, considering that he was still young (47 years old) and that in the images recorded the day before the announcement of his death (a court hearing via video conference) he appeared physically healthy and in high spirits? Shouldn't the prison authorities have ensured his physical and mental health?

Alexei Navalny's death was not accidental but thoroughly planned. Towards the end of 2023, the head of the Federal Penitentiary Service, Arkadi Gostev, personally visited the penitentiary colonies in Yamal, preparing the intransigent dissident's transfer to the “Polar Wolf” colony. Before Navalny, between 2005-2006, Platon Lebedev, Mikhail Khodorkovsky's business partner at Yukos, also joined the “Polar Wolf”<sup>1</sup>. He returned from there alive, but the news had spread about the harsh, exterminating conditions in the prison colonies with a special regime in Yamal.

The reality is that during the electoral campaign for the presidential elections in March of this year, the powers in the Kremlin made sure that no opponent of the current regime would disturb the idyllic course that



Source: <https://www.bursa.ro/interviul-cu-vladimir-putin-realizat-de-tucker-carlson-46758152>

<sup>1</sup><https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/stropit-cu-apa-pe-ger-naprasnic-ce-se-stie-despre-colonia-de-la-cercul-polar-unde-a-fost-transferat-navalnii/32749554.html>.

would bring V. Putin a new mandate. The physical disappearance of A. Navalny - no matter how many questions it raises among ordinary Russians - can only be to V. Putin's liking.

### **V. Putin, the Victorious Candidate**

V. Putin practically has the next presidential mandate in his pocket, so was it really necessary for A. Navalny to physically disappear? Well, even if it seems like nonsense, from Putin's and his power circle, the answer is yes. Presidential elections in Russia do not represent, as in many democratic countries, the culmination of an electoral process, where voters are called to express their collective will, but a demonstration of power, to which the citizens are called upon to consent. A demonstration that must cause victims that can be exhibited as victory trophies, evidence of an omnipotent regime.

Let's have a little history. In 2018, V. Putin obtained a new six-year presidential mandate, being elected with slightly more than 76% of the votes. His main opponent at the time, Pavel Grudinin, from the Communist Party, got about 13% of the votes, and the nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovski got about 6% of the votes. On May 7, 2018, V. Putin assumed the position of President of Russia for the fourth time and invited Dmitry Medvedev to form the government. Finally, on May 25, 2018, Putin publicly announced that he would not run for president in 2024, given that the constitutional provisions no longer allow him to do so.

In the spring of 2020, a referendum was held in Russia to validate the revision of the constitutional text and, as a fully expected "surprise", an amendment was introduced in the last hundred meters that reset the presidential terms, allowing the incumbent president to run - if he wished - for another two six years terms. In other words, the conditions were created for V. Putin to remain in power in Russia until 2036, when he is 83 years old.

Initially, Putin refused to announce whether he still wanted to run or not, giving the impression that he was looking for a successor, whom he could guide from the shadows, just like Mao Zedong. But his plans were quite different, and for those who have followed Kremlin politics closely, they began to take shape more clearly with the maneuvers occasioned by the joint military exercise with Belarus, "Zapad 2021": the military invasion of Ukraine. The target was the arrest of the democratically elected leadership from Kiev, the division of the country into two parts: the west - a buffer Ukraine, on the model of Belarus, and a Novorossia, from Odessa and the mouths of the Danube in the west, to Donbass in the east - an artificially created state (according to plans penciled during the time of Tsarina Catherine II), who in time would request integration into the Russian Federation.

What followed, we now know very well: February 24, 2022, V. Putin gives the order to start the invasion - operational plans anticipated the fall of Ukraine in 18 days, after the arrest of President Volodymyr Zelensky and his government. If the plan had succeeded, by the end of 2022 we would have witnessed the division of Ukraine; V. Putin would have left the stage in glory and could have assumed the role of Mao Zedong of a Russia that defeated the West in Ukraine and that, at any time, can make the next move: the recovery of Eastern Europe up to the Elbe and the advance in the Balkans, towards the Mediterranean.

As we know, Ukraine resisted; moreover, in the summer of 2022 it managed to recover part of the territory occupied during the first two months of the war. Obviously, a backup plan had to be hatched quickly. This second plan required obtaining a new presidential mandate in 2024, following a triumphal march, which would show popular support for the cause of "denazification" of Ukraine and the fight with the West.

In the first part of February this year, the Central Electoral Bureau of the Russian Federation validated the registration of four candidacies, the last one on the list ("if you'll permit me") being of the current president, who will have as counter-candidates: Vladislav Davankov, vice-president of the State Duma, Leonid Slutski, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party, ultra-nationalist and loyal to the Kremlin, and the candidate of the Communist Party, Nikolai Kharitonov. Boris Nadejdin, the only candidate who does not have the profile of a "rabbit", was rejected by the Central Electoral Commission, on the grounds that "irregularities were identified in the collection of signatures" to support the candidacy.

Then the signal was given to begin the march of power to victory in the elections, which, in fact, no one can dispute. Through the voice of Dmitry Peskov, the spokesman of the Kremlin, V. Putin announced that he will not participate in any election debate. At the same time, I witnessed the arrest and conviction of the dissident journalist, Vladimir Kara Murza, accused of treason and today lost in a penitentiary colony around Siberia and the ritual elimination of the dissident "traitor" A. Navalnyi. The message was clear: "Whomever continues to oppose, must know that he will be convicted, and prison is actually a death sentence!" Finally, after a year of intense fighting and the loss of tens of thousands of soldiers, the army gifted him with hundreds of tanks, aviation technology, the occupation of Avdiivka, so V. Putin could hail - "great victory".

## The Interview

“This man [Vladimir Putin, n.m.] is cruel. He is a KGB officer, not a politician. Therefore, we can expect anything from him,” says Belarusian writer Svetlana Alexievici<sup>2</sup>. “It might seem impossible to kill the main opponent, the opponent, the politician. A strong personality does not allow this. She appreciates a strong opponent. And the weak one does what we see.” In fact, warns S. Alexievici, the corpses ritualistically sown lately<sup>3</sup> in the path to the victory that Putin wants could mean more than that: “Dictators learn from each other. Navalny’s death opened an abyss of permissiveness for dictators all over the world (...). Now we can expect anything. The authorities have been given such permission. It turns out that they can do anything and the world will be powerless. This is the worst thing.”

A strange fascination with the leader V. Putin can be found among the leaders of the world, from Europe to the USA and to Asia. And not only. Simple people choose to believe the siren song coming from Moscow precisely because there are characters like Donald Trump, Narendra Modi, Prabowo Subianto (Indonesia) or Viktor Orbán - not to mention Xi Jinping - who by their attitude guarantee the legitimacy of both the Kremlin’s revisionist politics and the criminal regime which he imposed in the country to preserve his power.

In his recent speech on the state of the nation<sup>4</sup>, V. Orbán spoke to his supporters about how the year 2024 should bring - through more, less or no democratic elections - the change desired by this “club” that wants to lead the world towards a new paradigm, prophesied by Xi Jinping about 7 or 8 years ago, when (in total opposition to the thesis of Francis Fukuyama, from the 90s of the last century) he stated that liberal democracy was contemplating its end, not being able to withstand the onslaught of the new type of democracy - authoritarianism (or according to V. Orbán’s definition - illiberalism).

“The global political scene will look completely different at the end of the year and, God willing, Hungary’s room for maneuver will increase to an extent not seen for a long time”, claimed V. Orbán; “We cannot have a say in elections in other countries, but we would very much like Donald Trump to return, to make peace here in the eastern half of Europe,” he continued. “We can still talk about peace in Ukraine...”, stated Putin in the recent interview with journalist Tucker Carlson; “If I return to the White House, in 24 hours I will end the war in Ukraine”, reads one of D. Trump’s electoral messages.

On the 3rd of February this year, T. Carlson - a journalist who between 2016 and 2023 was (Fox News) the host of the talk show “Tucker Carlson Tonight”, where he stood out as an exponent of populist conservatism republican, also called “trumpism”, as a promoter of conspiracy theories and, of course, as a critic of Kiev (of V. Zelensky personally, whom he always called a dictator), implicitly vouching for V. Putins motivations regarding the legitimacy of the military invasion of Ukraine; finally, in April 2023, Fox News decided to fire him, stopping the production of the talk show. So, he landed in Moscow, to interview V. Putin.

I want to present the Russian side of the story to the world, because the regime in Moscow is demonized in the West, and journalists are afraid to interview Putin, Carlson said upon leaving for Moscow. However, it turned out that other journalists asked the Kremlin to approve their interviews with V. Putin, but they were turned down, as Dmitri Peskov insisted: we approved the interview with Tucker Carlson because “his position is different”<sup>5</sup>. Peskov’s statement came after the American journalist confirmed that on February 6 he recorded the interview in the Kremlin and that he will broadcast it on his X social media channel, where he continues his talk show that Fox News refused to host.

So, Carlson is “different” and what makes him different in the eyes of the Kremlin is precisely the kind of journalism that made him famous: the obvious political partisanship, the loyalty to D. Trump, the adversity to Kiev and the admiration for Putin, leaning towards conspiracy theories<sup>6</sup>. The Kremlin’s strategists believed that such a journalist, could not cause problems for V. Putin - and they were not wrong - on the contrary, he will give him the forum he needs before the March elections to reaffirm his theories while rewriting history

<sup>2</sup><https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-26913929-laureata-nobel-svetlana-alexievici-spune-moartea-lui-navalnii-arata-vladimir-putin-nu-opri-nu-politician.htm>.

<sup>3</sup>Poet Lev Rubinstein, photographer Dmitri Markov, defecting pilot Maxim Kuzminov, Ivan Secin, son of Rosneft’s Igor Secin – deaths that will probably never be explained.

<sup>4</sup><https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-26910557-viktor-orban-placea-donald-trump-intoarca-casa-alba-facem-pace-aici.htm>.

<sup>5</sup><https://mediastandard.ro/multi-jurnalisti-au-incercat-sa-l-intervieze-putin-de-ce-carlson-a-fost-singurul-acceptat/>.

<sup>6</sup>[https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/coronavirus-response/fighting-disinformation/identifying-conspiracy-theories\\_ro#ce-sunt-teoriile-conspira%C8%9Bioniste-de-ce-cap%C4%83t%C4%83-propor%C8%9Bii](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/coronavirus-response/fighting-disinformation/identifying-conspiracy-theories_ro#ce-sunt-teoriile-conspira%C8%9Bioniste-de-ce-cap%C4%83t%C4%83-propor%C8%9Bii).



advertise the unwanted but necessary conflict with the West, the “security” needs that imposed the invasion of Ukraine, the desire for peace and so on.

I don't want to go into details, for those who haven't seen the interview or haven't read it, it can be found in English, in the version authorized by the Kremlin, on the website of the Presidency of the Russian Federation<sup>7</sup>. They talked about history proving that Ukraine doesn't actually exist, it's part of Mother Russia, about the Western-backed coup in Kiev in early 2014, about the Nazi government in Kiev, about the impossibility of Ukraine defeating Russia and recovering its lost territories after 2014, about how the West, leaving Kiev without support, can achieve peace in a few days or weeks, and about the denial of any intention to attack any NATO state in the future. Asked about the journalist Evan Gershkovich, arrested and charged with espionage in Russia, V. Putin insisted that there was no doubt that he was anything but a spy and that his release depended on Washington - an exchange similar to those during the Cold War.

“The reasons Carlson's claims are quite obvious: an interview with Putin was a provocative gesture designed to satisfy his audience, many of whom are opponents of the US President Joe Biden. Warnings that Putin might use him as a propaganda tool did not deter Carlson,” writes Tatiana Stanovaya, senior fellow at the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center.” Twice during the meeting, Putin accused Carlson of not asking serious enough questions. The interview is worth watching just to see how Putin made even Carlson's non-threatening figure wince. To be fair, Carlson did try to interrupt the interminable history lecture, but Putin wouldn't let him.”

“The issue was that, really and when he spoke to a ‘friendly’ journalist like Carlson, Putin had a hard time saying what he actually meant. He was inflexible and obtuse and focused on themes that seem to represent personal stakes. Carlson was unable to get answers to many of his questions. The spectacle of the two men talking over each other is symptomatic: the war in Ukraine and its terrible consequences have pushed Russia into an ideological stalemate vis-à-vis the West and convinced the Kremlin that it is engaged in an existential struggle. Given the larger context, even a dialogue between Putin's Russia and conservative America will be an extremely difficult goal to achieve.”<sup>8</sup>

After the interview aired, Tucker Carlson was accused of having a non-combat attitude, serving question after question and Putin leaving them unanswered. The almost unanimous conclusion was that his “mission” in Moscow was “to play the role of useful idiot”. And while Carlson tried to defend himself from the accusations, similar ones were issued by the Kremlin, even by V. Putin: “To be honest, I thought he would behave more aggressively and ask ‘sharper’ questions. I wasn't just ready for them, but I wanted them, because it would have given me an opportunity to respond in kind. Honestly, I was not very satisfied with this interview.”<sup>9</sup>

“Legends [founding, n.m.] attract the best of us, just as ideologies attract the ordinary people, and rumors of secret powers and behind-the-scenes conspiracies bring the worst in us” wrote Hannah Arendt in “The Origins of Totalitarianism”. A Kafkaesque scenario? Certainly. But also a cynical warning to all the “useful idiots” who sing to the tune of some characters like V. Putin or Donald Trump (which Viktor Orbán would do well to take note of).

### “Merging Ideas” and Avatars of the “New World”

“Besides giving Putin a platform to repeat his usual lies about history, NATO expansion and the war in Ukraine to a global audience, the interview [given by Putin to Carlson, n.m.] emphasized (...) how D. Trump's interests align with those of the Kremlin” believes Samantha de Bendor, associate fellow Chatham House<sup>10</sup>. “As one example of many, Putin suggested that former US presidents were dissuaded by their advisers from integrating Russia into NATO or establishing a joint missile defense system with Europe. Carlson seized the moment to promote Trump's narrative - MAGA<sup>11</sup> according to which US democracy is being undermined, noting: “you referred to US presidents whose decisions are tainted by their own agencies. You seem to be describing a system that isn't actually run by those we elect?”

“Carlson embraced Putin's hostile view of NATO and nodded in approval at Putin's claims that the CIA had shaped US foreign policy goals to undermine world peace. This attitude seems to justify analysts' warnings that a future Trump presidency would radically overhaul US foreign policy, US relations with NATO

<sup>7</sup><http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/73411>

<sup>8</sup><https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/91614>

<sup>9</sup><https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/rusia/putin-e-nemultumit-de-interviul-cu-tucker-carlson-nu-sunt-pe-deplin-satisfacut-2688127>

<sup>10</sup><https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/02/putins-carlson-interview-shows-links-between-trump-talk-and-russian-messaging>

<sup>11</sup><https://www.britannica.com/topic/MAGA-movement>

and exert strong presidential control over the civil service and government agencies, including the CIA. V. Putin also wanted to emphasize that the war in Ukraine would be over in a few weeks if the US stopped providing weapons to Ukraine - which seems to complement Donald Trump's claim that once he becomes president, the war will be over in 24 for hours.

"It was difficult after the interview to still believe that Carlson, a strong supporter of Trump, and V. Putin are fighting on the same team," concluded Samantha de Bendern. "This is especially worrying because polls suggest that Trump will not only win the Republican nomination in the upcoming elections presidential, but also the presidency itself."

Two days after the publication of the article from which I quoted, at a campaign rally in South Carolina, D. Trump presented to his supporters a transactional vision of NATO's future. An alliance meant to defend allied democracies, is about to become a corporation that could provide protection only to those with "paid dues". "One of the presidents of a large country stood up and said, "Well, sir, if we don't pay and are attacked by Russia, will you protect us?"" "You haven't paid. You're a delinquent." He said, "Yes, let's say it happens." No, I wouldn't protect you. In fact, I would encourage them to do whatever the hell they want!"<sup>12</sup>

Donald Trump's statements, whether electoral ones, come to confirm a series of warnings that were otherwise dismissed as risky and ill-intentioned. CNN then aired the views of former Trump White House aides who warn - based on the former president's track record - that if he gets another term in office, he could decide to overhaul all US security commitments, isolating America.

John Bolton, who was a security adviser in the Trump administration, believes that "NATO would be in real danger". And the retired general, John Kelly, who was Trump's chief of staff, believes that once he reaches the White House again, he will make dramatic decisions: "The point is that he saw absolutely no point in NATO. He was just adamantly against having troops in South Korea, again, a deterrent force, or having troops in Japan, a deterrent force discouragement. He thought that Putin was a good guy and Kim was a good guy, that we had backed North Korea into a corner. To him, it was like we were challenging these guys. If we didn't have NATO, then Putin wouldn't have done these things."<sup>13</sup>

We can agree, as evidence shows, that there is a similarity between V. Putin's vision of the world and that of D. Trump; that during negotiations Boris Yeltsin might have unsuccessfully challenged Bill Clinton. "... I ask you only one thing of you. Give Europe to Russia. The United States are not in Europe. Europe should be left to the Europeans. Russia is half European and half Asian. (...) You can take all the other countries and provide security for them. I will take Europe and provide security for it. Of course, not me. But Russia. (...) In Russia we have the power to protect Europe in its entirety"<sup>14</sup> - in the words of Donald and Vladimir, this time with different results: "Vladimir, do whatever the hell you want to them!" We cannot rule out such a perspective.

It's just that, if V. Putin can be sure that he will stay in the Kremlin after the March elections, the same cannot be said about D. Trump. V. Putin slyly hinted that he would rather the election be won by Joe Biden, who is a "predictable" leader. On the other hand, Putin's European puppet - V. Orbán - says something completely different, that D. Trump must win the elections, so that the world will look "completely different" after 2024. And, if John Bolton's and John Kelly's warnings become a reality, then surely the world will become quite different from the one we know today.

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<sup>12</sup><https://romania.europalibera.org/a/trump-putin-aliati-nato-europa-/32817752.html>

<sup>13</sup><https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/trump-va-retrage-sua-din-nato-daca-va-castiga-alegerile-avertizeaza-un-fost-consilier-alianta-ar-fi-cu-adevarat-in-pericol-2685357>

<sup>14</sup><https://cursdeguvernare.ro/iti-cer-un-singur-lucru-da-europa-rusiei-atunci-s-a-transat-si-soarta-romaniei.html>

## 2. GLOBAL SITUATION



### A New International Law Court for Cyber War Crimes – Needed for Global Peace and Security

Mona AGRIGOROAIEI

*“In the 21st century, bits and bytes can be as threatening as bullets and bombs.”*

*William J. Lynn, former US Assistant Secretary of Defense<sup>1</sup>*

#### Abstract

Conceptualizing cyberwarfare attacks - which are not covered by the defense field - as a threat to peace and security humanity, international regulations should theorize a new concept - “cyber war crimes” that would incriminate and punish them in a new International Law Court for Cyber War Crimes. The concepts are relatively new to the fields of cyber security and international criminal law (a combination of the two) and this subject - which will be further analyzed in subsequent theses - attempts to theorize an argument that current international principles are not the only ones that should be applied to cyber warfare. This phenomenon should be subjected to international criminal law. Then we analyze what the concept of “cyber-crime” should entail. We believe that the lack of these new concepts - “cyber court” and “cybercrimes”, that should be mandatory in every country, is yet another setback for global peace and security.



Source: <https://blog.ilegis.ro/9-actualitate/100-atacurile-cibernetice-primele-sanctiuni-impuse-de-ue>

**Keywords:** Cyber Security, Cyber Warfare, Cyber War Crimes, International Law Court for Cyber War Crimes, Law of War

#### Introduction

In the 21st century, humanity practically cannot live without computers and digitization. Our world seems dependent on technology and we all use computers - which have a good side: they make our lives easier, but could also pose a threat if used by malicious agents - such as enemy states, hackers, terrorist organizations, etc.

<sup>1</sup>Remarks regarding a Cyber Strategy Defense Department by the Deputy Secretary of Defense William J. Lynn, III, July 14, 2011, in Marco Roscini, *Cyber Operations and The Use of Force in International Law*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014.

Cyber has now become a crucial area of national security and should be addressed because cyber infrastructure is part of the critical infrastructure. In the case of a cyberattack, economic vitality can be directly affected by the many threats that can endanger the integrity and functionality of a country.

The threat exists especially when there is a cyberattack against civilians and the attacking state disregards international regulations on the laws of war. By using bits and computers, rogue states could deliberately harm the men, women, children of another country, starve them to death, hit critical infrastructure, or otherwise injure and kill them. This makes our world more unsafe.

We designed this essay thinking that a country's responsibility - usually regulated - in the case of illegal cyber-attacks by rogue states, is not the only thing that should be regulated. As with war crimes, humanity needs to tackle this problem in a tougher way, by introducing a new category of international crimes - "cyber war crimes", regulated by international criminal law and eventually convicting those responsible for planning, commanding and executing them at... what a criminal generally deserves, whether he is also a head of state, a prime minister, a military leader, or an executor of these crimes...!

It is the only way to have more room for friendly relations between all states, in an international society where, so to speak - paraphrasing Hobbes' famous expression in "**On the Citizen**" - "*man is a wolf to man*".<sup>2</sup>

### Hypothesis

Our hypothesis is that malicious cyber-attacks, illegal according to international law, committed by various aggressive states/non-state organizations pose a great threat to global international peace and stability and should come under international criminal law. Cyber-attacks constitute an act of violence that should be considered a "cyber war crime", similar to crimes of aggression (already criminalized by the ICC), but not included in the latter category and should be prosecuted by a new established "International Cyber War Crimes Tribunal".

### International Law Applicable to the Field of Cyber Warfare – New Approaches

Hugo Grotius, wrote in "De jure belli ac pacis" (1625) that: "Men rush to arms for light causes, or for no cause at all, and once taken there is no respect for the law, divine or human." This is why to regulate this field, he established some rules of conduct split even today into jus ad bellum and jus in bellum regulations. Hugo Grotius's contribution to the international law of war was huge and is still considered by one among the founding fathers of this field.<sup>3</sup> Contrary to Grotius' time, in the post-modern era, wars can also be fought with cyber weapons, although the new war in Ukraine can be considered to have a cyber component. We haven't reached that dangerous moment when we must fight cyber wars, but we need to think and find rules of conduct for the situation where a cyber war might be in effect.

What makes a war nowadays is a war. According to the UN Charter, it is an **armed attack**.<sup>4</sup> The UN Charter does not further define what really is an armed attack; not even NATO. Unlike a century ago, when wars were started with declarations of war, today they begin with the assessment of the victim, usually publicly declared to have been the subject of an act of war, and the claim of the right to self-defense.

We all know that cyber-attacks are viewed by NATO as the fifth domain of war. It is an area where anonymity and surprise can trigger an attack from somewhere on the globe, thousands of miles away against a target located on another continent. But what makes an act of war an act of war, is its effects. If the effects of a cyber-attack were comparable to a conventional or nuclear attack, then it could be considered a potential armed attack and a cyber war situation.

### But the question remains, what law should we apply in the event of a cyber war?

As Marco Roscini stated: ..."cybercrimes", sre crimes against the confidentiality, integrity and

<sup>2</sup>Hobbes in "On the Citizen" is "homo homini lupus" ("man is wolf to man"), originally attributed to Asinaria the Plautus (195 BC), see "On the Citizen" (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought) (R. Tuck & M. Silverthorne, Eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Hugo Grotius, Stephen C. Neff, Hugo Grotius on the Law of War and Peace: Student Edition, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p.8.

<sup>3</sup>Hugo Grotius, Stephen C. Neff, Hugo Grotius on the Law of War and Peace: Student Edition, Cambridge University Press, 2012, p.8.

<sup>4</sup>Article 51 of the UN Charter actually only provides that, in the event of an armed attack, the victim has the right to self-defense. "Nothing in this Charter shall affect the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken the necessary measures for the maintenance of international peace and security." ([https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_16937.html](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_16937.html)).



availability of data and information systems, committed by individuals or private entities for personal gain, is essentially a matter of domestic law, cyber activities carried out by states against other states fall within the scope of international law. The legal paradigm applicable, therefore, depends primarily on whether or not the operation is attributable to a subject of international law.

The present treaties do not mention cyber warfare operations, but as stated in Roscini's book in an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (i.e. Advisory Opinion on the Legal Consequences for States of the Continued Presence of South Africa in Namibia (South Africa -West).) notwithstanding the Security Council Resolution 276 (1970), the ICJ found that "an international instrument must be interpreted and applied within the framework of the entire legal system existing at the time of interpretation". Thus, the applicable legislation for cyber warfare attacks is, as a consequence, the following: The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, the jus ad bellum and jus in bello treaties of the United Nations Charter (1945) and the Geneva Conventions for the Protection of War Victims (1949), but also their two additional protocols.

*"...despite the unique attributes of information and communications technologies, existing principles of international law serve as an appropriate framework to identify and analyze the rules and norms of behavior that should govern the use of cyberspace in connection with hostilities"<sup>5</sup> (such as stated by the US views sent to the UN Secretary General).*

Because cyber-attacks by an aggressive state against another state could cause damage - such as destroying critical infrastructure used by the population of the attacked states (such an act would be prohibited by the Tallinn Manual), they can be seen as an act of force, comparable to an act of aggression, when "their scale and effects are comparable to non-cyber operations that amount to the use of force". (Rule 10, Definition of use of force, from the Tallinn Manual).

But despite the fact that law abiding countries can be held responsible for an unlawful cyber-attack has not stopped cyber-attacks by various rogue states. Our world still remains insecure under the constant threat of illegal cyber-attacks. Accordingly, our thesis is that the applicable law in this area should not be limited to the current norms of international law and should be further developed. In addition to the application of current treaties and principles of international law, international criminal law must be included. And in the same way that the principle of non-aggression in the UN Charter produced the criminalization of the crime of aggression, if a cyber-attack is illegal and in violation of the laws of war, then it should be included in the category of "cyber war crimes".

***The relation between cyber security and international criminal law is an area that needs further exploration. This is just a brief attempt to do so.***

### **Defining Cyber War Crimes**

Cyber war crimes refer to actions taken by cyber actors in the context of conflict and war. These crimes include the use of information and communication technology to attack the cyber infrastructure of a state, organization or individual, with the aim of causing material damage, disruption of services and theft of data, propaganda and blackmail or harmful influences on international relations.

To provide a more complete definition of cyber war crimes, it is important to describe some actions such as:

1. *Cyber-attacks*: These are actions aimed at attacking and destroying cyber systems. These can include DDoS (denial of service) attacks to block services, exploiting known security vulnerabilities to enter systems and destroy data, installing malicious programs to control and damage cyber networks and systems.

2. *Cyber espionage*: This type of crime involves obtaining important and sensitive information from the cyber systems of a state or organizations. These actions may include breaking into security systems, exploiting security holes to enter networks and steal valuable information, installing hidden programs to monitor and collect data, and using other sophisticated techniques to uncover sensitive information.

3. *Propaganda and manipulation of information*: These actions include spreading disinformation, propaganda and manipulation of information through online platforms. Propaganda may include spreading fake news, conspiracy theories, political propaganda, or calls to hatred and violence. Information manipulation can include changing data to create confusion and influence people's thoughts and attitudes. Cyber war crimes are of concern because of their detrimental influence on national security, economy and the stability of the environment.

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<sup>5</sup>UN Doc A/66/152, 15 July 2011, p. 18, in M. Roscini, *op.cit.*, p. 21

## The Need for a Cyber War Crimes Court

The need for a Cyber War Crimes Court is very important to address the challenges and violations of cyber law in the context of conflict and war. A cyber war crimes court could fulfill several key functions:

1. *Competence Specialized*: A cyber war crimes court would have in-depth knowledge and specialized skills in cyber security, information technology and legal aspects of these issues. This court could address the complex challenges of cybercrime and provide decisions with sound legal and technical foundations.

2. *Investigation and prosecution of cybercriminals (leaders with criminal responsibility)*: A specialized court would facilitate the effective investigation and prosecution of cybercriminals in the context of conflict and war. This would include identifying perpetrators, gathering evidence and punishing those responsible for malicious cyber-attacks and actions.

3. *International Cooperation and Jurisdiction*: A specialized court would develop effective international cooperation mechanisms to address cyber war crimes. This court would coordinate actions with other states, international organizations and other entities to ensure assistance in the investigation and prosecution of cybercriminals. It would also be important for this court to have global jurisdiction to address cyber-attacks and actions around the world.

4. *Impact and prevention*: A court specializing in cyber war crimes would have an impact in breaking the culture of impunity and raising international awareness of these challenges. This court could set clear cyber security rules and standards and prepare decisions that improve cyber protection.

5. *Setting legal precedents*: A court specializing in cyber war crimes would have the potential to set legal precedents in the field of cyber security and criminal justice. Decisions made in this court would create a clear and common legal basis to address similar cases of cybercriminals in the future.

6. *Awareness and education*: Cyber war crimes courts have the potential to influence the awareness of institutions, individuals and organizations about the risk of cyber criminals. By promoting information and awareness of cyber security challenges and the involvement of harmful cyber actions in the context of war, this court would help prevent cyber war crimes in the future. 7. *Protection of individual and organizational rights*: A court specializing in cyber war crimes would be able to protect individual and organizational rights and interests affected by cyber-attacks. This court would ensure that all procedures and legal processes followed are in accordance with the standards of human rights and legal certainty.

A court specializing in cyber war crimes would add significant value to the fight against this form of crime. It would ensure efficiency and justice in the investigation, prosecution and punishment of cybercriminals. It would also improve international cooperation and awareness of cyber security challenges.

## Key Components of a Cyber War Crimes Court

To effectively address cyber war crimes, a cyber-crime court with clear jurisdiction, structure and functions must be created. Its jurisdiction should extend to all cyberwar crimes committed across national borders, allowing for international cooperation in investigations and prosecutions. The court should be composed of judges, legal experts and technical specialists capable of handling cyber warfare, ensuring the court's ability to understand and prosecute cyber warfare crimes.

### A Brief Overview of a Few Key Components:

1. *Jurisdiction*: The Court should have a clear definition of the jurisdiction that deals with cyber war crimes, including attacks, theft, sabotage, information distribution and harmful activities related to the cyber sphere. Its jurisdiction should be international to address attacks committed on the territory of other states and to improve international cooperation in criminal investigations and prosecutions.

2. *Organizational Structure*: The Court should have an appropriate organizational structure, including judges specialized in the field of cyber warfare and lawyers specialized in criminal justice and cybersecurity law, as well as technical specialists with deep knowledge of cybersecurity and information technology.

3. *Legal Procedures*: The Court should follow defined legal procedures for investigation, prosecuting and punishing cybercriminals. This would include obtaining evidence, hearing witnesses, arguing appeals and defending the rights of the accused.

4. *International Cooperation*: The Court should have the ability to cooperate with international authorities and courts to share information, pursue and assist in joint investigations, and extradite individuals accused of cyberwar crimes.

5. *Independence and neutrality*: The Court should be independent and impartial, acting in accordance with the principles of justice and the law. It should be able to defend individual rights and interests.

These components are essential to a court for cyber war crimes and will aid its effectiveness and ability to investigate, prosecute and punish those responsible for cyber-attacks and harmful activities.

While combating cyber war crimes is essential, ensuring justice and a fair trial for the accused is also essential. The creation of a Cyber War Crimes Court should respect the rights of the accused, ensuring a fair trial, access to legal representation and the presumption of innocence until proven guilty. Safeguards should be imposed to prevent abuse of power or violation of individual rights in the prosecution process put into practice in justice.

Addressing cyber war crimes requires international cooperation and information sharing between states. A cyber war crimes tribunal would serve as a platform to encourage cooperation and mutual assistance in combating cyber threats. It would facilitate the sharing of information, evidence and best practices between states, thereby strengthening the collective response to cyber war crimes. Strong mechanisms for information sharing and cooperation should be created to increase the effectiveness of the court.

### **The Role of the Court for Cyber War Crimes - Prevention**

Creating a court for cyber war crimes would play a crucial role in prevention. The existence of a dedicated court focused on cyber war crimes would send a clear message that such acts will not be tolerated and will be met with serious consequences. This deterrent effect could significantly influence the behavior of states and non-state actors involved in cyber warfare.

By holding cyberwar criminals accountable for their actions, the Court would set a precedent that underscores the seriousness of cyberwar crimes. Fear of prosecution and possible legal consequences would act as a deterrent, keeping actors away from engaging in cyberbullying. This deterrent is crucial to maintaining the stability and security of the cyber domain.

Additionally, the Court's ability to attribute cyber-attacks to specific actors and establish responsibility would increase the risks and costs associated with cyber warfare. States involved in cyber aggression should consider the possible legal consequences of their actions, including reputational damage, economic sanctions and possible international intervention. This additional risk would help prevent cyber-trading activities.

### **Conclusions**

We do not know how a cyber war would play out in the future, but we believe that humanity must always be prepared for the next stage and develop instruments of international law, and justice. That is why new instruments of international law and in the field of cyber security must be developed and that is why we must be prepared in the event of a cyber war to penalize the excesses of possible cyber war crimes. We must not wait for those excesses to happen and then act, we must use pre-emptive action in the design and development of future crime-fighting tools that could harm various parts of the human species through disproportionate, illegal and criminal use. of cyber weapons.

Having an academic master's degree in the field of security and diplomacy, I feel personally responsible for finding and developing this type of new instruments of international law, like the design of an International Law Court for Cyber War Crimes, because the future of humanity must be shaped starting today and the logic thing to do is come up with new rules. We are not responsible just for ourselves, but also for the future of the new generations that will populate this earth or perhaps space, and we must now think about what our world will be like.

## 2. GLOBAL SITUATION



### Turkey, an Assertive NATO Member that Places the Concept of Strategic Autonomy Above all Else

PhD. Eng. Stelian TEODORESCU

*“Wherever you go, regardless of the weather always bring with you the radiance of your own sun.”*

*Anthony J. D’Angelo*

Starting up from February 24, 2022, war returned to Europe, effectively ending the peace generated by the international initiatives that had protected the continent from a generalized confrontation since 1945. In this long period of 77 years, however, there were also major events that took place during the said period in Budapest, Prague and in the former Yugoslavia, while the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain fell. However, it should be noted here that none of these few events brought back to the political scenes of the states the specter of a European-wide war. Now, things have changed drastically, due to what has been unleashed as a result of the launching of a so-called “special military operation” by Russia against Ukraine, evolution that can now be clearly defined as a confrontation at a global level, as the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, stated in his speech on May 9, 2023: “Civilization is once again at a decisive, critical moment. A real war has been launched again against our homeland.”

The invasion of Ukraine can thus be clearly framed in a much wider context, that is, a battle launched against NATO, the European Union (EU), the USA and therefore against Western civilization. Political and military support of Ukraine without entering into a direct confrontation with Russia has become the overriding priority of the governments of the EU, the UK, the US and most NATO allies.

While the deep impact of the war in Eastern Europe is a major concern for Western European leaders, Turkey’s political narrative is dominated by the goal of becoming an autonomous power and the ambition to be a cooperative state with Moscow, a mediator between Russia and Ukraine, but also a NATO member state, which supports Kyiv.



Source: <https://evz.ro/turcia-recep-tayyipr-erdogan.html>



Thus, the effects generated by the assertive<sup>1</sup> position, but also the lack of high-level political consultations between Turkey and other key Western countries, we can say they play an overwhelming role in delaying the emergence of a common assessment of the current regional and global situation.

As a result, we can state without reservations that after the electoral process held in 2023, Turkey is developing an assertive foreign policy, as I have previously emphasized. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's choice is increasingly visible through the involvement and interventions in the civil war in Syria, the support given to Azerbaijan in the dispute with Armenia, regarding Nagorno-Karabakh, the support for the government forces in Libya, the increased tensions with Greece and Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly on drilling rights, Turkish Cypriot leaders' support for a two-state solution and rejection of the UN-backed model of a unified federal Cyprus and, last but not least, Turkey's role in mediating the conflict triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Although it joined other NATO member states in condemning the invasion launched by Moscow and provided military equipment to Ukraine, Turkey did not impose sanctions on Russia. In July 2022, Turkey brokered an agreement allowing Ukrainian and Russian exports of grain and other agricultural products via certain Black Sea routes.

Furthermore, in May 2023, R. Erdoğan stated that Turkey has a special relationship with Russia and President V. Putin. In this context, Turkey gave rise to great suspense and by initially rejecting Sweden's request to join NATO, claiming at the time that the said state provides a safe haven for Kurdish terrorists, but Turkey once again proved that it embraces an assertive policy and finally ratified the decision to integrate the Swedish state into the Alliance, even before the decision of the last NATO member, Hungary.

Based on the narratives specific to the election campaign, the political speeches and the statements of the new members of the cabinet, but also the gestures, positions and decisions adopted, we can say that Turkey's priorities can be identified as it implements its own interests and strategies.

Above all else is the concept of "strategic autonomy", which applies to all of Turkey's interests, including and especially the defense industry, the supply of energy resources and trade flows, this position adopted in the system of foreign relations is now the defining element of the political position of this NATO member country. Strategic autonomy is a legitimate goal in itself, but being applied to a country characterized by limited natural resource capacity and structural balance of payments deficits, it will take time to fully and successfully achieve the set objectives.

Remarkable advances have been made in the defense industry (drones, ships, missiles, vehicles and tanks). Results and prospects in the field of military drones are particularly impressive and illustrative of Turkey's new international influence, even if short-term gaps remain in critical areas such as engines and navigation systems.

In the same multidisciplinary context, we also emphasize the fact that a gas field in the Black Sea will become operational and will constitute another step towards obtaining autonomy from an energy point of view. The Akkuyu<sup>2</sup> nuclear power plant will become operational, but the chosen legal architecture "Russia builds, owns and operates the plant" will clearly improve its own power generation capabilities, but at the same time will sharply increase political dependence on Moscow.

As a result, the clear picture of developments in the Black Sea region will become extremely important, if not predominant, the question being asked more and more intensely: How is Turkey being used by Russia in the context of its invasion of Ukraine? Russia's attempt to use Turkey as a tool to penetrate NATO is not a new and unknown policy in Moscow's proceedings. In fact, the implementation of such plans began on August 8, 2016, immediately after the coup attempt on July 15, 2016, when R. Erdoğan visited V. Putin in Saint Petersburg, and the latter expressed strong support for the first. A few days before this crucial meeting, it was possible to launch as a hypothesis "that Russia may make a long-term game-changing move and lure Turkey

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<sup>1</sup>By assertive behavior, we understand "a behavior that allows a person to act as best as possible in his own interest, to defend his point of view without excessive anxiety, to express one's feelings honestly and to use one's own rights without denying the other's" - J. Cottraux (<https://www.clinicadefericire.ro/articole/assertivitate---model-de-comunicare>)

- Being assertive means finding the right balance between passivity (not being assertive enough, 'letting go') and aggression (angry or hostile behaviour). "Being passive means letting others decide for you. Being aggressive means deciding for others. Being assertive means deciding for yourself." - Dr. Edith Eva Eger (<https://www.reginamaria.ro/articole-medicale/assertivitate>)

<sup>2</sup>The Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant is a large nuclear power plant in Turkey and is under construction at Akkuyu in Büyükşehir, Mersin Province. It is expected to generate about 10% of the country's electricity when it will be completed. In May 2010, Russia and Turkey signed an agreement under which a subsidiary of Rosatom will build, own and operate a power plant at Akkuyu, comprising four 1,200 MW VVER1200 units. Construction of the first reactor began in April 2018. In February 2013, Russian nuclear construction company Atomstroyexport (ASE) and Turkish construction company Özdoğu signed the site preparation contract for the proposed Akkuyu nuclear power plant.

away from the West as part of a wider geopolitical reconfiguration". This hypothesis has largely materialized in the past seven years: what has sometimes been called a "marriage of convenience" it turned into a complex alliance, mixing mutual convenience with divergent goals.

Since the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Turkey has implemented a dual policy. In several cases, it has voted together with its Western allies in the UN General Assembly and adopted the conclusions of ministerial meetings of defense and foreign affairs in NATO. In accordance with its role under the Montreux Convention<sup>3</sup> and its traditional policy in this regard, Turkish leaders also closed the Bosphorus and Dardanelles after the start of the war, thus preventing a second Russian fleet from regrouping with the Black Sea Fleet, based at Sevastopol, and with reinforcements sent in early February from the Baltic and North Sea Fleets. He also supported the UN in implementing a temporary and renewable agreement for the export of grain from Ukraine to the Black Sea and participated in the negotiation of prisoner-of-war exchanges between Russia and Ukraine. Turkey also reportedly supplied Ukraine with military drones, ammunition and armored personnel carriers. Similarly, Turkey has committed troops as part of NATO's deterrence and defense posture on its eastern front, which "at any time, can be deployed in battle groups or stationed in their home countries with the ability to deploy quickly if necessary."

Now that the Russian-Ukrainian war has entered its third year, it appears that global natural gas flows have been distinctly reshuffled, leading to supply crises and heightened shortages as seen and felt by Europe in a pronounced way in 2022. In this context, the offshore sector becomes a critical area to counter the gas shortage.

Thus, it should come as no surprise that the Black Sea offshore sector is at the center of Turkey's attention. The Turkish nation can now be categorized as a deep-sea gas producer through the Sakarya gas field (discovered in 2020); it is believed to hold the largest gas reserves in the Black Sea, according to various sources. To be clear, the race to extract offshore gas is expanding globally and across geopolitical borders as a direct result of the increasing dependence on energy resources of more and more states.

For example, in addition to TurkStream<sup>4</sup>, another separate underwater pipeline, known as Blue Stream<sup>5</sup>, connects Russia and Turkey, further demonstrating how the two states have a common interest in exploiting gas flows in the region. However, both TurkStream and Blue Stream were previously shut down (for various reasons). Critically, Russia abruptly stopped gas flows to Germany via the previously operational (before dismantling) Nord Stream 1 pipeline. A geopolitical risk has been identified where underwater pipelines from Russia to Turkey may increase Russian influence.

In this context, one of the concrete cases that can be analyzed in detail as an example can be cataloged that of the USA which, despite having imposed sanctions against Venezuela, Washington is committed to making exemptions to allow

<sup>3</sup>The Montreux Convention (Switzerland) is an agreement from 1936, through which Turkey gains control over the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. The conference took place between June 22 and July 21. Turkey, USSR, Great Britain, France, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Yugoslavia, Australia and Japan participated in it. The conference was convened by Turkey for the purpose of revising the Straits Agreement adopted at the Lausanne Conference of 1922-23. The Montreux Convention gave Turkey the right to militarize the strait area in the event of an armed conflict. Thus, freedom of passage is guaranteed for all civilian ships in peacetime, and military ships are subject to certain limitations, such as: the obligation to send a notification 8 days (for riparian states), respectively 15 days before the transit, to the Turkish authorities, which, in turn, must inform the parties to the convention; limiting the type, number and tonnage of warships belonging to countries other than those bordering the Black Sea, the stationing of these ships being limited to 21 consecutive days; access to aircraft carriers and submarines is not allowed. In war situations and Turkey is neutral, no battleship belonging to belligerent countries cannot cross the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits, except when they return to the port of departure. Also, in time of war, Turkey has the right to take the decisions it sees fit and can authorize the transit of any ship.

<sup>4</sup>TurkStream (former name: Turkish Stream) is a natural gas pipeline that runs from Russia to Turkey. It departs from Russkaya station near Anapa in Russia's Krasnodar region, crossing the Black Sea to the reception terminal in Kiyiköy. Some gas flows further to the EU. Blue Stream is a gas pipeline through which Russia supplies natural gas to Turkey. The gas pipeline connects the two countries through the Black Sea and consists of two parallel pipelines. Blue Stream starts from Izobilny, Russia, reaches the coast in the Beregovaya compressor station, crosses the Black Sea, arrives in Turkey in Samsun and stops in Ankara. Blue Stream was built by the Russian company Gazprom and the Italian company Eni and has a capacity of 16 billion cubic meters per year. The pipeline provides 65% of Turkey's gas needs.

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Trinidad and Tobago (T&T)<sup>6</sup> to import gas from Venezuela's offshore sector. T&T's 2022 Energy Minister Stuart Young has focused on increasing gas resources as the Caribbean nation has LNG export capabilities. It is important to emphasize that if the Russian-Ukrainian conflict persists, this will also increase the world's need for gas supplies.

It is significant to mention here that, in 2019, Romania also made an essential decision in the Black Sea, when the authorities in Bucharest adopted a final investment decision and approved 400 million dollars for the exploitation of energy resources in Midia. In the same context, we must not omit to introduce in our strategic analyzes the fact that Russia is facing the problem of the distribution of its gas resources, currently blocked from a geopolitical point of view, this situation being further exacerbated by the dismantling of the Nord Stream underwater infrastructure and by the blockages and the reluctance of certain states to engage in gas transactions with Russia. This contributes to the intensification of Russia's multi-pronged call to seek alternative routes and move its gas distribution to other regions.

As a result, we can once again talk about an assertive Turkey because Russia is already distributing gas to Turkey through the TurkStream underwater pipeline. The said pipeline stretches for more than 800 km, from Russia to Turkey, across the Black Sea. The notion of a Russian hub is still in its infancy; however, the war has shown the level of geopolitical dynamism that can arise from the acceleration of events and projects, while the Turkish hub is no exception.

It became very clear that Turkey can take inspiration from Romania's success by promoting domestic hydrocarbon production to strengthen its energy security. In addition, if Turkey's Black Sea reserves clearly turn out to be the greatest discovered by including a pronounced production, this can catalyze the significant transformation and progress of this assertive Turkey. As a result, in the coming years, it will be essential to closely monitor Turkey's developments in the Black Sea area and the effects it may have in the region and around the world.

It is very true that this "strategic autonomy" also requires a dynamic and sustainable economy, meaning that Turkey's entire evolution has moved from an election campaign theme to a key element of foreign policy, the success of which is not it will rely not only on achieving excellence in various fields or political leadership, but also on a favorable macro-political environment. Both the current equidistant position adopted and the so-called desired "balanced policy" between NATO and Russia will clearly remain a pillar of Turkey's foreign policy. This concept, legitimate in normal times, existed before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but has now become closely tied to the future outcome of the ongoing war. We say this because Turkey and Ukraine signed an agreement that will allow Turkish construction firms to participate in the reconstruction of Ukrainian infrastructure damaged in the wake of the Russian invasion, as leaders from the two countries said on January 31.

Turkey had for a long time and continues to have significant economic cooperation with Russia as well: tourism on the Mediterranean coast, two-way agricultural trade, construction contracts in Russia, and oil and gas imports. But the nature of the relationship changed drastically after the July 2016 coup attempt, when Russia convinced Turkey to buy and take delivery of an S-400 missile system, which contributed to its de facto exclusion from NATO's missile defense architecture and resulted in December 2020, even the exclusion of Turkey from the F-35 fighter jet program put into practice by the US for other states. This was a major change for Turkey's air force as well as its aerospace industry. As articulate as the Turkish narrative is, the strategic assessment is quite simple: Ankara has allowed Moscow to "cleanse" the southern interface with NATO (i.e. the Black Sea) of two of the most advanced Western military systems. Looking back in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the win for Moscow is obviously massive, and the win doesn't seem to stop at this level.

For other important decisions, Russia has meanwhile agreed with Turkey to implement many other crucial decisions in addition to the ones mentioned: training hundreds of nuclear engineers and paying Turkey with substantial dollar advances; partnering with Turkish oil refiners, allowing its crude oil to be exported to Turkey (without sanctions) and converted into Turkish refined products, then re-exported (also without sanctions); delay in payments and/or their transfer into rubles for gas sold to Turkey; and, of course, the considerable development of trade flows. The strategic consequences of this new form of dependence require more than ever to be identified and analyzed.

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<sup>6</sup>Trinidad and Tobago (or Trinidad-Tobago), officially called the Republic of Trinidad and is an island country consisting of two main islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and numerous smaller islands, located 11 km off the northern coast of South America (Venezuela), in the Caribbean Sea and 130 kilometers south of Grenada, part of the Lesser Antilles. It has maritime borders with Barbados to the northeast, Grenada to the northwest, Guyana to the southeast, and Venezuela to the south and west. Most of the population is concentrated in the island of Trinidad. The island of Tobago is much smaller, with about 6% of the country's land area and 4% of the population. The economy is mainly based on the oil industry. An important event in the life of the islands is the annual carnival that attracts tourists from all over the world.

It is significant to mention here that in context in which Turkey has so far refrained from joining Western sanctions against Russia, it has been made possible for air traffic between Russia and the rest of the world to continue through Turkish airspace, and in addition to exports of Russian crude outside the sanctions schemes, transfers have also been allowed financial or investments from Russian oligarchs in Turkey. This policy has brought substantial economic benefits to Turkey.

Such a “balanced policy” is now much more complex because of the return of a brutal war on European soil and its predictable worsening in the coming months. One of the broader implications of strategic autonomy is a more influential foreign policy centered almost entirely on Turkish interests. This will predictably translate, in turn, into a deepening of relations with a) Central Asian states; b) its traditional partners such as Pakistan and Qatar; c) Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the United Arab Emirates, as well as sub-Saharan African countries.

This ambitious policy began with the Arab Spring in 2011 and has since had many sinusoidal developments. There are still obstacles along the way, but the trends can be described as “normalization where needed” and “intensification everywhere.”

This is said because, in a number of internationally issued worst-case scenarios, Russia could resort to limited hybrid attacks on Western Europe, for example on critical underwater energy or communications infrastructure, or by hacking systems information technology, as observed in France. Moscow has also hinted at the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons in the theater of war, launched from either Russia or Belarus, where a first batch of nuclear warheads was recently delivered. A reasonable assumption is that an escalation involving nuclear weapons would not be tolerated by the NATO powers and that their response would be appropriate. Such massive developments would complicate Turkey’s proclaimed balanced policy. Depending on the exact nature of the escalation, Turkey could in principle stick to the logic of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, only as long as a Russian attack could not be characterized as directly targeting a NATO member. However, in such a worst and undesirable case, Turkey could be put in an extremely difficult situation to manage and answer the question: *shouldn’t it therefore intervene to defend other NATO member countries just to maintain a balanced position?*

In such a decision-making context, however, it is worth remembering why Turkey’s accession to NATO is of fundamental significance: Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty is a genuine guarantee for its security, as well as a key element of evaluation by circles finance and international business. This means that Ankara is obliged to carefully evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of its balanced policy between NATO and Russia.

In Turkey’s real evolving environment, it should not be overlooked that the economic relationship with Europe remains important and will continue to play a decisive role in shaping the country’s geopolitical role, despite political narratives that sometimes point in a different direction.

As a result, we must recognize that the security foundations of the entire world, especially of the European continent, are undergoing a major upheaval resulting from armed conflicts and their potential military, economic, social and, last but not least, ideological consequences.

This situation is unprecedented and justifies a reset and a thorough analysis of the strategies imposed by an assertive attitude, by “strategic autonomy” and, implicitly, by resuming an honest and open dialogue between Turkey and its European and American allies.



### 3. EUROPE



## The Greek - Romanian Relations Background, Current Status and Future Prospects

Georgios KOUKAKIS (Greece)

### Introduction

Our era has been characterized as an era of *polycrises* and *permacrises*<sup>1</sup>, leading many actors to revise their foreign policy in order to ensure their (national) security. The Hellenic Republic (Greece) is one of them, as - due to its strategic location at the crossroads between Europe, Asia and Africa - it has been in a constant battle against several threats that endanger its national interests. In order to effectively address the threats of the contemporary security environment and protect its national interests, the Hellenic Republic - upholding its ancient democratic values and realizing the benefits of interstate cooperation - has been implementing an extrovert and multidimensional foreign policy based on establishing good bilateral relations with its neighboring countries through several collaborative schemes, in order to play a more active role on a regional level.<sup>2</sup>

The *Greek foreign policy* is mainly expressed through the establishment of multilateral partnerships, in the context of which Greece has signed a significant number of agreements in several fields, such as the economy, energy, tourism, diaspora, agriculture, environment, and of course the military. The concept behind these partnerships is that the development of strong ties with other states in several sectors will eventually lead to their interdependency, minimizing the possibility of implementing an aggressive foreign policy in the future. This will create the necessary conditions for the *development* of the states involved, and the safeguard of their *national security*, two terms that are closely related and intertwined<sup>3</sup>. As stated by Antonia Dimou<sup>4</sup> in *Modern Diplomacy*:

*“Trilateral partnerships, the miniature of multilateralism, can significantly contribute to peace, security, and economic development between regional countries. Shared interests, common values, and effective leaderships guarantee coordination to address regional contingencies”*<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Koukakis Georgios, “Permacrises and Polycrises: Outlining the Contemporary Security Environment through References to Strategic Documents of Regional and International Actors”. *HAPSc Policy Briefs Series, Vol 4 (2)*. pp. 55-64. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hapscpbs.36661>. (05/02/2024).

<sup>2</sup>Charalambos Tsardanidis, “Greece’s changing role in the Eastern Mediterranean”, in Zenonas Tziarras (ed.), *The New Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean: Trilateral Partnerships and Regional Security, Re-imagining the Eastern Mediterranean Series: PCC Report, 3* (Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2019) 86. available at [https://files.prio.org/publication\\_files/cyprus/GeopoliticsEasternMediterranean/The%20New%20Geopolitics%20of%20the%20Eastern%20Mediterranean%20-%20Chapter%205%20-%20Greece's%20Changing%20Role%20-%20Charalambos%20Tsardanidis.pdf](https://files.prio.org/publication_files/cyprus/GeopoliticsEasternMediterranean/The%20New%20Geopolitics%20of%20the%20Eastern%20Mediterranean%20-%20Chapter%205%20-%20Greece's%20Changing%20Role%20-%20Charalambos%20Tsardanidis.pdf) (08/02/2024).

<sup>3</sup>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, “Security and Development”. <https://www.oecd.org/countries/burundi/securityanddevelopment.htm> (08/02/2024).

<sup>4</sup>Head of the Middle East Unit at the Institute for Security and Defense Analyses (Greece) and an Associate at the Center for Middle East Development, University of California, Los Angeles (USA).

<sup>5</sup>Antonia Dimou, “Trilateral Partnerships drive East Mediterranean security and prosperity”. *Modern Diplomacy*, 18 August 2021. <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2021/08/18/trilateral-partnerships-drive-east-mediterranean-security-and-prosperity/> (06/02/2024).

The *purpose* of this article is to present the context of the bilateral relations between the Hellenic Republic and Romania, highlight their importance for regional peace and security, and assess future prospects that further promote the national interest of both countries. Before proceeding to the analysis of the bilateral relations of the two countries though, it very important that the term ‘national security’ should be clarified, as it is a term that is usually misunderstood, being considered as merely the protection of a state’s borders against external threats (national defense).

Although *national security* indeed includes national defense, it is a more complex term that refers to the protection of a state and its citizens from external and domestic threats, encompassing economic security, energy security, homeland security, environmental security, human security, cybersecurity, etc. Therefore, national security can be defined as:

“[...] the situation in which a state is not threatened by other states or major threats, allowing stability to prevail within the state, either because threats have been eliminated or because deterrence is effectively implemented”.<sup>6</sup>



**Picture 1:** The 5 strategic axes of the Greek Foreign Policy for the time period 2022-2025

**Source:** [https://www.mfa.gr/images/docs/strategic\\_plan\\_2022.pdf](https://www.mfa.gr/images/docs/strategic_plan_2022.pdf)

## Decoding the Greek Foreign Policy

Greece's contemporary foreign policy was officially made public in **July 2022** when the Directorate for Strategic and Operational Planning of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued its first *Strategic Plan*, covering a timeframe of four (4) years<sup>7</sup>. The 2022-2025 Strategic Plan described the ten values of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>8</sup>, its mission which is “*The exercise of the Hellenic Republic's foreign policy and the promotion of international legality in collaboration with other states and the international community*” and its vision to “[...] *actively participate in and significantly contribute to the strengthening of global security, prosperity, and peace as well as to the safeguarding of International Law's fundamental principles, democratic institutions, and human rights*” by promoting the Hellenic Republic's national interests. It also set *five (5) strategic axes (Picture 1)*<sup>9</sup>, as follows:

<sup>6</sup>Georgios Koukakis, “*Establishing the Greek National Security Council: A Comparative Case Study Analysis with the National Security Council of the United States*”. *Global Security and Intelligence Notes (GSIN)*, No 6 (December 2022). [https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/GSIN\\_6F.pdf](https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/GSIN_6F.pdf) (04/02/2024).

<sup>7</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “*Strategic Plan 2022-2025*”. Directorate for Strategic and Operational Planning, July 2022, [https://www.mfa.gr/images/docs/strategic\\_plan\\_2022.pdf](https://www.mfa.gr/images/docs/strategic_plan_2022.pdf) (04/02/2024).

1. Promoting good neighborly relations, resolving bilateral issues with neighboring countries, and addressing diplomatic challenges through adherence to international law and international agreements,
2. Enhancing the country's international standing within the EU and around the world,
3. Strengthening Extroversion,
4. Promoting Greece's image and its positions abroad, as well as making the most of the Diaspora's potential, and
5. Developing human resources, upgrading the structures, and modernizing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' operational capacity.<sup>10</sup>

## 6 Strategic Pillars

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Strategic Plan is structured around **six (6) Strategic Pillars** :

- 1  Promoting good neighborly relations, resolving bilateral issues with neighboring countries, and addressing diplomatic challenges through adherence to International Law and international agreements
- 2  Enhancing the country's international standing within the EU and around the world
- 3  Strengthening *Extroversion*
- 4  Promoting Greece's foreign policy positions and international image
- 5  Developing human resources, upgrading the structures, and modernizing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' operation
- 6  Strengthening ties with the Hellenic Diaspora

**Picture 2:** The 6 strategic pillars of the Greek Foreign Policy for the time period 2023-2026

**Source:** [https://www.mfa.gr/images/docs/Strategic%20Plan%202023-2026\\_EN.pdf](https://www.mfa.gr/images/docs/Strategic%20Plan%202023-2026_EN.pdf)

On *January 2023*, the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued its second *Strategic Plan for 2023-2026*<sup>11</sup>. While the new Strategic Plan maintained the same values, mission and vision, there was a slight change in its context due to the division of the 4<sup>th</sup> axis into two separate pillars (the old 5<sup>th</sup> axis remained the same)<sup>12</sup>. According to the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, the *six (6) Strategic Pillars (Picture 2)* of the Greek foreign policy are the following:

1. Promoting good neighborly relations, resolving bilateral issues with neighboring countries, and addressing diplomatic challenges through adherence to international law and international agreements,
2. Enhancing the country's international standing within the EU and around the world,
3. Strengthening Extroversion,
4. Promoting Greece's foreign policy positions and international image,

<sup>8</sup>The 10 values of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs are: 1) Commitment to the fundamental Principles of Human Rights, Democracy, and International Law, 2) Defence of the National Interest, 3) Transparency, Credibility, Resilience in the face of crises/challenges, 4) Provision of optimal quality of services to citizens and businesses, 5) Excellence, Sense of Duty, and Professionalism, 6) Honesty, Integrity, and Courtesy, 7) Collegiality, Team Spirit, Consistency, and Confidentiality, 8) Adaptability and Effectiveness, 9) Hard Work, Initiative, Creativity, Organizational Skills, and 10) Accountability and Evaluation, Sense of Ownership, and Recognition of the Employee's Work.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid

<sup>10</sup>Ibid

<sup>11</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, "Strategic Plan 2023-2026". Directorate for Strategic and Operational Planning, January 2023. [https://www.mfa.gr/images/docs/Strategic%20Plan%202023-2026\\_EN.pdf](https://www.mfa.gr/images/docs/Strategic%20Plan%202023-2026_EN.pdf) (04/02/2024).

<sup>12</sup>The term "axis" of the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan was replaced by the term "pillar" in the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

5. Developing human resources, upgrading the structures, and modernizing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' operational capacity, and
6. Strengthening ties with the Hellenic Diaspora.

### The Hellenic Republic's Regional Policy in the Black Sea

As far as the foreign policy of the Hellenic Republic in the *Black Sea* region is concerned, the 5<sup>th</sup> Goal of the 1<sup>st</sup> Strategic Pillar (**Picture 3**) of the aforementioned 2023-2026 Strategic Plan defines that the Hellenic Republic will seek to strengthen its relations with countries in the Black Sea region<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, according to the official website of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Greece's ties to the wider Black Sea region - due to the historical background - are unbreakable, a fact that is evident by the strong cultural and economic Greek presence and the wider support of the Hellenic Republic to the states of the Black Sea region through inter alia the *European Neighborhood Policy (ENP)*<sup>14</sup>, the *Black Sea Synergy*<sup>15</sup> and the *Eastern Partnership (EaP)*<sup>16</sup>. It must also be stressed that Greece is a founding member of the *Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)* that was established in 1992 in order to promote cooperation among its 13 members<sup>17</sup> and ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the Black Sea region<sup>18</sup>, hosting the *Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (BSTDB)* in Thessaloniki<sup>19</sup>, and the *International Center for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS)* in Athens.<sup>20</sup>

Promoting good neighborly relations, resolving bilateral issues with neighboring countries, and addressing diplomatic challenges through adherence to International Law and international agreements (2/2)



#	Goal	#	Goal
1.5	Deepening cooperation with Western Balkan countries and promoting their EU accession path on the basis of conditionality - Strengthening relations with countries in the Black Sea region	1.6	Shielding the country from external threats through the promotion and strengthening of bilateral relations and alliances and establishing, on this basis, new multilateral formats in the wider region of the Eastern Mediterranean
1.7	Strengthening bilateral contractual and political relations with the countries of the Middle East, the Gulf, and North Africa. Participating in the stabilization of countries in the region		

**Picture 3:** The Greek Foreign Policy regarding the Black Sea for the time period 2023-2026  
**Source:** [https://www.mfa.gr/images/docs/Strategic%20Plan%202023-2026\\_EN.pdf](https://www.mfa.gr/images/docs/Strategic%20Plan%202023-2026_EN.pdf)

In this context of the Black Sea regional policy of the Hellenic Republic, Greece has developed close bilateral relations with Bulgaria (which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest global customer of Greek products) related to trade and the economy<sup>21</sup>, Turkey (despite its aggressive foreign policy in the Aegean Sea and Eastern Mediterranean)<sup>22</sup>, Azerbaijan which is a close partner of Turkey<sup>23</sup>, Armenia whose independence was recognized by

<sup>13</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, "Strategic Plan 2023-2026". *Ibid*.

<sup>14</sup>European Union External Action Service, "European Neighbourhood Policy". 29 July 2021. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-neighbourhood-policy\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-neighbourhood-policy_en) (04/02/2024).

<sup>15</sup>European Union External Action Service, "Black Sea Synergy". 22 January 2021. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/black-sea-synergy\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/black-sea-synergy_en) (04/02/2024).

<sup>16</sup>European Union External Action Service, "Eastern Partnership". 17 March 2022. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eastern-partnership\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eastern-partnership_en) (04/02/2024).

<sup>17</sup>The 13 members of BSES include Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, North Macedonia, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine.

<sup>18</sup>Black Sea Economic Cooperation, "BSEC at a glance". No date. <https://www.bsec-organization.org/bsec-at-a-glance> (04/02/2024).

<sup>19</sup>Black Sea Trade and Development Bank, "Who we are". No date. <https://www.bstbd.org/who-we-are> (04/02/2024).

<sup>20</sup>International Center for Black Sea Studies, "ICBSS at a glance". No date. <https://icbss.org/icbss-at-a-glance/> (04/02/2024).

Greece early on<sup>24</sup>, Moldova which is an important partner for Greece as far as trade is concerned<sup>25</sup>, Georgia whose trade balance has been consistently positive for Greece<sup>26</sup>, and Ukraine whose trade volume with Greece is constantly increasing<sup>27</sup>. Greece had also established significant trade and economic bilateral relations with Russia, which are currently extremely poor due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine<sup>28</sup>. As far as Romania is concerned, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that:

*“Romania is a successful example of Greek business activity, with a large and steadily growing volume of exports, significant Greek capital investments, and a large number of Greek businesses. Greek exports in 2022 amounted to 1.8 billion euros and Greece ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in terms of invested capital (2.3 billion US dollars) with a high number of Greek-owned companies”.*<sup>29</sup>

## The Multilateral Collaborative Schemes of Greece and Romania

In the framework of the strategic goals set in the aforementioned 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs has implemented an extrovert foreign policy aiming at the establishment of several trilateral partnerships such as *Greece-Cyprus-Israel*<sup>30</sup>, *Greece-Cyprus-Egypt*<sup>31</sup>, *Greece-Cyprus-Lebanon*<sup>32</sup>, *Greece-Cyprus-Jordan*<sup>33</sup>, *Greece-Cyprus-Armenia*,<sup>34</sup> *Greece-Cyprus-Serbia*<sup>35</sup>, and *Greece-Cyprus-Palestine*<sup>36</sup> in order to promote Greek national interests, ensure the state’s national security, and promote peace and stability. We must emphasize that each partnership has its own dynamics, meaning that the number of the trilateral meetings, the level of hierarchy of its participants (heads of state, ministers, secretary generals, etc.) and the fields of cooperation differ significantly.

<sup>21</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Bulgaria”. No date. [https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/bulgaria/\(04/02/2024\)](https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/bulgaria/(04/02/2024)).

<sup>22</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Turkey”. No date. [https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/turkey/\(04/02/2024\)](https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/turkey/(04/02/2024)).

<sup>23</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Azerbaijan”. No date. [https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/azerbaijan/\(04/02/2024\)](https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/azerbaijan/(04/02/2024)).

<sup>24</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Armenia”. No date. [https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/armenia/\(04/02/2024\)](https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/armenia/(04/02/2024)).

<sup>25</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Moldova”. No date. [https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/georgia/\(04/02/2024\)](https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/georgia/(04/02/2024)).

<sup>26</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Georgia”. No date. [https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/georgia/\(04/02/2024\)](https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/georgia/(04/02/2024)).

<sup>27</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Ukraine”. No date. [https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/ukraine/\(04/02/2024\)](https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/ukraine/(04/02/2024)).

<sup>28</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Russia”. No date. [https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/russia/\(04/02/2024\)](https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/russia/(04/02/2024)).

<sup>29</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Black Sea”. 15 November 2023. <https://www.mfa.gr/en/foreign-policy/regional-policy/black-sea.html> (04/02/2024).

<sup>30</sup>Koukakis Georgios, “The 9th Trilateral Summit of Cyprus, Greece and Israel: Türkiye’s struggle for power in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Competition between India and China in the Middle East, and the New Era of Economic Peace”. HERMES Institute of International Affairs, Security & Geoeconomy, Occasional Paper 1/2023 (November 2023). <https://nebula.wsimg.com/1ce63b686059fb298514120c8978e0f8?AccessKeyId=401F75AAF8C61A96E174&disposition=0&alloworigin=1> (05/02/2024).

<sup>31</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Egypt-Greece-Cyprus trilateral summit Cairo declaration”. 09 November 2014. <https://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/news-announcements/egypt-greece-cyprus-trilateral-summit-cairo-declaration.html> (05/02/2024).

<sup>32</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “1<sup>st</sup> Trilateral Political Consultations between Secretaries General of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Cyprus and Lebanon, Athens, May 11, 2016. Joint Statement”. 11 May 2016. <https://www.mfa.gr/missionsabroad/en/lebanon-en/news/1st-trilateral-political-consultations-between-secretaries-general-of-the-ministries-of-foreign-affairs-of-greece-cyprus-and-lebanon-athens-may-11-2016-joint-statement.html> (05/02/2024).

<sup>33</sup>Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, “Joint declaration of the Cyprus-Greece-Jordan First Trilateral Summit”. 16 January 2018. <https://www.primeminister.gr/en/2018/01/16/19243> (05/02/2024).

<sup>34</sup>Armenian Freedom TV, “Armenia, Cyprus, Greece Agree On Trilateral Partnership”. 04 June 2019. <https://www.azatutyun.am/a/29981422.html> (05/02/2024).

<sup>35</sup>Ekathimerini, “First Greece, Serbia, Cyprus trilateral FM meeting concludes in Belgrade”. 05 April 2021. <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1158683/first-greece-serbia-cyprus-trilateral-fm-meeting-concludes-in-belgrade/> (05/02/2024).

<sup>36</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Greek-Palestinian Relations”. No date. <https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/palestine/> (05/02/2024).



### a. Greece - Romania - Bulgaria

One of trilateral partnerships established by Greece in the Black Sea region is the one between *Greece, Bulgaria and Romania*, that was established on 3 October 1998 in Delphi (Greece)<sup>37</sup>. Although this partnership is one of the oldest partnerships established by the Hellenic Republic, I must point out that it had remained inactive for almost four years, since the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the three states that was held on 12 March 2018 in Bucharest. There, they expressed their common stand in a variety of subjects regarding the EU perspective of the Western Balkans, EU Eastern Neighborhood, energy security, security and defense, free movement (Schengen Area) and the future of the EU.<sup>38</sup>

The partnership revived on 12 May 2022 in Athens, during a meeting of the Greek Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs (Miltiadis Varvitsiotis), the Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (Vasil Georgiev), and the State Secretary for Global Affairs of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Daniela Grigore Gîțman). During the meeting the Greek Alternate Minister emphasized inter alia Greece's support to Bulgaria's and Romania's request to join the *Schengen Area* and the need for exploitation of the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean energy reserves in order to differentiate the EU's *energy supplies*, stating that:

“[...] *energy security and the interconnection of the member states is a key priority. we don't want to face a dilemma between peace or gas prices, cheap energy or green energy. [...] We want to have both cheap and green energy resources obtained by peaceful means*”.

On 13 October 2022 a second meeting was held in Sofia between the Greek Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs (Miltiadis Varvitsiotis), the Bulgarian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (Velislava Petrova) and the Romanian State Secretary for Global Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Daniela Grigore Gîțman)<sup>39</sup>, focusing on *energy infrastructure*, support to Ukraine and the European perspective of the Western Balkans<sup>40</sup>. Moreover, on 1 December 2022 - building upon the *Joint Statement* of the Ministers of Energy that was released on 8 September 2016 in Budapest during the Central and South-Eastern European Gas Connectivity (CESEC) meeting<sup>41</sup> - Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary signed a *Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)* during the 22<sup>nd</sup> *World LNG Summit* that took place in Athens, expressing their intention to construct a *Vertical Corridor* in order to enable natural gas bi-directional flows the four states.<sup>42</sup>

As far as the military cooperation between the three states is concerned, the Greek, Bulgarian and Romanian ministers of defense - on the initiative of the Bulgarian side - held a meeting on 18 April 2016 in the city of Luxembourg in the framework of the Foreign Affairs Council of the EU, where they agreed to enhance their cooperation.<sup>43</sup> After the aforementioned revitalization of the trilateral partnership, the agreement was implemented through the joint Special Forces training exercise entitled *Balkan Shield 22* that was conducted in 22 August - 02 September 2022 in the Bulgarian regions of Plovdiv and Pazardzhik.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>37</sup>European Cultural Centre of Delphi, “Milestones”. No date. <https://eccd.gr/en/simantikoi-stathmoi/> (05/02/2024).

<sup>38</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Statements of Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikos Kotzias following the proceedings of the Trilateral Ministerial Meeting between Greece, Romania and Bulgaria (Bucharest, 12 March 2018)”. 12 March 2018. <https://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/top-story/statements-of-minister-of-foreign-affairs-nikos-kotzias-following-the-proceedings-of-the-trilateral-ministerial-meeting-between-greece-romania-and-bulgaria-bucharest-12-march-2018.html> (05/02/2024).

<sup>39</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Greece-Bulgaria-Romania Trilateral Meeting – Joint Statements (Athens, 12.05.2022)”. 12 May 2022. <https://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/statements-speeches/greece-bulgaria-romania-trilateral-meeting-joint-statements-athens-12052022.html> (05/02/2024).

<sup>40</sup>Evstatiev Valentin, “Trilateral Meeting of Bulgaria, Greece and Romania Held in Sofia”. Bulgarian News Agency, 14 October 2022, <https://www.bta.bg/en/news/bulgaria/343882-trilateral-meeting-of-bulgaria-greece-and-romania-held-in-sofia> (05/02/2024).

<sup>41</sup>European Commission, “Meeting of the Central and South-Eastern European Gas Connectivity (CESEC) High Level Group on 8-9 September 2016 in Budapest”. 09 September 2016. [https://energy.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2016-09/CESEC%25202016.09.09%2520HLG%2520conclusions%2520-%2520FINAL\\_0.PDF](https://energy.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2016-09/CESEC%25202016.09.09%2520HLG%2520conclusions%2520-%2520FINAL_0.PDF) (05/02/2024).

<sup>42</sup>DESFA, “Memorandum of Understanding between gas systems operators from Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, and Hungary for the development of the Vertical Corridor”, 01 December 2022. <https://www.desfa.gr/en/press-center/press-releases/memorandum-of-understanding-between-gas-systems-operators-from-bulgaria-greece-romania-and-hungary-for-the-development-of-the-vertical-corridor> (05/02/2024).



**Picture 4:** Trilateral Meeting of the Greek, Romanian and Bulgarian Prime Ministers on 9 October 2023  
**Source:** <https://www.primeminister.gr/en/2023/10/09/32726>

On 9 October 2023 the Prime Minister (PM) of the *Hellenic Republic* (Kyriakos Mitsotakis), the PM of the Republic of *Bulgaria* (Nikolai Denkov) and the PM of *Romania* (Marcel Ciolacu) in addition to the Minister of Energy of *Moldova* (Victor Parlicov) held a trilateral meeting (**Picture 4**) in Varna (*Bulgaria*)<sup>45</sup>, where they reaffirmed the excellent cooperation of the three parts releasing a *Joint Declaration* that welcomed Greece's accession to the *Three Seas Initiative (3SI)* as the 13<sup>th</sup> member state<sup>46</sup>, and promoted *energy security* stating that:

“[...] we agree to further advance in practical terms the *Vertical Gas Corridor*. This project, together with the *Greece-Bulgaria Interconnector (IGB)* and the *Floating, Storage, and Regasification Unit (FSRU)* in *Alexandroupolis*, will contribute significantly to the diversification of supplies, the *EU energy security* and the *energy independence* of the wider region, including the *Republic of Moldova* and potentially *Ukraine*”.<sup>47</sup>

In addition to energy security, the Prime Ministers of the three states addressed a variety of matters, expressing their intention to:

1. Enhance their efforts in countering *foreign malign influence* and strengthening *strategic communication*,
2. Further expand their multidimensional support to *Ukraine*,
3. Ensure their support for *Moldova* which faces the effect of the Russian aggression against *Ukraine*,
4. Further consolidate the use of *EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes*,
5. Support the *NATO* presence in the *Black Sea*,
6. Conduct *military drills* at sea, ensure *fuel supply* to *NATO's Eastern Flank*,

<sup>43</sup>Novinite, “*Bulgaria, Greece, Romania to Step up Defence Cooperation*”. 19 April 2016. <https://www.novinite.com/articles/174098/Bulgaria%2C+Greece%2C+Romania+to+Step+up+Defence+Cooperation> (05/02/2024).

<sup>44</sup>Vodenova Yoanna, “*Bulgaria Hosts Balkan Spirit - 2022 Military Training*”. *Bulgarian News Agency*, 22 August 2022. <https://www.bta.bg/en/news/315152-bulgaria-hosts-military-training-balkan-spirit-2022-military-training> (05/02/2024).

<sup>45</sup>Romanian Government, “*Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu attended the Romania - Bulgaria – Greece Trilateral meeting*”. 09 October 2023. <https://gov.ro/en/news/trilateral-meeting-of-the-prime-ministers-of-the-republic-of-bulgaria-the-hellenic-republic-and-romania#null> (05/02/2024).

<sup>46</sup>Three Seas Initiative, “*Three Seas Story*”. No date. <https://3seas.eu/about/threeseasstory> (05/02/2024).

<sup>47</sup>Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, “*Trilateral Meeting of the Prime Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Hellenic Republic and Romania*”. 09 October 2023. <https://www.primeminister.gr/en/2023/10/09/32726> (05/02/2024).

7. Support the European perspective of the *Western Balkans*,
8. Establish a Trilateral Working Group to facilitate the construction a *multimodal transport corridor* linking Bulgaria, Romania and Greece,
9. Share *information* and integrate their *weather forecast* and *early warning* systems,
10. Identify and develop new routes/corridors on the *North-South axis* connecting the three countries through new *rail and motorway infrastructure*,
11. Renew their strong call for a positive decision of the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council on the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to *Schengen* in 2023, and
12. Strengthen their cooperation in combatting *illegal migration*.

#### b. Greece - Romania - Bulgaria - Serbia

Besides the aforementioned trilateral cooperation, Greece and Romania participate in the quadrilateral partnership known as '*The Craiova Group*'. The Group was inaugurated on *24 April 2015* in the respective city of Bulgaria as a trilateral scheme during a high level meeting of the PM of *Bulgaria* (Boyko Borissov), the PM of *Romania* (Victor Ponta) and the PM of *Serbia* (Aleksandar Vucic)<sup>48</sup>, and was joined by Greece on *03 October 2017* at the Varna (Bulgaria) Summit (*Picture 5*)<sup>49</sup>. This quadruple cooperation enhanced the dynamics of the Balkans, as according to the statement made by the Greek PM (Alexis Tsipras) after the Summit:

*"[...] we decided to work closely together in a number of fields such as the energy, the economy in general, transport, but also the crisis management, security, and the refugee crisis. We discussed, and I will close with this, about major development projects in our region which if they are set in motion, they will change the image of the wider region. Allow me to say, for example, the TAP pipeline, the IGB vertical corridor, the Eastern Mediterranean pipelines, the Thessaloniki-Belgrade railway link, Thessaloniki-Rousse, and why not Bucharest. These are projects that I believe can re-invigorate the wider region"*.



**Picture 5:** *The Quadrilateral Summit of Varna between Greece, Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia on 03 October 2017*  
**Source:** <https://www.primeminister.gr/en/2023/10/09/32726>

<sup>48</sup>Romanian Government, "Prime Minister Victor Ponta participated in a trilateral meeting with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, Boyko Borissov". 24 April 2025. <https://gov.ro/en/news/prime-minister-victor-ponta-participated-in-a-trilateral-meeting-with-the-prime-minister-of-the-republic-of-serbia-aleksandar-vucic-and-the-prime-minister-of-the-republic-of-bulgaria-boyko-borissov> (06/02/2024).

<sup>49</sup>Greece in Bulgaria, "Statement by the Prime Minister of Greece, Mr. Alexis Tsipras, at the Quadrilateral Meeting of Greece-Bulgaria-Serbia-Romania in Varna, Bulgaria (03.10.2017)". 09 October 2027. <https://www.mfa.gr/bulgaria/bg/the-embassy/news/statement-by-the-prime-minister-of-greece-mr-alexis-tsipras-at-the-quadrilateral-meeting-of-greece-bulgaria-serbia-romania-in-varna-bulgaria-03102017.html> (06/02/2024).

### c. Greece - Romania - Bulgaria - Croatia

Moreover, on 19 September 2023 the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of *Bulgaria* (Mariya Ivanova Gabriel), the Republic of *Croatia* (Gordan Grlić-Radman), the *Hellenic Republic* (George Gerapetritis) and *Romania* (Luminița Odobescu) held an informal meeting on the sidelines of the 78<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly in New York, initiating a second *quadrilateral partnership*. After the high-level meeting they released a joint declaration that reaffirmed their support for Ukraine, reiterated their support for Westerns Balkans, Moldova and Georgia on the European path expressed their will to enhance transport, energy, human, science, education, technology and innovation connectivity between the four states, reaffirmed their commitment to the energy security efforts of the EU, and emphasized the importance of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the Schengen area as well as the accession of Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania to the OECD.<sup>50</sup>

### The Bilateral Relations Between Greece and Romania

Greece and Romania have developed very strong bilateral relations through time, not only due to their aforementioned cooperation in the framework of their common participation in several regional and international organizations but also due to their geographic proximity and many other common characteristics that are going to be briefly presented in the following paragraphs.

#### a. Historical and Cultural Relations

According to the Embassy of Romania in Athens, the regions of *Wallachia* and *Moldova* were ruled by *Greek Princes* in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a Greek community had always been living in Romania taking active part in its social, economic and cultural activities, while several personalities of Romania - such as the 1862 *Acting Prime-Minister of Romania* Dr. Apostolos Arsakis and the academic supporter Evangelos Zappas - were Greek<sup>51</sup>.

Moreover, according to the official website of the Embassy of Greece in Bucharest (Romania), there are approximately 10.000 *Greeks* living in Romania that have founded the *Hellenic Union of Romania*<sup>52</sup> and established a large number of Greek enterprises<sup>53</sup>. In addition to that, in 2008 the Greek Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, the Greek Embassy in Romania and the Association of Parents of the School founded the *Greek School of Bucharest "Athena"* in order to provide education based on the Greek values of culture and heritage.<sup>54</sup>

#### b. Diplomatic relations

First of all, it must be underlined that the diplomatic relations of the two states date back to 1880.<sup>55</sup> As far as the diplomatic services are concerned, Greece hosts a *Consulate General of Romania* in Thessaloniki<sup>56</sup> and an *Embassy of Romania* in Athens comprising a political section, a consular section, an economic and trade section, a defense attaché office, a home affairs attaché office, a labor and social affairs attaché office, a financial service, an administrative office and an IT service<sup>57</sup>. Romania also hosts an *Embassy of Greece* in Bucharest comprising a political affairs section, a consular office, an economic and commercial affairs section, a defense attaché office, a public diplomacy office and an education office.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>50</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, "Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Croatia, the Hellenic Republic and Romania (New York, 19 September 2023)". 20 September 2023. <https://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/statements-speeches/joint-declaration-of-the-ministers-of-foreign-affairs-of-the-republic-of-bulgaria-the-republic-of-croatia-the-hellenic-republic-and-romania-new-york-19-september-2023.html> (06/02/2024).

<sup>51</sup>Embassy of Romania to the Hellenic Republic in Athens, "Brief history". No date. <https://atena.mae.ro/en/node/393> (07/02/2024).

<sup>52</sup>Hellenic Union of Romania, "Who we are". <https://uniunea-elena.ro/> (07/02/2024).

<sup>53</sup>Greece in Romania, "Cultural Relations and Greek Community". No date. <https://www.mfa.gr/missionsabroad/en/romania-en/bilateral-relations/cultural-relations-and-greek-community.html> (07/02/2024).

<sup>54</sup>Athena Greek School of Bucharest, "About us". No date. <https://greeschool.ro/about-us/> (07/02/2024).

<sup>55</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, "Diplomatic Relations of Romania". No date. <https://www.mae.ro/en/node/2187> (06/02/2024).

<sup>56</sup>Consulate General of Romania in Thessaloniki, "About Us". No date. <https://salonic.mae.ro/en> (07/02/2024).

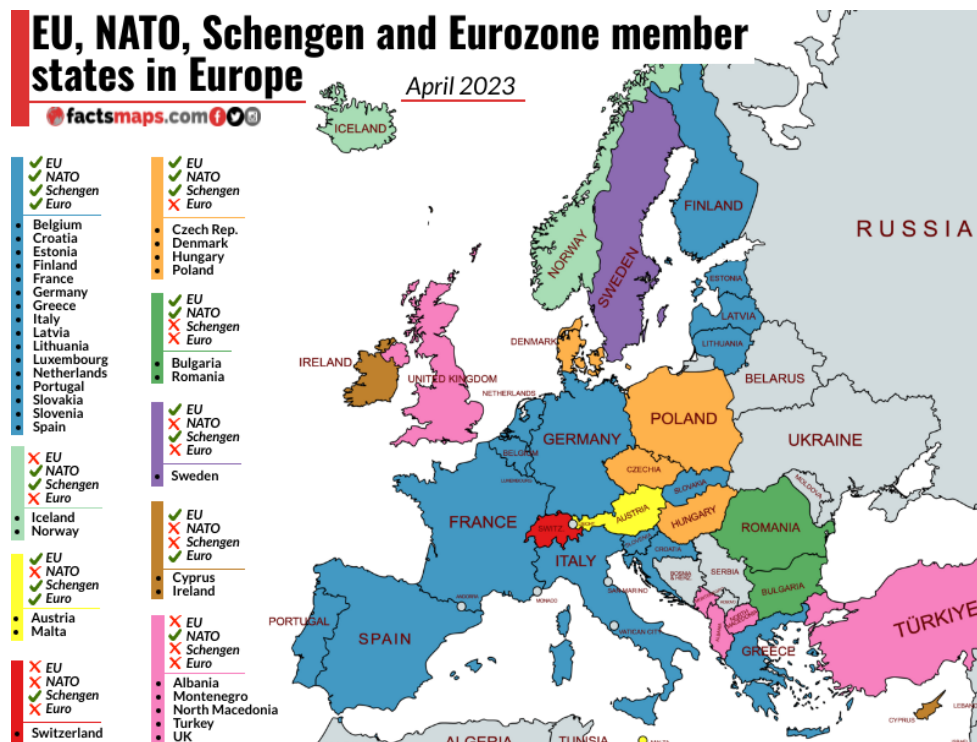
<sup>57</sup>Embassy of Romania to the Hellenic Republic in Athens, "Home". No date. <https://atena.mae.ro/en/node/371> (07/02/2024).

<sup>58</sup>Greece in Romania, "Embassy Sections". No date. <https://www.mfa.gr/missionsabroad/en/romania-en/about-us/embassy-sections.html> (07/02/2024).



Political relations between Greece and Romania are considered to be excellent<sup>59</sup>, a fact proven by Greece's strong support of Romania's efforts to join both *NATO*<sup>60</sup> and the *EU*<sup>61</sup>, and its current support in accession to the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD)<sup>62</sup>, the *Schengen Area* and the *Eurozone* (**Picture 6**)<sup>63</sup>. The Greek support is of great importance for Romania, since Greece is one of the oldest member-states of both the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) – becoming the 10<sup>th</sup> member of the EU in 1981<sup>64</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> member of NATO in 1952<sup>65</sup> – and one the 18 founding states of OECD in 1960<sup>66</sup>. Greece is also considered to be a valuable and reliable partner not only in the Balkans but in the Eastern Mediterranean as well, a fact that was confirmed by the following statement of the US ambassador:

*“Greece is a pillar of stability in its region. We cooperate closely in advancing freedom and security in the Balkans, the Eastern Mediterranean and the broader region. [...] It is also important to remember that Greece is one of a small handful of countries who regularly meet their NATO defense spending commitments and, because of its strategic location, has a very deep understanding of the importance of maintaining a strong national defense”*.<sup>67</sup>



**Picture 6:** The EU, NATO, Schengen and Eurozone member states as of April 2023  
Source: <https://factsmaps.com/eu-nato-schengen-eurozone-member-states-in-europe-april-2023/>

<sup>59</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Romania”. No date. <https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relationships/romania/> (04/02/2024).

<sup>60</sup>Romania joined NATO in 2004. For further information visit: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “NATO member countries”. 24 January 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52044.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm) (06/02/2024).

<sup>61</sup>Romania joined EU in 2007. For further information visit: European Commission, “From 6 to 27 members”. No date. [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/6-27-members\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/6-27-members_en) (06/02/2024).

<sup>62</sup>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, “Who we are”. No date. <https://www.oecd.org/about/> (04/02/2024).

<sup>63</sup>Greek residency, “EU Vs Eurozone Vs Schengen Area”. No date. <https://greekresidency.com/golden-visa/eu-vs-eurozone-vs-schengen-area/> (04/02/2024).

<sup>64</sup>The EU is currently consisted of 27 member-states. For further information visit: European Commission, “From 6 to 27 members”. Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>NATO is currently consisted of 31 member-states. For further information visit: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “NATO member countries”. Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, “Greece and the OECD”. No date. <https://www.oecd.org/greece/greeceandtheoecd.htm> (06/02/2024).

<sup>67</sup>Pyatt Geoffrey, “US ambassador: Greece a pillar of stability”. Ekathimerini, 11 October 2017. <https://www.ekathimerini.com/opinion/222356/us-ambassador-greece-a-pillar-of-stability/> (06/02/2024).



### c. Political relations

Greece and Romania cooperate closely in several fields –such as peace and security, economy and trade, defense and human rights - in the framework of their participation in a variety of *international and regional organizations* such as the United Nations (UN)<sup>68</sup>, the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP)<sup>69</sup>, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)<sup>70</sup>, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)<sup>71</sup>, the Council of Europe<sup>72</sup>, the World Trade Organization (WTO)<sup>73</sup>, the World Health Organization (WHO)<sup>74</sup>, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)<sup>75</sup>, and the aforementioned Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC).

### d. High-Level Visits

As far as formal high-level visits are concerned, Romania considers the visit of the *Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs* (Antonis Samaras) to Bucharest in 1990 as a milestone in the relations between the two states, as it was the first visit by a foreign high official to Romania after the Romanian revolution in 1989 that put an end to the Communist rule. Moreover, Romania was visited by the *President of the Hellenic Republic* in 1995, 1999, 2004, 2007 and 2011, the *Greek Prime Minister* in 1991, 1997, 2002, 2008 and 2019, and the *Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs* in 1990, 1993, 1995, 1999, 2004 and 2007. On the part of Romania, Greece was visited by the *President of Romania* in 1994, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003 and 2009, the *Romanian Prime Minister* in 1993, 1999, 2003, 2005, 2014 and 2022, and the *Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs* in 1990, 1992, 1993, 1996, 1997, 2006, 2010 and 2013<sup>76</sup>.

### e. Economic and Trade Relations

As far as the economic and trade relations between Greece and Romania are concerned, the bilateral trade - according to the Embassy of Romania to the Hellenic Republic - recorded the highest level ever in 2017 reaching the amount of approximately 1.8 billion €, while the Romanian exports amounted to approximately 0.9 billion €. Moreover, in 2018 - according to the National Register of Commerce - Greece was positioned as the 9<sup>th</sup> top foreign investor in Romania, having a subscribed share capital of 1.35 billion €, invested in 7,186 registered companies with Hellenic share-holders.<sup>77</sup>

### f. Military relations

Military relations between Greece and Romania are very strong due to their *Military Cooperation Programme* (**Picture 7**) in the fields of operational and individual training<sup>78</sup>. Their cooperation in the military sector includes several activities such as common participation in several *PESCO* projects of the EU<sup>79</sup>, the co-hosting of *NATO military exercises* e.g. Exercise Noble Jump 17<sup>80</sup>, participation in *Joint Exercises* e.g. Balkan Shield 22<sup>81</sup>, the conduction of common *training activities*<sup>82</sup>, and *exchange visits* of cadets (military erasmus)

<sup>68</sup>United Nations, "Member States". No date. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/member-states> (06/02/2024)

<sup>69</sup>South East European Cooperation Process, "Participants". No date. <https://www.seecp.info/services> (06/02/2024)

<sup>70</sup>Regional Cooperation Council, "RCC Participants". No date. <https://www.rcc.int/pages/96/rcc-participants> (06/02/2024)

<sup>71</sup>Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Participating States". No date. <https://www.osce.org/participating-states> (06/02/2024)

<sup>72</sup>Council of Europe, "Our member states". No date. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/about-us/our-member-states> (06/02/2024)

<sup>73</sup>World Trade Organization, "Members and Observers". No date. [https://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/whatis\\_e/tif\\_e/org6\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/tif_e/org6_e.htm) (06/02/2024).

<sup>74</sup>World Health Organization, "Countries". No date. <https://www.who.int/countries> (06/02/2024).

<sup>75</sup>Union for the Mediterranean, "Member States". No date. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/who-we-are/member-states/> (06/02/2024).

<sup>76</sup>Embassy of Romania to the Hellenic Republic, "Political Relations". No date. <https://atena.mae.ro/en/node/396> (07/02/2024).

<sup>77</sup>Embassy of Romania to the Hellenic Republic, "Economic News". No date. <https://atena.mae.ro/en/node/796> (07/02/2024).

<sup>78</sup>Hellenic National Defense General Staff, "2018 Military Cooperation Programme with Romania". 26 February 2018. <https://geetha.mil.gr/en/22694-2018-military-cooperation-programme-with-romania/> (08/02/2024).

<sup>79</sup>One of the PESCO projects participated by both Greece and Romania is the Maritime (semi-) Autonomous Systems for Mine Countermeasures (MAS MCM). For more information visit: Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), "Maritime (semi-) Autonomous Systems for Mine Countermeasures (MAS MCM)". No date. <https://www.pesco.europa.eu/project/maritime-semi-autonomous-systems-for-mine-countermeasures/> (08/02/2024).

<sup>80</sup>JFC Naples Public Affairs Office, "EXERCISE NOBLE JUMP 17 CONCLUDES IN ROMANIA, BULGARIA AND GREECE". North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2017. <https://jfcnaples.nato.int/newsroom/news/2017/exercise-noble-jump-17-concludes-in-romania--bulgaria-and-greece> (08/02/2024).

<sup>81</sup>North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES EXERCISE BALKAN SHIELD 22 CONCLUDES IN GREECE". 15 November 2022. <https://shape.nato.int/news-archive/2022/special-operations-forces-exercise-balkan-shield-22-concludes-in-greece> (08/02/2024).

of the Military Academies<sup>83</sup>. Moreover, the Chief of Hellenic National Defence General Staff (General Konstantinos Floros) visited Romania in 2021<sup>84</sup>, followed by a visit of his counterpart (General Daniel Petrescu) in 2022<sup>85</sup>.



**Picture 7:** The signing of the Military Cooperation Programme between Greece and Romania in 2018  
**Source:** <https://geetha.mil.gr/en/22694-2018-military-cooperation-programme-with-romania/>

Finally, on 12 October 2023 the Minister of National Defense of Greece (Nikos Dendias), the Minister of Defence of Bulgaria (Todor Tagarev) and the Deputy Minister of Defense of Romania (Simona Cojocaru) held a trilateral meeting on the sidelines of a NATO defense ministers' meeting in Brussels (Belgium), where they signed a *Letter of Intent* expressing their countries' will to extend the existing *NATO fuel pipeline network* to the Alliance's Eastern Flank by interconnecting Greece with Bulgaria and Romania through the energy infrastructure located in Alexandroupolis (Greece)<sup>86</sup>. The importance of this initiative for Greece was highlighted by the Greek Minister of National Defense, stating that:

*"Greece's footprint as an energy hub is enhanced and the role of the port of Alexandroupolis is further upgraded".<sup>87</sup>*

### Conclusions, Future Considerations and Prospects

To conclude, it must be stressed that the large amount of Greek and Romanian defence spendings (more than the 2% of their GDP that NATO requires)<sup>88</sup>, their common participation in PESCO projects and their broader military cooperation are significant factors that further enhance their defence capabilities. That is why the cooperation between Greece and Romania is of great importance for ensuring the national security of the two states and for promoting *peace and security* in wider region of the Balkans and the Black Sea, a fact that was underlined by the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs (George Gerapetritis) on 21 November 2023 during the 7<sup>th</sup> 'Thessaloniki Summit' by the following statement:

<sup>82</sup>Hellenic Army General Staff, "Greece – Romania 2021 Military Cooperation Programme". 16 December 2021. <http://army.gr/en/content/greece-romania-2021-military-cooperation-programme> (08/02/2024).

<sup>83</sup>Cadet Mateusz Marszalek, "What is like to study at the Military Academy in Greece?". Military University of Land Forces, No date. <https://www.wojsko-polskie.pl/awl/en/articles/my-first-steps-leadership-en/what-study-military-academy-greece-cadet-mateusz-marszalek/> (08/02/2024).

<sup>84</sup>Hellenic National Defense General Staff, "Formal Visit of the Chief of the Hellenic National Defense General Staff in Romania" (In Greek). 08 October 2021. <https://geetha.mil.gr/episimi-episkepsi-archigoy-geetha-stin-roymania/> (08/02/2024).

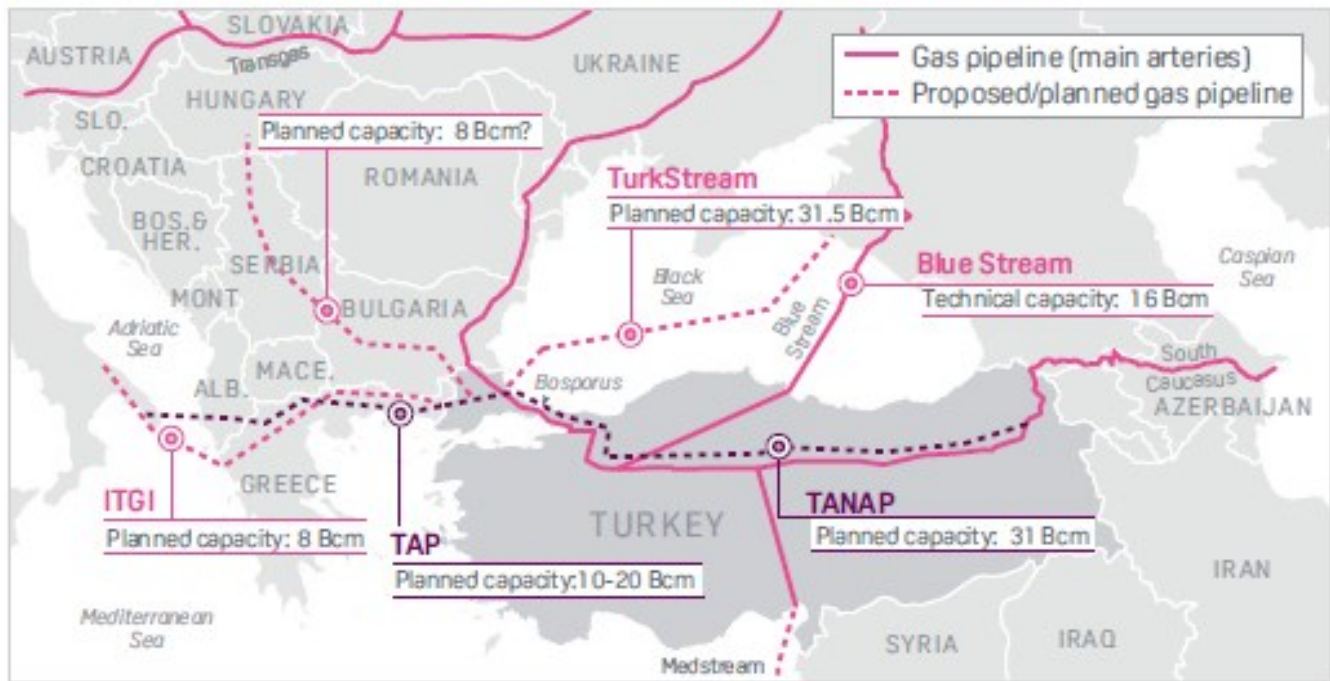
<sup>85</sup>Hellenic National Defense General Staff, "Formal Visit of the Chief of Defense of Romania" (In Greek). 26 May 2022. <https://geetha.mil.gr/episimi-episkepsi-archigoy-amynas-tis-roymanias/> (08/02/2024).

<sup>86</sup>Business Daily, "Greece, Bulgaria, Romania sign letter of intent to extend NATO pipelines". 12 October 2023. [https://www.businessdaily.gr/english-edition/98163\\_greece-bulgaria-romania-sign-letter-intent-extend-nato-pipelines](https://www.businessdaily.gr/english-edition/98163_greece-bulgaria-romania-sign-letter-intent-extend-nato-pipelines) (06/02/2024).

<sup>87</sup>Ekathimerini, "Greece, Bulgaria, Romania sign letter of intent to extend NATO pipelines network". 12 October 2023. <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1222258/greece-bulgaria-romania-sign-letter-of-intent-to-extend-nato-pipelines-network/> (06/02/2024).

<sup>88</sup>Ifo Institute, "NATO Countries Slow to Increase Defense Spending". 16 May 2023. <https://www.ifo.de/en/press-release/2023-05-16/nato-defense-spending> (08/02/2024).

“[...] the Thessaloniki Declaration came to ensure, more than anything, the architectural security of the Western Balkans and the broader region. A region that we all know, especially those of us who have delved a little into history, that has been historically plagued by great wars, conflicts, civil wars, significant realignments, volatility, and an asymmetric historical trajectory. In this context, Greek foreign policy has supported Bulgaria’s and Romania’s accession to the European family. We have played a decisive role in shaping European policy for the accession of the Western Balkans and supporting their integration path”.<sup>89</sup>



Source: Platts

**Picture 8:** Existing and proposed/planned gas pipelines in the wider Black Sea region

Source: [https://tekmormonitor.blogspot.com/2017\\_07\\_16\\_archive.html](https://tekmormonitor.blogspot.com/2017_07_16_archive.html)

In addition to the aforementioned military cooperation, the cooperation of Greece and Romania in the fields of economy, trade and critical infrastructure contributes greatly to the increase of the resilience of the two states –the development of which has been set as the main goal of several major actors<sup>90</sup>, leading to *prosperity and stability* in the region. This will also be facilitated by Romania’s inclusion in the

Schengen Area, an action that will boost economic and trade activities. Moreover, the extension of the existing NATO fuel pipeline network that was recently announced in addition to several other existing and future energy and transportation<sup>91</sup> projects in the region (**Picture 8**) will facilitate energy diversification and ensure *energy security* for both states, a vital component of national security that was highlighted after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, also allowing Greece to emerge as a *gateway and a hub for energy transit* in regional level. In this context Greece:

<sup>89</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Minister of Foreign Affairs George Gerapetritis’ closing speech at the 7th “Thessaloniki Summit” (Thessaloniki, 21.11. 2023)”. 21 November 2023. <https://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/top-story/minister-of-foreign-affairs-george-gerapetritis-closing-speech-at-the-7th-thessaloniki-summit-thessaloniki-2111-2023.html> (06/02/2024).

<sup>90</sup>Koukakis Georgios, “Resilience: Highlighting Its Importance for Security and Development through References to (National) Security Strategic Documents of International Actors”. HAPSc Policy Briefs Series, Vol. 4 (1), pp. 77-87. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hapscpbs.35186>. (06/02/2024).

<sup>91</sup>Gherasim Cristian, “Romania, Greece and Bulgaria want to build a highway and rail transport corridor connecting the three countries”. Eureporter, 12 October 2023. <https://www.eureporter.co/world/romania/2023/10/12/romania-greece-and-bulgaria-want-to-build-a-highway-and-rail-transport-corridor-connecting-the-three-countries/> (08/02/2023).

“[...] promotes the implementation of the Vertical Gas Corridor, which will be a sum of existing and planned natural gas energy infrastructures. [...] The interconnector pipeline between Greece and Bulgaria (Interconnector Greece - Bulgaria/IGB) is a ‘game changer,’ a fundamental element and the first ‘link’ in the energy ‘chain’ of the Vertical Gas Corridor (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Ukraine, and Moldova) [...]”<sup>92</sup>

In the context of energy security, Greece has initiated many other energy projects such as the ‘East-Med’ gas pipeline and the ‘Euro-Asia Interconnector’ undersea electricity cable in cooperation Cyprus and Israel, and the ‘Euro-Africa Interconnector’ undersea electricity cable in cooperation with Cyprus and Egypt. The first led to Turkey’s reaction proposing an alternative route for East-Med through its territory, as the planned route is against its national interests, a scenario though that seems not viable<sup>93</sup>. The same reaction might be expected as far as the planned pipelines that provide an alternative energy source to the TANAP pipeline (**Picture 8**) that passes through Turkey. In fact, some scholars express the opinion that the initiatives taken by Greece as far as the energy sector will have a negative result, as gas pipelines:

“[...] are more likely to provoke political tensions [...] unless constructive steps are taken via more inclusive partnerships embracing all riparian parties concerned. [...] managing stability in the region requires a mutual-beneficial approach [...]”<sup>94</sup>

Moreover, through the establishment of the trilateral partnerships in the Balkans and Black Sea region, Greece has managed to promote the use of International Law as the main method of resolving disputes among states, especially as far as the delimitation of maritime zones is concerned. Indeed, *UNCLOS* plays a vital role in safeguarding the Greek national interests, as Turkey does not acknowledge several of its provisions regarding the continental shelf and the EEZ. Moreover, in 2019 a *Memorandum* defining the limits of the maritime zones of Turkey and the temporary government of Libya was signed between the two parties, an illegal action that was countered by the Hellenic Republic in 2020 by a respective delimitation agreement with Egypt canceling ‘de facto’ the Turkish-Libyan Memorandum. It must also be stressed that - in addition to the aforementioned counter-action - Greece, Egypt and Cyprus filed an *opposition letter to the UN* stating that the Memorandum was null and void, since it did not take into account the provisions of *UNCLOS*<sup>95</sup>.

As far as the future prospects of the bilateral relations of Greece and Romania are concerned, it must be highlighted that the two states can *broaden* their cooperation in more policy fields of common interest such as the protection of the environment, migration and natural disasters, *strengthen* their cooperation in the existing policy fields, or do *both*. The most significant though factor that will act as a catalyst in any of the three aforementioned scenarios of cooperation is Romania’s integration in the Schengen Area, since - according to the former Greek Minister of Migration and Asylum (Notis Mitarachis) - Schengen’s enlargement will also benefit the Hellenic Republic by uniting it with Romania by road, just like the other EU member-states.<sup>96</sup>

## Epilogue

To conclude, it must be noted that Greece’s bilateral and multilateral relations with Romania in addition to the several other collaborative schemes established between the countries of the Balkans and the Black Sea

<sup>92</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, “Energy Diplomacy”. November 2023. [https://www.mfa.gr/en/energy-diplomacy/\(05/02/2024\)](https://www.mfa.gr/en/energy-diplomacy/(05/02/2024)).

<sup>93</sup>Georgios Koukakis, “The trilateral partnership between Greece, Cyprus & Israel: Background, recent developments and future considerations regarding the security environment in the Eastern Mediterranean”. Hellenic Institute for Strategic Studies (HEL.I.S.S.), 13 November 2022. [https://elisme.gr/the-trilateral-partnership-greece-cyprus-amp-israel\\_by-georgios/\(08/02/2024\)](https://elisme.gr/the-trilateral-partnership-greece-cyprus-amp-israel_by-georgios/(08/02/2024)).

<sup>94</sup>Emre İşeri & Ahmet Çağrı Bartan, “Turkey’s geostrategic vision and energy concerns in the Eastern Mediterranean security architecture”, in Zenonas Tziarras (ed.), *The New Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean: Trilateral Partnerships and Regional Security. Re-imagining the Eastern Mediterranean Series: PCC Report, 3* (Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2019) [https://files.prio.org/publication\\_files/cyprus/GeopoliticsEasternMediterranean/The%20New%20Geopolitics%20of%20the%20Eastern%20Mediterranean%20-%20Chapter%207%20-%20Turkeys%20Geostrategic..%20-%20Emre%20Iseri%20Ahmet%20C%20Bartan.pdf](https://files.prio.org/publication_files/cyprus/GeopoliticsEasternMediterranean/The%20New%20Geopolitics%20of%20the%20Eastern%20Mediterranean%20-%20Chapter%207%20-%20Turkeys%20Geostrategic..%20-%20Emre%20Iseri%20Ahmet%20C%20Bartan.pdf) (08/02/2024).

<sup>95</sup>Georgios Koukakis, “The 2020 Exclusive Economic Zone Delimitation Agreement Between Greece and Egypt”. October 2022, HERMES Institute of International Affairs, Security & Geoeconomy, available at <https://nebula.wsimg.com/2b32a1aba1179517db2b2fe9451b602d?AccessKeyId=401F75AAF8C61A96E174&disposition=0&alloworigin=1> (08/02/2024).

<sup>96</sup>Ministry of Migration and Asylum of the Hellenic Republic, “Greece’s initiative on the enlargement of the Schengen Zone to Bulgaria and Romania”. 12 January 2023. [https://migration.gov.gr/en/greeces-initiative-on-the-enlargement-of-the-schengen-zone-to-bulgaria-and-romania/\(08/02/2023\)](https://migration.gov.gr/en/greeces-initiative-on-the-enlargement-of-the-schengen-zone-to-bulgaria-and-romania/(08/02/2023)).

region enhance not only Greece's national security, but the overall regional security as well. The reason why is because the enhancement of their cooperation in fields of common interest creates strong ties that consolidate peace and stability, leading to the prosperity of their citizens and the establishment of a stable political environment.

Despite though the intense geostrategic and geo-economic systemic competition that the contemporary security environment is facing by actors that seek to create a new multipolar international system, every actor should keep in mind that it is only through cooperation that actors can achieve the maximum desired and long-lasting outcome as far as their national security is concerned. This was also highlighted by *Franklin D. Roosevelt* in the following remark:

*“Competition has been shown to be useful up to a certain point and no further, but cooperation, which is the thing we must strive for today, begins where competition leaves off”.*<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>97</sup>Michael Reiss von Filski, “Comment: Competition versus cooperation”. *International Accounting Bulletin*, 25 February 2013. <https://www.internationalaccountingbulletin.com/comment/commentscomment-competition-versus-cooperation/> (02/02/2024).



### 3. EUROPE



## From the Weimer Triangle to the Bucharest Dodecagon - the Appointment of the European Commissioner for Defense

PhD. Eng. Constantin REBEDEA

*“Of all the virtues we can learn, no trait is more useful, more essential to survival, and better suited to improving the quality of our lives than the ability to turn adversity into a pleasurable challenge.”*

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

#### Abstract

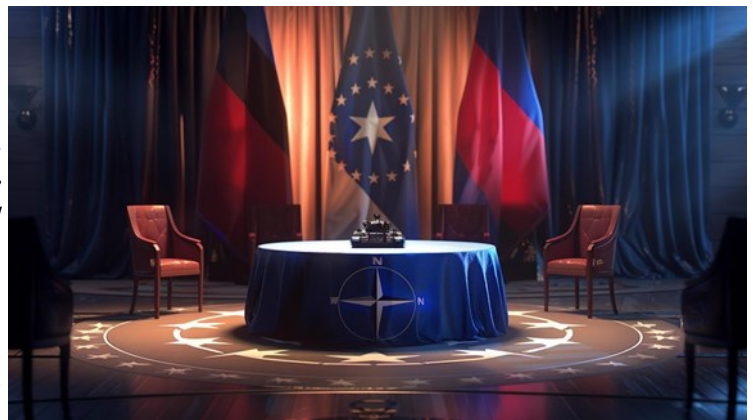
*Strategic resilience can be defined as the capacity of a state, regions or organizations to withstand and adapt to a variety of shocks, simultaneous or consecutive, from multiple spheres of activity or of a geographical order, maintaining its essential functions and without losing in the medium and long term its ability to manage and recover from the effects negative and to ensure the sustainable development and evolution of these entities, at a higher level, which ensures balance, prosperity and stability.*

*From a regional or organizational perspective, strategic resilience is extremely important because it can ensure the maintenance of a high standard of living, sustainable development and progress, but it can face a series of obstacles generated by the individual interests of the entities involved/member states, which sometimes they may be divergent and thus requiring harmonization.*

*It should also be considered and the process of developing the Strategic Compass, which aims to operationalize the EU's strategic autonomy, to clarify the EU's level of ambition and harmonize the EU's strategic and operational capabilities needs.*

*To strengthen strategic resilience at the national level, we could consider three action scenarios for the future. The first could consist of the continuation of the established EU-NATO strategic plan, which would cover a period of 10 years, with the aim of increasing strategic resilience to various challenges. In such a situation, states might emerge with a different approach, which focuses on a rethinking of domestic capabilities and thus implies isolation or reluctance to interact.*

*A second scenario could be thought with Romania as a regional leader, in the South East European area - the Balkans - the Dodecagon of Europe. The arguments in this regard would be numerous, this would require the outline of a clear, articulated, multisectoral vision, which would be doubled by an intense diplomatic activity necessary to convince and bring to the table all interested actors in the region.*



Source: Image generator, graphic editing of images created with the help of AI.

*A third scenario would be the transfer of as many responsibilities as possible to NATO, certainly with stronger European integration and a more accentuated centralized decision-making system.*

### **Keywords:**

*The resilience of inclusive electoral processes in the Union, the appointment of the European Commissioner for Defence, the Weimar Triangle, the European Security and Defense Policy, the development of analytical tools and best practices.*

## **1. Introduction**

### **• Current status, changes, observations, trends, impact**

For building resilience, including strategic resilience, a set of seven principles have been identified for sustaining ecosystem services in socio-economic and ecological systems (Biggs). These principles include: maintaining diversity and redundancy, managing connectivity, managing slow variables and feedbacks, encouraging complex adaptive systems thinking; encouraging learning, widening participation and promoting polycentric governance systems.

Any strategy to increase resilience requires respect for these principles, which must be applied to existing realities at the national and regional level.

From a national perspective, the strategic resilience of the country must be a constant and essential concern of the political decision-makers, but also of the representatives of the state powers, who work harmoniously to ensure the well-being of its inhabitants and institutional stability.

Also, strategic resilience is increasingly seen as a corollary of deterrence and reassurance measures in the classical military sphere as part of a comprehensive security strategy for the alliance. The seven benchmarks to be assessed from a NATO perspective are:

1. ensuring the continuity of government and critical government services;
2. resilient energy sources;
3. the ability to effectively deal with the uncontrolled movement of people;
4. resilient food and water resources;
5. the ability to deal with mass casualties;
6. resilient communication systems;
7. resilient transport systems.

These areas apply to the entire crisis spectrum, from an evolving hybrid threat to the most complex and demanding scenarios envisioned by alliance planners.

### **• Weimar Triangle – Bucharest Dodecagon**

The Weimar Triangle refers to a diplomatic initiative and forum for cooperation between three European countries: Germany, France and Poland. The main purpose of the Weimar Triangle is to stimulate political, economic and cultural cooperation between the participants nations and to contribute to the stability and integration of Europe.

The Weimar Initiative provides a platform for regular consultations and dialogue on various issues, including regional security, economic development and European integration. It is seen as a mechanism for improving understanding and collaboration between the three countries, promoting mutual interests and addressing common challenges.

The Weimar component was an important stage of European diplomacy, and the participating countries worked together on issues such as the enlargement of the European Union, the development of the Eastern Partnership and other regional and global concerns.

It is worth noting that although the Weimar Triangle has been an active forum, its impact and prominence has varied over the years, and its effectiveness can be influenced by political dynamics in each participating country.



*Source: Image generator, graphic editing of images created with the help of AI.*

In the case of Romania, in accordance with the National Defense Strategy 2020-2024, “the concept of resilience is approached in a double key: the inherent capacity of entities - individuals, communities, economic operators, regions, the state - to resist and adapt to violent events causing stress, shock, major incidents, disasters, pandemics or conflicts, on the one hand, respectively the ability of these entities to quickly return to a functional, normal state, on the other hand”.

Thus, the Bucharest dodecagon proposes other regional and international forums and alliances, with the aim of expanding EU actions to strengthen cooperation in the field of defense and which also play crucial roles in shaping Europe’s diplomatic landscape.

In this context, a recent initiative that illustrates, in a relevant way, the amplification of efforts to strengthen resilience against as many threats as possible, is the establishment in 2021 of the Euro-Atlantic Center for Resilience (E-ARC), having the mission of “to develop concepts, doctrines and methodologies in the field of resilience, to offer training courses and to provide a platform for the transfer of expertise between the government sector, the private sector, civil society and the university environment”.

The establishment of E-ARC, it is worth noting, does not take over the mission of the national institutions with attributions in the management of critical infrastructures in Romania and the concept of strategic resilience, but has as its object of activity the direct contribution to the development and transformation process of NATO and the EU, through ensuring a direct relationship with NATO and EU structures, by providing expertise in the field of resilience and by supporting cooperation between the two international organizations.

#### • **NATO-EU strengthening the common defense strategy**

The Treaty of Lisbon provides for a common EU defense policy, but it clearly states the priority of national defense policy, including NATO membership or neutrality. The European Parliament has consistently supported more cooperation, increased investment and pooling resources at EU level to better protect European citizens.

EU leaders realize that no single EU member state can address today’s security threats in isolation. The French President, Emmanuel Macron, took the initiative of a joint European military project in 2017, while the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, declared in November 2018, in a speech held in the European Parliament, that we should advance the steps for the creation of a European army. Moving towards a Security and Defense Union was one of the priorities of the von der Leyen Commission.

Previously, in 2016, President Klaus Iohannis declared, after discussions with his French counterpart, that Romania supports the formation of an army of the European Union, which does not modify the NATO format.

The topic of the EU army was also brought up in the context where the EU needs to invest more in defence, especially by creating its own defense industry.

At the same time, a plea for more autonomy in the EU’s military decisions vis-à-vis participation in NATO actions should be considered.

## **2. Appointment of the European Commissioner for Defence. The need to revise the Treaties**

#### • **Extending the qualified majority vote**

EU-NATO cooperation is based on the principle of complementarity and compatibility of the mission of the two structures, one as a political and economic union, the other as a defense, as a military alliance, as well as their instruments. The basis of the cooperation between the two organizations should continue and be cooperative and not competitive, considering that 22 of the EU member states are also NATO members. The EU’s Common Security and Defense Policy is focused on peacekeeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security, while NATO’s strategy is based on military defense and the deterrence of armed conflict.

At the time the proposal was strongly supported by Germany and France, there were also signals from Italy, but a decision could not be taken due to the traditional opposition of Great Britain.

Europe is surrounded by crisis, external and internal threats, managing the migration crisis, the changing global and regional political and security landscape, at the level of 2024 in Europe and in the US are just some of the threats EU states have to deal with. Thus, the geopolitical context stands out as the biggest vulnerability of the EU and it seems that there is a lack of a common direction for the development of cohesion, security and defense strategies.

Although the Treaty of Lisbon preserves the intergovernmental character of decisions in relations with CFSP-ESPA, a series of provisions have been introduced, which extend the use of qualified majority voting.

Despite their distinct approaches and perceptions, both the EU and NATO focus their horizons on security issues and on undertaking crisis management operations and missions.

Considering the provisions of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, in particular Article 292, regarding inclusive and resilient electoral processes in the Union and strengthening character, the resilience of electoral processes in the Union should be strengthened, with full respect for fundamental rights and democratic values enshrined in the rules European Union and international norms and the efficient conduct of elections for the European Parliament.

Along with this year's European Parliament elections, the appointment of a European commissioner for defense is proposed and, in this context, the idea that Romania is entitled to receive this post is circulating in certain circles.

#### • **The European Defense Union is necessary for the safety of European citizens**

Under the EU mission, armed forces have missions, in the Horn of Africa and the Western Indian Ocean, up to the Western Balkans, within the framework of agreements with the African Union and the United Nations, or within the Eastern Partnership, but it is not enough, it is more and more evident that, we carry out missions and support distant societies, for the respect of human rights, but we fail to manage the problems of EU member and partner countries.

After 2024, the EU proposes a structural, strategic cooperation in the field of defense, even if there will be discussions regarding the appointment of a European commissioner for defense, surely a headquarters for the future military structure will be created. Also, 2% of GDP is allocated to each member state.

Through its attributions, the European Parliament approved by vote the establishment of a Defense Union, as part of a structural plan aimed at facilitating military operations between nations, at EU level, maximizing mobilization and international cooperation to minimize response and reaction time. In this way, all the controversies that arise when military units are mobilized at the level of the member states would be clarified.

Exacerbated fears that ESDP could rival and weaken NATO are reflected in the US reaction to the decisions taken by Britain and France at the European Council in Saint-Malo in 1998, which approved the EU's development of an autonomous capacity for action.

But since then the perception has changed radically, the US being concerned that the feelings of alienation of non-EU NATO member states could create tensions within it and implicitly threaten its political cohesion.

#### • **Integrated approaches in the institutional context of the European Union and NATO**

The discussion of the command options developed in the context of European cooperation cannot be done comprehensively without taking into account the bivalent nature of the EU's operational engagements. More precisely, it is about the fact that the EU's potential to carry out crisis management operations is declining from both a military and a civilian perspective. The example of the initiation of commitments in the Western Balkans represented a considerable effort both from the perspective of the engaged contingents and from the perspective of ensuring the credibility of the EU's potential to face the challenges in the theater.

#### • **Differences between the two concepts of security and defense**

Until the late 1990s, the relationship between the EU and NATO did not exist. As we have seen, with the reactivation of the military side, it harmonized its activity in the sphere of security and defense with the EU, together with the Treaty of Maastricht, which consecrates its "armed arm" and which was responsible for developing and implements Union defense decisions and actions.

The changes brought about by the Treaty of Amsterdam were not significant, since the European states, despite the experience in Yugoslavia, they no longer felt threatened either economically, but not from a security point of view, reason for which they preferred more of an intergovernmental character as regards the CFSP. Added to all this is the apparent failure of the CFSP in its first years of existence and the difficulties it faced as a result of the problems in Iraq, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the Middle East, which had an important impact and hence the lack of enthusiasm and pessimism regarding the success of integration in the defense sphere.

Although the European Council in Helsinki decided to develop a European military force until 2003, nevertheless, we cannot speak of a "common defense", because the EU does not propose to establish a European army and however autonomous and independent it would be ESDP in theory, NATO will continue to represent the basis of collective defense and play an important role in crisis management.

## Conclusions

The efficiency problem facing the EU in the area of security and defense is not due to incomplete institutional architecture, but to the lack of a pro-active attitude towards the development of the European defense project, an attitude which, as Margaras argues in a constructive manner, is due to the different visions and traditions of the states in defense matters, to the divergent geopolitical interests between Europeanists and Atlanticists.

Despite the institutional innovations brought by the Treaty of Lisbon to increase the efficiency and cohesion of the Union in the defense sphere, the EU will not be able to respond effectively to the challenges unless it acquires a strategic culture.

The assessment cannot be carried out comprehensively without taking into account the intergovernmental nature of European cooperation, which is reflected in the predominant role of the member states regarding the implementation of operations with an executive profile.

Equally, the advantages of the system developed by the EU must be taken into account in terms of the potential for flexibility, which allowed the generation of an extensive set of commitments, including mixed ones, the latter representing a significant added value in the operational context.

Based on these considerations, the current stage of the development of the EU's capacity to simultaneously plan and conduct crisis management operations represents a relevant indicator for the degree of maturity reached by European cooperation in this field. The general tendency is to standardize the civil and military approaches and, subsequently, to strengthen the permanent character of the related structures. Undoubtedly, we are talking about a process that is in full evolution, the results of which will add new solutions that will complete the options for using the EU-NATO cooperation framework.

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### 3. EUROPE



## Heated Debates in the Political and Military Environment in Europe Regarding Russia's Future Plans

PhD. Eng. Stelian TEODORESCU

„The things that cause us suffering, educate us.”

Benjamin Franklin)

Recently, various information regarding the imminence of a possible major armed conflict between NATO and Russia began to be processed, analyzed and evaluated all over the world, making known through various sources even the possibility that Russia is preparing to invade the Baltic States members of NATO, as early as July 2024. In such an analytical context, even the German armed forces (Bundeswehr) seem to be preparing for a potential Russian hybrid attack on NATO's eastern flank, being expected, as predicted with some time ago, an escalation of tensions between NATO and Russia since this time we are in 2024.

At the level of the international media, scenarios of the outbreak of a war are increasingly being built, scenarios that are based on various assessments and forecasts that focus on the evolution of the security situation at the regional and global level, but avoid specifying the type of possible Russian conflict with NATO and, by implication, the number and movement of troops. However, certain scenarios predict that Russia's mobilization could begin in the first part of this year, followed by a spring offensive in Ukraine and an attack on the Baltic States in the middle of this summer. In the same context, new cyberattacks and other forms of hybrid warfare are to be expected, which nevertheless took place some time ago in several European states.

But here are some predictions according to which the tensions of the conflicting developments grinding the whole world could reach culminating in October 2024, when Russia wants to deploy troops and missiles to Kaliningrad (a Russian exclave in Poland).

So, so-called “border conflicts” and “disruptions with many victims” are possible to break out, until December 2024, also in the “Suwalki corridor” (the small corridor between Belarus and Kaliningrad that is located along the Polish-Lithuanian border).



Source: <https://evz.ro/nato-gata-sa-intre-in-razboi-in-ucraina-fost-sef-cia-declaratii-dure-despre-rusia-si-linia-rosie.html>

Thus, it appears that one of Russia's major goals is to move and deploy Russian troops to Suwalki, which is about 80 km long and connects Poland to Lithuania, a possible forecast is that the Baltic countries could see themselves isolated from Europe. Naturally, a question can be asked: can this possible development be an enormous threat to start military preparations to counter it? The Suwalki invasion is just a practice scenario, according to Marcis Balodis, a researcher at the Center for East European Policy Studies in Latvia. The worst-case scenarios must be taken into account, but they are not necessarily based on intelligence, says the expert, who believes that the noise created around the Suwalki scenario was a bit exaggerated.

It is increasingly clear that we cannot exclude that Russia will repeat its first invasion from Ukraine, since 2014, and on NATO territory, but, as expected, with the support of Belarus, after the end of the US election. However, this scenario could end its validity after a so-called "D-Day", when NATO will deploy significant military forces on the eastern flank. However, if NATO will be able to master such a situation and will give a firm answer to Russia, there are still many questions for the entire international community about how the actual situation will evolve in the next period.

In recent months, politicians and the military of several European countries have appealed to the citizens of their countries not to rule out the possibility that the war - or its consequences - will affect their existence. Lieutenant General Martin Wijnen, the commander of the Dutch army until his resignation on 01 January 2024, said that the Netherlands and its society must prepare for a possible war with the Russian Federation. "The Netherlands should seriously fear war and our society should prepare for it [...] The Netherlands should not think that our safety is guaranteed because we are 1,500 kilometers from Russia [...] There is only one language that Russia understands, and that is the language of a strong army", announced M. Wijnen in an interview with the Dutch media "De Telegraaf". In addition, he urged the Dutch to stock up on food and drinking water.

For his part, the Swedish Minister of Civil Defense, Carl-Oscar Bohlin, called for more work to be done to modernize the Swedish civil defense system. "Many have said it before me, but let me say it forcefully - it could be war in Sweden," warned C. Bohlin. He was also supported by the Swedish captain, Micael Byden: "On an individual level, you have to prepare yourself mentally [...] Look at the news in Ukraine and ask yourself the simple questions: if this happens here, am I ready? What should I do?"

These ads generated effects similar to those produced by an earthquake in Swedish society. While some Swedes welcomed the announcements as a realistic view, others accused politicians and officials of spreading fear. For example, the Swedish child protection group BRIS said its helpline was inundated with calls from worried children.

Similar comments were heard from both German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius, who warned that Russian President Vladimir Putin could attack NATO in less than a decade, and Belgian army chief Michel Hofman, who estimated that V. Putin's next attack could target southern Moldova or the Baltic states. Finally, the head of Poland's national security agency mentioned that Russia could attack NATO countries within three years.

Experts and think tanks have also issued warnings. The Institute for the Study of War, in Washington, pointed out that V. Putin has intensified the rhetoric against the Baltic States, setting the stage for potential "future escalations". Recently, V. Putin criticized Latvia for its immigration law, as about 1200 Russians were forced to leave this country while their residence permits were not renewed according to the new rules. At the same time, the think-tank admitted that it found no indication that Russia plans to attack the Baltic States anytime soon. However, V. Putin's comments on the situation in Latvia have been categorized as similar to those expressed by Russia before the invasion of Ukraine, accusing Kiev of committing "genocide" against ethnic Russians living in Ukraine.

Former NATO Secretary General, George Robertson, also believes that the Russian threat to NATO may be exaggerated and cited relentless Russian propaganda as one possible cause. He reflects on a poll suggesting that most Hungarians, Romanians and Bulgarians believe that supplying arms to Ukraine "provokes Russia and draws their own countries closer to war [...] Instead of the West being nervous about Russia's escalation, which have already exceeded, we must cultivate in the military hierarchy in Moscow the concern that if they overdo what is being done in Ukraine, then a real and not fictional war with NATO could be the result, a war they know they could only lose," G. Robertson pointed out.

In such a context, NATO countries understand that their armies need more money. Politicians know this, so they have to mobilize society. They are trying to counter the threat from Russia, which already appears to be quite a serious one for the Baltic countries, with Belgium or the Netherlands, for example, the least likely to be attacked.

So, at present, we can say that here it is rather a question regarding the need to support the Baltic states, even if the threat is a little overstated, but it cannot be considered impossible. As a result, if the production of the defense industry is to be intensified, then the threats that exist right now must be discussed, justifying the increase in financial resources for defense, as Toms Rostoks, associate professor at the University of Latvia and senior researcher at the National Defense Academy of Latvia, also pointed out in a statement to Veridica.<sup>1</sup>

On February 4, 2024, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated in turn that there is currently no imminent military threat from Russia to a NATO member, emphasizing the Alliance's strengthened defense capabilities.

In an interview with German public broadcaster ARD<sup>2</sup>, J. Stoltenberg rejected claims that Russia would attack an Alliance member if it won the war in Ukraine. "We do not currently perceive a military threat against a NATO allied state in the near future," he said, noting that NATO has been "significantly strengthened" in recent years and all member states have invested "significantly" in their own defense. NATO has adapted to the new reality resulting from Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, recognizing and adapting to the changed circumstances, he added. J. Stoltenberg stressed that Germany and all NATO members are expected to modernize their armed forces and equip them accordingly, noting that Germany is currently the member with the highest defense spending after the US and the UK. J. Stoltenberg highlighted Germany's contribution to NATO's collective defense and urged both Germany and other partners to step up their efforts to build a reliable defense for the future.

Evaluating the potential impact on NATO if former US President Donald Trump were to be re-elected, J. Stoltenberg expressed his confidence that the US will remain a reliable and loyal ally for NATO for various reasons that align with its security interests. Regarding Trump's previous criticisms of member states not spending enough on NATO, he clarified that it was more of a criticism of NATO allies' underspending, stressing that with increased spending and unity, NATO will remain safe. J. Stoltenberg also pointed out that NATO members represent 50% of the world's economic and military power, making the Alliance essential for the US, and he expects them to remain reliable partners as long as they stand and act together.

So, as can be seen, policy makers and military and national security experts are now seriously discussing the possible need for a European nuclear deterrent. For example, former German foreign minister Joschka Fischer, in an interview with the weekly Die Zeit in December 2023, supported the idea of a European nuclear deterrent. In 1975, the West German government declared that its ratification of the Federal Republic's accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty would not prevent the formation and consolidation of a eventual nuclear deterrence system within the European Union (EU). The issue of European nuclear deterrence also intertwines with the related question of the role of such weapons, namely whether, for of so-called "tactical" nuclear weapons in NATO. There are several political and military arguments in favor of this proposal. Now, with the rise of former President Donald J. Trump, who has in the past vowed to leave NATO and recently threatened never to come to the aid of his allies within the Alliance, concerns are growing among European nations that Putin might invade a NATO member country in the next decade and that Europe may have to face Russian forces without US support. That could happen in just five years after the end of the war in Ukraine, according to officials and experts who believe that would be enough time for Moscow to rebuild and retool its military. "We have always suspected that this is the only existential threat we have," said Major General Veiko-Vello Palm, the commander of the main ground combat division of the Estonian Army, when referring to a possible Russian invasion.

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<sup>1</sup>Veridica is a publication specialized in monitoring, analyzing and dismantling fake news, disinformation and manipulation campaigns in Central and Eastern Europe, in an increasingly fluid geopolitical context. The project was launched in the context of the health crisis and the infodemic, it is undertaken by the International Alliance of Romanian Journalists and carried out together with journalists, experts and researchers from Central and Eastern Europe, with the support of non-governmental organizations and diplomatic representations from Bucharest and social involvement of the companies that have chosen to be their partners. Their objectives are to increase the awareness and understanding of the phenomenon, the resilience of society, as well as the promotion of democratic values.

<sup>2</sup>ARD is a joint organization of regional public service broadcasting in Germany. It was founded in 1950 in West Germany to represent the common interests of the new, decentralized post-war broadcasting services, particularly the introduction of a common television network. ARD has a budget of €6.9 billion, 22,612 employees and is the largest public broadcasting network in the world. The budget comes primarily from a compulsory license fee that every household, company and public institution, regardless of television ownership, is required by law to pay. For a typical household, the fee is currently €18.36 per month (as of 2023). Households living on welfare are exempt from the tax. The fees are not collected directly by ARD, but by Beitragsservice (formerly known as Gebühreneinzugszentrale GEZ), a joint organization of member broadcasters ARD, the second public broadcaster TV ZDF and Deutschlandradio.

But here it is, just as V. Putin two years ago downplayed warnings from the J. Biden administration that Russia was planning to invade Ukraine, and Moscow dismissed concerns that Russia was planning to attack NATO, and the head of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, Sergei Naryshkin, stated in January 2024 in an interview with the state news agency RIA Novosti that this information was part of a Western disinformation campaign to stir up resentment against Russia.

However, it should not be overlooked that Europe's concern has been further fueled in recent months by the intense militarization of the Russian economy and huge increases in military and military industry spending, while at the same time some Republicans in The US Congress seeks to limit US aid to Ukraine. "If anyone thinks that this is only about Ukraine, they are fundamentally mistaken," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned at the World Economic Forum in January 2024. "Possible directions and even a timeline of new Russian aggression beyond Ukraine are becoming increasingly more and more evident." NATO says it is ready to defend the borders of all 32 member states, which together have increased national defense spending by about \$190 billion since 2014 when Russia first invaded Ukraine. But this was the beginning of rebuilding what had become an insufficient military network across Europe in the decades following the end of the Cold War, a process that could take years, international analysts say.

As early as 2006, concerned that they were unprepared for conflict, senior defense officials from each NATO country agreed to spend at least 2% of their annual GDP for their armies. But it was not a requirement, and when military spending hit a low point in 2014, only three of NATO's 28 member countries at the time met the benchmark. By last year, only 11 countries had reached the 2% threshold, although a Western diplomat said in January that around 20 member states it is expected to fulfill it in 2024.

The alliance will test its readiness in a month-long military exercise - including 90,000 troops - that began in January, in what officials say is the biggest exercise NATO has staged since the end of the Cold War actually being a test of how NATO forces would respond to a Russian invasion. "I'm not saying it's going to go wrong tomorrow, but we have to realize it's not a thing given that we are at peace", declared to the media adm. Rob Bauer of the Netherlands, chairman of NATO's Military Committee, on January 18. Noting NATO's plans to respond to its two main threats, he added: "That is why we are preparing for a conflict with Russia."

In conclusion, we can appreciate that the current security situation, which has become precarious for the whole world, has led to the total confirmation of the importance of NATO for the entire world community. Here, Sweden was also accepted and officially joined NATO, after the accession of Finland last year, because both countries abandoned the strategy of military non-alignment due to the effects generated by Russia's aggression policy. And while he also described the commotion as "exaggerated", Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson made it clear that Russia remains a top threat. "There is nothing to suggest that war is at the door now, but it is clear that the risk of war has increased significantly," U. Kristersson emphasized in an interview with Sveriges Radio.

The Estonian government has not failed to point out that the territorial area that Russia occupied in the first days of the invasion of Ukraine, from February 2022 - before it was pushed back to the current front line in eastern Ukraine - is roughly the size of the territories of the Baltic States.

"Their ambition is to restore their power," said col. Mati Tikerpuu, commander of Estonia's 2nd Infantry Brigade, which is based about 30 kilometers from the Russian border. "We don't think this question refers to whether or not Russia will try to invade," said Colonel M. Tikerpuu at his command at the Taara military base. For many Estonians, he emphasized: "The question is only: when?"

## 4. AFRICA



### Unveiling Angolan Politics: An Exclusive Interview with Eduardo J. Chingunji

Juri FFERRARIO (San Marino)

As I sit down to pen this piece, the anticipation is palpable. Across from me sits **Eduardo J. Chingunji**, a man whose name resonates through the corridors of Angolan history like a steady drumbeat. In this exclusive interview, I have the privilege of unraveling the enigma of Angolan politics with a figure whose lineage intertwines with the very fabric of the nation's independence struggle. Eduardo, a former minister and scion of the influential Chingunji dynasty, offers a glimpse into a world where heritage, power, and progress converge in a delicate dance. Join me, Juri Ferrario, as we embark on a journey through the past, present, and future of Angola, guided by the insights of one of its most eminent voices.

- **In your monumental book chronicling the history of the Chingunji family, you've unearthed a treasure trove of stories that illuminate not just your family's legacy but also Angola's struggle for independence. Could you share with our readers a glimpse into the origins of your family and its significant contributions, not only up until the multiparty elections of 1992 but also in navigating the post-independence landscape and shaping contemporary Angolan politics?**

*EC: Indeed my family (Chingunji family), was one of the pillars of the struggle for independence. It is a family that has strong African Royal blood, and in particular the ancestry of the Kings and founders of Bié which is now a province in the Central Angolan plateau.*

*One of our Ancestors and King was the one that practically facilitated the acceptance of Christian religion in Bié and was the first to be converted and even leave a few of his wives as an example of acceptance of Christianity in his region. Here we are talking about American Evangelical Protestant Missionaries.*

*My grandfather is perhaps the biggest reference for our family in the 20th Century, as he was the most educated of his era, a close ally of American and Canadian Missionaries, in particular Dr Walter Strangway and his wife Alice Strangway who were Canadians pioneers of the treatment of Leprosy at Chissamba Missionary Hospital in Bié. My grandfather Eduardo Jonatão Chingunji, who's also my name sake, was a great primary teacher. He founded his own school that was incorporated into the Evangelical Chris samba Mission. He was also a great Orator at Church, but considered himself as having a greater mission other than being confined to being just a Church God Representative. He was a Preacher but not a Pastor. He took up education as the greatest tool to give to blacks in order to fight Colonialism, Oppression and Discrimination.*



Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angola>



He became a staunch admirer of Martin Luther King, and even believed that African Americans would be key to the liberation of Africa.

In Angola, he was keen to fight for equality through non-violent means.

However, eventually accepted that armed struggle was complimentary to help liberate Angola. Hence he created the foundation for the third liberation movement in Angola, where his oldest son was also a founder and Chief of Staff of the liberation movement eventually called UNITA.

Because if my grandparents leadership increasing clandestine cells in urban areas to support UNITA, whose children were big famous Guerrilla fighters, eventually the whole family in urban areas and Bié, were imprisoned in 1969 as leaders of subversion activities against the Colonial government. My grandfather now considered as a dangerous leader of urban subversion activities, was posted to Cabo Verde Island, whilst the rest of the family led by grandmother Violeta Jamba Chingunji, were kept prisoners in southern Angola, in the town called Moçâmedes. The imprisonment of the Chingunji lasted until 1974 after the collapse of the Colonial government through the famous April 25 revolution in Portugal.

Hence, the book I wrote was about the origins of our family and their roles in society until the coming of multiparty elections in 1992.

My dad was the first Chief of Staff of UNITA from its foundation in 1966 until his premature death in January 1974.

After independence we had the civil between UNITA and the MPLA which lasted until 2002.

My dad's brother Tito Chingunji, was the UNITA architect for the negotiated solution to end the civil war and introduce multiparty elections in 1992. He was the architect for Western support, in particular American. However, like my grandparents, my father and uncles, Tito Chingunji became too popular in UNITA as a future great leader and internationally respected, and like before, UNITA's leader Jonas Savimbi who viewed as rivals to his dominance, in 1991 decided to kill Tito Chingunji and the rest of the Chingunji family, including babies and women in order to eliminate forever our threat to his personal leadership ambitions for Angola.

I defied Savimbi at 22 years old and became his strongest critic and adversary until he was killed in 2002, which also brought the end of the war.

Since 1988 at 22 years old, I became an independent Politician.

My belief that Africa needs new leadership and political parties, was my reason to create a small party that was legalized just before the election during the campaign window. We did achieve much, but we wanted visibility so that in 2027 we could run after 5 years of existence.

- **Your involvement in Angolan politics has spanned decades, from your tenure as a minister to your recent presidential candidacy in the last elections. How do you perceive the evolution of Angolan politics, considering your experiences from the early stages of your career until now?**

**EC:** As a Minister, it was my first experience in government service, after coming from Washington DC where I had an office that Represented UNITA members that were against the war that Savimbi waged after losing the elections in 1992.

I went to Washington DC to also lobby for American support for the young Democracy and refrain from supporting the illegal war against the new Multiparty Democracy.

I was supposed to work in infrastructure development after the war, but in the attempt to unify UNITA factions into one, I was invited to help modernist the party for the new challenges, and once more bring back the value our family represented. Hence, the reshuffle of UNITA members in the Government of Reconciliation and National Unity, saw me being appointed as the Minister of Hospitality and Tourism. It was a sector I also loved and wanted to bring new infrastructure development of Tourism to make Angola a world destination as



Source: Eduardo J. Chingunji - personal archive

well as best for domestic destination for Angolans

*I left a mark as the pioneer on the Angolan side of the 5 nation Transfrontier Tourism Area in the SADC region that includes Zambia, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Angola. The Project is called Okavango-Zamvezi or KAZA.*

*During my reign despite being the youngest Minister and first time in public service, I shined as best UNITA Minister and Tourism became a force to be reckoned with for future development of Angola.*

*Today, the Okavango project is again being revamped to become a reference in the world for ecotourism and sustainable development. Since I left in 2008 after the end of the Government of national unity, nothing moved.*

*Working in government taught me great things especially to see the weaknesses and know how to do better if one day I could lead the government.*

*I travelled throughout Africa and saw the bad side that hinders development. It was a good school. I saw how bureaucracy hinders development in Angola in particular.*

*From the travels throughout the world, I know how we can become a great nation and even better than many. This increased my belief that we need new leaders new generation and education to train leadership and governance.*



Source: Eduardo J. Chingunji,

- **How do you perceive the current geopolitical landscape in Angola, and what do you see as the primary challenges confronting the nation?**

*EC: The current geopolitical situation of Angola is interesting. On one hand we've a new President of the MPLA that has ruled since independence 1975. The new MPLA leader took over in 2017, from the late veteran president Jose Eduardo dos Santos.*

*João Lourenço the new leader is now in his second and last term, ending 2027. He came in at the height of Oil crisis and huge debts for Angola. Added to the period of COVID-19. However, his mission was the fight against corruption and promised prosperity. Now, the country has deepened the social and economic crisis. The huge debts he inherited and economic chaos have really worsened. Corruption and the biggest people that took the billions, of public money, continue to be free or runaways from justice. The prices since 2017 have gone up more than 10 times. Most of the infrastructure is being rebuilt. Housing is still a nightmare.*

*Angola must not only rebuild most of the highway and roads, but must also put in place water and electricity infrastructure in order to stimulate access to local production of agriculture products, create jobs, and improve socioeconomic conditions of the majority.*

*We also have to introduce laws to further reduce drastically, bureaucracy and other evil detrimental to development.*

- **How do you perceive Angola's position within the Southern African region, and which diplomatic relationships do you consider most crucial for the country?**

*EC: Angola's role in the SADC region has been as the beacon for Peace and National Reconciliation, mainly because it was something most countries are unable to achieve today.*

*Our influence and beacons for Peace and Reconciliation now goes beyond Angola, the SADC regions, and now influence the East African countries organization, including West Africa. Hence, the reason our President has won recognition as the leader for Peace*

*Angola's now respected role as a world player, has also won Diplomatic praise from America. The campaign for the attraction of investment into Angola, has also brought Americans to the international Lobito Corridor.*

*We certainly deserve the accolades for our political achievements, but economically despite oil and diamonds.*



- **Drawing from your extensive political experience, what do you see as the primary objectives of the Angolan government in the realm of global geopolitics, particularly concerning emerging powers like China and India?**

*EC: The priority of the government must continue into the building of critical infrastructure. We must have clean water accessible to all, including remote areas. We must transport electricity to all corners of the country.*

*We must have a balanced relationship with America, China, Russia and India. So far the balance seems to work, especially American development funds. China is our biggest lender, but most of the roads and highways built by Chinese companies, have collapsed.*

*There's need to cleanup this,*

*We must build a sound middle class and affordable housing.*



Source: Eduardo J. Chingunji - personal archive

- **What are your thoughts on Angola's engagement with international organizations such as the UN and the African Union, concerning the pursuit of national and regional objectives?**

*EC: I am not a fan of the UN and African Union.*

*In our case, our war was ended by us defining our own path and how to end. Before then, the UN broken initiatives only prolonged and worsened the war*

*As for the African Union, it has many times failed. To me it is simply a Club. The AU has time and again accepted subversion to Democracy. Has allowed presidents to change Constitutions, especially to prolong their stay in power. Many times it has failed to end conflicts. It has failed to intervene and help crisis and calamities. It has allowed the World powers to exploit and create or promote chaos and misery on the continent. It has failed to force the UN to change its format that is terribly against Africans and the development and progress of the continent and population.*

*At the UN, the Security Council continues to ignore the importance of Africa.*

- **Given recent shifts in global geopolitics, how do you envision Angola's future role on the international stage, and what opportunities or challenges do you anticipate for the country?**

*EC: Angola's future role must be as a power of Africa and in particular SADC. Our resources must not only transform the lives of our population, but also force respect from the world that needs our resources, and at times force parity and reciprocity. The 21st century requires to many products Angola has. Primary materials and rare minerals that we have in abundance. This must be used to gain our deserved respect, but also investment in the improvement of the standard of living in the country. We also must invest in strengthening our state. The new world only respects strong nations. Hence, internally we need strong government institutions, strong borders and political stability.*

*Angola can help lead the renaissance of African Development, which is long overdue. This is possible with the new generation and thinking.*

*I see the next elections in 2027 as the biggest opportunity since independence to correct the wrongs and bring into play serious new politicians that can transform Angola so that we can be as good or better than the Tiger countries and new envied Middle Eastern countries.*

*The natural wealth and climate, and favorable weather, including a new generation of responsible citizens, is conducive to making us the future for the good face of Africa, and do away with misery, disease, corruption, wars etc.*

**In conclusion, Eduardo J. Chingunji's insights offer a profound understanding of Angola's rich history, complex political landscape, and promising future. From the legacy of the Chingunji dynasty to the challenges and opportunities of contemporary geopolitics, Angola's journey reflects a nation poised for transformation. As the country navigates its path on the international stage, guided by visionary leadership and a commitment to progress, Angola stands on the cusp of a new era - a beacon of hope for**

**Africa and the world.**

**With determination, resilience, and a steadfast dedication to excellence, Angola is primed to fulfill its potential and emerge as a shining example of prosperity, peace, and development on the global stage.**

## 4. AFRICA



### The United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP28) and Africa's Climate Imperative: Navigating Challenges and Opportunities

*Oluwasogo Joseph DAIRO (Nigeria)*

The 28th meeting of the United Nations Conference of Parties (COP28) convened against a backdrop of escalating climate crises, global awareness, and urgent calls for action. With Nigeria and other African nations actively participating, COP28 served as a crucial platform for Africa to articulate its perspectives, challenges, and aspirations in confronting the existential threat of climate change.

#### Understanding COP28

COP28, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, emerged as a pivotal moment in the global climate agenda, following the landmark commitments of the Paris Agreement. It provided a forum for nations to assess progress, negotiate solutions, and mobilize resources to combat climate change.

#### Africa's Stance on Climate Change

Africa's engagement with climate change is multifaceted, shaped by its vulnerability to climate risks, dependence on natural resources, and socio-economic challenges. While African nations recognize the urgency of climate action, there exists a spectrum of perspectives within the continent regarding the severity of the crisis and the most effective response strategies.

#### The Loss and Damage Fund

A significant outcome of COP28 was the operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund, aimed at



*Source: <https://vocebasarabiei.md/ministrul-energiei-a-plecat-in-dubai-parlicov-participa-la-conferinta-onu-pentru-schimbari-climatic/>*



assisting climate-vulnerable countries in addressing the socio-economic impacts of climate-induced disasters. For Africa, this represents a crucial mechanism for accessing financial support and building resilience in the face of escalating climate risks.

### **Challenges and Controversies**

Despite progress, Africa's stance on climate change is not without challenges and controversies. Skepticism exists within some segments of African society regarding the severity of climate change and the efficacy of proposed solutions. Additionally, concerns persist regarding the adequacy of financial commitments from high-income countries and the prioritization of climate justice in global negotiations.

### **Africa's Climate Justice Perspective**

At the heart of Africa's climate narrative lies the principle of climate justice, which emphasizes the disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable populations and the moral imperative of equitable solutions. African leaders and advocates advocate for greater recognition of Africa's historical contributions to climate change and the need for solidarity and support from the international community.

### **Youth Mobilization and Leadership**

African youth play a vital role in shaping the continent's climate agenda, mobilizing grassroots movements, and advocating for transformative change. Youth-led initiatives focus on raising awareness, promoting sustainable practices, and holding governments and corporations accountable for their environmental policies and actions.

### **Moving Forward**

As COP28 concludes, Africa stands at a critical juncture in its climate journey, poised to confront the intersecting challenges of climate change, sustainable development, and socio-economic transformation. African nations must prioritize climate resilience, renewable energy adoption, and environmental conservation in their policy agendas, while also advocating for systemic reforms in global climate governance.

### **Conclusion**

COP28 represents a milestone in Africa's engagement with the global climate agenda, marked by both progress and challenges. As the continent navigates the complexities of climate change, it must leverage its unique strengths, mobilize its youth demographic, and assert its voice in global negotiations. By prioritizing climate justice, sustainability, and resilience, Africa can emerge as a beacon of hope and leadership in the collective effort to address the defining challenge of our time: *climate change*.

## 4. AFRICA



### The Geostrategic Implications of Dangote Refinery: Transforming Nigeria and Shaping Global Energy Dynamics

*Oluwasogo Joseph DAIRO (Nigeria)*

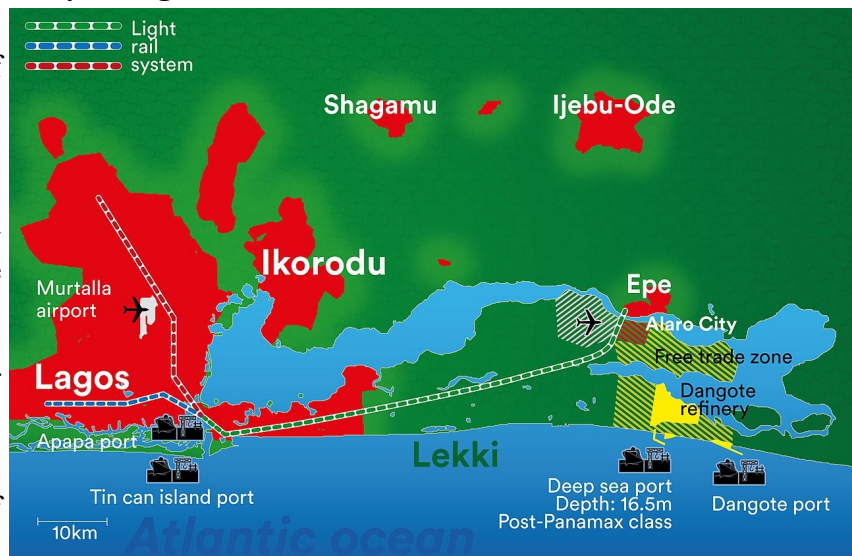
The operational commencement of the Dangote Refinery, Africa's largest single-train refinery, heralds a transformative shift in the global energy landscape, with far-reaching geostrategic implications for Nigeria, Africa, and the broader global economy. As the refinery gears up to meet Nigeria's domestic demand for refined petroleum products and potentially export surplus to other countries, its impact extends beyond the realm of energy to encompass economic, geopolitical, and regional integration considerations.

#### Economic Resilience and Energy Security in Nigeria

Nigeria, a major oil-producing nation, has historically grappled with the paradox of abundant crude oil resources and inadequate refining capacity, leading to heavy reliance on fuel imports and subsidies. The Dangote Refinery's operationalization presents a pivotal opportunity to address this challenge by significantly reducing Nigeria's dependence on oil imports, thereby saving billions of dollars in import bills and bolstering the country's balance of payments. This move towards self-sufficiency in petroleum products holds the potential to enhance Nigeria's economic resilience, strengthen its foreign exchange reserves, and mitigate the impact of global oil price fluctuations.

#### Diversification of Revenue Sources and Value-Added Oil Exports

The refinery's capacity to process various African crudes, in addition to sourcing from distant suppliers such as the United States and Saudi Arabia, signifies a strategic diversification of feedstock sources. This diversification not only enhances supply chain resilience but also elevates the value-added of Nigeria's oil exports, reducing its exposure to regional production disruptions and geopolitical tensions. By creating a new domestic market for Nigeria's crude oil and expanding its export potential, the Dangote Refinery contributes to the diversification of revenue sources and the reduction of Nigeria's economic vulnerability to oil market volatility.



Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dangote\\_Refinery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dangote_Refinery)

## **Regional Leadership and Integration in Africa**

Beyond Nigeria's borders, the Dangote Refinery assumes a pivotal role in shaping Africa's energy dynamics and regional integration efforts. As the largest oil refining plant in Africa, the refinery is poised to become a major supplier of refined petroleum products to other African countries, aligning with the objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). By facilitating intra-African trade and integration, the refinery not only fosters economic cooperation but also strengthens Nigeria's regional leadership role, positioning the country as a key player in advancing continental energy security and cooperation.

## **Global Energy Markets and Competitiveness**

The refinery's strategic shift towards importing non-Nigerian crude, as evidenced by its recent purchase of 2 million barrels of WTI Midland from the United States, underscores its adaptability and competitiveness in the global energy market. This move signals the increasing competitiveness of American barrels and reflects the evolving dynamics of global oil supply and demand. The refinery's ability to navigate diverse crude sourcing and supply chain resilience strategies positions it as a significant player in shaping global energy trade patterns and market dynamics.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

While the operational commencement of the Dangote Refinery presents promising prospects, it also brings forth challenges, including the need to secure reliable crude oil sources, navigate market dynamics, and ensure operational efficiency. Addressing these challenges will require sustained investment in infrastructure, technology, and human capital, as well as proactive engagement with global energy stakeholders.

## **Looking Ahead**

As the Dangote Refinery continues to ramp up its production towards its full capacity of 650,000 barrels per day, its strategic implications will continue to unfold, shaping Nigeria's energy sector, Africa's regional integration efforts, and global energy markets. Monitoring the refinery's progress and its impact on Nigeria's energy dynamics will be crucial in understanding its broader implications for regional stability and global energy trade.

*In conclusion, the operational commencement of the Dangote Refinery represents a transformative milestone with profound geostrategic implications for Nigeria, Africa, and the global economy. By bolstering Nigeria's economic resilience, enhancing regional integration, and contributing to global energy competitiveness, the refinery stands as a catalyst for positive change in the energy landscape, underscoring its significance as a key player in shaping the future of energy in Africa and beyond.*

## 4. AFRICA



### Navigating the Complexities of Strategic Competition in the Sahel: Insights and Recommendations for Romania

*Oluwasogo Joseph DAIRO (Nigeria)*

#### Understanding Sahel's Geopolitical Landscape

The Sahel region, characterized by its vast arid expanse and diverse ethnic and cultural tapestry, has emerged as a focal point of strategic competition among regional and global actors. The convergence of security threats, governance challenges, and socio-economic vulnerabilities has created a volatile environment that demands careful navigation and strategic engagement.

#### Current Dynamics and Challenges

The Sahel faces a myriad of challenges, including terrorism, insurgency, organized crime, weak governance, and environmental degradation. These challenges are exacerbated by historical grievances, socio-economic disparities, and external interventions, further complicating efforts to achieve stability and prosperity in the region.

#### Key Actors and Their Strategies

Several key actors are vying for influence in the Sahel, each pursuing distinct strategies to advance their interests:

**China:** China's engagement in the Sahel is primarily driven by its economic interests, particularly its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Through infrastructure development projects, investment in natural resources, and trade agreements, China seeks to expand its influence and access to key markets in Africa.

**Russia:** Russia's involvement in the Sahel is motivated by strategic considerations, including countering Western influence, investments in natural resources, security involvement and expanding its geopolitical footprint.

**United States and European Powers:** The United States and European powers, notably France, have traditionally held significant influence in the Sahel. Their efforts to address security challenges, promote good governance, and foster economic development have faced obstacles, including persistent insecurity and political instability.

#### Strategic Recommendations for Romania

In light of the complex challenges and opportunities in the Sahel, Romania can make a meaningful



Source: <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/cum-s-au-dezvoltat-retelele-teroriste-in-sahel-ucid-si-rapesc-liderii-comunitatilor-locale-1698205>

difference by adopting a multifaceted approach that integrates security, development, diplomacy, and governance:

**Strategic Engagement:** Romania should prioritize strategic engagement with key stakeholders in the Sahel, including regional organizations, international partners, and local actors. This includes participating in multilateral initiatives, such as the European Union's Sahel Strategy and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), to amplify its impact and enhance its legitimacy.

**Investment in Development:** Recognizing the linkages between security, development, and stability, Romania should prioritize investment in sustainable development initiatives in the Sahel. This includes supporting education, healthcare, infrastructure, and livelihood opportunities to address root causes of conflict and instability.

**Promotion of Good Governance:** Corruption, weak governance, and lack of accountability are significant drivers of instability in the Sahel. Romania can contribute to strengthening governance institutions, promoting the rule of law, and fostering transparency and accountability in the region.

**Enhancement of Security Cooperation:** Security cooperation remains essential for addressing the persistent threat of terrorism and organized crime in the Sahel. Romania can contribute by providing training, equipment, and logistical support to local security forces, participating in multinational peacekeeping operations, and sharing expertise in counterterrorism and intelligence.

**Diplomatic Dialogue and Conflict Resolution:** Diplomatic engagement and dialogue are critical for fostering trust, resolving conflicts, and building consensus among stakeholders in the Sahel. Romania can leverage its diplomatic networks and expertise in conflict resolution to facilitate dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation processes.

## **Conclusion**

The Sahel region of Africa presents both challenges and opportunities for strategic competition and engagement. By adopting a comprehensive and integrated approach that addresses the root causes of instability, promotes sustainable development, fosters good governance, enhances security cooperation, and engages in diplomatic dialogue, Romania can make a meaningful difference in promoting peace, stability, and prosperity in the Sahel region for the benefit of its people and the international community.



## 5. MIDDLE EAST



### The Lebanese Pound Crash and the Lebanese Economy Meltdown

*PhD. Hussein Nabulsi (Lebanon)*

#### Abstract

Lebanese economy and markets are best described by a private and liberal economic activity and openness to abroad with perfect capital and labor mobility with a large banking sector equivalent to more than 2.5 times its economic sector and providing an important support to aggregate demand. The private sector contributes to around 75% of aggregate demand, a well-diversified sector that covers the totality of economic sectors is a major pillar for growth and recovery.

Recently, Lebanon is facing many problems; political, geographical and economical. Besides that, the Lebanese currency is declining and loses its value. Many reasons led to the collapse of the Lebanese pound, the emphasis was to study the crises of the collapse of the Lebanese currency and the economy and the loss of many basic commodities from the market.

Indeed, we studied the influences due to the important relation between currency and inflation, so currency manipulation is the act of artificially increasing or reducing the value of a particular currency against another currency. Currency is a means of measuring the value of any item in a country. The Inflation is measured by some broad index and mirrored in the correspondingly decreasing purchasing power of the currency. The interest rate before is taking inflation into account. The nominal interest rate is the rate quoted in loan and deposit agreements. They are an effect on currency value by different forms.

Here, we will discuss how these crises have affected this sector, and we will lay out some solutions to get out of this crisis. Once known for its dynamic food, music and culture, Lebanon is now in the midst of the worst economic crisis in modern history. With no clear resolution in sight, the country is experiencing rolling blackouts, a shortage of food and a monthly inflation. The Lebanese Pound joins a list of dozens of failed fiat currencies including the Venezuelan Bolivar, the Zimbabwean Dollar and Argentinean Peso.

Lebanon is experiencing its worst economic crisis in decades, characterized by an unprecedented devaluation of its currency that has plunged half of the Lebanese people into poverty. The economic collapse, which led to the dismissal of huge numbers of employees, caused a significant price hike in the country suffering from historic highs in inflation. It also suffers because the Corona crisis hit the country, which has led to the closure of all commercial sectors

The explosion of the port also exacerbated Lebanon's crises, as import and export stopped and there was a severe shortage of basic goods in the market.

**Key words:** inflation, exchange rate, economy, money, crisis, import, export, trade balance.

## Introduction

Lebanese recent economic history is characterized by a moderate and volatile GDP growth. Lebanon's estimated real GDP grew on average at the annual rate of 3.1% between 1993 and 2005. Following the post-war reconstruction boom (1993-1996), the Lebanese economy has progressively fallen into a slow growth trap, whereas declining investment reflects lack of profitable business opportunities and weak external competitiveness. In recent years (2001-2004), economic activity rebounded, pulled by external factors, growing oil prices notably, which favored demand for Lebanon's goods and services, transfers, and capital inflows from Gulf countries. But the induced resumption in domestic absorption and exports was only moderately accompanied by greater investments, and consequently, Lebanon's growth potential (i.e., the long-term growth trend determined by supply capacities, once controlled for shorter term demand variations) remained barely unchanged, at about 3% in real terms. In 2005, growth receded with political events, illustrating Lebanon's great vulnerability to confidence shocks.

## Lebanese Pound (LBP):

The currency code for the Lebanese pound, Lebanon's currency, is LBP. In the late 1930s, it replaced the former currency, the Syrian pound. Originally, the LBP was divided into 100 piasters, or qirsh. These smaller units are no longer needed due to inflation and local prices are simply in pounds. The currency is pegged per U.S. dollar at a rate of 1507.5 pounds. The rate around this figure fluctuates slightly. (Mitchell, 2019).

Before World War I, the Ottoman lira was used. In 1918, after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the currency became the Egyptian pound. Upon gaining control of Syria and Lebanon, the French replaced the Egyptian pound with a new currency for Syria and Lebanon, the Syrian pound, which was linked to the French franc at a value of 1 pound = 20 francs.

Lebanon issued its own coins from 1924 and banknotes from 1925. In 1939, the Lebanese currency was officially separated from Syria's, though it was still linked to the French franc and remained interchangeable with Syrian money. In 1941, following France's defeat by Nazi Germany, the currency was linked instead to the British pound, at a rate of 8.83 Lebanese Pounds = 1 pound sterling. A link to the French franc was restored after the war but was abandoned in 1949.

Before the Lebanese Civil War, 1 U.S. dollar was worth 3 Lebanese Pounds. During the Lebanese Civil War the value decreased rapidly until 1992, when one US Dollar was worth over 2,500 Lebanese Pounds. Subsequently the value increased again, and since December 1997 the rate of the Lebanese Pound has been fixed at 1507.5 Lebanese Pounds per US\$.

In August 2019, pressure on the fixed exchange rate with the U.S. dollar started, creating a parallel rate in the market. The two-rate market is a textbook case of weakening Central Bank reserves that are not able to defend the official exchange rate. Continuous financial pressures driven by unsustainable sovereign debt, high trade deficit and deposit outflows due to loss of confidence are threatening the peg for the first time since 1992.

As of 1 July 2020, one U.S. dollar was quoted at over 9,000 Lebanese Pounds in the black market in Beirut.

Concerning the Lebanese Republic currency LBP, we can summarize its situation from the civil war, the LBP depreciated from 0.33 USD to approximately 0.0004 USD. In 1997, the LBP was fixed at a rate of



Source: <https://www.businessmagazin.ro/galerie-foto/actualitate/dezastru-financiar-liban-moneda-nationala-devalorizata-90-incercarea-21562692>

USD/LBP 1507.5, or 0.0066 USD.

For job creation and fiscal sustainability, Lebanon's growth needs to get accelerated on a sustainable basis. Current growth trends and derived job opportunities do not meet Lebanese youth's expectations. In the face of it, many new entrants find no alternative but to eventually emigrate or become inactive. Consequently, Lebanon's active population is stagnating, its human capital progressively eroding and its resident population ageing. To reverse such worrying trends, the number of jobs created every year should increase, but their quality as well. Demand for skilled labor remains indeed structurally much below its supply, given the very high level of education expenditures in Lebanon. The current macro-economic situation imperatively calls for all possible actions to foster growth. Indeed, with the envisaged fiscal and privatization reforms, any additional point of real GDP per year would translate into a debt to the GDP ratio with 10% less by 2011.

Yet, fiscal stabilization could restrain aggregate demand, unless the supply response to improving macro-economic conditions is quick and large. This, in turn, calls for lifting potential impediments to private investment, which can schematically fall under three categories: poor access to investment finance, weak aggregate returns to investment, or low private appropriation of returns.

There is a need to improve our understanding of Lebanon's growth determinants and select the most effective policies to foster it. In recent years, policy makers' attention was mostly focused on shorter-term macro-economic and financial issues linked to the debt dynamics. But as the Government of Lebanon increasingly recognizes the importance of addressing economic imbalances through deep structural reforms, the need to systematically review the determinants of growth (or lack of) and possible actions to foster it become more imperative.

As underlined in the recently endorsed Country Assistance Strategy (World Bank, 2005b), Lebanon's institutional ability to undertake structural reforms is weak. This inability takes its roots in the very nature of Lebanese political institutions, based on a confessional system which grants the various sects with veto power on important decisions. Following the civil war (1975-1990), this system proved to be effective to maintain peace, but also probably led to some paralysis in public institutions and decision making, at the expense of social and economic development. Hence, the crucial need to select the very few measures that would have the largest marginal impact on growth. (Mitchell, 2019).

### **Monetary Policy in Lebanon:**

In its conduct of monetary policy, the central bank of Lebanon (known as Banque du Liban – BdL) focuses on stabilizing the Lebanese pound (LBP) which has been pegged to the US dollar since December 1997. This necessitates holding sufficient foreign currency reserves by BdL to intervene in the foreign exchange market when necessary, where these reserves equaled to \$36.77 billion in October 2017, representing about 75% of Lebanon's GDP. These large reserves have improved the confidence in the banking system and increased its ability to attract an increasing amount of foreign deposits (see Awdeh, 2018). BdL also conducts its monetary policy by defining two operational targets:

(1) The spread between foreign-currency deposit rates and those on international markets, in order to attract capital to the country to finance the current account deficit and external debt;

(2) The spread between LBP interest rates and dollar interest rates in Lebanon, to promote deposits in LBP (Poddar et al., 2006). Accordingly, domestic interest rates respond to changes in international rates.

This policy has changed considerably the structure of bank deposits base in Lebanon over the past two decades and resulted in a considerable increase in LBP.

Poddar et al. (2016) shows that the degree of pass-through from international benchmark rates to interest rates in Lebanon is substantial and global benchmark interest rates that are an important element in the determination of interest rates in Lebanon. Particularly, the impact of changes in international interest rates on the government's borrowing costs is substantial, with a pass-through of 70%. Awdeh (2018) also shows that USD 3-month LIBOR rate is a major determinant of both debit and credit interest rate in Lebanon.

Also, 150 Journal of Central Banking Theory and foreign currency deposits. Foreign financial inflows have led to an expansion of bank deposits base, which became key element to ensuring continued government financing. With high government debt exceeding 140% of GDP and largely held by domestic commercial banks, their continued funding is an important gauge to the viability of the Lebanese financing model (Finger and Hesse, 2019). Nevertheless, these inflows have negative repercussions represented by the fact that BdL constantly faces the risk that these large inflows fuel higher fiscal imbalances, increased trade and current account deficits, asset bubbles, and generate appreciation in the exchange rate with deterioration in trade competitiveness (World Bank, 2018). This forces BdL to sterilize the excess liquidity through issuing LBP

denominated certificates of deposits and via compulsory reserves in LBP (25% on demand deposits and 15% on term deposits) and reserves in foreign currencies (15% of all customers' deposits in foreign currency). This has ballooned bank deposits at BdL, which equaled to 46.7% of total sector's assets and 189.2% of its claims on the resident private sector in October 2017.

For more than two decades, financial inflows represented the lifeline for the Lebanese economy because it suffers large and persistent trade deficits. BdL adopts several measures to stimulate these financial inflows mainly by preserving "attractive" interest rates as explained above. Dibeh (2018) found that real interest rates had a significant impact on the dynamics of the business cycle in Lebanon, particularly between 1993 and 2002. According to the interest rate transmission channel view, high interest rates should result in lowering both investment and consumption, thereby directly affecting economic activity. Finally, on the bank-lending front, BdL has introduced several successful measures to promote credit to the resident private sector and help banks improve the use of their excess liquidity. These measures included special schemes such as interest payment subsidizations and mandatory reserve exemptions. These schemes focused on main economic sectors, such as agriculture, industry, tourism and housing. According to the World Bank (2016), these schemes represented more than 50% of total lending in agriculture, tourism, housing, and industry. In addition, without these schemes, some sectors would have been deprived from lending.

### **Economy of Lebanon:**

Lebanon has a free-market economy and has a strong entrepreneurial history of laissez-faire. However, the investment climate suffers from red tape, bureaucracy, arbitrary licensing decisions, complicated customs processes, high taxes, tariffs and fees, outdated regulations, and insufficient defense of intellectual property rights, according to the CIA World Factbook. The Lebanese economy is service-oriented; main growth sectors include banking and tourism.

The 1975-90 civil wars significantly damaged the economic infrastructure of Lebanon, cut national production by half, and derailed Lebanon's position as a banking center in the Middle East. Lebanon reconstructed much of its war-torn physical and financial infrastructure following the civil war by borrowing heavily, mainly from domestic banks that saddled the government with a massive burden of debt. The commitments made at different international donor conferences during the 2000s were largely unfulfilled by economic and financial reforms, including those made at the 2007 Paris III Donor Conference, following the July 2006 war.

One of Lebanon's main markets and a transport route through the Levant were cut off by the war in Syria. With the influx of almost one million registered and an estimated 1500,000 registered Syrian refugees, social tensions and intensified competition for low-skilled employment and public services have intensified (UNHCR).

Chronic fiscal deficits have increased Lebanon's debt-to-GDP ratio, the third highest in the world; most of the debt is held internally by Lebanese banks. These factors combined to slow economic growth to the 1-2% range in 2011-17, after four years of averaging 8% growth. Weak economic growth limits tax revenues, while the largest government expenditures remain debt-servicing, salaries for government workers, and transfers to the electricity sector. These limitations constrain other government spending, limiting its ability to invest in necessary infrastructure improvements, such as water, electricity, and transportation.<sup>1</sup>

In early 2018, as part of the country's first offshore licensing round, the Lebanese government signed long-awaited contract agreements with an international consortium for petroleum exploration and development. It is anticipated that exploration will begin in 2019.

### **Lebanon's Economic Update - October 2020:**

Lebanon's macro economy is in dire straits due to compounded crises. On October 2019, the economy plunged into a financial crisis brought about by a sudden stop in capital inflows, which precipitated banking, debt (including sovereign default) and exchange rate crises. End of March 2020, the Government imposed a lockdown to counter COVID-19. Lastly, on August 4, 2020, a massive explosion rocked the Port of Beirut (PoB), destroying much of the port and severely damaging the dense residential and commercial areas within a 1- to 2-mile radius. Lebanon is in its third government in less than a year.

Real GDP is projected to decline by 19.2% in 2020. High frequency indicators support such a substantial contraction in economic activity. On the demand side, net exports, is expected to be the sole positive contributor to Lebanon's GDP, driven by falling imports. Subject to unusually high uncertainty, real GDP is projected to contract by a further 13.2% in 2021. This projection assumes the following key factors: COVID-19

<sup>1</sup><https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/le>.

effects carry through H1-2021, macro policy responses continue to be absent, and limited reconstruction and recovery efforts in the aftermath of the PoB explosion. We are not assuming runaway inflation, but it is a realistic downside risk.

Exchange market pressures will continue to stifle trade finance and corporate finance in the highly dollarized economy, constraining the importation of capital and final goods, and inducing disruptions all along the supply chain. This implies an inability to tap international markets for foreign financing, and an impaired banking system. As a result, capital controls will continue to be needed, but are also projected to become less effective over time, in line with international evidence.

Macroeconomic stabilization is a key prior action for Lebanon's recovery process. This necessitates a credible strategy that identifies measures along a number of dimensions, especially, the external, fiscal and financial sectors, social safety nets, a growth framework and the governance deficiency. A key risk is hyperinflationary. The Social affect already dire, could become catastrophic; half the population is falling below the poverty line, unemployment is rising rapidly. Currency deterioration and the resulting inflationary effects are highly regressive factors, disproportionately affecting the poor and middle class.(Lebanon report, 2020)

### **Lebanon Is Paying the Cost of Its Dysfunctional Politics**

The country has been deeply damaged by an increasingly dysfunctional political system. A series of compromises have alienated it from its main markets in the Gulf and strangled its economy; anyone that has glanced at fluctuations in Lebanese bank deposits over the last ten years can see the correlation.

The costs to the Lebanese economy include the opportunity cost created by the annual threat of war with Israel, after which trips are cancelled and projects postponed. Hezbollah also controls a section of Beirut port where it pays no duty or taxes. Add to that the economic fallout from the war in Syria, such as the impact on exports, the inflow of refugees and the cost of Hezbollah's involvement.

The cumulative cost and economic impact of being cut off from its main economic partner eventually bankrupted the country. The fiscal and financial aspects, with Lebanon's inability to service its debt, are but a reflection of these political factors. In the long run, the key to avoiding complete collapse is to restore relations with the GCC and free Lebanon from that very costly grip.(Shehadi N 2020)

### **Plunging Lebanese Pound Hits New Lows, Food Imports Reduced**

Lebanese pound tumbled to new lows against the dollar on a parallel market where losing around 80% of its value, and a food importer said the currency collapse was hitting imports. The currency crisis poses the biggest threat to the stability of import-reliant Lebanon since the 1975-90 civil wars.

Food importers were being quoted a price of 7,500 to buy dollars, said Hani Bohsali, president of the Syndicate of Importers of Foodstuffs, Consumer Products and Drinks. A second market participant cited exchange rates of 7,300/7,600.

Also, food imports are being reduced. It cannot continue this way. If you can't find dollars to import, you don't have any guarantee that if you ship something you will be able to get the funds for it. And the pound has continued to slump despite President Michel Aoun's pledge that the central bank would supply the currency market with dollars to prop it up. Lebanon defaulted on its foreign currency debt, citing critically low reserves.

### **Banking and Economic Crises Leaving Many in Poverty**

Before the pandemic struck, the World Bank estimated that by the end of 2020, 40 per cent of Lebanese people will be in poverty, a prediction that the Minister of Economy claims is now obsolete.

According to the BBC, in October, a shortage of foreign currency caused the Lebanese pound, for the first time in two decades, to lose value against the US dollar on a newly developing black market. In the months since the condition has only gotten worse. Despite the official rate of \$US 1 to 1,500 USD.

Food and clothing costs surged 190% and 172% respectively compared t the year before, according to official data cited by Credit Libanais.

Hyper-inflation is now a big concern after being recorded in Lebanon last month. CNN reported that a widely used app that tracked the black market exchange rate showed \$US 1 would buy about 8,200 Lebanese pounds for average citizens.

Lebanon's Reserve Bank has also come under heavy criticism since last year. A former central bank vice governor and others have described its so-called financial engineering as a "Ponzi scheme" because it has relied on fresh borrowing to pay back existing debt.



As that has unraveled, the whole system has suffered. Many citizens have been unable to access their savings.

The BBC estimated that, well before the pandemic, Lebanon's public debt-to-gross domestic product (what a country owes relative to what it produces) was the third highest in the world.

The nation defaulted on its debt instalments, and the shutdown of many businesses during the pandemic has only worsened Lebanon's economic outlook.

With a heavily indebted state struggling to pay its own bills, residents must pay for private generators because the Government cannot provide reliable power. Even the water is unsafe to drink.

Parts of the capital Beirut got just a few hours of electricity a day in the summer heat. Some residents have said the blackouts have been worse than during the 1975-1990 civil war.

### **How Beirut's Port Explosion Exacerbates Lebanon's Economic Crisis:**

Baumann H (2020) identified that the explosion that tore through Beirut on August 4 was so strong that shockwaves were felt on the island of Cyprus, over 200 kilometers away. At least 135 people were killed and 5,000 injured in the blast. Such devastation would be difficult to deal with at the best of times but it hit the Lebanese capital in the midst of a severe economic crisis that has only been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before the blast, Lebanon's currency had plummeted to record lows, losing more than 80% of its value since October 2019. The Lebanese pound has been officially pegged to the US dollar since 1997 at the rate of LBP 1,500 to US\$ 1, with the two currencies largely used interchangeably. But this exchange rate has long been untenable.

Not only that but also the collapse of the Lebanese pound means imports have become very expensive. Inflation is skyrocketing, causing unprecedented levels of economic hardship for Lebanese families. World Bank estimates from before coronavirus and the latest tragedy suggested poverty could rocket from a third to 50% of the population.

The collapse of Lebanon's financial system is symptomatic of a wider failure of governance which goes back to the policies adopted after the end of the country's civil war in 1990. Lebanon's political class recruits itself from a narrow pool of families, many of whom have been in power for decades. He found that the explosion of the port fits into the pattern of failed governance in Lebanon. Initial reports suggest that port officials were aware of the dangers posed by the store of ammonium nitrate that caused the explosion. Only an impartial investigation could uncover full culpability. The neglect and incompetence at the center of this disaster are typical of the myriad failures replicated across the state.

Solutions may emerge as many Lebanese look beyond their failing state and corrupt politicians. The day after the explosion, Beirut's streets were filled with the sound of glass being swept up as thousands of people worked together without much support from official agencies in sight.

### **The October Uprising**

Middle East&North Africa (8 June 2020) wrote that austerity measures and new taxes discussed in a cabinet meeting on 17 October 2019 were *the straw that broke the camel's back*. Lebanese had suffered years of failing public services and state negligence, most visibly a dismal electricity supply, massive pollution and the breakdown of garbage disposal, which they attributed to deeply embedded corruption.

Political infighting compounded the governance problem by repeatedly paralyzing state institutions. As a result, the cost of living ballooned, salaries stagnated and unemployment rose, prompting a significant proportion of the country's well-educated youth to emigrate.

On the evening of 17 October, groups of youths – apparently coordinating among each other over spontaneously formed social media networks – took to the streets in response to the austerity measures discussed during the cabinet meeting. They closed major intersections in and around Beirut with burning tires.

Over the next days, the protest spread to other areas, bringing much of the country to a standstill. On the first weekend following the outburst, huge crowds congregated in downtown Beirut, calling for the ouster of the entire political elite under the slogan "*kullunya 'nikullun*" (in Lebanese Arabic, "All means all").

### **How Is the Economic Crisis Impacting the Education Sector?**

#### **What Are We Expecting in Terms of the Quality and Access to Education?**

El Ghali H (2020) It is essential to keep in mind that the education system in Lebanon was already strained and challenged before the recent events in light of this crisis, multiple schools shut down; yet the association of schools in Lebanon have been very supportive of the families and have issued a decision

to support those struggling to pay private schools' tuition fees for an academic year. It was interesting to observe what happened in September 2020, when families started to question their decision on whether they could still afford to enroll their children in private schools, or in some cases even have them work to support the family.

In conclusion, I think Lebanon should use this crisis as an insight into the gaps in its education system in the aim to find solutions. It is also important to establish a partnership between the public and private sectors in order to overcome these gaps as some of the challenges in education are also found in private schools as well.

### **Pulling Lebanon out of the Pit:**

The Lebanese governments, will have to carry out substantial structural and institutional reforms to put the country's fiscal and economic system back on a sound footing. To succeed, such structural change will have to put an end to the political model in which corrupt and self-serving cliques appropriate and redistribute state resources and public goods. Reform inevitably would strike at their vital interests and at the method by which they maintain and reproduce their political power.

Whether the political actors running this system, who have been thriving on it for decades, are capable of initiating and overseeing such a transition, thereby pulling out the rug from under their own feet, is highly questionable. It is very hard to imagine that they will do so unless the Lebanese who have gone into the streets since October 2019 find ways to exert sustained pressure on the country's political institutions.

### **What Is Behind Lebanon's Economic Crisis?**

Magazine (2020) wrote that people have centered their outrage on one specific goal in the continuing protests in Lebanon: banks. When demonstrations broke out, at least a dozen branches of various banks have been firebombed.

The weeks-long curfew to avoid the spread of the latest coronavirus, has worsened the economic outlook that is already deteriorating. Rage has concentrated on political corruption and a culture that rewards sectarian loyalty during elections rather than competence and the inability of the government to provide basic services such as electricity.

The president has to be a Maronite Christian under Lebanon's political structure, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim and the speaker of parliament a Shia Muslim. Lawmakers also get seats based on a sectarian quota in parliament.

### **We Are on the Road to Breakdown Inside Lebanon's Crippling Economic Crisis:**

Cheeseman A (2020) found that Lebanon is grappling with its most severe economic crisis in modern history - NBC News spoke to people living through it.

In recent history, Lebanon is dealing with its most serious economic crisis. The pound has lost over 80% of its value. Unemployment has soared. Skyrocketing rates. This tiny Mediterranean country, known worldwide for its cuisine, is spreading hunger. In neighboring Syria, which has long used Lebanon as a way around sanctions, the fall of the Lebanese currency has had knock-on effects. And the crisis has left Lebanon, a regionally strategic country, open to interference from other countries as the International Monetary Fund's bailout becomes more unlikely.

Relations with the U.S., which is an army supporter and some parties in Lebanon, and the main donor to the IMF, have further broken. Hezbollah has alleged Lebanon's debilitating dollar shortage results from a U.S. plot, an Iranian proxy officially labeled a terrorist entity by the U.S., and a political party with unrivaled government power.

Since anti-government demonstrations started, the deterioration of Lebanon's economy has accelerated. Of "Revolution" chants! Hundreds of thousands took to the streets attempting to bring down decades of oppressive leadership in order to enrich themselves through relying on divisive politics and entrenched patronage networks, causing extreme inequality.

After that the result of the coronavirus pandemic shut down factories and left tens of thousands unemployed.

For years, in order to sustain a fixed exchange rate of 1,507 Lebanese pound to the US dollar, the central bank borrowed from private banks. This held import prices down. But private bank loans effectively came from the deposits of ordinary Lebanese, who were persuaded to deposit their money with interest-rate guarantees of up to 15%.

This expensive 30-year artificial peg to the dollar caused the house of cards to crash as confidence waned over the years.

This expensive 30-year artificial peg to the dollar caused the house of cards to crumble as confidence plummeted over the years, corruption increased, diaspora remittances shrank and Saudi Arabia's support slowed.

### **Little Action on Corruption, Economic Crisis**

World report (2020) concluded that Lebanon's authorities are failing to address a massive economic and political crisis that is endangering citizens' access to vital services, including health care, Human Rights Watch said today in its World Report 2020. Security forces have at times failed to protect protesters from violent attacks by counter-demonstrators.

Anti-government demonstrations began on the evening of October 17, 2019, after the government announced new taxes, including on the messaging application WhatsApp, was revoked due to popular outrage. The countrywide protests intensified as people directed their anger against the entire political establishment, whom they blame for corruption and the country's dire economic situation.

Lebanon's politicians have done little to stop living standards from plummeting and have not responded to protesters' concerns about the worsening economic crisis. Their dereliction is threatening to drastically worsen access to health care and the availability of medical supplies.

### **Research Approach**

Explanatory research approach has been used in this research study to clarify the effect of the crises of the collapse of the Lebanese currency and the economy of Lebanon. Also, to study the history of the Lebanese currency and fluctuations in the exchange rate and to analyze the factors that affecting the economy of Lebanon.

#### **1. Nature of the Study**

This research study is primary in nature because primary data was collected to conduct the study with knowledge about the primary stage. In addition, secondary or released data is not available in this research study, so the primary method has been adopted to precede the study. The primary approach helps to provide additional knowledge to support the research purpose and enrich the research study body.

#### **2. Type of the Study**

The method of analysis used in this research is quantitative. Numeric obtained via the data collection method is used in this research study to conduct the analysis and test hypothesis. In addition, this helps to encourage numerical findings that not only help to explain the results easily, but also help to clarify the intensity and essence of the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

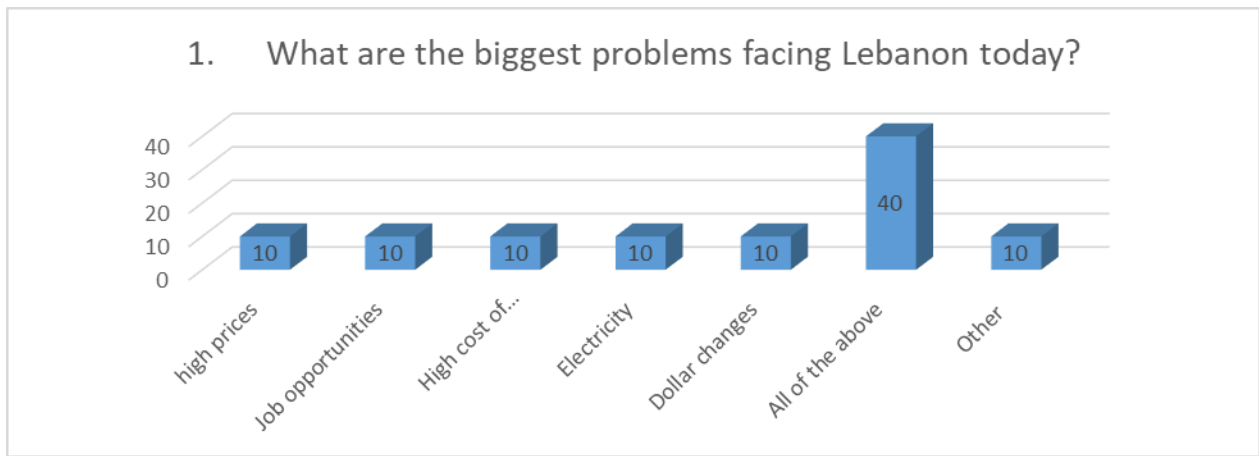
#### **3. Data Collection Process**

Primary data: In order to deal the research analytical approach, the study used questionnaires as an essential tool for gathering information about the study. This research will therefore use a statistical strategy to obtain clear results about the impact of collapse of Lebanese pound.

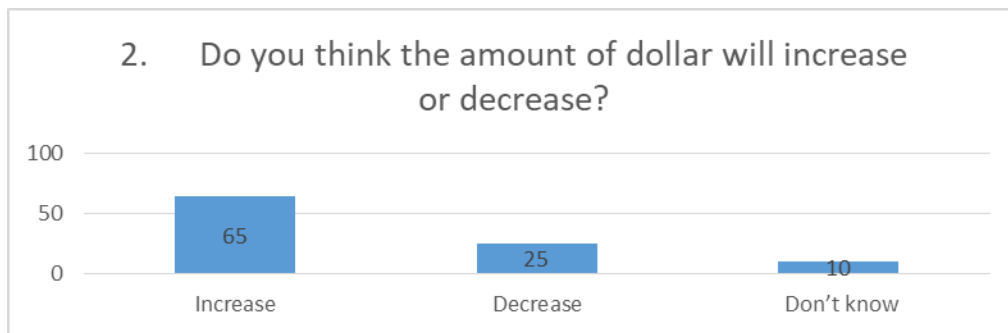
Secondary data: The survey methodology for the data collection method has been adopted in this research study. The search for literature was carried out by Google scholar and online service and library of American university of culture and education (EBSCO discovery service).

#### **4. Data Collection Instrument**

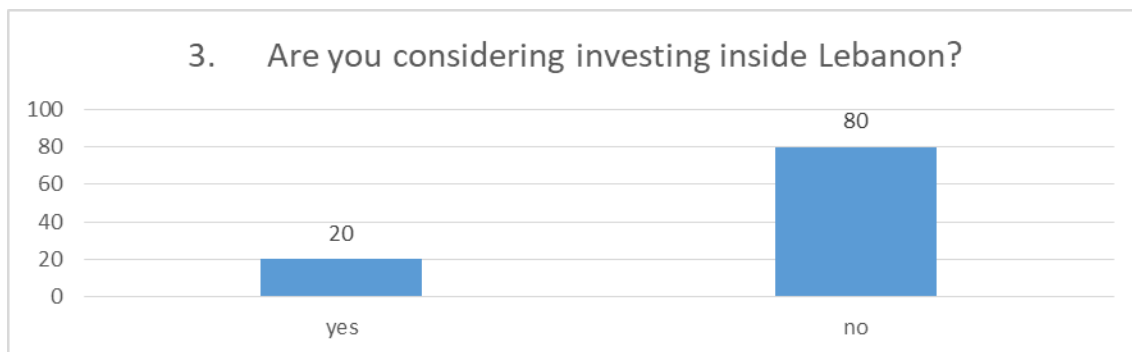
The questionnaire was used as a data collection tool in this research study. In this context, for the present study, a specific questionnaire has been developed with considerable consideration during its development. The language of the questionnaire is simple, concise, easy to understand and to the point. Unnecessary questions are prohibited in the questionnaire, the sequence is centered and the size of the questionnaire has rationalized the respondent's response.



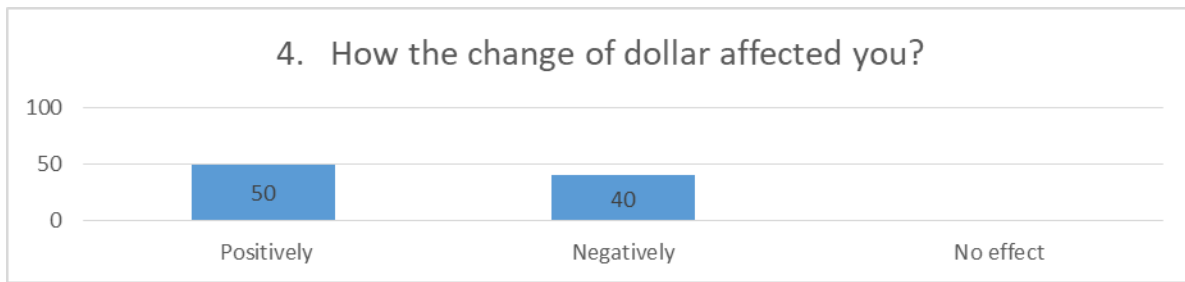
**Figure 1** shows that 10% of the respondents said the biggest problem in Lebanon is the high cost of living. 10% of the respondents said the biggest problem in Lebanon is the job opportunities. 10% of the respondents said the biggest problem in Lebanon is the high prices. 10% of the respondents said the biggest problem in Lebanon is the electricity. 10% of the respondents said the biggest problem in Lebanon is the dollar change. 40% of the respondents said the biggest problem in Lebanon is all of the above and 40% said other things.



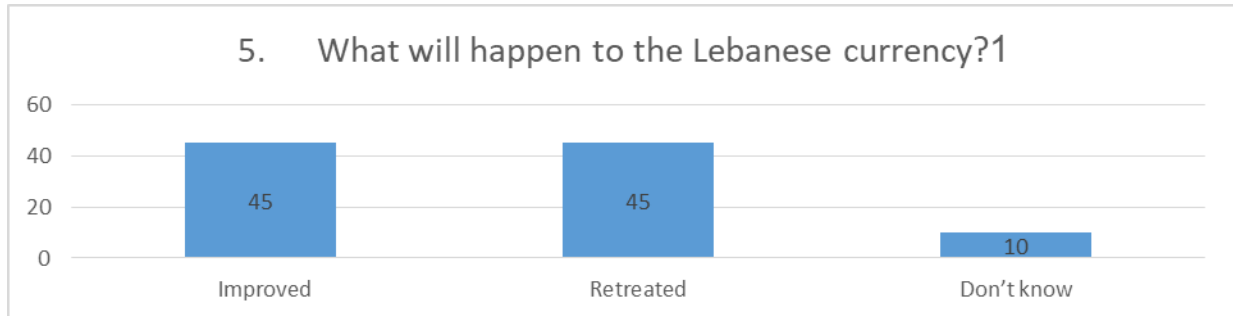
**Figure 2** shows that 65% of the respondents said that the dollar will increase. 25% of the respondents said that the dollar will decrease and the rest said that they don't know about its changes.



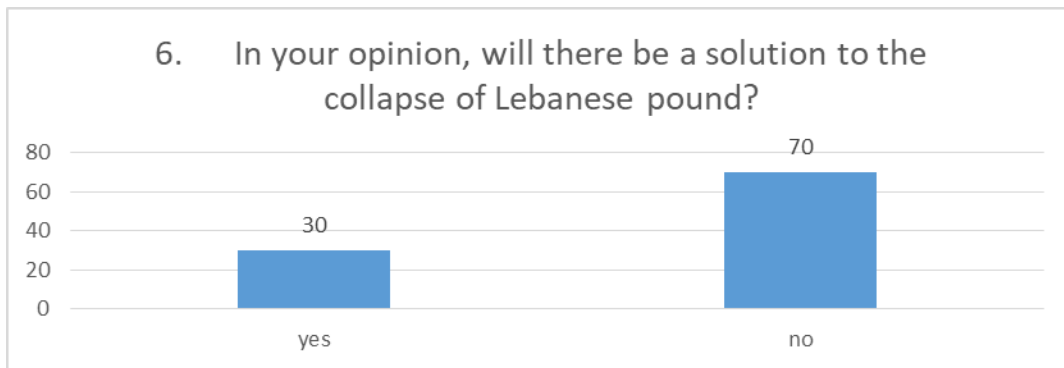
**Figure 3** shows that 80% of the respondents are not consider to invest inside Lebanon while the rest said that they are consider to invest in Lebanon.



**Figure 4** shows that 50% of the respondents affected positively with the change of dollar. 40% of the respondents affected negatively with the change of dollar.



**Figure 5** shows that 45% of the respondents said the Lebanese currency will be improved. 45% of the respondents said that the Lebanese currency will retreated and the rest don't know the fade of the currency.



**Figure 6** shows that 30% of the respondents said that there is a solution to the collapse of Lebanese pound and 70% of the respondents said that there is no solution.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion of all what has been presented. The Lebanese economy is suffering nowadays, therefore, the government must implement solutions as soon as possible, because if no solution are implemented than an economic crisis is most likely to happen within a year leading to huge losses in all the industries allowing companies to go bankrupt, and increase in the level of unemployment. Therefore, since all almost all sectors are related and what happens to one can affect the other. The Beirut Stock Exchange was one of the most damaged sectors in Lebanon because it contains companies from different sectors and in precise we can summarize the following points:

**Firstly** is the balance of payments and currency crisis. The economy experienced difficulties including servicing of external debt, imported goods' shortages, currency devaluation, and economic contraction.

**Secondly crisis** is that of public finance. Inflation-adjusted spending is also crumbling. In 2020 there was more than \$5 billion primary budget deficit.



**The third crisis** is that of the banking system. Despite the loose and inefficient capital and banking controls recently put in place, the sector is experiencing a deposit run. However, the BDL is constrained by its limited USD reserves and by fears that an oversupply of LBP would lead to further currency weakening.

**The fourth crisis** is the reflection and consequences of COVID-19 pandemic, which expands to increase the unemployment rate and the creates social problems as well as affecting the educational sector clearly.

In addition to this:

- The economy experienced a deep recession.
- Currency manipulation has a significant impact on the economy directly on the imports and exports.
- The Foreign Exchange (FX) weakened.
- Capital and bank controls intensified. Banks continued rationing deposit withdrawals and external transfers.
- Debilitating social conditions intensified.
- A seismic political shift occurred. The current political parties did not emerge unscathed.
- Finally, international financial support fell short of what was needed to relieve the economy.

**Recommendations below should be implemented in parallel rather than piecemeal.**

1. Establish an empowered economic emergency steering committee to design, negotiate and implement the program. In parallel, create participatory mechanisms to discuss with civil society the policy package, and to empower citizens to monitor its implementation.
2. Creditors should be offered a menu of concessions including lower principal, reduced interest rates, and extended maturities.
3. A wholesale governance and regulatory reform program is needed to curb the rent seeking culture. I recommend the adoption of a binding and credible “fiscal rule” that caps the size of future budget deficits.
4. Deal with private sector debt. The existing draft Bankruptcy and Restructuring law should be promptly passed.
5. Repair BDL’s balance sheet. BDL is a large lender to the government and has an estimated USD 30 billion negative net FX position rendering it vulnerable to devaluations. Until this is dealt with, it is tough to see confidence in the LBP returning.
6. Bring the banking sector back to health as a prerequisite to reinvigorating the economy. Public debt restructuring and mounting In parallel, foreign loans and State assets could conceivably be used to recapitalize the sector (see below).
7. Preserve social peace through a focus on social justice. A safety net must be put in place to fight poverty and support health and education.
8. Re-think the FX/monetary policy mix. I recommend a more flexible exchange rate arrangement centered on a weaker LBP. However, it will be dangerous to allow the currency to freely float.
9. Secure a multi-year Stabilization and Structural Reform Facility. A three-year \$30 billion fund is needed. However, it will realistically require an IMF program as an umbrella.

So, Lebanon’s government will struggle with high political insecurity caused by the civil war in Syria. The parliament’s failure to elect a new president and repeated postponement of parliamentary elections will mean prolonged political instability. So long as the Syrian war continues, Lebanon’s service-oriented economic will perform modestly although the large fiscal and current-account deficits will fall. Economic reforms will be delayed by security concerns and political rivalry.

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## 5. MIDDLE EAST



### Pipeline to Progress: Navigating US Sanctions for Iran-Pak Unity

*PhD. Mohamad Al MOKDAD (Lebanon)*

In the complex geopolitical chessboard of South Asia and the Middle East, the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project stands as a testament to the enduring quest for energy security and regional cooperation amidst the challenging dynamics of international sanctions. This article delves into the multifaceted implications of this ambitious project, exploring how it could pave the way for not just energy sufficiency but also for a stronger diplomatic rapport between Iran and Pakistan, all while navigating the treacherous waters of U.S. sanctions. The Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline, also known as the Peace Pipeline, is envisioned to transport natural gas from Iran's abundant reserves in the South Pars field to energy-hungry Pakistan. The project, conceived in the 1990s, has faced numerous setbacks, not least due to the geopolitical tensions surrounding Iran's nuclear program and the resultant U.S. sanctions. Despite these challenges, the pipeline remains a beacon of hope for economic and energy cooperation in the region.



Source: [https://www.stiripesurse.ro/masurile-luate-de-pakistan-dupa-atacul-cu-rachete-efectuat-de-iran\\_3202339.html](https://www.stiripesurse.ro/masurile-luate-de-pakistan-dupa-atacul-cu-rachete-efectuat-de-iran_3202339.html)

For Pakistan, the pipeline is more than a mere infrastructural project; it's a vital lifeline. Pakistan's economy, plagued by chronic energy shortages, stands to gain significantly from the reliable and affordable energy supply that the pipeline promises. The energy obtained could fuel Pakistan's industrial sector, alleviate energy shortages, and stimulate economic growth by providing a stable energy source for businesses and households alike. Beyond the economic dimensions, the pipeline project is a diplomatic overture, poised to deepen Iran-Pakistan ties. In an era where geopolitical alliances are in constant flux, the collaboration on such a strategic project could serve as a cornerstone for a more profound and multifaceted partnership. It symbolizes a mutual commitment to overcoming common challenges, including economic sanctions and regional instability.

The elephant in the room remains the U.S. sanctions on Iran, primarily aimed at curtailing its nuclear ambitions but with far-reaching effects on its economic relations. These sanctions pose a significant hurdle to the completion and operation of the pipeline. However, the project also presents a case study in the quest for sovereignty and regional solidarity in the face of external pressures. The success of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline hinges on the diplomatic finesse of both nations to navigate the sanctions regime. This involves engaging

mechanisms that are insulated from the sanctions' reach. Moreover, it necessitates a broader dialogue on the importance of energy security and regional stability, which transcends the bilateral interests of Iran and Pakistan. The pipeline project, if successfully realized, could serve as a model for regional cooperation, setting a precedent for how nations can collaborate on energy security while navigating the complex landscape of international politics. It underscores the need for a balanced approach that respects national interests and international norms.

The intricacies of international relations come to the forefront when examining the broader implications of the pipeline. While U.S. sanctions present a significant obstacle, other global powers have vested interests in the project's outcome. China, a close ally of Pakistan and a strategic partner of Iran, views the pipeline as complementary to its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aiming to enhance connectivity and energy security across Asia. The European Union, with its vested interest in diversifying energy sources and stabilizing the Middle East, might also play a nuanced role in navigating the sanctions landscape to support this project indirectly. In an era increasingly defined by the imperative of sustainable development, the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline also raises important environmental considerations. The project offers a cleaner alternative to coal and oil, reducing the carbon footprint of energy production in Pakistan. However, it also necessitates rigorous environmental assessments to mitigate any adverse impacts on ecosystems along its route. Innovations in pipeline technology and rigorous environmental safeguards could ensure that the project aligns with global sustainability goals.

The potential socio-economic benefits of the pipeline extend far beyond energy security. By catalyzing industrial growth, it could create thousands of jobs, uplift communities, and stimulate sectors like manufacturing, agriculture, and services. Furthermore, by providing a stable energy supply, it could significantly improve living standards, healthcare, and education in Pakistan by ensuring that critical services remain uninterrupted. The Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project could also set a precedent for future cross-border energy projects in the region. It offers a framework for overcoming geopolitical hurdles through diplomacy, strategic partnerships, and a shared vision for development and prosperity. Such projects could become pillars of a new regional order characterized by mutual dependence and cooperation rather than competition and conflict.

For Iran and Pakistan, the pipeline is a statement of strategic autonomy - a declaration of their right to pursue economic and energy security partnerships based on their national interests. As they navigate the complexities of international sanctions and regional dynamics, their success or failure will send a powerful message about the feasibility of such autonomous initiatives in a unipolar world order. The Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project, with its potential to transform the energy landscape of Pakistan and forge closer ties with Iran, is a narrative of resilience and strategic cooperation. As both countries move forward, the key to unlocking this pipeline's potential lies in diplomatic agility, innovative problem-solving, and the unwavering pursuit of mutual benefits. In doing so, they not only pave the way for their own progress but also light a path for others in the region, demonstrating that unity and cooperation can flourish even amidst the most challenging circumstances.

## 6. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



### Artificial Intelligence in Business: Strategies, Challenges and Future Prospects

*PhD Ibrahim K. Allouch (Lebanon)*

#### Abstract

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into business operations represents a pivotal shift in the landscape of contemporary commerce, heralding both unprecedented opportunities and novel challenges. This paper aims to dissect the multifaceted nature of AI's adoption within business processes, scrutinizing its implications, the hurdles encountered during its implementation, and the prospective future landscape it promises to shape. Employing a comprehensive methodology, the study delves into a rich tapestry of current literature, augmented by illustrative case studies across diverse sectors, to furnish a nuanced understanding of AI's burgeoning role. This approach facilitates an in-depth analysis of AI deployment in various business facets, from strategic decision-making to customer service enhancement and operational efficiency.

Key findings underscore AI's instrumental role in refining decision-making processes, personalizing customer engagement, and optimizing operational methodologies. These advancements are not without their challenges; the paper highlights significant hurdles such as ethical dilemmas, data privacy concerns, and the potential for workforce displacement. Despite these obstacles, the research elucidates AI's capacity to confer a competitive edge, underscored by enhanced efficiency and innovation.

The implications of AI's integration extend far beyond immediate operational improvements, encompassing broader ethical considerations, the imperative for workforce re-skilling, and the redefinition of competitive dynamics within the digital era. As businesses navigate this complex terrain, the paper posits that the strategic adoption of AI is paramount, necessitating a balanced approach that harmonizes technological advancement with ethical responsibility and human-centric values. This study contributes to the discourse on AI in business, offering insights that are pivotal for policymakers, business leaders, and scholars navigating the AI-driven transformation of the business landscape.

**Key words:** Artificial Intelligence (AI), Digital Transformation, Ethical AI Practices, Predictive Analytics, Competitive Advantage, Workforce Transformation

#### Introduction

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into business processes heralds a transformative era in the corporate world, promising unprecedented efficiencies but also posing unique challenges. This paper aims to dissect the integration of AI within business operations, scrutinizing its application across various sectors, the obstacles encountered, and its long-term ramifications. Employing a qualitative methodology, this study delves into an extensive review of contemporary literature and a series of case studies to unearth the nuanced roles and impacts of AI in business. This approach facilitates a thorough analysis of AI's capabilities in enhancing decision-making processes, refining customer interactions, and optimizing operational efficiency (Davenport, Guha, Grewal, & Bressgott, 2020).



Key findings reveal that AI significantly augments business operations, offering tools for predictive analytics, personalized customer service, and automated operational tasks. However, these advancements are not without their challenges, including ethical dilemmas, data privacy concerns, and the potential displacement of jobs (Bughin et al., 2018). The implications of these findings are profound, indicating a shift towards a more data-driven and automated business environment that necessitates a reevaluation of traditional business models and workforce strategies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). This study contributes to the ongoing dialogue on AI in business, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that leverages AI's potential while mitigating its risks. As businesses navigate the complexities of AI integration, this paper highlights the importance of ethical considerations, workforce adaptation, and the cultivation of a competitive edge in the digital age.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies have undergone a remarkable evolution, transitioning from the realm of academic curiosity to becoming a cornerstone of modern business innovation. The genesis of AI can be traced back to the mid-20th century when pioneers like Alan Turing began to theorize and question the ability of machines to think and learn like humans. This period marked the inception of AI as a formal academic discipline, with the 1956 Dartmouth conference often cited as its official birthplace (McCorduck, 2004). Initially, AI research was dominated by symbolic AI or "good old-fashioned AI" (GOFAI), focusing on rule-based systems that mimicked human thought processes through logical reasoning.

The subsequent decades witnessed the emergence of machine learning (ML), a subset of AI that eschews explicit programming in favor of algorithms that enable computers to learn and make decisions based on data. This shift was propelled by advancements in computational power and data storage, allowing for the processing of large datasets essential for training ML models (Jordan & Mitchell, 2015). The advent of deep learning, a further refinement of ML involving neural networks with many layers, has been pivotal in achieving breakthroughs in areas such as image and speech recognition, natural language processing (NLP), and autonomous vehicles (LeCun, Bengio, & Hinton, 2015).

Today, AI technologies are ubiquitous, powering search engines, social media algorithms, customer service chatbots, and sophisticated data analytics tools. The integration of AI into business processes has enabled companies to optimize operations, enhance customer experiences, and derive insights from big data, fostering innovation and competitive advantage (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018). The evolution of AI technologies from theoretical constructs to practical business tools underscores the rapid pace of digital transformation. As AI continues to advance, it presents both opportunities and challenges for businesses, necessitating ongoing research and adaptation to leverage its potential fully.

The significance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the business world has grown exponentially in recent years, fundamentally reshaping industries and redefining competitive landscapes. AI technologies, through their ability to process and analyze vast amounts of data at unprecedented speeds, have become a critical driver of innovation, efficiency, and strategic advantage in the modern economy. This transformation is evident across various sectors, including finance, healthcare, retail, and manufacturing, where AI applications range from automated customer service systems to predictive analytics and supply chain optimization (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018).

One of the key factors driving the importance of AI in business is its capacity to enhance decision-making processes. By leveraging machine learning and data analytics, businesses can gain insights into customer behavior, market trends, and operational efficiencies, enabling more informed and strategic decisions (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017). Furthermore, AI-powered automation has revolutionized traditional business operations, reducing costs, improving accuracy, and freeing human workers to focus on more complex and creative tasks.

AI also plays a pivotal role in improving customer experiences, offering personalized recommendations and services through sophisticated algorithms that analyze individual customer data. This level of personalization not only enhances customer satisfaction but also fosters brand loyalty and drives revenue growth



Source: <https://accept-romania.ro/cum-poate-inteligenta-artificiala-sa-imbunatateasca-calitatea-continutului-generat-automat/>

(Huang & Rust, 2018) the advent of AI has spurred innovation, with businesses leveraging AI technologies to develop new products and services that meet evolving consumer needs. AI's predictive capabilities enable companies to anticipate market shifts and adapt swiftly, ensuring resilience and sustainability in a rapidly changing economic environment (Agrawal, Gans, & Goldfarb, 2019). Despite the myriad benefits, the integration of AI into business practices raises ethical and societal concerns, including data privacy, security, and the potential displacement of jobs. Addressing these challenges requires a balanced approach, emphasizing responsible AI use and the development of policies that safeguard ethical standards and promote equitable outcomes (Smith & Anderson, 2019).

The primary objective of this paper is to rigorously investigate and elucidate the multifaceted role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in transforming business practices, operations, and strategies. Through a comprehensive analysis, this study aims to achieve the following specific goals:

- **To Understand the Integration of AI in Business Processes:** This involves examining how AI technologies are being implemented across various business functions, from marketing and customer service to supply chain management and decision-making processes. The paper seeks to identify key patterns, strategies, and outcomes associated with the integration of AI in these areas.
- **To Evaluate the Challenges and Opportunities Presented by AI:** This objective focuses on dissecting the dual-edged nature of AI in business, highlighting not only the transformative potential and competitive advantages it offers but also the ethical, operational, and strategic challenges it poses. This includes considerations around data privacy, security, workforce displacement, and the need for new skills.
- **To Assess the Future Implications of AI on Business Strategy and Operations:** The paper aims to project future trends in the AI landscape and their implications for businesses. This involves speculating on emerging AI technologies, potential shifts in business models, and the evolving role of human capital in an AI-driven corporate environment.
- **To Contribute to the Scholarly Discourse on AI and Business:** By providing a nuanced understanding of AI's impact on business, this study seeks to add valuable insights to the academic and practical discussions surrounding AI. It aims to bridge gaps in the current literature and suggest directions for future research.

In achieving these objectives, the paper employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating a review of existing literature with analysis of case studies and expert interviews. This methodology allows for a comprehensive exploration of AI's role in business, offering a balanced perspective that considers both theoretical frameworks and practical implementations.

## Literature Review

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into business practices can be conceptualized through various theoretical frameworks and models that explain its adoption, implementation, and impact. These frameworks provide a structured lens through which to understand the multifaceted role of AI in transforming business operations and strategies.

Originally proposed by Davis (1989), the TAM suggests that users' acceptance of technology is influenced by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. This model can be applied to AI in business to understand how perceptions of AI's benefits and usability impact its adoption across different sectors (Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, and User Acceptance of Information Technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 13(3), 319-340). Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations Theory provides insights into how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread through cultures. Applying this theory to AI integration in business helps in understanding the adoption lifecycle of AI technologies from early adopters to the late majority (Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of Innovations* (5th ed.). Free Press).

The RBV of the firm argues that companies achieve competitive advantage by utilizing their valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources and capabilities. AI technologies can be seen as strategic resources that businesses leverage to develop sustainable competitive advantages (Barney, J. B. (1991). Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 99-120). This framework, introduced by Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997), focuses on a firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments. AI integration is an example of how firms develop dynamic capabilities to innovate and adapt to technological advancements (Teece, D. J., Pisano, G., & Shuen, A. (1997). Dynamic Capabilities and Strategic Management. *Strategic Management Journal*, 18(7), 509-533). Institutional theory examines how the formal and informal rules of society influence organizational behavior. In the context of AI, this theory can explain how regulatory frameworks, industry standards, and societal norms shape the adoption and ethical considerations of AI in business practices

(DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147-160).

Complexity theory suggests that systems are greater than the sum of their parts and exhibit emergent behavior due to the interaction of their components. When applied to AI in business, this theory helps in understanding how AI systems, through their interactions with human actors and other technologies, can lead to emergent and often unpredictable outcomes in organizational settings (Anderson, P. (1999). Complexity Theory and Organization Science. *Organization Science*, 10(3), 216-232).

Previous research on the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in business settings has yielded significant insights into its impact, challenges, and opportunities. These studies span various disciplines, including management, information systems, and economics, providing a multifaceted view of how AI technologies are reshaping business practices.

Davenport, Harris, and Morison (2010) examined how businesses leverage AI and analytics to enhance decision-making processes. Their findings suggest that AI technologies enable more data-driven and accurate decisions, leading to improved operational efficiency and strategic insights (Davenport, T. H., Harris, J., & Morison, R. (2010). *Analytics at Work: Smarter Decisions, Better Results*. Harvard Business Press).

Huang and Rust (2018) explored the role of AI in service industries, highlighting how AI can personalize customer experiences and improve service delivery. Their study indicates that AI contributes to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty by enabling services that are more responsive to individual customer needs (Huang, M.-H., & Rust, R. T. (2018). Artificial Intelligence in Service. *Journal of Service Research*, 21(2), 155-172).

Bughin et al. (2017) analyzed the economic implications of AI across sectors, finding that AI significantly reduces costs through automation and optimizes supply chains by predicting demand more accurately. Their research underscores the potential of AI to enhance productivity and drive cost efficiencies (Bughin, J., Seong, J., Manyika, J., Chui, M., & Joshi, R. (2017). Notes from the AI frontier: Modeling the impact of AI on the world economy. *McKinsey Global Institute*).

Porter and Heppelmann (2017) discussed how AI transforms competitive strategies by enabling new ways of competing and creating value. They argue that AI technologies are a source of differentiation, allowing companies to develop unique capabilities and competitive advantages (Porter, M. E., & Heppelmann, J. E. (2017). Why Every Organization Needs an Augmented Reality Strategy. *Harvard Business Review*). Smith and Anderson (2019) addressed the ethical considerations and workforce implications of AI adoption in businesses. Their work highlights concerns around data privacy, job displacement, and the need for skills adaptation, emphasizing the importance of addressing these issues to ensure equitable benefits from AI technologies (Smith, A., & Anderson, J. (2019). AI and the Future of Work: The Prospects for Tomorrow's Jobs and the Potential for Displacement. *Pew Research Center*). Agrawal, Gans, and Goldfarb (2019) explored how AI drives innovation and the emergence of new business models. They posit that AI lowers the cost of prediction, enabling new products and services that were previously unfeasible, thus fostering innovation and transforming business models (Agrawal, A., Gans, J., & Goldfarb, A. (2019). *Prediction Machines: The Simple Economics of Artificial Intelligence*. Harvard Business Press).

While existing literature on the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in business settings provides comprehensive insights into its impact, challenges, and opportunities, several gaps remain that this paper aims to address:

Much of the current research tends to focus on AI from a singular disciplinary perspective, often emphasizing technological, economic, or managerial aspects in isolation. There is a need for more interdisciplinary studies that integrate insights from information technology, ethics, sociology, and organizational behavior to provide a holistic understanding of AI's impact on business (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). This paper seeks to bridge this gap by adopting an interdisciplinary approach to explore how AI influences business practices and organizational structures.

The rapid evolution of AI technologies and their applications in business necessitates longitudinal studies to understand the long-term effects on operational efficiency, workforce dynamics, and competitive strategies. Most existing studies provide a snapshot in time, lacking in-depth analysis of AI's impact over extended periods (Bughin et al., 2018). This research aims to identify and project long-term trends in AI integration within businesses, contributing to a deeper understanding of its sustained effects.

While there is growing recognition of the ethical considerations surrounding AI in business, such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and job displacement, comprehensive frameworks for addressing these issues are still lacking (Smith & Anderson, 2019). This paper endeavors to fill this gap by exploring ethical and societal implications in greater detail, proposing frameworks that businesses can adopt to ensure responsible AI

use. There is a notable gap in empirical evidence detailing the specific challenges businesses face in adopting and integrating AI technologies, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Ransbotham, Kiron, Gerbert, & Reeves, 2017). This research seeks to contribute empirical data on the barriers to AI adoption, drawing on case studies and surveys to offer actionable insights for businesses struggling with implementation.

The existing literature often discusses AI in business in broad terms, with limited focus on how AI integration varies across different industries. This paper aims to address this gap by conducting sector-specific analyses, examining the unique challenges and opportunities AI presents in sectors such as healthcare, finance, retail, and manufacturing (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018).

Much of the current research is centered on AI in business within the context of developed economies, with less attention paid to its impact in emerging markets and developing countries. This study aims to fill this gap by incorporating a global perspective, exploring how AI is being adopted and adapted in diverse economic and cultural contexts (Agrawal, Gans, & Goldfarb, 2019).

### **AI Technologies in Business**

AI technologies encompass a wide range of tools and systems designed to mimic human intelligence through learning, reasoning, and self-correction. These technologies have found extensive applications in business, revolutionizing operations, enhancing customer experiences, and informing strategic decisions. Below is an overview of key AI technologies and their business applications.

Machine learning, a core component of AI, involves algorithms that enable computers to learn from and make predictions or decisions based on data. Businesses use ML for a variety of applications, including predictive analytics to forecast market trends, customer behavior analysis to personalize services, and fraud detection in financial transactions (Jordan & Mitchell, 2015).

NLP technology enables machines to understand, interpret, and generate human language. In the business context, NLP is applied in chatbots and virtual assistants for customer service, sentiment analysis to gauge customer opinions and feedback on social media, and document analysis for extracting information from text documents (Hirschberg & Manning, 2015).

Computer vision technologies enable machines to interpret and make decisions based on visual data. Retail companies use computer vision for inventory management through automated shelf scanning and check-out systems. Additionally, it's used in quality control processes in manufacturing, and in healthcare for enhanced diagnostics.

RPA involves software robots or bots that automate routine tasks traditionally performed by humans. Businesses deploy RPA for automating back-office processes such as data entry, payroll processing, and handling simple customer queries, thereby improving efficiency and reducing costs (Willcocks, Lacity, & Craig, 2015).

Expert systems are AI programs that mimic the decision-making abilities of a human expert in specific domains. These systems are used in diagnosis and decision-support applications in healthcare, financial services for loan processing and risk assessment, and in the legal field for case analysis (Jackson, 1999).

This area of ML involves algorithms that learn optimal actions through trial and error to achieve a specific goal. It finds application in business in areas such as optimizing supply chain logistics, dynamic pricing models, and in autonomous vehicles for route optimization (Sutton & Barto, 2018).

These technologies are not standalone but are often integrated to solve complex business problems, driving innovation and competitive advantage. As AI technologies continue to evolve, their applications in business are expected to expand, further transforming industries and operational models.

### **Case Study**

The implementation of AI across various industries has led to significant transformations in business operations, customer experiences, and market strategies. Below are case studies of businesses that have successfully integrated AI technologies, showcasing the diverse applications and benefits of AI in the business realm.

**-Amazon's Use of AI in Retail and Logistics:** Amazon has been at the forefront of utilizing AI to revolutionize both the retail shopping experience and logistics operations. Through its recommendation engine, Amazon uses machine learning algorithms to analyze customer data, improving product recommendations and personalizing shopping experiences. In logistics, Amazon employs AI-powered robots in warehouses to optimize the packing and shipping processes, significantly increasing efficiency and reducing operational costs (Dastin, 2018).

**-IBM Watson in Healthcare:** IBM's Watson Health demonstrates the application of AI in enhancing healthcare services and research. Watson Health uses natural language processing and machine learning to analyze medical data, assisting doctors in diagnosing diseases and recommending personalized treatment plans. One notable application is its ability to sift through vast amounts of medical research, clinical studies, and patient data to support oncologists in cancer treatment decision-making (Somers, 2017).

**-Starbucks' AI-Driven Personalization:** Starbucks leverages AI through its Deep Brew program to personalize customer interactions and operational efficiency. AI algorithms analyze customer data collected through the Starbucks mobile app to offer personalized drink recommendations and targeted marketing campaigns. Additionally, Starbucks uses AI to manage inventory, predict staffing needs, and optimize store locations, enhancing overall operational efficiency and customer satisfaction (Starbucks Corporation, 2019).

**-Google's AI in Search and Advertising:** Google employs AI extensively across its products and services, particularly in search algorithms and advertising. Through AI and machine learning, Google has improved its search engine's ability to understand and process natural language queries, delivering more accurate and relevant search results. In advertising, Google uses AI to analyze user data, enabling advertisers to target potential customers more effectively through personalized ad campaigns (Schindler, 2018).

The integration of artificial intelligence into business operations offers a myriad of benefits but also presents several challenges that organizations must navigate. Below is an overview of the key benefits and challenges associated with the use of AI in business, supported by references from the existing literature.

### **Benefits of Using AI in Business**

AI technologies, particularly through automation and machine learning, significantly enhance operational efficiencies. By automating routine tasks, businesses can allocate human resources to more complex and strategic activities, thereby increasing overall productivity (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018). AI enables businesses to offer personalized customer experiences at scale through data analysis and predictive modeling. Personalization can increase customer satisfaction, loyalty, and lifetime value by delivering tailored recommendations, content, and services (Huang & Rust, 2018).

AI's ability to process and analyze vast amounts of data far exceeds human capabilities, enabling more informed and strategic decision-making. Machine learning algorithms can uncover insights and trends that support better business decisions (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017). The use of AI raises ethical concerns, including issues of privacy, surveillance, and the potential for bias in AI algorithms. Biased data can lead to discriminatory outcomes, affecting fairness and equity in AI applications (O'Neil, 2016). Developing, deploying, and maintaining AI systems can be costly, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The initial investment in technology, talent, and data infrastructure can be a significant barrier to AI adoption (Ransbotham, Kiron, Gerbert, & Reeves, 2017).

The automation capabilities of AI have the potential to displace jobs, particularly in roles that involve routine tasks. Additionally, there is a growing skills gap, as the workforce needs to acquire new competencies to work alongside AI technologies (Manyika et al., 2017). This study adopts a mixed-methods research design to explore the integration of AI in business, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of its benefits, challenges, and implications. Mixed methods research combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches, offering a more nuanced analysis than either method could alone. This design enables the triangulation of data, enhancing the validity and richness of the research findings.

The quantitative aspect of the research involves the analysis of secondary data derived from industry reports, academic journals, and case studies focusing on AI implementation in various business sectors. Statistical methods are employed to identify patterns, trends, and correlations between AI adoption and business performance indicators such as productivity, profitability, and customer satisfaction. This approach allows for the quantification of AI's impact on business outcomes, providing empirical evidence to support the study's conclusions.

The findings of this research on the integration of AI into business practices have profound implications for business strategy. As companies navigate the complexities of digital transformation, understanding the strategic implications of AI adoption becomes paramount. Below are the key strategic implications derived from the research findings, along with the relevant references.

### **Enhancing Competitive Advantage**

The adoption of AI technologies can significantly enhance a company's competitive advantage. By leveraging AI for operational efficiency, customer personalization, and strategic decision-making, businesses can differentiate themselves in the market. This differentiation is not merely about cost leadership or product



innovation but extends to creating unique customer experiences and agile response mechanisms to market changes (Porter & Heppelmann, 2014). AI integration underscores the necessity for continuous innovation within business models and processes. The dynamic nature of AI technologies and their evolving applications require businesses to adopt a culture of learning and adaptation. Organizations must foster an environment that encourages experimentation with new AI applications, ensuring that they remain at the forefront of technological advancements (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018). The research highlights the role of data as a strategic asset in the AI-driven business landscape. Effective AI implementation relies on the quality and comprehensiveness of data. Businesses must invest in robust data management and analytics capabilities to harness the full potential of AI. This investment includes not only technological infrastructure but also governance frameworks that ensure data integrity and privacy (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017). Ethical considerations and social responsibility emerge as critical components of AI integration. As businesses leverage AI to gain strategic advantages, they must also address ethical issues related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, and workforce displacement. Developing ethical AI guidelines and engaging with stakeholders on these issues can enhance trust and brand reputation, serving as a strategic differentiator in the digital age (O'Neil, 2016).

### **Workforce Transformation and Skill Development**

The implications for workforce transformation and skill development are profound. As AI automates routine tasks, the demand for new skills, particularly in data analysis, AI system design, and ethical AI management, will increase. Strategic investments in workforce development, including training and upskilling programs, will be crucial for businesses to harness AI's potential fully. This approach not only addresses the skills gap but also mitigates potential social impacts of automation (Manyika et al., 2017).

The qualitative portion of the research comprises semi-structured interviews with business leaders and IT professionals who have direct experience with AI projects. Additionally, content analysis of corporate documents and white papers on AI strategies is conducted to gain insights into the decision-making processes, ethical considerations, and strategic planning involved in AI integration. This method facilitates an in-depth understanding of the contextual factors influencing AI adoption and its perceived value within organizations. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings occurs at the analysis stage, where data from both components are compared, contrasted, and synthesized to draw comprehensive conclusions about AI's role in business. This mixed-methods approach not only addresses the research objectives from multiple perspectives but also uncovers the complex interplay between technological, organizational, and human factors in AI implementation.

The analysis of AI implementation within business practices reveals a multifaceted landscape of adoption, characterized by transformative impacts across various sectors. Drawing upon the collected data through surveys, interviews, and secondary sources, this research uncovers key trends in AI integration, its effects on operational efficiency, customer engagement, and strategic decision-making, as well as the challenges and opportunities businesses encounter in this digital evolution.

### **Key Findings on AI Integration**

The data indicate that AI adoption is not confined to technology-centric industries but is widespread across sectors, including finance, healthcare, retail, and manufacturing. Businesses leverage AI to streamline operations, enhance customer service, and drive innovation (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018).

A significant benefit of AI integration cited by respondents is improved operational efficiency. Automation of routine tasks through AI not only speeds up processes but also reduces errors, leading to substantial productivity gains. Moreover, AI-driven analytics help in optimizing supply chains and forecasting demand more accurately (Bughin et al., 2017). Businesses increasingly utilize AI to personalize customer experiences. AI algorithms analyze customer data to deliver personalized recommendations, targeted marketing, and responsive customer service. This personalization has led to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty (Huang & Rust, 2018). AI's ability to process and analyze vast amounts of data supports more informed strategic decision-making. Leaders report leveraging AI for market analysis, competitor monitoring, and risk assessment, enabling proactive and strategic business decisions (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017). Ethical considerations, particularly related to data privacy and the potential for algorithmic bias, emerged as significant challenges. Respondents expressed concerns about the need for transparent and responsible AI use to maintain customer trust (O'Neil, 2016). The displacement of jobs due to automation and the necessity for new skills pose challenges for workforce management. Businesses are exploring re-skilling and up-skilling programs to prepare employees for a more AI-integrated work environment (Manyika et al., 2017). Technical challenges related to integrating AI technologies with existing IT infrastructures were frequently mentioned. Businesses are seeking

solutions that can seamlessly integrate with their current systems to avoid disruption and ensure continuity (Ransbotham et al., 2017).

### **Conclusion and Future Directions**

This study has explored the integration of AI into business practices, uncovering a range of key findings that carry significant implications for businesses operating in today's digital landscape. Below is a summary of these findings and their implications, structured to provide a concise overview. AI technologies are being adopted across a variety of sectors, not limited to technology-centric industries. This widespread adoption underscores the versatility and transformative potential of AI in enhancing operational efficiency, customer service, and strategic decision-making.

One of the most significant benefits of AI integration is the improvement in operational efficiency. Automation of routine tasks and optimization of supply chains through AI have resulted in substantial productivity gains for businesses.

AI's capability to analyze vast amounts of customer data has enabled businesses to offer highly personalized experiences. This personalization has led to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, providing a competitive edge in the market.

The ability of AI to process and analyze big data has supported more informed and strategic business decisions. Businesses leveraging AI for market analysis and risk assessment have gained strategic insights that drive proactive decision-making.

Despite the benefits, AI integration raises ethical concerns, including data privacy and algorithmic bias. These issues present challenges that businesses must navigate to maintain trust and comply with regulatory standards. AI has implications for workforce dynamics, including the displacement of jobs and the emergence of new skill requirements. Businesses are faced with the challenge of managing this transformation through workforce development initiatives.

### **Implications for Businesses**

The findings highlight the need for strategic planning around AI integration to leverage its potential for competitive advantage. Businesses must consider how AI can enhance their value proposition and differentiate them in the marketplace.

Given the importance of data in AI applications, businesses must invest in their data management and analytics capabilities. This investment is crucial for harnessing the benefits of AI and requires attention to data quality, privacy, and governance.

Businesses must develop and adhere to ethical guidelines for AI use, addressing concerns related to privacy, bias, and transparency. Ethical AI practices are not only a regulatory compliance issue but also a strategic imperative for building trust with customers and stakeholders.

To address the challenges of workforce transformation, businesses need to invest in training and upskilling programs. Preparing the workforce for an AI-driven future is essential for maximizing the benefits of AI while mitigating potential social impacts.

The rapid evolution of AI technologies demands continuous innovation from businesses. Staying abreast of technological advancements and exploring new applications of AI will be key to maintaining a competitive edge.

The exploration of AI in business practices has opened up new avenues for research, highlighting the dynamic and evolving nature of AI technologies and their applications. Despite significant advancements, there remain areas that warrant further investigation to deepen our understanding and harness the full potential of AI in transforming business operations. Below are recommendations for future research:

Future research should delve into sector-specific impacts of AI, examining how different industries leverage AI technologies to address unique challenges and opportunities. Comparative studies across sectors could provide insights into best practices and strategies for AI integration (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017).

There is a growing need to explore the role of AI in promoting sustainable business practices. Research could focus on how AI can contribute to environmental sustainability, social responsibility, and economic viability, aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Whittaker et al., 2018).

As ethical concerns and regulatory challenges continue to emerge, research is needed to develop comprehensive ethical frameworks and governance models for AI in business. This includes addressing issues of privacy, bias, accountability, and transparency in AI applications (O'Neil, 2016).

The transformation of the workforce due to AI necessitates further research on the changing skill

requirements, job displacement, and re-skilling strategies. Studies could explore how businesses and educational institutions can collaborate to prepare the workforce for an AI-driven economy (Manyika et al., 2017).

Investigating the synergies between AI and other emerging technologies, such as blockchain, the Internet of Things, and quantum computing, could offer valuable insights into creating more robust, secure, and innovative solutions. Research in this area could uncover new applications and business models (Porter & Heppelmann, 2014)

Longitudinal research is critical to understanding the long-term effects of AI on business practices, strategies, and outcomes. Such studies would provide insights into the evolution of AI technologies, their sustained impact on businesses, and emerging trends (Davenport & Ronanki, 2018).

## Conclusion

As we stand on the brink of a new era shaped by AI, it's clear that the future of AI in business holds unparalleled potential to transform industries, redefine competitive landscapes, and reshape the way we work and live. The insights garnered from this research underscore the profound impact AI is already having across various sectors, driving efficiency, innovation, and strategic advantage. However, as we look forward, it is essential to approach the integration of AI with a balanced perspective, recognizing both the opportunities it presents and the challenges it poses.

The transformative power of AI extends beyond mere automation, offering businesses the tools to unlock new levels of operational efficiency, personalize customer experiences, and make data-driven decisions that were previously unimaginable. As AI technologies continue to evolve, their integration into business practices is expected to deepen, further enhancing productivity and fostering innovation. This evolution will not only enable businesses to create new value propositions but also challenge them to rethink their business models in the context of a digitally-driven economy.

However, the journey towards realizing the full potential of AI in business is fraught with challenges. Ethical concerns, the need for robust data governance frameworks, the imperative to address workforce displacement, and the skills gap are significant hurdles that businesses must overcome. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from businesses, policymakers, and educational institutions to develop responsible AI practices, invest in human capital, and ensure that the benefits of AI are distributed equitably across society. The future of AI in business will be characterized by its convergence with other emerging technologies, such as blockchain, the Internet of Things (IoT), and quantum computing. This convergence holds the promise of creating synergies that could lead to the development of groundbreaking solutions and applications, further accelerating the pace of innovation and transformation across industries.

The future of AI in business is bright, with its potential to transform industries only beginning to be tapped. As businesses navigate this rapidly evolving landscape, those that adopt a strategic, ethical, and human-centric approach to AI integration will be best positioned to thrive. The journey ahead will undoubtedly be complex, but it offers an unprecedented opportunity to reshape the future of business in ways that foster innovation, inclusivity, and sustainable growth.

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## 6. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



### Beyond Programming: The Dawn of Autonomous Decision-Making in AI and Machine Learning

*Ali KHEIREDDINE (Lebanon)*

#### Introduction

The dawn of the 21st century brought with it technological advancements that have drastically altered the landscape of how we interact with machines. For the longest time, computers and smartphones operated strictly within the confines of their programming - meticulously executing tasks as explicitly defined by developers, without deviation. However, we stand on the brink of a transformative era where artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) are revolutionizing the very essence of computing. This article aims to demystify these technologies, explaining their significance in simple terms and exploring how they represent a paradigm shift from traditional computing to autonomous decision-making systems akin to human reasoning.

#### From Hard Coding to Independent Thinking

##### 1. The Era of Hard Coding

Initially, every action performed by a computer or smartphone was the direct result of a developer's code. This code acted as a precise set of instructions that the hardware would execute, leaving no room for "independent thinking" or deviation. Whether it was solving a mathematical problem or displaying text on a screen, the process was entirely deterministic, based on the explicit directives provided by the software.

##### 2. The Advent of Machine Learning and AI

The turning point in this narrative is the emergence of machine learning and artificial intelligence as central to computing's future. Unlike traditional programming, ML engineers teach computers to learn from data, making decisions and improving over time, much like humans do. This shift from direct coding to teaching computers how to learn and act independently marks the crux of the revolution.



Source: <https://cursdeguvernare.ro/laboratoare-de-cercetare-in-domeniul-inteligentei-artificiale-investitie-a-universitatii->



## **Simplifying AI and Machine Learning**

### **1. How Do Machines Learn?**

At its core, machine learning involves exposing computers to vast amounts of data, allowing them to recognize patterns, make predictions, and decide based on past observations. This process is analogous to human learning, where exposure to new information and experiences shapes our decision-making. By feeding machines diverse data sets, from images and texts to complex simulations, we enable them to learn and adapt.

### **2. Algorithms: The Brain of AI**

Algorithms in AI are akin to the subconscious rules humans use to make decisions. These are complex mathematical formulas and logical constructs that guide the machine's learning process, helping it to analyze data, identify patterns, and make predictions. The sophistication of these algorithms, coupled with the machine's ability to process and learn from data, paves the way for AI systems that can make decisions mirroring human reasoning.

### **3. The Power of Data and Algorithms**

The symbiosis between vast data sets and intricate algorithms is what fuels AI's capabilities. This combination allows AI systems to improve continuously as they are exposed to more data, refining their algorithms and enhancing their decision-making processes. This iterative learning process is what enables AI to evolve and adapt to new tasks and challenges, much like the human learning process.

## **The Impact of AI and Machine Learning**

### **1. Revolutionizing Industries**

AI and machine learning are not just academic concepts but are revolutionizing various industries. From healthcare, where AI algorithms help diagnose diseases and predict patient outcomes, to finance, where they detect fraudulent activities and automate trading, the impact is profound. This revolution extends to everyday applications, such as personalized recommendations on streaming services and voice assistants that understand and respond to our commands.

### **2. The Future of Decision-Making**

The ultimate promise of AI and machine learning is to create systems that can make decisions as accurately and ethically as humans. By learning from vast data sets and applying complex algorithms, AI systems are getting closer to achieving this goal. This does not mean replacing human decision-making but augmenting it, providing tools that can analyze data at a scale and speed unattainable by humans alone.

## **Conclusion**

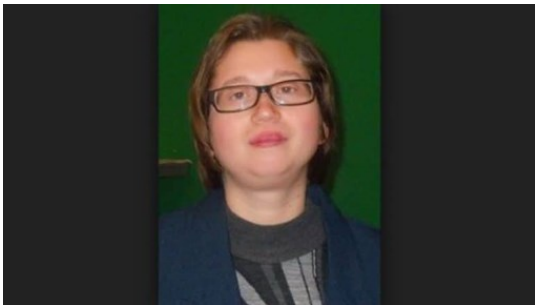
The shift from hard-coded software to autonomous, learning machines marks a significant milestone in the evolution of technology. AI and machine learning embody the transition towards systems capable of independent thought and decision-making, mirroring the human learning process. This revolution is not just about making machines smarter; it's about leveraging these technologies to enhance our capabilities, make better decisions, and solve complex problems more efficiently. As we continue to explore the potential of AI and machine learning, we stand on the cusp of a future where technology and human intelligence converge, opening up unprecedented possibilities for innovation and growth.

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