

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

GEOSTRATEGIC PULSE

No.288, January - February 2023 | www.pulsulgeostrategic.ro

GLOBAL ORDER AND SECURITY

Putin's "Red Lines" – Maps, Geopolitical Representations and the New World (Dis)Order

P. 10

EUROPE

Europe in Turmoil: Navigating the Challenges of Post-Ukraine War Realities

P. 30

MIDDLE EAST

Iran and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Regional and Opportunities Challenges

P. 46

Developments of the European Union in the New Paradigm of Globalization

P. 5

CONTENT

Geostrategic Pulse, No.288, January- February2023

I. EDITORIAL

1. Republic of Moldova – Proactive Counteraction of Security Risks and Threats Generated by Russia - p. 3



II. GLOBAL ORDER AND SECURITY

2. Developments of the European Union in the New Globalization Paradigm - p. 5



3. Putin’s “Red Lines” – Maps, Geopolitical Representations and the New World (Dis)Order - p. 10



4. China Is Stepping up Its Actions in the Middle East and Africa to Reform the World Order - p. 13



5. New World Strategies - p. 18



III. EUROPE

6. The Strategic Weariness in the Conflict in Ukraine - p. 23



7. Geopolitics of Foreign Fighters and Volunteer Battalions in the Ukraine Conflict - p. 26



8. Europe in Turmoil: Navigating the Challenges of Post-Ukraine War Realities - p. 30



9. Romania’s Sustainable Development for 2030. From Concept to Action in the Energy Field. A Green and Just Transition. A 2050 Taxonomy - p. 38



10. The Republic of Croatia and the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU - p.41



IV. MIDDLE EAST

11. Iran and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Regional Opportunities and Challenges - p. 46



V. MODERN TERRORISM

12. Profiling and Behavioural Analysis of the Modern Terrorist - p.50



I. EDITORIAL



Republic of Moldova – Proactive Counteraction of Security Risks and Threats Generated by Russia

PhD. Eng. Stelian TEODORESCU

“Things do not happen. Things are made to happen.”

John F. Kennedy

Recently, there has been a resurgence of old information and fears regarding possible risks and threats generated and orchestrated by Russia for the political destabilization of the Republic of Moldova and the generation of a new conflict in the region, similar to the one in Ukraine. According to some information revealed by Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelensky, in Brussels, on February 9, 2023, Moldova is targeted by the forces of the Russian intelligence services, who wish to organize operations to destroy the democratic order.

Russia’s more or less direct threats against the Republic of Moldova have intensified recently. The increase in the state of alert regarding the re-emergence of security threats from Russia coincides with the moment when the government of Moldova went through a political change and realignment.

In an interview he gave the Russian state television, the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov suggested that Moldova is the West’s new “anti-Russian project”. It is once again confirmed that the argument usually used by Russian propagandists to justify military aggression against other independent states is the reference that the “repression of everything Russian” is afoot.

In this context, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova quickly reacted to S. Lavrov’s latest threats, emphasizing that the remarks are not true and do nothing but continue the “already well-known and threatening rhetoric of Russian diplomacy”. “The purpose of these actions is to overturn the constitutional order, to exchange the legitimate power from Chisinau with an illegitimate one”, as President Maia Sandu also specified on February 13, 2023.



Source: <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/politica/serviciul-de-informatii-de-la-chisinau-confirma-planul-lui-putin-de-a-distruge-republica-moldova-2246389> - The President of the Republic of Moldova

According to latest data and information communicated by the media, a probable operation by Russia could take place in the shadow of massive anti-government protests, organized by the pro-Russian opposition, with possible violent actions against state institutions, as part of a well-developed plan. In order to manage such course of action, the authorities of the Republic of Moldova have taken all the necessary measures to maintain public order and safety, without providing any details.

In the same context of increased alert regarding Russia’s latest security threats, the government of the Republic of Moldova went through a political realignment, as I mentioned before.

As the result of more or less predictable developments, Maia Sandu and the ruling Action and Solidarity Party proposed Dorin Recean for prime minister.

The return of D. Recean¹ to politics, in February 2022, was commented on by certain political actors, who said that they attempted to test the population, because he would be offered a much higher position. His name has also been circulated as a possible head of the Intelligence and Security Service (SIS), which did not occur but we must not forget the fact that his name was mentioned many times in connection to the position of Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova. All these changes, risks and threats take place in a context marked by the deteriorating social-economic situation in the Republic of Moldova. The main cause - the energy crisis that started in October 2021, and has escalated as a result of the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The main political supporter of the Russian agenda in Moldova, the “ȘOR” Party², expected the high energy prices would bring many people to the streets. Although inflation has increased throughout 2022, those who were responsible for the recent protests have failed to organize mass demonstrations and obtain the desired effects.

As a result of the latest developments in the Republic of Moldova, M. Sandu emphasized that Russia hopes to take advantage of the public discontent resulting from the triggered crises. Moreover, the Kremlin planned to use “saboteurs with military training, disguised as civilians, who would take violent actions, and carry out attacks on public institutions, or even take hostages” as the president of Moldova specified. She urged Moldovans to remain vigilant and also asked Moldovan lawmakers to pass new laws that would give the security forces additional power to prevent foreign subversive actions. Consequently, due to the fact that the authorities and structures have been watchful, Russia’s plans and those of its opposition remain, at least until now, without result.

Under such circumstances, in 2023, Russia’s objectives with regard to the Republic of Moldova will largely remain the same, likely to be, essentially, a repeat of the failed 2022 scenario. However, despite Russia’s aggressive intentions, we must not overlook the fact that the ruling party in the Republic of Moldova has a solid majority in the parliament (63 out of 101 seats) and any attempt to overthrow the government would involve a wider range of actions. Such an evolution would mean that all state institutions fall under the control of the pro-Russian forces, a course of action that would involve the use of significant forces and large-scale hybrid actions.

In conclusion, we must point out that February is the last month when we can expect massive protests with regard to the effects of the energy crisis, most likely because Russia’s intended subversive operations become more and more difficult to implement. Their chances of causing substantial and uncontrolled protests will be significantly diminished.

At the same time, we must notice that since Russian risks and threats aimed at the future of the Republic of Moldova are rising, during the talks that took place at the Munich Security Conference (February 17-19, 2023), Moldovan authorities requested their Western partners to provide additional assistance so that it could address the vulnerabilities that Russia could take advantage of and take action

The second meeting of the European Political Community, to be held on June 1, 2023, in Chisinau, will serve as an additional argument to request help on security matters from the EU Member States. 47 heads of state, government and European institutions are expected to attend. It has become very clear that the Russian aggression in the media and in the international diplomatic environment is rapidly bringing Chisinau and the West closer together, with the EU already granting Moldova a candidate status in June 2022, and NATO showing a very clear position to prevent a new Russian invasion, especially since it is Ukraine’s neighbour.

¹He was advisor to the president of the Republic of Moldova on security issues from February 2022 and held the position of secretary general of the Supreme Security Council of the Republic of Moldova. During the escalation of tensions in Transnistria in the context of the war in Ukraine, D. Recean discussed in Varnița with the separatist leader, Vadim Nikolaevich Krasnoselski.

²The „ȘOR” party is a political party in the Republic of Moldova, which represents the interests of the Russian-speaking population. The leader of the party is the ex-mayor of the city of Orhei, the millionaire businessman Ilan Mironovici Șor of Jewish origin. He is currently a deputy in the Moldovan Parliament and is suspected to have been involved in several bank robberies. The honorary president is Valerii Klimenko, a Russian-speaking politician, who currently serves as a municipal councilor in Chisinau. He is the founder of the Ravnopravie Movement, currently known as the „ȘOR” Party (PPȘ). The political formation was officially registered on October 27, 1998.

II. GLOBAL ORDER AND SECURITY



Developments of the European Union in the New Globalization Paradigm

PhD. Cosmin DUMITRESCU

New challenges, new opportunities, new risks, new vulnerabilities and the corresponding political, economic and strategic objectives join the present ones. Cyclically, they change their temporal positioning among themselves, causing imbalances that, due to the accelerated process of globalization, become inevitable for all actors at the regional, national, macro-regional, continental and global levels.

Even if Europe as a whole directly and fundamentally influences globalization through solid political and economic approaches, a phenomenon that is an ongoing economic and social process, an instrument for achieving strategic interests at the national level as well as at the level of a group of nations, the European civil society is becoming increasingly divided in terms of opinion. It splits into the supporters of globalization as a source of enrichment for society and its opponents, who accuse the process of leading to future feudalism.

It has become obvious that, for the past three decades, due to high production costs, Europe has been at a real disadvantage compared to other regions of the world, being forced to successively implement sets of economic and social policies aimed at maintaining a trade balance and avoiding deficit in this area. Legislative and normative instruments must separate the activities and means pertaining to fair trade from those that are specific to unregulated free trade that give way to or even favour unfair trade practices and unfair competition.

At the same time, analysing synthetically the developments in the specialized markets, but also those in the field of specialized European jurisprudence, we note the centrifugal tendencies of capital on the part of the major economic actors at national and multinational level, who want to denounce the ultra-regulatory system of the economic environment in general and the free market of the European Union in particular. The appellants substantiate their public positions with the effects of the slowdown in the economic dynamics of development within the European subsidiaries of multinational companies, which they say produce much less profit than their subsidiaries operating in markets with much more relaxed regulations in the fields of commercial practices, consumer protection and personal data protection.

Undoubtedly the European Union faces positive situations determined by globalization, such as the very high level of integration for states, citizens and economic operators. At the same time, the Member States of the European Union and the partners in the eastern, southern and transatlantic neighbourhoods are forced by new international circumstances to simultaneously manage unprecedented crises in the history of humanity, starting from the issue of uncontrolled migration, energy security, climate change, relations with failed states, international terrorism, food security as well as the humanitarian crises caused by the global pandemic COVID-19 and the armed conflicts that are currently tearing the planet apart, Russia's illegal and unacceptable aggression on Ukraine being undoubtedly the most dangerous due to the risks it poses to Europe and the whole world.

All these elements seem to act interdependently precisely through the lens of the analysis of the globalization process, which constitutes a causative element for each of the segments of the European political-economic picture. The progress of information technology produced and accelerated by the expansion of national super computing capabilities as well as the expansion of the areas of use of the significant capabilities of artificial intelligence developed by several national actors, but also by multinational companies, has erased all existing geographical obstacles and time barriers in front of flows of people, information and capital.

It is already axiomatic that the European Union is one of the most important global actors and that it is obliged to identify the right solutions to manage the globalization process, which cannot be stopped. Europe still holds the status of the most important and richest market worldwide.

Through its evolution in the last decade, the European Union proves that it knows how to master the political-strategic and economic instruments characteristic to the globalization process. The tools developed by

the EU for regulation and the development of financial services, in the difficult financial context that put a constant pressure on the consolidation process of the euro, as well as the standardization achieved through regulations in important markets such as mobile telephony, are good examples of successes reported by the European Union, with the broad cooperation and support of the Member States and despite a type of commercial main stream not necessarily friendly to such reforms, a flow supported globally by very powerful multinational companies.

Objectives and Challenges Caused by the Dramatic Changes that Occurred in the Evolutionary Paradigm of Globalisation

The targets and main challenges for the European Union in the new era opened to the evolution of the globalization process by the crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as by the threats to energy, food and even territorial security in Europe, cannot but include chapters such as the effective management of the impacts of the economic component of globalization, managing the cultural dimension of globalization by intensifying and making the dialogue between civilizations more efficient and ensuring global and European security regarding the sustainability of energy sources and climate change. To these we add the other sectoral challenges brought by the pandemic and Russia's armed aggression on Ukraine, and all their effects specific to the disastrous economy and the diplomacy exercised adapted to the environment of armed conflicts.

The opportunities of the freedom of trade, the free movement of people, goods and capital and the lifting of millions of people out of poverty are, in reality, counterbalanced by the acute loss of jobs, caused by the relocation of businesses to other third countries with much lower labour costs, inflation with dangerous stagflation tendencies and social inequity, leading to severe populist or sovereigntist anti-globalization movements, as well as Euroscepticism.

The European Union faces the challenge of protecting its own interests and that of its Member States in trade relations with China and that of the energy security crisis arising from Russia's illegal aggression against Ukraine, which also has specific major risk effects managed by food security policies, for several states in the southern European neighbourhood.

In describing the global strategy of the European Union in the new political-strategic context of globalization, the European External Action Service, the main entity responsible for the Union's foreign and security policy, lists in the European Commission's document *The European Union in a Changing Global Environment*, five sets of challenges and opportunities that the Union must face:

Supporting the reforms in the states of the Western Balkans, Turkey and the eastern partners through integration and association policies according to each individual state is the first and most important, recently materialized including by granting Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova the status of candidate states for accession to the EU, also expressing the openness to grant the same status to Georgia, after it manages to recover the arrears registered in the process of harmonizing its national system with that of the other Member States.

In this context, I believe it is appropriate to highlight the success of Romania's foreign policy, which supported and continues to effectively support the accession and Europeanization process of the Republic of Moldova, as well as its European route, the only one that can lead to the consolidation of the state of law, of democracy and prosperity for all its citizens.

A second major challenge remains the continued adaptation and implementation of the integrated foreign policy set, which results in keeping Turkey active in managing issues of common interest, such as massive immigration from Africa and the Middle East via the Balkan route.

The European Union's foreign policy also includes the strategic objective of supporting democratic and healthy state systems in the countries of the Eastern Partnership and firm reactions from those countries when it comes to the destabilizing actions that take place close to the EU's external borders.



Source: <https://cursdeguvernare.ro/economist-globalizarea-nu-a-murit-modificarile-si-riscurile-care-apar-in-modelul-economic-mondial.html>

The European Union's relations with the Russian Federation are currently at an all-time low due to its illegal, criminal and unacceptable armed aggression against Ukraine. It remains important to maintain an Europe's openness regarding Russia's involvement in maintaining the balance of European security, but only after a mandatory change of attitude and position in the sense that its actions and positions are within the limits of legality dictated by the normal compliance with international law and the cessation of any acts of aggression against any other states, with the return of all Russian military capabilities within its borders, drawn by positive international law through the treaties in force.

In the relationship with North Africa and the Middle East, the European Union faces three immediate challenges: ensuring alternative sources of energy for the European economy in the context of the efforts to reduce Europe's dependence on energy resources imported from Russia and making the existing instruments more effective internally and externally for the preservation of a security environment capable of guaranteeing the continuous and sustainable development of European society and for the effective management of humanitarian and legal and illegal migration crises, caused by massive population movements caused by armed conflicts in the respective areas.

The political-strategic, economic and security challenges specific to migration are defined for Europe both on the positive component of fully and correctly integrated human resources, necessary to maintain the increased rate of development of the economies of the EU Member States, but also on the short, medium and long-term security component constituted by the cultural diversity and complexity of the massive social segments of immigrants arriving in Europe and the risks arising from their incomplete integration in the European society.

The physical and cultural enclaving of immigrants constituted as hermetic subcultural groups in incomplete and economically, security, educationally and socially insufficient social islands, has already shown that it can lead to the intensification of radicalization processes, to deviant social behaviours, with real potential to sometimes become particularly dangerous – let's remember that most of the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks that took place in Belgium (Brussels), Great Britain, Spain (Atocha) and France (Bataclan, etc.) had European citizenship, came from ethnic groups distinct from the majority of the population in the respective countries. Romania's contribution to the effective security of the EU's eastern external is already generally recognized at the European level. The fact that at the last meeting of the Justice and Internal Affairs Council in December 2022, one of the Member States of the European Union absolutely unjustifiably refused to recognize this essential contribution of Romania, especially in the complex strategic context determined by the armed conflict illegally provoked by the action of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, was without a doubt an unprecedented abuse in the relations within the European Union and a flagrant disregard of the European legislation in force.

Romania's rightful, proper and normal accession to the Schengen Area was thus prevented, despite the fact that our country respects and fulfils all the rules established by the Schengen agreement. The European Union has proven in this case that the process of relations within itself can sometimes act in a defective way, unfairly putting not only Romania in difficulty and having a direct negative impact on the Romanian economy, but the on entire European Union.

Within the framework of the Atlantic Partnership, the European Union is currently successfully managing the challenge of continuing to invest in a privileged relationship that Europe as a whole and almost all EU Member States are developing with partners across the Atlantic, in particular by raising the level of cooperation between the EU and NATO.

The Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation signed in Brussels on January 10, 2023 by the NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, the President of the European Council, Charles Michel and the President of the European Commission, Ursula von den Leyen, represents another clear proof of the commitment of the two organizations in the partnership strategy they developed for the defence of freedom and the other core common values they share.

In the fierce direct competition that the European Union has in the context of the globalized economy with other major actors, the need to reform and modernize the systems of the Member States still proves to be topical, given that the crises on the financial markets caused by the pandemic, the armed conflicts and the rampant inflation have shown that highly optimistic economic growth rates can easily be overturned and even pushed into the negative zone of recession.

In the same sense, we can still find that, in many of the Member States from the central and eastern part of the EU, a significant percentage of the labour force is still employed in traditional sectors where the competitive advantage stagnates in the area of low labour costs, which causes social discontent and direct competition between domestic and foreign markets with similar products manufactured in China and India.

Such policies of ensuring a fragile competitiveness through the inevitable pauperization of human resources with a lower level of training or qualification, cannot help in the efforts made by the European Union narrow the gap between its economic performances and those of the United States of America. The US is not only experiencing higher annual economic growth, but also better economic integration of new technologies and higher investment figures in research and development, with the direct consequence of raising the level of productivity through innovation and implementation of disruptive technological tools in the economy.

On the other hand, we note with concern that the European Union tries and only partially succeeds in keeping inflation and interest rates at a level that in the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic would have been considered unacceptable. In the same global economic context, the USA succeeded in the last semester of 2022 to set, through the firm financial policies imposed by the Federal Reserve, a clearly favourable trend of sustainable control of the evolution of the annual inflation rate, which had a constant downward evolution from 7, 1% to 5.7%.

In the efforts to control the increase in consumer prices, the experience of the new Member States, the most recent example being Croatia, showed that within the process of Europeanization, along with globalization, they were often in a position to intervene to maintain under control of consumer prices.

Management Policies and Mechanisms for the Effects of the Globalisation Process in the European Union

In this very complex economic, political-strategic and security context, the most important challenge for the institutions of the European Union and the Member States responsible for managing the effects of the globalization process is to build and implement policies that can transform the potential benefits of the new paradigm of globalization in concrete advantages, while keeping the social costs as low as possible.

However, the European Union also faces a series of external challenges for which it is necessary to apply strategies and policies adapted to the new realities of globalization, significantly different from those accepted before the COVID-19 pandemic and before Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

Identifying, adapting and implementing new strategies to encourage global trade and maintain Europe's position as a global trade leader, the almost continuous reconfiguration of migration management strategies and tools as a source of labour, to counter the effects of the aging European population, and for the benefit of economic and social development, maintaining Europe's leading position in the field of foreign direct investment both as an investor and as a destination of investments and applying appropriate measures for the effective management of global economic imbalances, in partnership with other states and international institutions remain challenges that Europe is bound to and must address with priority, determination and a lot of courage in order to maintain its status intact.

European security depends on all these sets of policies for external relations, which must continue to be supported within the European Union by concrete measures aimed at strengthening the global economy, by maximizing the transatlantic market, streamlining the internal reform processes of the Member States, increasing the funds allocated to research and innovation and intensifying the dialogue between civilizations to avoid radicalization, especially amongst the Muslim population, the promotion of tolerance, security, as well as methods and practices of good governance.

The European Union must also increase its ability to export to its partner states that want to follow the European model, its power to transform its society through moderation and modernization policies and to thoroughly build the education of new generations on the European model.

Regarding the external cooperation to support mobility, while maintaining the sets of measures intended to have a safe security environment within the borders of the European Union, the Member States have also taken steps towards establishing a common approach – the European Commission was delegated national sovereignty attributes with regard to the common short-stay visa policy. Through mobility partnerships and visa facilitation agreements with certain third countries, the European Union supports mobility as a factor of social and economic development and combats illegal migration.

The European Union was conceived from the very beginning as a management system primarily dedicated to the management of the European integration process and the more or less tense relations between the Member States. But even though Europe holds one of the most important positions of economic and commercial power, its organizational system suffers from diminished global influence and importance. The most alarming situation stands out in the field of energy security where its dependence on resources from Russia, Africa, the Arctic and the Middle East make it more influenced than influential in the globalization process. Fully aware of its vulnerabilities in the overall picture Europe offers the international community, in the last decade the European Union has developed a series of mechanisms and instruments that are meant exclusively

at restoring an orderly and controlled system of relations built face the continuous series of challenges of the globalization process.

Among the most effective instruments, I mention the euro currency, immigration management policies, the enlargement of the European Union, the neighbourhood policy and energy security. All these have among their main objectives the avoidance of the political marginalization of the European Union at the global level, the active and central role it wants in global relations being decisive for ensuring the influence and strategic capacities for the promotion and operation of the common instruments for ensuring European security.

The European Union still manages to establish or maintain a leading position among the regulatory powers of some important sectors globally, including telecommunications, the chemical industry, financial services and food policies, thus managing to decisively shape the principles of global governance.

The arguments that made the European Union succeed in imposing its standards at the global level are the modernity of governance principles, the sharing of the decision-making process between the Member States, the existence of a redistribution of wealth between the rich and the poor (even if at a fairly low level) and the practice of permanent negotiations in the process of identifying an unanimously accepted legal order.

By supporting international institutions, the European Union achieves the most effective global projection of its own interests by influencing the construction, implementation and follow-up of the norms dictated by them, even using the instruments of international institutions. For Europe, this mechanism is key to restructuring the international system adapted to the complexity required by globalization, by building effective institutions that enjoy legitimacy.

The expansion of the European Union's territorial sphere of influence is ensured in the most effective way possible by expanding to the east and southeast. The expansion of the EU territory through the accession of new states makes them subject to the pressure of Europeanization and the imposition of Union rules, something that makes it possible to remove from the direct influence of the general process of globalization decisively influenced by other superpowers and implicitly the expansion of its political and economic influence, as well as its European control over the new Member States.

The European Union is expanding its influence, but Europeanization is not in reality an impediment to globalization, on the contrary. The difference is given by the fact that in the European approach there is moderation in accepting the idea of omnipotent markets and the need for identity and political legitimacy is heightened, especially in a collective, sustainable, ethical and efficient economic and financial environment.

The globalization process cannot withstand social pressures without the application of strategies to redistribute the costs of globalization. Economically and financially weaker states are usually disadvantaged by the legal, political and regulatory frameworks that seek to regulate the process of globalization, and without extended socially sound and economically sustainable global approaches, economic openness could not withstand social explosions.

Effective tools for redistributing the costs of globalization can be considered the labour relocation agreements and unilateral trade benefits that enable economic development in underdeveloped countries, but the real benefits of such tools in the long run may prove to be vulnerabilities major in times of crisis when European solidarity proves to be dysfunctional (a proof of this is the example of actions and blockades carried out through almost exclusively national approaches in the first weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic).

I could not end this text without also mentioning a political paradox that emerges from the very policies and mechanisms used by the European Union for the management of the effects of the globalization process and that relates to the fact that the institutions that the EU supports are attacked politically from within the Union itself and accused of ineffectively managing the globalization process, which not only does it not manage correctly, but even contributes to the uncontrolled acceleration of the process, with particularly serious effects on a regional and global level.

These views are supported by the often conflicting realities we observe in Africa, the Middle East, the Eastern Neighbourhood, the Western Balkans and, more recently, Turkey. In these states, anti-globalization political organizations accuse the European Union of supporting abusive political and economic behaviour on the part of state and non-state actors, which leads to open, frozen or hybrid armed conflicts, with the support of some Eastern powers.

The next three years will show through economic and global integration performances to what extent the European Union and its partners in the southern and eastern neighbourhood, as well as those overseas, are or are not prepared to lead, control, implement and positively capitalize globalization, which seems as inevitable as the invasion of artificial intelligence on the labour and service markets. But the contribution of these related but essential factors as economic and social dynamics will be the subject of other analyses.

II. GLOBAL ORDER AND SECURITY



Putin's "Red Lines" – Maps, Geopolitical Representations and the New World (Dis)Order

Prof. PhD Cristian BARNA

The historical fact that a country must own a vital space led, over time, to the understanding of the birth, expansion and fall of great empires that have worked on changing their borders by annexing more territories.

Therefore, ever since the beginnings of geopolitics as a science, Friedrich Ratzel believed that the geographical and political mobility of a country was related to the vitality of the *mittlepunkt*, and its geographical amplitude, even if it went beyond geographical borders. According to him, the border is not just a piece of land that separates two countries, but the marginal body of a state, a sign of growth or weakness. Ratzel believed that a country will set its own borders and settle most advantageously, from a geostrategic point of view: take over mandatory border crossings (mountain passes, straits, canals), and have direct access to the sea, navigable rivers, mountain ranges etc.

In his turn, Klaus Haushofer believes that countries have a "political border life" of their own, that is defined by the relation between the organic defence forces, the ability to change their borders and the capacity of efficiently countering enemy attacks on those borders.

When geopolitics became a science, Halford Mackinder split the world in two – the telurocratic power, geographically identified by Eurasia, and the thalassocratic power, that is the countries that had fleets capable of controlling the borders of the telurocratic power – the Mediterranean, the Atlantic Ocean and the seas in south-east Eurasia.

In 1940, Mackinder was the one who drew the maps of the areas surrounding Eurasia, "the pivot of history" (later known as the *heartland*), where an essential geostrategic player was Russia, as it was surrounded by two arcs: the inner arc that enclosed Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, India and China, and the outer arc, that enclosed Great Britain, Japan, Canada, the USA, South Africa and Australia.

Halford Mackinder identified strategic regions as the Great Ocean (the Pacific, Indian, and the South Atlantic) and its coasts (monsoon Asia, Australia, South America, and Sub-Saharan Africa). He also brought out the expansion perspectives of South America's regional profile and the Mantle of Vacancies (an area with borders in the Sahara Desert, Central Asia, all the way to East Siberia, which would mark the border between the heartland and the Great Ocean).

At the same time, he believed that Africa, Europe and Asia were a "global island", whose survival firstly depended on the control of Eastern Europe, and implicitly on the Eurasian heartland that included a series of Asian mountain areas, and the river basins that flowed into the Baltic and Black seas (basically associated with Eastern Europe).

Overall, Halford Mackinder's main argument can be summed up as "whomever masters Eastern Europe will master the heartland. Whomever masters the heartland will master the *global island*, and whomever masters the *global island*, will rule the world".

In the context of the fierce competition between the telurocratic power and the thalassocratic one for border change, Alfred Mahan came up with the "anaconda theory", which says that Eurasian powers needed to be "suppressed", deprived of any rimland control, and access to the sea.

The work that made Alfred Mahan famous was *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*, that said that the USA adopted the thalassocratic power as a means to ensure its national defence and security. Hence, the US admiral emphasized the major benefits that the maritime power had, insisting on the fact that “the first and most notable *characteristic* of the sea as a political and social advantage is its ability to act as a freeway; or better, generally speaking, as an area that people can cross in every direction, some of which indicate that the reason they were chosen was because they were better than others.”

Furthermore, Alfred Mahan highlighted that the advantage the thalassocratic power has over the telurocratic one is that “despite all common and uncommon dangers that the sea poses – travels, navigation, were always cheaper than the ones on land”. Mahan claimed that the state power competition is all about water control, which essentially implies control over the ships and to some extent the existence of decisive positions. These decisive positions, ports, overseas military bases, points that can control main trade routes, such as straits, are aimed at projecting a country’s maritime power, which eventually extends to its overall power.

Influenced by Alfred Mahan and Halford Mackinder’s works, during World War 2. the US political expert, Nicholas Spykman makes his own geostrategic theory known. The timeframe of his works is very im-

portant, as the heartland was owned by the USSR, an ally at that time. The threat to our global security was represented by the Axis powers that wanted global domination, including by exerting control over the Eurasian heartland. Nicholas Spykman revives Alfred Mahan’s perspective regarding the geographical distribution of power poles and comes up with an alternative to thalassocratic powers, in order to maintain control over the heartland. He develops the rimland theory – the advantage the Eurasian seas have over the shores that surround it. Nicholas Spykman insists on the geostrategic importance of the rimland, arguing that the Eurasian heartland is too wide and difficult to control,



Source: <https://www.national.ro/politica/noua-ordine-mondiala-si-ascensiunea-puterilor-de-mijloc-784397.html>

while the control of its shores implicitly means exerting control over the ways of communication to this land. Intended as a critical analysis of Mackinder’s geopolitical concept with regard to world domination through the control of the heartland, the rimland theory or the “geopolitics of borders” is actually an addendum to the heartland theory.

Just as Saul Cohen notices, “Spykman’s terminology, its detailed global, geographical context, and the political conclusions that its view of the world provided, show that he was mainly inspired by Mackinder, whose strategic conclusions he tried to dismiss [...]. In fact, paraphrasing Mackinder’s theory, he came up with *whomever dominates the rimland, dominates Eurasia. Whomever dominates Eurasia, holds the destiny of the world*. This is what his source of inspiration proves; this is how unique Spykman’s theory is. Speaking of the rimland, Spykman refers to the arc that surrounds the heartland, that is seen as a *buffer zone* between land and sea. Spykman’s theory is based on what Friederich Ratzel stated before him – a powerful country is a country that has a powerful navy. Indeed, sea control provided the USA an undeniable geopolitical advantage. It could not be invaded, but it could invade other countries. Thus, by the end of World War 2, the USA had the best developed naval capabilities, through which they were able to monitor the naval activity in the entire world. Exerting control over the oceans of the world is and will be, geopolitically speaking, USA’s most important objective, as it is interested in preventing all Eurasian powers from building a strong fleet, maintaining regional balance and blocking the emergence of regional Eurasian powers. This is why the rimland theory was the geopolitical concept the USA used during the Cold War to develop the *containment* theory – the containment of the USSR. From this point of view, Mahan and Spykman can be considered the promoters of the Euro-Atlantic partnership.

During the Cold War the USSR was the heartland, while the USA ruled over the rimland that surrounded Eurasia and prevented the USSR from accessing seas and oceans. At that time, history proved that the USSR’s telurocratic power was not enough for it to be considered a hegemon. The strategic and military advantages and the economic opportunities provided by the control of the seas and oceans overcame the power

of the heartland.

In the post-Cold War era, the Russian Federation saw itself as the victim of the Eurasian heartland, as it was surrounded by thalassocratic powers, by the USA most of all, a geopolitical sentiment exacerbated by the fact that they did not have access to the planetary ocean. This sentiment clung to the “historical failure” of the Cold War, which caused contemporary Russian geopolitical representations to be impregnated with a vengeful spirit towards the fall of the USSR and with a hostile attitude towards maritime powers that would tamper with the Russian Federation’s attempt to come back as a hegemon.

Eurasianism – a geopolitical theory that Vladimir Putin turned into a state policy – promotes an imperial nostalgia, according to which the destiny of the Russian Federation is to “rebuild the Grand Empire”, which means bringing back in Russia’s sphere of strategic, political and economic influence the Eurasian area it “lost” over certain historical periods. According to Alexandr Dugin, whose neo-Eurasian ideas are adopted and implemented by Vladimir Putin, Russia is a vital component of the heartland, a non-Russian Eurasia is unconceivable without the defeat of the Russian people. Meanwhile, to ensure a complete expansion, the Russian Federation needs to gain access to the planetary ocean.

The Russian Federation’s geopolitical future (the USA’s as well) is marked by what is taking place in the Eurasian heartland, as well as in its rimland, the unstable arc extending from the Mediterranean and North Africa, all the way to the Middle East. Hence, the evolutions of the “buffer states” and the Eurasian border (Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Libya and Egypt) can act as disturbing factors to regional and international stability and security. In this geostrategic perspective if Syria grants the Russian Federation access to the Mediterranean, Iran can grant it to warm seas. This is why a geopolitical axis – Russia-Iran could stop *Euroatlanticism* from entering Central Asia. According to Alexandr Dugin the “curdling of an empire” that includes the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Iran, Armenia, Tajikistan, Belarus and Syria would give the Russian Federation the advantage of breaking the circle around the Atlantic Ocean and access warm seas.

As far as Iran’s geostrategic role in Eurasia is concerned, due to its size and geographical position the country can be considered as the heartland of the Middle East and Eurasia’s rimland, through the control it exerts over the Hurmuz strait, considered by thalassocratic powers (especially the USA) as one of the nine strategic points in the planetary ocean, because it grants access to the Persian Gulf. Unfortunately for Iran, the regional power equation is not in its favour at present, because of the evolutions of the civil war in Syria, its main ally in the region, its bridgehead in the Mediterranean. Therefore, at present, Iran is no longer a strategic threat to the USA in the Middle East, as it is currently defending itself and has to help its allies, Syria and Lebanon, to survive, as well as maintain its control over Iraq.

When it comes to the threat of Iran’s nuclear holocaust, Martin Dempsey believes this country is a rational geopolitical player, concerned with its own survival and prosperity, even if it does not share the same goals and values as the West or the Arab countries. Starting from this assumption, George Friedman believes that Iran’s strategy doesn’t imply obtaining or using nuclear weapons, but having a credible nuclear development plan that allows it to be seen as a major player in the international power game.

In this context, to attain their geopolitical objectives Eurasian experts rely on de-globalising non-Western civilisations, getting “prairie” Muslim countries from Central Asia and “desert” Persian Gulf countries closer, justifying their interference in Central Asia and the Middle East on their goal to “pacify” borders.

The Russian Federation’s greatest loss is Ukraine, as according to Rudolf Kjellen, its vocation is to promote a balanced policy between Western powers (the Euro-Atlantic choice) and the Russian Federation (resource dependency), so as not to become the latter’s satellite. On the other hand, according to Brzezinski, the Russian Federation stopped being an empire without Ukraine, but together, Russia automatically becomes an empire. To the Russian Federation, maintaining its influence over Ukraine, given its fleet in the Black Sea, represents the strategic stake of a well-structured plan.

Therefore, from a geostrategic point of view, the separatist region in eastern Ukraine, Crimea, Transnistria (a bridge head or a Russian knife in Ukraine’s back), the separatist regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia are part of the Russian Federation’s security corridor to the Black Sea. It represents a “fortress of special geostrategic importance to the Russian Federation. If it wants to pretend it is a Mediterranean power, it must be a Black Sea power first”.

Under such circumstances, Ulrich Beck sees the scenario of the power reaffirmation in a “Western fortress”, translated into the cooperation of a small number of countries, managed by the strongest, a scenario that would leave to the fates the “victims of non-multipolarism” – how the Russian Federation wallows in self-pity in comparison with the USA and NATO! Beck also draws attention on the fact that great powers need to be aware that the victim status, no matter how unbalanced it is, has global effects.

II. GLOBAL ORDER AND SECURITY



China Is Stepping up Its Actions in the Middle East and Africa to Reform the World Order

PhD. Eng. Stelian TEODORESCU

„You have to learn the rules of the game. And then you have to play better than anyone else.”

Albert Einstein

Foreword

At the global level, a new world order is foreshadowed that is becoming increasingly characterized by the political, economic, social, defence and security transformations and reconfiguration of some areas and the appearance of an increasing number of international actors with influence in various areas of the world. If we take a closer look at these entities that are or will become poles of power, we can see that all these regional or global actors have a significant advantage in certain fields, they can exploit certain types of resources that provide them with substantial benefits.

Looking carefully at the transformations that have taken place or continue to take place at the global level, we can see that they occur more and more dynamically and are marked by deep changes.

At present, on various continents or in various regions of the world, there are states that are ready to become poles of power, some of which even aspire to becoming great powers. One of the most eloquent examples is China's, a state actor that, in the following decades, might become far superior economically, financially and, why not, politically and militarily speaking.

China's efforts to reshape international institutions, norms and standards at a global level rely significantly on the surprising support from Middle Eastern and African governments. Such a global change strategy is making its effects known, mirroring Chinese perspectives that prove to be essential to China's *publicized* approach in the geopolitical and geostrategic competition in which it is engaged.

China's willingness to multilaterally reshape international institutions and create new ones, rests in part on its ability to obtain significant support from other countries, so that its global initiatives are successful; eloquent examples in this case are the Middle East and Africa.

China Wants to Turn the Middle East and the Gulf into its Global Centre of Gravity

During December 7-10, 2022, the Chinese President Xi Jinping paid an important historic visit to Riyadh. It was the source of inspiration for thousands of media headlines insisting on what this special event means for other international actors, but especially for the US, as a major international player in the Middle East and the Gulf.

While taking part in the aforementioned events and throughout his visits, the Chinese President Xi Jinping had bilateral meetings with nearly 20 Arab leaders, attending three high-level meetings – the Saudi Arabia-China Summit, the first Council Summit Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)-China and the first Arab-Chinese Summit. The visit attracted a lot of attention and generated, as expected, a lot of debate on an international level, given the dynamics of geopolitical developments on a regional and global level. It was all the more relevant, especially in terms of the world's access to energy resources today, especially when taking into account the current international situation, strongly influenced by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Xi's visit to the Middle East and the worldwide commentaries and debates with regard to the present and future developments have been significant, leading us to believe that major global geopolitical changes will follow.

Xi's visit could be seen as his first venture beyond East and Central Asia in three years, his third state visit abroad since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and his first visit to Saudi Arabia since 2016. We

can safely say that this diplomatic action represented an unprecedented success, which the Chinese state media presented as “China’s biggest diplomatic action in the Arab world since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China”.

Thus, in the afternoon of December 7, 2022, the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, arrived and began his visit to Riyadh, having included in the program, in addition to three high-level meetings, an official state visit to Saudi Arabia, at the invitation of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. It is worth mentioning here that in the 32 years since the establishment of diplomatic ties, China and Saudi Arabia have increased their mutual trust and cooperation on a strategic level. In 2016 they reached the necessary level of trust to establish a strategic partnership as well. In the China-Saudi Arabia bilateral relationship, this visit is the fifth official visit by a Chinese head of state. Each resulted in a wide bilateral cooperation, in various fields, beginning with the 1999 visit of Jiang Zemin, who signed a Strategic Petroleum Cooperation Agreement, eventually making China the main client for the energy resources of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The visit in 2016, when Xi and King Salman signed a strategic partnership agreement, took the Kingdom to the highest level in China’s diplomatic hierarchy. The relations between the two countries improved their cooperation in other important areas as: trade, investment, financing, technological cooperation, education and security. It has become abundantly clear that the Saudis and their neighbours in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) see China as an important partner that proves it is a global superpower. It has a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, a major market for energy sources it is a source of technological support and investment that can help the Saudis build and develop a diverse economy.



Source: <https://www.news.ro/externe/xi-jinping-se-intalneste-cu-liderii-arabi-inaugurand-o-noua-era-a-relatiilor-1922404409002022121120945209>

The China-Arab Summit on December 8, 2022 was a diplomatic activity that was hailed as a first starting a new era of relations. In fact, the China-Arab Cooperation Forum (FCCSA) has held a ministerial every two years since 2004. The meetings were held either in China or in one of the Arab states’ capitals. In each of these meetings, China and the Arab League member states set the main areas of cooperation to be discussed during future meetings. In this context, it is worth mentioning that during his opening speech/the China-Arab Summit, Xi insisted on eight areas of “pragmatic cooperation”: development support, food security, public health, ecological innovation, energy security, inter-civilizational dialogue, youth development and security and stability.

The third high-level meeting, which was the China-Saudi Arabia Summit, was even more impressive. The joint statement released at the end of the summit proves how much the two countries are already cooperating and their ambitions to continue working together “in all fields”.

After analysing the developments, relations and activities that took place on an international level, it was concluded that the China-GCC Summit still generated the most interest. China’s priority was to announce the areas of cooperation for the next three to five years: oil and gas, finance and investment, innovation and new technology, aerospace, language and culture. Again, many of these have been promoted for cooperation through the well-known Belt and Road Initiative¹ or the CASCF² frameworks.

¹The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a global infrastructure development strategy adopted by the Chinese government in 2013 to invest in more than 150 countries and international organizations. It is considered a key piece of Chinese leader Xi Jinping’s foreign policy. In line with its growing power and status, it has been compared to the American Marshall Plan. As of January 2023, 151 countries were listed as members of the BRI.

²The China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF) is an official dialogue initiative between China and the Arab League, established in 2004. This forum serves as the main multilateral coordination mechanism between China and the Arab states. The CASCF was the first forum for cooperation between the Arab League and any other country or region. Its members consist of China and the

Looking back at these visits made by the Chinese President, Xi Jinping to Saudi Arabia, we can say that they were perceived as opportune moments, missions to send several important messages to the whole world, in the wider context of the triangular relationship that has formed and developed rapidly between the countries in the Middle East, China and the USA. The most distinctive message was that the countries in the Middle East are recently adopting a much more independent and favourable policy for the accelerated development of relations with the Chinese state, even if there were certain limits to how far the Arabs were willing to go in the current geopolitical context.

The series of summits and visits that took place in the Middle East with China's important involvement, gave rise to some concerns for the US, even if it is the main entity at the global level that bases its relationship building and competitions on the *win-win* principle. That its main strategic competitor, China, is seen to be making serious progress in a region of great geopolitical importance and with many of America's key allies and partners appears to be an increasingly serious problem.

In such a context, one should not neglect the advantages and disadvantages generated in the region by other Chinese diplomatic initiatives and actions, such as China's interesting endeavour to peacefully resolve the "issue of the three islands: Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa". The case has been a point of contention between the UAE and Iran since Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf in 1971, when Iran imposed its authority on the three islands previously administered by the UAE. The fact that China chose to intervene was surprising to the Iranians and Tehran saw it as a betrayal, even though Iran itself has a strategic partnership with China. As a result, the Chinese ambassador to Iran at the time was sent for by the Iranian government and they let him know their grievances on the matter. The overall perception is that China's economic interests in the Arab part of the Gulf far exceed those in Iran, and Tehran's behaviour, regarded as destabilizing in the region, threatens Beijing's foreign in the region.

Xi's visit to Riyadh also came at a time when the relations between the US and Saudi Arabia were tense due several issues, including human rights concerns, the war in Yemen, OPEC's decision to cut oil production and a number of other foreign policy issues. The fact China has been gaining importance on a global level is the proof of the transformations that are taking place with regard to the changing world order.

Most signs point towards the centre of economic gravity shifting to Asia, which, by 2040, will account for 50% of the global GDP and 40% of the global consumption. China relies on imports of energy resources from the Gulf to cover of about 30% of its annual needs, but also on imports of energy resources from Russia. China is the world's largest oil buyer, while Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter and has become China's main trading partner and supplier of crude oil. China imports from the Saudis about 18% of its need. While Beijing's interests in the Middle East may have initially been driven by energy, the relationship is now diversifying. Over the past 20 years, China has increasingly become an important partner for the GCC states in several fields, such as infrastructure, investment, trade in goods and services, digital technology, and defence. Currency strategists point out to the fact that Saudi Arabia appears to be sending a political message to the international community, which is a surprise. Many intelligence reports show Saudi Arabia is considering accepting Chinese state yuan payments for the oil it sells China.

In the strategic analysis we carry out, we should not omit that the value of trade between China and Saudi Arabia in 2021 was more than 80 billion dollars, and ever since 2005, Chinese companies in Saudi Arabia earned more than 36 billion dollars in revenue. China's crude oil imports from Saudi Arabia were worth nearly \$44 billion in 2021, accounting for 77% of the total value of its imports from the Kingdom. China has also emerged in recent decades as an important trading partner for many other GCC states. Most GCC state governments depend on the exploration and use of their important energy resources to support the diversification of their economies, while China needs hydrocarbons from the Gulf to fuel its economy.

China Is Really Interested in Africa

Africa is the largest bloc in the United Nations General Assembly (UN), with 28% of the votes, compared to 27%/Asia, 17%/the Americas and 15%/Western Europe. Africa also holds more than a quarter of the votes in all UN governing bodies and is the largest bloc in other international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Arab League, which officially represents its twenty-two member states as a relatively unified body. Therefore, the CASCF serves as the main multilateral coordination mechanism between China and the Arab states. This coordination by the Arab League allows Arab states to actively negotiate for collective projects involving multiple states, such as rail projects, nuclear power projects, and Dead Sea initiatives. Since their suspension from the Arab League in 2011, Libya and Syria participate individually in the CASCF. As of 2018, China considers the CASCF as part of its Belt and Road Initiative.

This makes African votes in international institutions extremely important to China's efforts to implement the strategy of redesigning the world order and global institutions. China's foreign policy priorities are summarized in the doctrine: "Great powers are the key, China's periphery the priority, developing countries the foundation, and multilateral platforms the stage."

The economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine has undermined the ability of many African nations to service their foreign debts. At present, there are 22 African countries with little financial resources struggling to pay their debts. Chinese lenders account for 12% of Africa's private and public external debt, which more than quintupled to \$696 billion from 2000 to 2020. China is a major creditor to many African nations, but its loans has also declined in recent years and are set to remain at lower levels. This situation is likely to worsen in 2023, limiting the ability of African nations to self-finance to provide wider improvement for the social development of their populations and to respond to various disruptive factors, including climate change. China's substantial exposure to some African economies, combined with its central role in global economic governance and influence, denotes that it is well placed to identify a solution to Africa's sovereign debts.

It is noteworthy that China's new foreign minister, Qin Gang, spent a week in Africa, a visit that marked the continuation of the long-standing tradition (ever since 1991). Every Chinese foreign minister starts the year with a visit to Africa. Qin, who until recently was China's ambassador to the US, made his first official trip abroad in his new role, visiting Ethiopia, Gabon, Angola, Benin and Egypt. While in Egypt, Qin met with the Arab League Secretary General, Ahmed Aboul-Gheit in an effort to strengthen thawing relations between China and Arab nations. While in Ethiopia, Qin held bilateral talks with Moussa Faki Mahamat, the chairman of the African Union Commission, in order to strengthen relations with the entire continent and promote multilateralism. When it made his visit public, China's Foreign Ministry said that "it demonstrates that the Chinese state attaches great importance to the long-standing friendship with Africa and to the development of China-Africa relations."

In 2016, with African support, China sponsored the UN Trust Fund for Peace and Development with a contribution of \$200 million over ten years. The fund supports peacekeeping, rapid response and conflict prevention and mediation. In 2018, again with the help of the African lobby, China made available to the UN a force of 8,000 soldiers to carry out missions in crisis areas. China's increased multilateral contributions have increased its voting power in the multilateral system, giving it decision-making power in the process of shaping global institutions and their norms and working methods.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with observer status at the UN are largely unaware of how China and its African partners leverage their representational power. For example, during the 2018/2019 UN budget negotiations, China appears to have expressed its desire for reduced funding for human rights monitoring within UN missions, reduced NGO observers at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), and lesser government cooperation with civil society. Although these proposals failed to pass, China has made clear that it wished to exercise its power within multilateral institutions in ways that primarily serve its own goals and interests. Some UN members (including African countries) supported the adoption of decisions that would have removed NGOs from the UNHRC and reduced investigative capacity at the UN level. These include missions in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and South Sudan, where some of the worst human rights abuses have taken place. Africa has proven to be central to China's ongoing efforts to build an alternative architecture of global institutions. Thus, South Africa is a founding member of the New Development Bank based in Beijing, created in 2014 by the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa) to provide a mechanism outside the World Bank and to have access to loans guaranteed by China.

Theories abound as to why African countries seem so determined to support China in selectively reshaping certain global institutions. African leaders give various reasons, from solidarity with China over its support for their anti-colonial and anti-apartheid wars, to the belief that a strong China will make the world more multipolar.

Conclusions

Even though China has always pursued global pre-eminence, it initially sought to be discreet and progress more stealthily and with less access for other states to its profile. However, for some time now it appears that, in the context of new global developments, China is seeking to signal more and more frequently and intensely that the era of discretion is gradually being replaced by a bolder and more assertive approach.

Of late, China has been proving that it likes to position itself as a leader, especially in the developing world. While China receives five billion dollars in loans annually from multilateral development banks, it has

steadily increased its contributions to a wide variety of multilateral development institutions.

It is well known that in its National Security Strategy, released in October 2022, the Biden administration stated that the greatest challenge to US interests comes from a rising China, so Washington's main focus has been on supporting and strengthening the US action capabilities in competition with China, especially in the context of China's increasingly visible and stronger connections with the states in the Gulf, the Middle East and Africa, developments that could influence cooperation with Washington, the main strategic ally and security partner of many countries in many regions. Why could such a development occur? Because we can already see that Saudi Arabia and other countries in the region are interested in joining organizations led by China, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the "BRICS plus" proposed in 2017. An eloquent example in this sense is that of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar which have become new dialogue partners of the SCO, while Bahrain, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates seem to want to follow their example.

The visits of Chinese leaders and China's major interest on a global level, prove it has a definite idea of what it wants in the Middle East and Africa. This vision is articulated and aligned with the agendas of the countries from these areas of the world. We can presently say that the US is the main international player competing against China, but it must respond with its own positive view on how these regions of the world fit into its broader strategy, while addressing the concerns of its allies and partners from the Middle East and Africa.

II. GLOBAL ORDER AND SECURITY



New World Strategies

PhD. Eng. Sorin DOBÎRCIANU

“No, justice is nothing without power.”

Mihai Eminescu

Abstract

In the current world context, generated by quasi-states of unpolarizing semi-equilibria, created by the large laboratories that give birth to new select clubs of interests, focused on international political games and also on the politics of multinational games and arrangements, in the reference areas, marked by wide and deep disruptions & asymmetries, the participating teams, through the appointed representatives, at the top, have already launched in the emerging resort markets, at a sizeable exposure rate, the players, the arrangements, the strategies, the methods and, particularly, the resources and rules.

The globalizing processes are in full force around the world, as they access new membership formulas related to European and Euro-Atlantic (re)integration and enlargement, in the context of the new expansionist strategies and interventions in the east, respectively of the Russian Federation’s forceful interventions. This country is considered a recovering superpower, which carries out political-military laboratory strategies, more or less fastidious, in relation to the international, transnational and multinational entities and organizations adhering to the western space.

The Russian strategy will never abandon its “lines of force”, Russia’s feature as a Eurasian power, the result of its territorial possessions and resources. Russia is the largest country in the world, it stores huge reserves of natural resources and has an immense material, human, cultural and military potential. Russia sees battle plans differently, a result of its vast geography and experience, geostrategic position and, obviously, from the role it plays and assumes, in the construction of the new world order, in the reconfiguration of the power poles.

Kremlin leaders, like the other Russian citizens, see their country as part of Greater Europe. President Vladimir Putin does not miss the opportunity to stir the political and economic waters, evoking his plan to create an “Eurasian Union” from the Atlantic to the Pacific “which will strengthen the positions and opportunities of the Russian Federation” and steer it towards an economic *New Asia*, a *continental power*, whose mission is to unify Eurasia’s largest areas “from Lisbon to Vladivostok”. All external alliances will be based on geopolitical, not ideological, values: “Under no circumstances are we thinking of reviving the USSR, but merely of a close integration based on the new political and economic values, on our agenda”, V. Putin wrote in an article for *Izvestia*.

The EU strategy, expressed through the Common European Security and Defence Policy (CESPA), aims at becoming a new strategy and is not concerned with ongoing war but with certain aspects of it, especially those that lead to actions and missions, for example those pertaining to the fight against terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime, humanitarian actions, actions in case of natural calamities, civil and military emergencies. The priority of EU strategies is meeting all the conditions that would allow the de facto unity of the continent, finding solutions to economic, political, social, ethnic, and domestic problems, crisis and conflict management, frozen or ongoing such as those in former Yugoslavia, in the Western Balkans, and more recently in the Black Sea region, in Ukraine.

Today, the US is dominant the world, and economic and security crises facilitate the revival of its defence policy and shift the US’s strategic interests. In achieving its strategic goals, the US aims to strengthen its

established bridgehead in a united Europe through a viable transatlantic partnership, so that the new, enlarged EU can become a more practical launch pad for the new Eurasian order. The recent “robust” NATO expansion, from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, fully demonstrates the US’s interest in controlling the Eurasian rimland, which begins with Finland and the Scandinavian countries, continues with Poland, Romania, Turkey and Georgia, includes the area of the Near East and India and ends with Mongolia, China and Japan.

If we take a look at how the US developed, we see the benefits and advantages of a functional and pragmatic democratic system, a performing and efficient economy, impressive financial and military resources, when they do not have a worthy competitor. Known analysts and political scientists see them as the only real superpower – a mega power. Furthermore, the current trends specific to the affirmation and acknowledgment of new power centres are direct consequences of the events that take place in the global security environment.

From a bastion of hard and pure communism, China has become a socialist-capitalist country, and great European powers, such as Great Britain, France and Germany, seek to shape a new, adapted form of European order, alternative to the Eurasian space, in which Japan, after a period of economic recession, is coming on strong, trying, through the capabilities it develops, to assert itself as a great military power, despite the fact that, after World War 2, the victorious major powers changed the economic capacity of this country and limited the capacity and power of absorption and supply of their industrial resources. A few days later, the Japanese economy started performing, and from the end of the world conflagration until now it persevered because of its persistence, dedication and constant development made possible due to the rhythmicity of the archipelago’s supply chain with resources of any kind.



The Eurasian maritime border, that theorists call “rimland” represents, at present, the essence of global power and the one who dominates the rimland dominates Eurasia, and the one who dominates Eurasia holds the fate of mankind.

It is very clear that the fight for resources is focused, directed, channelled and especially directed in the Caspian area, the node where Russia, India, Kazakhstan and China’s global interests collide, which can have an immediate impact on the matrix of global disputes.

These actions along with the establishment of multinational platforms - the Russian Federation-South America-Africa-Asia-China-Arctic Zone, pertaining to UNESCO, BRICS - Shanghai Treaty-IRAN (Eastern Gulf) are joined by the two major courses of action of the global Eastern axis: Russia’s decision-making role in international issues, on one hand, and on the other, the increasingly strong, sustainable, sustained and visible participation of the regions in Asia, in the global political life. They are also connected to the military lab scenarios of world players circumscribed to the divided Muslim-Arab region.

One of the main resources that supports these international policies, whose actions are worth taking into consideration is North Korea, which, in the context of the Arab crises, publicly, consistently, irreversibly and continuously denounces the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Concept of the Hindus’ sub-continent challenges. The actions can be seen as a pattern originating from elsewhere in the world, with up-to-date, current, real, precise and, above all, “opportune” effects when it comes to the parts and official attributes of the players included in the actions in question, illustrating and influencing environmental and security evolutions on a macro-continental scale.

At the same time, the new formulas circumscribed to the BREXIT chain effects, and the dynamics of the complex developments in Turkey – analyses and expert evaluations related to migration, in the new contexts of the ongoing scenarios, pertaining to the existing in force agreements, which clearly and explicitly regulate, through mechanisms of international jurisdiction, the movement of goods, people and capital, etc., impose new elements related to plans and strategies adapted and conjugated to climatic phenomena, telluric & seismic movements, resource depletion, Afro-Asian demographic growth and the considerable decline in demographics in the northern hemisphere.

In the same context, the international terrorist phenomenon is adapting, diversifying and exacerbating,

and as the specialists assess, it was not by chance that the Yemen terrorist phenomenon appeared; it recently hit the centre of Dubai (United Arab Emirates) and created a deep chain reaction in the area.

On another note, the analysis of Germany's evident actions in relation to the problems caused by Russia, concluded that Berlin is hesitant when it comes to fulfilling its commitments to support Ukraine's defence effort, leaving the impression that the German capital is preserving an already developed low-profile model, a pacifist and equidistant guarantee, waiting to be launched – the resumption of Germany's relations with Russia, once the military hostilities in Ukraine are over.

We can say that this can still alter the image of this country among its allies, a general perception that is based on the support provided, in sight, by the social-democratic deputies in the Bundestag and by a considerable segment of the population, especially when there is undeniable evidence that the Kremlin's hybrid strategy of spreading fear, corroborated with the costs of the crisis and the imminence of a nuclear war, are beginning to bear fruit and impact the German population.

This is the real reason why the government of this country ordered a series of social measures, a financial aid of 30 billion euros, to relieve the neediest people in this country of the increased costs of energy resources.

With this conglomeration of strategies and lab games, no longer declarative, Russia would like to reconfigure the complex process of rebuilding a multipolar world; it essentially aims at dethroning the US and take over its place as a hegemon.

The fight is being waged on multiple levels, on all fronts, in a complex global dynamics, and Russia had to come out and attack. It launched its exit from its narrow former sphere of influence but it is at a standstill maintained, contained and secured by Euro-Atlantic strategies and Chinese pressures, strict and clear actions and operations that block Russia's endeavours to take over the Planetary Ocean. At the same time, they also hinder the plans of the leaders in the Kremlin, drawn up for 2025. These plans include the Arctic Zone, a particular issue in the triangular dispute involving the USA-Canada-Russia.

At the same time, there are major risks, caused by the imminence of an "Islamic spring", similar to the Arab one, which could shake the foundations and obstruct the interests of the Russian political-economic-oligarchic-military conglomerate within BRICS and the Shanghai Treaty, prevent it from attaining its main goal – Central Asia – taking into account the fact that there are extensive disputes over the spheres of influence.

With regard to the emerging trade between Russia and the EU, taking into account the fact that the latter lost its status as a major player, and as a postmodernist regional actor, in a construction generated and assumed by a unique, almost final architecture, that takes into account economic, political and geopolitical rules and concepts of force, power and political authority, we are witnessing the fragmentation of various alliance systems and profiles within the European organisations and entities. Russia manages to exploit, at high level, the lack of unity between EU members, as well as the lack of identity of some of the Member States.

The triangle energy matrix – the Russian Federation-Germany-Austria – is a formula prepared to take over in the immediate post-Ukrainian horizon, the integrated common and multilateral Russian energy model. It already assimilated in 2022, the special Compliance & Certification criteria (TUV Tübingen), for the horizon marked by the post-conflict stage in Ukraine. The projection of the formula was included in the bilateral planning, in May 2023.

As a consequence, NATO defined its enemies, calling for mobilization, as early as March 2022. At the leaders' summit in Madrid, on June 29, 2022, NATO adopted its new strategic concept, radically different from the one in force, due to the changes and transformations in the global security environment. It defines the new concepts, models and strategies for defence, communication, military, and security (for aviation, maritime, cyber) and launches the first operation: reinforcing the eastern flank of the Alliance.

The restoration of the new energy markets, in the context of the latest world alliances, along with the buffer that marks and delimits the two large western and eastern macro systems and borders the geopolitical area that includes the North Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Baltic countries, Poland, Ukraine, Romania, the Black Sea, Bulgaria, Greece, changes the position of the strategies circumscribed to the new geo-economic and



geopolitical global architecture. Thus, we observe revised trends, completed and derived from the dynamics and evolutions of the two global trends: sovereignty and globalism, formulas adopted by organisations such as the UN, UNESCO, FAO, the Security Council, the IMF, World Bank, Wall Street Banking Leveraging, Canary Wharf, Berkeley Square, NATO, Cornerstone Holdings, the New Jesuit World Order, Vanguard, Putnam, Marsh McLennan, The Open Secrets, Bilderberg, Rockefeller, Rothschild, the Brotherhood, Williams Mullen, G7 (G8), Eurasia Group, RIAC the Russian Council, the New Eurasia, BRICS, Fortune Five Hundred, Asia Square Tower 1 and 2, the Dragon Family Asia, etc.

It has become very clear that humanity is currently undergoing deep changes. New phenomena, named too vaguely for the ordinary observer, such as globalization or regionalization, often encourage the mind to carry out a careful analysis, and find out what is hidden beneath. Because, perhaps now more than ever, behind the curtain there are real players and actors that play the real parts. The show that is put on for the world to see is merely a parade that conceals and hides various interests (mostly economic), which serve egos dependant on material possessions and on the power given by wealth and prosperity.

The subordination of the political to the economic is probably more obvious at the level of the international relations within the global economy, not the national one. Here, the actions that have as their objective the economic benefit stand out the best. Players of different structure, size and importance face each other through the levers, mechanisms and tools at their disposal, in a permanent struggle to find the best solution for efficiency. The players of the 21st century, disguise different kinds of low profile formulas and mechanisms and combine new methods of lab-made adapted dynamics.

According to the theories developed by Martin Wight – in his work *Power Politics*, one of the handbooks for international relations – the nation-state has become the “ultimate loyalty for which men will fight” and it will not disappear in the near future but will continue to manifest itself as an important actor on the international stage.

However, according to the WTO (World Trade Organization), more than a quarter of all global trade is carried out within transnational companies. The most important players in these markets are multinationals, which play an ever-increasing role in the “journey” of raw materials, up until they reach their “final consumption”, making sure that the entire process takes place inside the company.

The principles and rules of these large transnational groups of global interest that manipulate the latest strategic exchanges have their direct and immediate correspondents in the trade blocs policies of the EU, Asia-Pacific and NAFTA, as well as in international institutions, which contribute to the improvement and liberalization of international flows, as the movement and speed of wealth and economic power from west-to-east is unprecedented in modern history. To these we add the new strategies of prominent American entities, which are currently directing their attention, courses of action, plans and operations regarding “trade, economic diplomacy, politics, economy, mineral & natural resources exploration and exploitation” towards Kenya, Congo, Namibia, Ghana, etc.

These hybrid tendencies, named by some researchers hermaphrodite tendencies of self-maintenance and self-management, lead to the autonomy of their own markets, which are, of course, under exclusive control and in which the mechanisms of the free market no longer work, as monopolistic structures are created, with great power of market manipulation, in the context of supporting, on sight, these favouring factors: accumulation and investments, catalysts for continuous expanding markets aligned with the new global banking leverage regulation. It imposes more catalysts for compliance formulas such as: corporations and corporate governance, complete quality management control-performance and excellence in performing, resilience, sustainability, cohesion, coherence, etc., new, modern techniques and methods. They are also integrated into the western geopolitical model that mainly envisages neutralizing the response of the eastern macro system that continuously and systematically generates disruptions along the eastern buffer line – an extended sector between the North Sea-Baltic Sea-Latvia, Estonia-Lithuania-Poland-Romania-the Black Sea – in the current context of the unpredictable dynamics and ongoing evolution of the front from Ukraine.

As a first conclusion to the complex analysis of this new strategic exchange formula we can understand the importance of the Black Sea, in relation to Russia’s major interests. Moscow sees Ukraine as critical and, to a lesser extent, Georgia. Through the Russian stock market, the Federation wants to protect them from Western influence and, particularly from NATO expansion, as well as from the ever-growing, expanding, and developing Islamist threat.

The players in the global energy sector will continue to play a key role. They will significantly continue to influence the top of the global elites, and the profits the actors involved register in the targeted theatres, respectively the Gulf, riparian states or those that have access to Caspian resources, particularly Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. In this case, a key role will also have the changing of the rules of global

organizations.

The new strategy of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), based in Riyadh – Saudi Arabia, includes an updated balancing political, economic, military and energy system, regarding advanced cooperation. In this case we see the involvement of prestigious, professional international entities, such as the governments of the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, countries in the Middle East with resources, and which produce oil and gas.

At present, the New World Order is waiting for a change in the relations between the US, on one hand, and the Gulf states on the other, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, even more so when China and Russia's presence in the Middle East and Africa intensified.

As a result, coalitions are taking shape all over the world, which aim at stopping the USA's absolute influence, the alliance between China and Russia being eloquent in this sense. So is the obvious increasing desire for independence in Europe. With France and Germany's help Europe is becoming more and more competitive, especially when the anti-globalization movement is on the rise.

In the multipolar world, where power is, at least at first, dispersed not coagulated, a significant part of the world's spheres of influence will go to international actors such as India, China and Russia, which even though they have both leading and supporting roles, aspire to a different world order altogether and offer another development model, different from the Western one.

Thus, potential conflicts will take place, caused by both regions of instability, especially present in the Great Middle East, and by the proliferation and access to of powerful means of destruction (especially nuclear). Terrorism will linger, but its "appeal" might diminish once recruiting regions continue to develop. Other than that, the number of large-scale terrorist attacks will increase, a fact that can only be countered by the appropriate intensification of the globalization trend. Climate change is also a certainty, but it is difficult to assess how quickly it will take hold and where it will happen.

III. EUROPE



The Strategic Weariness¹ in the Conflict in Ukraine

Prof. Ph.D. Adrieon PÂRLOG

„Military tactics are like unto water. It shapes its course according to the nature of the ground over which it flows; the soldier works out his victory in relation to the foe whom he is facing. He who can modify his tactics in relation to his opponent and thereby succeed in winning.”

Sun Tzu

In the last months of intense military conflict in Ukraine, there is a lack of operational progress on both sides, as well as the lack of prospects for negotiating a solution, at least midway, between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, and things seem to be heading towards an obvious stalemate. The two sides are intensifying their military efforts, at the same time with their bellicose rhetoric touched by the optimistic predictions of the operative initiatives they have in mind. This rhetoric is based on the potent external and internal material resources of the two belligerents. International sanctions are likely to continue to erode Russia's economy, less on a short term and more on a long term. So far, it appears to have been largely unaffected by the sanctions targeting its defence industry and has managed to protect its industrial base that has allowed it to replace some of its lost military equipment, even though in 2022 Russia's economy shrank by 3% to 4%, and unemployment remained at numerical values similar to those of 2021. In the same period, as a result of the war on its territory, the Ukrainian economy lost a third of its potential compared to the previous year, and unemployment rose to 35%. These worrisome macroeconomic indicators are counterbalanced by economic, financial and military aid provided by the West. From the perspective of the international financial support for Kyiv, it is worth watching how the US will direct funds to Ukraine. Starting with June 2023, the House of Representatives is likely to change the size and dynamics of the support given to Ukraine. In December 2022, the Congress planned to allocate \$45 billion in aid for the current fiscal year, on top of the \$68 billion given to Kyiv in 2022. The EU has planned a financial aid for 2023, amounting to 18 billion euros, and NATO and other states that support the Ukrainian armed forces (Rammstein Format) will provide combat equipment and the necessary ammunition. As the main contributor to Ukraine's war effort, any reduction in Western aid will indirectly give Russia an advantage on the battlefield, a fact that is difficult for the Euro-Atlantic world to accept. In the general context briefly described above, it is likely that the Russian Federation will continue its harsh attacks on civilian infrastructure, with the aim of eroding the morale of the population and Ukraine's ability to fight. It probably aims at reaching a point that will allow it to enforce an idea expressed by a well-known quote: "peace by exhaustion is better than no peace at all", but it is hard to believe that Ukraine will end up in this situation!

In the beginning of March 2023, the obvious conclusions relate to the bloody confrontations along the entire 1000 km contact line, especially on the Donbas segment, to the extensive destruction of Ukrainian energy facilities, as well as to the transformation of important cities in Ukraine into targets for Russian missiles

¹The state of a social system (something that is supposed to have a memory) is characterised by the multitude of factors that define the structure, behaviour and functionality of that system, at a certain point.

and drones. To these conclusions we add the references regarding the strengthening of both parties' fighting capabilities, in view of the intense offensive operations announced by Moscow and Kyiv. The Russians want to convey a small amount of defensive and security military substance to the four Ukrainian regions that joined in 2022, and Ukraine and its supporters aim to defeat Russia by pushing its forces beyond the country's recognized borders. This could be seriously influenced by a possible political understanding assumed by the Russian and Chinese leaders, related to the strategic military support offered by Beijing. Such an eventuality will also provide a new structural perspective on the new global order generated by the smouldering competition between the "unitary West and the global South". In this likely new configuration China might not be interested in letting the Russian Federation collapse.

The unlikely alternative to such intentions is an immediate cease-fire followed by bilateral and multi-lateral peace negotiations, which include mutual concessions and compromises, especially when forces with powerful sponsors are regrouping. Let's hope that these plans – announced by Kamala Harris and Antony Blinken after the dialogue that the latter had with the leader of Chinese diplomacy, Wang Yi, at the Munich Security Conference, in February this year – will not be completed. The two American officials believed that Beijing could provide Moscow with lethal weapons, in addition to the non-lethal equipment it has already been sending for several months.

Historical experience shows us that, under such circumstances, parties in intense military conflicts tend to exhaust their human and material resources and will come to realize that the "prices" of victory in terms of territorial gains are sometimes far too high, and continued fighting foreshadows a "frozen conflict".² This is a state of affairs characterized by the lack of an officially recognized international agreement and the emergence of iron curtain-type paradigms. A "frozen conflict in Ukraine" would be an undesirable outcome, as none of the factors that caused the conflict between the two belligerents or the tensions between the West and Russia will disappear, and the war is likely to resume at any time.

Following these possible states of affairs, the adversaries create propaganda rhetoric accusing the opposing parties of bearing full responsibility for the situation they are in and seek to convince the international community that justice is on their side. In this context, a question naturally arises – has the strategic fatigue of some states settled in when it comes to the conflict in Ukraine? The answer that surfaces is somewhat negative.

In this particular situation – the war in Ukraine, it is unlikely that the authorities in Kyiv will sign a legal ceasefire agreement if it contains references to the loss of territories. The Ukrainian people are firmly against any territorial concession and support the creation of international investigative bodies to establish specific rules for Moscow. Ukraine's desire to defeat Russia is also supported by some historical resentments generated by the atrocities committed by the Soviets in the early 1930s (the starvation of ethnic Ukrainians and the Holodomor). At this time, any proposal to end the fighting, including the UN's control in the field or the model of arbitration imposed in the Brcko area, through the Dayton Agreement, in the context of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is an illusion. Even the unlikely prospects of Ukraine's accession to the EU or the pre-arrangements with NATO failed to be reason enough for a ceasefire to be taken into account.

The second year of the Russian-Ukrainian war does not clearly foreshadow the continuation of the confrontations, even if Moscow has completed the training period of the recently mobilized military, and the Ukrainian army is waiting for the arrival of the heavy weapons promised by many Western states. It remains to be seen how many and how useful will the equipment be, once it reaches the Ukrainian forces and impact will have on the fight. As far as the other side is concerned, spring will show whether or not there is the confirmation that the Russian air force will be used on a different level, as compared to how they were involved 2022. To prevent such a development, the Biden administration could take the initiative and, together with its allies,



Source: <https://www.impact.ro/ce-teritorii-mai-controlleaza-rusii-in-ucraina-harta-dupa-9-luni-de-razboi-445537.html>

²The state of a social system (something that is supposed to have a memory) is characterised by the multitude of factors that define the structure, behaviour and functionality of that system, at a certain point.

provide substantial additional incentives to Ukraine, as well as increase political, diplomatic and economic pressure on Russia, to end the war through a swift cease-fire agreement, followed by peace negotiations. Incentives for Kyiv could be: initiatives to start the process of an accelerated EU accession, as well as generous funds for the post-conflict reconstruction of Ukraine. In recent months, international security experts have noticed significantly less references to Russia's possible use of tactical nuclear weapons. That is if it does not come to claim the existence of threats to its security. The big immediate problem refers to the real status that Moscow will recognise in relation to the four regions integrated into the Federation, given that the international community has not recognized the referendums from the fall of 2022, as legal.

*

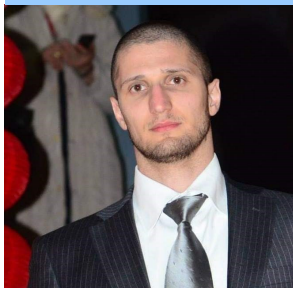
* *

If the US, the EU and NATO fail to bring about a negotiated end to the war, it is very likely that it will continue with the gradual destruction of what is left of Ukraine, with thousands and thousands more casualties on both sides, as well as an increased number of Ukrainian refugees.

Regardless of the prospects of a ceasefire and peace agreement in the near future, the United States and its allies should engage in a dialogue with Russia on a framework for a post-war European and global security architecture. Furthermore, a dialogue with Ukraine is necessary to accept a possible change to what the motto "nothing about Ukraine, without Ukraine" represents. Such an approach could also encourage a possible direct dialogue between Russia and Ukraine, perhaps under the auspices of the UN, an organization that has been almost absent so far, in the process of reaching a state of normalcy in the region. Both sides should also take into account the Western dilemma: the military confrontations in Ukraine should end with Ukraine victorious and an undefeated Russian Federation. If they take into account the extremely high political, economic, and military costs Russia and Ukraine's leaders might agree with carrying out a dialogue based on the principles of de-escalation.

Putin, as the leader who bears the greatest responsibility for this tragedy, may understand that his entire historical legacy is at risk. On the other hand, Zelensky, elected to seek the normalization of his country's relations with Russia, knows that Ukraine has been practically destroyed and that the time has come to consider its reconstruction as well. Since the current war has most likely produced many hundreds of thousands of casualties, rational world leaders should pressure both Putin and Zelensky to consider at least a temporary solution.

III. EUROPE



Geopolitics of Foreign Fighters and Volunteer Battalions in the Ukraine Conflict

Giuliano Bifulchi (Italy)

The conflict in Ukraine has highlighted foreign fighters¹ and volunteer battalions' impact in a war zone which, since its beginning in February 2022, has involved not only regular Russian and Ukrainian military forces.

Indeed, the world has witnessed the rise of an international movement created to militarily support the Ukrainian forces by establishing what has been defined as an 'armed resistance against the Russian aggressor'. Therefore, the Ukrainian authorities promoted the 'International Legion', a military battalion composed of volunteers from all over the world whose purpose is to counter and fight the Russian forces.²

According to the Russian Defense Ministry, volunteers from different parts of the world, especially Western countries and the post-Soviet space, which Moscow defines as 'mercenaries' and, therefore, irregular fighters, have fought among the ranks of the International Legion against the Russian armed forces in the context of the Kremlin's so-called "special military operation".³

This paper wants to analyze the foreign fighters enrolled in volunteer battalions linked to the post-Soviet space and the Russian Federation, whom the Kremlin sees as a threat to Russian national security. Furthermore, this investigation aims also to assess if foreign fighters and volunteer battalions' presence in Ukraine might represent a future challenge for the European Union, considering the possibility that these paramilitary formations might join crime organizations or terrorist groups at the end of the conflict.

Foreign Volunteer Battalions in Ukraine Connected to the Post-Soviet Space

In the Ukraine territory, nowadays, apart from the International Legion, there are several battalions whose fighters are linked to the post-Soviet space due to their nationalities and manifesto. According to Akhmet Zakayev, former prime minister of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria in exile in Great Britain, five Chechen battalions are fighting in Ukraine because, instead of opening a second front in Chechnya, the volunteers preferred to fight the Kremlin in the Ukrainian territory to avoid the Russian retaliation against the local population. On his social network account, in September 2022, Zakayev reported that in Ukraine are fighting the Sheikh Mansour Battalion, the Dzhokhar Dudayev Battalion, the Noman Chelebizshikhhan Battalion, a Chechen battalion of special forces under the main direction of the Ukraine Defense Ministry's Intelligence as part of the International Legion, and a newly formed battalion of which the former Chechen Prime Minister himself has provided little information.⁴

¹The term "foreign fighters" has been widely used in the recent past in academic literature and Western media to outline combatants enlisted in the ranks of the Islamic State. In this analysis, however, with such term the author outlined those fighters who are not regularly enlisted neither in the Ukrainian nor in the Russian armies although they have actively supported one of the belligerent parties. In academic literature, there was a huge debate on how the international community should consider these combatants called foreign fighters, foreign volunteers or mercenaries. Cf. T. MEHRA LL.M, A. THORLEY, "Foreign Fighters, Foreign Volunteers and Mercenaries in the Ukrainian Armed Conflict", International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 2022.

²The Ukrainian government created the portal Fight for Ukraine (<https://fightforua.org/>) to promote the International Legion and offer the opportunity to join the fight against the Russian armed forces.

³The Russian Ministry of Defense regularly publishes the number of foreign fighters present on Ukrainian territory. <https://eng.mil.ru/files/Number%20of%20foreign%20mercenaries%20in%20Ukraine.pdf>.

⁴A. KUSHCHENKO, "Glava Ichkerii v izgnanii Ahmed Zakaev rasskazal, kakoe kolichestvo chechenskih batal'onov vojuet za Ukrainu", Patriot Donbassa, 2022.

Some of these military battalions found their root at the beginning of the War in Donbas, which started in 2014. By contrast, other battalions were established after the beginning of the Ukraine conflict in February 2022. Indeed, the Dzhokhar Dudayev and Shaykh Mansur battalions were created in 2014 as armed groups of volunteers fighting in support of the Ukrainian armed forces engaged against the pro-Russian separatist forces of Donetsk and Lugansk.

The International Peacekeeping Battalion, named in honor of Dzhokhar Dudayev, has been defined as a voluntary non-governmental armed formation composed mainly of Chechens who emigrated from Russia after the Second Chechen War (1999-2009). The Battalion has among its ranks also volunteers from Georgia, Azerbaijan, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Sweden, England, Norway, Denmark, France, Austria, and Finland. The military group is named after Dzhokhar Dudayev, the first president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria killed in 1996 by the Russian security forces. In March 2014, in Denmark, the social and political movement *Svobodny Kavkaza* (Free Caucasus) established an armed group capable of participating in the War in Donbas. Adam Osmaev, the Battalion's leader, was accused of attempting to assassinate Russian President Vladimir Putin. In 2017, in the city of Kyiv, according to Russian and Western sources, Osmaev managed to escape an assassination attempt resulting in his wife's death.

The International Peacekeeping Battalion, named in honor of Shaykh Mansur, is considered a voluntary non-governmental armed formation composed mainly of Chechens who emigrated from Russia after the Chechen conflict⁵. Muslim Cheberloevsky is the Battalion's leader. Since February 2022, he has confirmed in several videos published on different social networks that the Battalion is fighting in support of Ukraine against the Russian armed forces⁶.

Although Zakayev stated that five Chechen battalions are fighting in Ukraine, apart from the Dzhokhar Dudayev and the Shaykh Mansur Battalions and the Chechens enrolled in the International Legion, it seems that the other military formations belong to other ethnic groups, and the Chechen fighters are just a tiny part of them.

In this context, it is necessary to mention the Georgian National Legion, founded in 2014 by the Georgian citizen Mamuka Mamulashvili. Since the beginning of the War in Donbas, the Georgian National Legion has carried out sabotage and reconnaissance operations in the Donetsk and Lugansk areas. At the same time, currently, according to some sources, this group of volunteers would participate in the defence of Ukraine from the Russian invasion as part of the 25th territorial defense battalion of the Kyiv region⁷. In April 2022, the Georgian National Lesson became 'famous' among the Western media after some combatants shared on Telegram a video broadcasting them killing Russian soldiers captured in Ukraine⁸.

In 2016, Lenur Islyamov founded the Battalion named in honor of Noman Chelebidzhikhan (in Tatar *Adina Milliy Gvardiya Noman Çelebicihan*) as a voluntary non-governmental armed formation representing the Crimean Tatars, or, according to the words of Islyamov himself, the entire Crimean population. Named in honour of the first chairman of the government of the Crimean People's Republic⁹ formed during the Russian civil war, since January 2016, the Noman Chelebidzhikhan Battalion conducted sabotage, patrol, and reconnaissance operations during the War in Donbas jointly with the *Mejlis* of the Crimean Tatar people, the paramilitary group *Pravy Sector*, the Ukrainian Volunteer Corps, the Azov Battalion and other paramilitary formations¹⁰. Previously, several members of the Battalion appeared to have taken part in the Crimean blockade organized in opposition to the referendum that decreed the annexation of the peninsula to the Russian Federation. According to the words of Franz Klintsevich, first vice-president of the Defense Committee of the Russian Federation Council, Turkey could have supported the Battalion¹¹.

⁵Sheikh Mansur Ushurma is an important historical figure in the North Caucasian society because he led the resistance against the Russian expansionism of Tsar Catherine the Great during the late eighteenth century. Cf. G. BIFOLCHI, *Storia del Caucaso del Nord tra presenza russa, Islam e terrorismo*, Anteo Edizioni, Cavriago (RE), 2022, pp. 39-41.

⁶S. BOLTUC, G. BIFOLCHI, D. GAROFALO, *Conflict in Ukraine: Geopolitical Risk, Jihadist Propaganda and Threat to Europe*, Enigma Edizioni, Florence, 2022, pp. 32-39.

⁷I. KONONEKO, "Inostrancy-legionery vojuyut za Ukrainu", *Nastojashhee Vremya*, 2020; M. GAFUROVA, "RIAN: na Ukraine protiv armii RF vojuet "Gruzinskij legion", *Ura.ru Informacionnoe agentstvo*, 2022.

⁹EDITORIAL STAFF, "Pojavilis" Foto Batal'ona Imeni Nomana Chelebidzhikhan", *Islam v Ukraine*, 2016

⁸E. HILL, "Video appears to show Ukrainian troops killing captured Russian soldiers", *The New York Times*, 2022.

¹⁰D. SHARKOV, "Ukraine's Crimean Tatar Battalion To Start Border Patrols", *Newsweek*, 2016.

¹¹EDITOR, "Klinsevich: Turcija davno razygryvaet "krymsko-tatarskuju" kartu", *RIA Novosti*, 2015; REDAZIONE, "Organizatoram blokady Kryma pomogaet Minoborony Turcii", *Regnum*, 2015; EDITOR, "Crimean Tatar battalion got help from Turkey", *Crimean News Agency*, 2016.

In November 2022, the Kyrgyz citizen Almaz Kudabek established the Turan Battalion. In an interview that appeared on both YouTube and the BASE Telegram channel of Kazakh political opponent Aidos Sadykov, Kudabek declared that the Turan Battalion includes Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Buryat, Dagestani and Altai fighters eager to provide support to the Ukrainian armed forces engaged in the fight against Russian soldiers, *Kadyrovtsy* (the Chechen fighters loyal to Ramzan Kadyrov), and the Wagner private military contractors¹². In the Battalion's video presentation that appeared on social media, Almaz Kudabek accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of organising a genocide against the Turkic people and promised to destroy the “*shaitan* (evil) regime” of Ramzan Kadyrov and the “imperial regime” of Vladimir Putin¹³.

Conclusions

Looking at the profile of the battalions present in the Ukrainian conflict and adding them to the volunteers currently fighting in the International Legion, it is possible to say that what is happening in Ukraine is taking on a decidedly international character. Indeed, on the one hand, the Ukrainian conflict has generated an open confrontation between Moscow, Brussels and Washington, pushing the West to impose sanctions against the Kremlin. On the other hand, the Ukraine conflict has also attracted the interest of various non-state geopolitical actors who have poured into Ukrainian territory to support Kyiv and contemporarily pursue their own latent goals.

In this context, it is undeniable that the strong commitment of the Chechen battalions Dzhokhar Dudayev and Shaykh Mansur can be linked to the failed experience of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, whose short life ended due to the Russian military intervention. The hatred often professed towards the Kremlin and Putin, as well as its historical ally in Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, has given rise to military companions currently engaged in the Ukrainian conflict. In the future, these battalions might use the weapons and military experience obtained in Ukraine and the reputation acquired through their continuous campaign and promotion on social networks to start a struggle within the Chechen territory. This eventuality represents a risk that the Kremlin must avoid in order not to risk that the North Caucasian republic and the entire region plunge back into the instability and insecurity that characterised them during the '90 and the first decade of the 21st century.

The Georgian National Legion, on the other hand, underlines the open wound in Russian-Georgian relations caused by the Kremlin's support to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Indeed, since the 2008 Russo-Georgian Conflict, Tbilisi has always considered the two de-facto republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as part of the Georgian sovereign territory under Russian military occupation. The Battalion's leader, Mamuka Mamulashvili, openly expressed his hatred against the Russian people originated in the past when he participated in the war in Abkhazia (1992-1993) at the age of 14 under the command of his father¹⁴. An advisor to the Minister of Defense of Georgia from 2009 to 2012¹⁵, Mamulashvili declared that he did not take Russian prisoners during the fighting, underlining the great resentment that a part of the Georgian population has towards Russia and the complex situation existing in another strategic region of the post-Soviet space such as the Caucasus.

In this context, it is impossible to forget that the Noman Chelebidzhikhan Battalion and the Turan Battalion bring together volunteer fighters of Turkic roots. United by the struggle against what they defined as ‘the Russian invader’, in the future, Ankara might exploit their Turkic identity to control these fighters to promote Turkish foreign policy in the Eurasian geopolitical chessboard and undermine the Russian presence in strategic regions such as Central Asia and the Caucasus. Except for the Georgian National Legion, the other battalions mentioned above can share a different unifying element, such as the religious one, because most of the volunteer fighters are Sunni Muslims. Indeed, videos of foreign Muslim fighters screaming *Allah Akbar* (God is the greatest) and social network posts inciting the Russian Muslim *umma* (community) to join the fight against the Kremlin might become part of the jihadist propaganda promoted by international terrorist organisations. Therefore, the Ukraine territory might be converted into a recruitment centre for Muslim fighters whose guerrilla experience could be transformed into violent attacks against European targets once the Ukraine conflict ends¹⁶.

¹²G. BIFOLCHI, “Ukraine conflict, kadyrovtsy and Chechnya”, *SpecialEurasia*, 2022.

¹³G. BIFOLCHI, “Established the Turkic ‘Turan Battalion’ in Ukraine to Fight against Russian Armed Forces”, *Geopolitical Report ISSN 2785-2598 Volume 25 Issue 4, SpecialEurasia*, 2022.

¹⁴T. OREL, “Komandir “Gruzinskogo legionia” Mamuka MAMULASHVILI: “Vojna v Ukraine skoro zakonchitsja — jeto poslednie konvul’sii rossijskoj vlasti”, *Bulvar Gordona N.7 (511)*, 2015.

¹⁵N. WALLER, “American Ex-Paratrooper Joins Georgian Legion Fighting in Ukraine”, *Georgia Today*, 2016.

¹⁶G. BIFOLCHI, “Conflict in Ukraine, Russian Language Jihadist Propaganda, Chechen Battalions and the Link with the Russian North Caucasus”, *The Policy of National Security 23(2)*, pp. 33-47.

Considering the ongoing jihadist propaganda that the Ukraine conflict has generated, European and Western institutions might not underestimate the geopolitical risk coming from foreign fighters and volunteer battalions supporting Kyiv against Moscow. Indeed, since the Ukrainian presidential decree adopted in 2021 granted Ukrainian citizenship to foreign fighters who took part in War in Donbas, these combatants in the future, whether or when Ukraine becomes an EU member, might freely travel in European territory and organize violent attacks against civilians¹⁷.

¹⁷E. BELOV, "Chechency – jeto ljudi, kotorye za nas". Predstavitel' prezidenta Ukrainy – o dobrovol'cah i jekstradicijah", Kavkaz Realij, 2022.

III. EUROPE



Europe in Turmoil: Navigating the Challenges of Post-Ukraine War Realities

Dimitrios Makousis (Grecia)

Si vis pacem, para bellum
Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus



Source: <https://media.istockphoto.com>

Abstract

Europe is currently confronted with a host of challenges in the spheres of geostrategy and geoeconomics, the consequences of which could have a significant impact on its future trajectory. These challenges include the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, EU and NATO relationships with Russia and China, geopolitical rivalries with emerging powers, the potential formation of a Eurasian bloc, political and socioeconomic cohesion, demographic shifts and migration, the effects of climate change and energy transition, as well as cybersecurity risks. The successful navigation of these multifaceted risks will play a crucial role in determining Europe's path forward. In light of this, the EU must take stock of the dangers it faces and the necessary steps it should take to mitigate them.

Prepare for War

The Latin maxim "*Si vis pacem, para bellum*" has been used by various authors and military strategists in the past. It is commonly attributed to the Roman author Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus and his famous dictum "*Qui désirât pacem, praeparet bellum*", found in his work "*De Re Militari*", in which he stressed the significance of military preparedness as a means of avoiding war¹. This idea was echoed by Aristotle, a precursor of Vegetius, who wrote in his "*Politics*": "... *For when men are well prepared, no enemy even thinks of attacking them*"². If you want to live in peace, simply put, you must possess the capacity for war. Ultimately, as Greek philosopher Heraclitus tells us: "*War is the father of us all and our king. War discloses who is godlike and who is but a man, who is slave and who is freeman*"³.

¹Christopher Allmand, *The De Re Military of Vegetius: How did the Middle Ages treat a late Roman text on War?* *Revista de História das Ideias, Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, Vol. 30, 2009, p. 109, accessed February 28, 2023, https://digitalisdsp.uc.pt/bitstream/10316.2/41532/1/The_de_re_militari_of_Vegetius.pdf*

²Aristotle, *Politics*, Book VII, Part XI, accessed February 28, 2023, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.7.seven.html>

³Guy Davenport, *Herakleitos & Diogenes, Translations, Herakleitos, The Extant Fragments, Fragment 25, Grey Fox Press, 1999, p.15, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://blogs.baruch.cuny.edu/authenticityandastonishment2/files/2013/02/Guy-Davenport-The-Fragments-of-Heraclitus-and-Diogenes.pdf>*

Other thinkers have expanded on the notion of preparedness for war, and some notable figures include Themistocles, an ancient Greek general; Niccolo Machiavelli, an Italian writer and philosopher; Sir John Smythe, an English author, and soldier; Thomas Hobbes, an English philosopher; and Carl von Clausewitz, a German military theorist. These influential individuals referenced the idea of preparedness in various ways. For instance, in his famous work “On War”, Clausewitz underlined that “*Defense is a stronger form of fighting than attack. ... The stronger the defense, the stronger is one’s capacity to attack. ... The defensive form of war is meant not only to ward off the blow but also to counter-attack*”⁴. Furthermore, both Machiavelli and Hobbes advocated the necessity of preparedness for war as a means of achieving peace and security in society. Machiavelli emphasized the importance of strategic thinking, strength, and the willingness, when necessary, to use force, whereas Hobbes stressed the imperative of strong governance and the use of force. For the latter, as described in “Leviathan”, “*Covenants are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all, without the sword*”⁵.

While some argue that diplomacy and cooperation are more effective in promoting peace, others recognize the necessity of military readiness in defending against potential threats. In his April 2, 1917, Address to Congress, President Woodrow Wilson requested a declaration of war against Germany in response to Germany’s hostile actions during World War One, arguing that the US was being forced to enter the war because there were no other means of defending their rights. He stressed that “*Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved, and the freedom of its peoples, and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic governments backed by organized force which is controlled wholly by their will, not by the will of their people*”⁶. Similarly, Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister during WWII, believed that diplomacy alone would not suffice to deter Hitler’s aggression, and therefore a strong military was necessary to defend Britain. He also promoted the importance of building strong alliances and working with the US and the Soviet Union to achieve shared goals. Thus, he recognized the significance of diplomacy but also believed firmly in military strength and preparedness as a means of deterring aggression and protecting national security. In essence, Vegetius’s maxim is a reminder that nations must remain vigilant and capable to defend themselves against emerging threats.

Europe and Russia: Background and Strategies

Following Russia’s reprehensible invasion of Ukraine, Europe was confronted with an unprecedented crisis in years. The outbreak of a war on the doorstep of the European Union further exacerbated the pandemic’s impact, which already had resulted in an inflation surge, supply chain destabilization, and an energy crisis. The notion that Europe’s eastward expansion via the Eastern Partnership initiative, establishing deeper relations with the post-Soviet states of Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, would ensure that the continent would never again witness war, thereby effectively quelling any prospects of military aggression on its soil, was shattered when Russian troops crossed Ukraine’s northern border⁷. Despite not being a member of the European Union, and in contrast with Russia’s view of the country as part of its sphere of influence, Ukraine’s strong historical and organic ties with neighboring western countries have continued to deepen, driven by the will of the Ukrainian people.

Germany’s primacy within Europe has hindered the Union’s ability to effectively reduce its reliance on Russian energy, despite its declared strategic objective to do so since the late 2000s and its changing energy policies since the 1990s. The priorities set by Europe to combat climate change and protect the environment are aligned with the goal of decreasing Moscow’s geopolitical influence. The transition towards renewable energy is also a geostrategic option and a geopolitical tool for reducing dependence on hydrocarbons and, consequently, reducing reliance on Russia. Berlin’s decision to deepen its relations with Moscow was part of a strategy aimed at balancing between its two “traditional enemies”, Russia and France. Energy served as a tool to achieve this goal with Russia, as France posed no severe threat within the EU.

⁴Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Book VI, Chapter I, 1873, London, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://www.clausewitz.com/readings/OnWar1873/BK6ch01.html>

⁵Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651, Part II, XVIII, McMaster University Archive of the History of Economic Thought, p. 108, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/hobbes/Leviathan.pdf>

⁶Woodrow Wilson, “April 2, 1917: Address to Congress, Requesting a Declaration of War against Germany”, Transcript, *Presidential Speeches*, Miller Center, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/april-2-1917-address-congress-requesting-declaration-war>

⁷“Eastern Partnership”, *European External Action Service, The Diplomatic Service of the European Union*, accessed February 28, 2023, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eastern-partnership_en

Furthermore, social cohesion, which is essential for a country's survival, was also a crucial objective. Without sufficient and affordable energy, economic development and progress would not be possible, and the division between West and East Germany that persists to this day would not be compensated for by social policy implementation.

However, German dominance in the political game within the EU has prevented the continent from effectively shielding itself against future threats from the east or elsewhere. Energy became a weapon in the hands of President Putin, who used it to prevent a strong and unified reaction from EU member states in response to the planned attack on Ukraine. The games played with Nord Stream, the reduction of natural gas flows, the accusations hurled against the West, and the denial of any responsibility whatsoever by the Russian side were indicative signs of how a policy-making tool can backfire if countermeasures are not already in place.

The Russian President's decision to deploy the "energy weapon" demonstrates his desire to push things to extremes if necessary. After all, the Western reflexes were sluggish in response to the occupation of Crimea, and President Putin could have thought that the same would happen again. Moreover, the disintegration of the European front, including the withdrawal of Great Britain from the Union, weakened established balances within it, which were primarily put in place to limit a potential expansionist Germany in the future. With only France as a rival, the emergence of a Germany that would lead European affairs could become a reality. A Germany deeply dependent on the Russian Federation would make the EU easily accessible to Russian influence. Europe's significance as a bridgehead for the United States' deterrence strategy against Russia made this possibility a significant concern for the US.

The Russian strategy for the partial revival of the Soviet Union, the collapse of which was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe according to the Russian President, leaves no room for other European illusions, nor for a passive stance on the part of the United States. Moreover, the opportunity of a Europe-Russia approach seems lost with the expansion of NATO and the culmination of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the attempt of Russia to deny the right to self-determination of a sovereign country by its neighbor. A non-imperialistic Russia in peaceful relations with Europe would be a reality beneficial to both parties, as well as to global stability, prosperity, and peace, something that would ultimately benefit the United States as well.

However, numerous historical, political, ideological, and cultural factors make such a development challenging. And although efforts to avoid a nuclear confrontation between the two dominant powers during the Cold War led to a brief respite from nuclear rivalry, it seems that we are once again heading towards a resurgence of fears of nuclear destruction. Recent threats by Russia to use nuclear weapons, as well as President Putin's announcement of Russia's withdrawal from the New Start Strategic Offensive Weapons Treaty, suggest a growing risk of nuclear conflict. The prospect of slipping back into a nuclear arms race and testing, in combination with the dangers posed by climate change, is certainly not a positive development for the protection of the environment and human societies.

The Eurasian Bloc

At the same time, the emergence of a Eurasian bloc of powers opposed to the West, led by the partnership between Russia and China under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), presents a severe challenge to Europe, the US, and the Western bloc. This political, economic, and defense union includes most of the Eurasian continent, 40% of the world's population, and 30% of world trade⁸. Moreover, regional powers such as Iran and Turkey are already joining or in talks with the bloc. Such developments openly challenge the dominance of the West and the US. In fact, in the last three years, we have seen this opposition being expressed with openly aggressive actions in the field, such as the instrumentalization of immigration by Turkey against Greece through the attempt to create a mini-invasion of thousands of immigrants in Evros in 2020, from Belarus against Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia with the attempt to break their borders by streams of immigrants in 2021-2022, culminating in the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

The unification of Eurasia, from a political and strategic perspective, is an ambitious task with a high probability of not being accomplished. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that various powerful forces with abundant natural, economic, and defense resources, viewing the West as hostile, are coordinating. Despite the significant interdependence between Russia and Europe, based on energy and economic ties, and China's extensive trade relations with Europe and the US, factors that tend to counterbalance a potential escalation of instability and conflict, the policies pursued by Russia suggest that even the possibility of war is not off the table.

⁸Rebecca Nadin, Ilayda Nijhar, Elvira Mami, "Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit 2022: key takeaways", ODI Think Tank, September 23, 2022, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://odi.org/en/insights/shanghai-cooperation-organisation-summit-2022-key-takeaways/>

And while Russia is more aggressive and impatient in establishing its supremacy and influence in the “Near Abroad”, a region consisting of former Soviet states on its borders, China is proving to be more methodical and patient. China’s military presence in countries such as Cambodia, Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, and the Pacific Islands, along with the strategic plans for broad expansion, including construction or long-term lease of infrastructure such as roads, airports, and ports far from its borders, from the Pacific (e.g. Solomon Islands) to the Atlantic and West African countries (e.g. Equatorial Guinea), i.e. the ongoing “One Belt One Road” initiative, demonstrate its aspirations to play a leading role internationally and improve its potential for global power projection.

The AUKUS Security Agreement between the US, the UK, and Australia, covering areas such as cyber warfare, undersea warfare, artificial intelligence, and nuclear defense capabilities, includes provisions for the assistance of the first two countries to the latter, regarding the development of nuclear submarines in the seas around Australia, thereby increasing Western military presence in the Pacific Ocean. The purpose of AUKUS, along with the QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), the strategic security dialogue between Japan, Australia, India, and the US, is to curb China’s geopolitical influence in the Indo-Pacific region⁹. However, Europe faces significant challenges in this context. Australia’s termination of a submarine purchase agreement with France, and the EU’s lack of knowledge of such developments demonstrate how weakened the EU’s global role has become. The geostrategic focus is shifting from Europe and the Atlantic to the Pacific, which will have consequences for Europe’s geopolitical footprint globally. A reduced strategic importance of the EU implies a reduced ability to intervene and determine global developments, which has significant implications for the prosperity, stability, and political and cultural influence of European nations in a rapidly changing world.

Mapping the Geopolitical Minefield: Europe’s Future Challenges

After the COVID-19 pandemic, the globalization process has been halted and reversed. The disruption of supply chains and the tendency of countries to secure necessary materials for managing the effects of the pandemic has caused states to focus inward and strengthen their crisis response capabilities. While the EU had an increased capacity to manage the pandemic and its devastating impact due to its economic strength and structure, serious problems arose. The European policies increased the cost of energy even before the invasion of Ukraine. Due to the way the European energy markets are structured, prices have soared to levels never before seen. This has sparked fears of a recession in the euro zone, as well as damaging effects on the economy and social cohesion.

Furthermore, the absence of immediate decision-making mechanisms during crises was apparent. While the EU’s ability to cope with such challenges is commendable, this did not occur due to sharp reflexes, predictive capabilities, or strategic acumen. And that is a significant problem that may cost the EU in the future. The European edifice’s focus on the economic field of attention after the Second World War helped establish cohesion, solidarity, peace, and prosperity on this long-suffering continent. However, it no longer appears to be sufficient to enable Europe to continue on the same path. Europe must actively prioritize other concerns immediately.

On the other hand, the development of technology has led and continues to lead to an increasingly wider connectivity between the world’s regions, which has both positive and negative consequences. Connectivity facilitates the development of trade, transactions, transportation, movement of people, capital, and knowledge. However, at the same time, it also creates security challenges, such as the risk of cyber-attacks that can cause problems in the regular operation of infrastructure and thus in social life, as we saw in cases after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, with attacks on transportation infrastructure in northern Germany states demonstrating, thus, the vulnerability of such systems. For Europe, the adoption of cybersecurity measures to safeguard its infrastructure and institutions must become top priority for the Union’s political establishment.

Furthermore, these interdependencies between countries located in different blocs can lead to greater possibilities of influencing domestic affairs with the aim of shaping political choices according to the perpetrator’s interests. This can be achieved by weaponizing economic tools, such as loans, natural resources, energy, populations, migration flows, or by influencing minorities and populations within borders. We are, thus, heading towards an unprecedented hybrid situation on the global scene with high connectivity and great interdependence on the one hand, and geostrategic rivalries and separate blocs with distinct cultural, political, and economic-financial characteristics on the other, striving to project power on the world’s chessboard. In light of these developments, the establishment of a common defense and security policy is crucial. Also, the creation

⁹Akshobh Giridharada, “Why the AUKUS helps the Quad”, *Observer Research Foundation*, October 21, 2021, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/why-the-aukus-helps-the-quad/>

of a “European Army” in conjunction with intelligence and security agencies, and a centralized joint command, would enable the analysis and assessment of critical information and developments through a “European Security” instead of fragmented national interests’ lens. This approach shall foster greater cohesion and unity among European nations, enhancing the collective ability to respond effectively to security threats and challenges in a coordinated and decisive manner.

The demographic issue, in addition to its humanitarian, economic, and social effects generating risks such as upsized pension and health costs, a probable shortage of skilled workers, and declining economic growth, also creates security, national cohesion, and defense risks for the European Union, particularly when combined with the burning issue of immigration. The declining and aging European population, with the simultaneous population increase in other continents, poses risks for economic prospects, internal security, and social cohesion of the European nations. The policy adopted in previous years, based mainly on ideological but also on pragmatic characteristics, promoted the idea that populations from other regions of the planet could cover gaps created in the population, particularly in younger age groups, thus solving economic development and insurance coverage issues, while also culturally enriching the old continent. However, in practice, this policy did not work out as planned.

Despite the macroeconomic benefits of such policy, there have been incidents of aggression from youth groups, even of second or third-generation immigrants, and phenomena of economic exploitation by some, of the provisions for state aid aimed at integration (e.g., allowances and housing). These have created ideological turmoil and political developments within the EU, with political forces emerging due to their anti-immigration political rhetoric, highlighting risks to the survival of their national distinctiveness and the internal cohesion of their countries. This fact reinforced the division within Europe, which was also expressed politically (Central Europe vs. Eastern Europe) by the already intensifying conflict between two dominant trends: the forces with more traditionalist and nationalistic characteristics versus those of the progressive and internationalist ideological space.

In the present context, Europe must prioritize its internal cohesion and security by strengthening its economic infrastructure, such as domestic production, or supply chains, which should relocate to regions that are not hostile towards Europe. Additionally, the economic development of every region in the Union must be supported, and measures must be taken to reverse the trend of demographic aging and facilitate internal migration where necessary. While it is true that the decline in population is a result of prosperity as described in the demographic transition theory, which holds that improved living conditions lead to fewer births, new technologies can be leveraged to enhance living standards and support a new model of life for Europeans. Effective management of migration is also essential, along with the establishment of supervisory rules and transnational cooperation, disincentives for populations from hostile regions, and intra-European solidarity to enable a common policy. These are critical points that should define decision-making in the future, given the ongoing geopolitical rivalries.

The ideological fragmentation of Europe, which has manifested in the divergent policies of various European states, combined with the Brexit crisis and the UK’s exit from the EU - which fueled one another to a certain extent - pose significant risks to the Union’s cohesion and stability, which is vital for its future on the global stage. These facts are a thorn in Europe’s side, leaving it exposed to external threats from those opposed to the West. Examples of this include the exploitation of refugee flows during the 2015 crisis by the Islamic State to stage terrorist attacks in European cities (terrorism remains a severe security threat), and the Russian propaganda and infiltration that were able to seize upon political strife within Europe to advance the interests of the Russian Federation. Political figures, parties, public figures, and media were approached by Russian agencies to work indirectly, projecting Russian positions and poisoning political life in European states.

Mass migration in the evolving geopolitical environment will result in security gaps, which emerging powers and a potentially coordinated Eurasian bloc in the future could exploit to influence European affairs. Organized minorities could also influence European politics within the framework of European legislation on human rights. For example, the Turkish minority in Germany wields significant influence that often determines Germany’s stance towards Turkey, which given its ambivalent stance, raises questions about the cohesion of the Euro-Atlantic Alliance. Therefore, it is a critical issue how a Turkey operating within an emerging Eurasian Alliance will affect decision-making in the heart of Europe, as well as other source countries of this bloc with massive organized populations in the states of the continent.

In the midst of current challenges, it is evident that the rupture prevailing in European societies poses a significant threat to their survival. Often driven by political motivations and lacking consideration for long-term consequences, witch-hunts are conducted that jeopardize democracy itself and freedom of expression. It is crucial for the European political system to enable divergent ideological forces to come to a consensus in the

face of such challenges. Albeit disagreement is a fundamental aspect of democracy, the common interest must prevail in the face of autocratic forces that exhibit higher speed and efficacy in decision-making and policy implementation. Persisting on internal divisions while overlooking the risks at hand may only help the enemies of Europe.

Climate change is another threat that Europe must effectively manage. In recent years, the European Union has taken the initiative to combat the effects of climate destabilization, which are mainly caused by human activity, based on scientific findings. Through legislative and regulatory initiatives, the EU has established the Green Deal's ambitious goal of achieving a climate-neutral economy by 2050, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, accelerating the transition to renewable energy sources and other decarbonized technologies such as hydrogen and nuclear energy, promoting energy efficiency and savings, and implementing circular economy principles with significant investments in the environment. Europe must keep moving down this path. Here, it should be noted that climate risks also intermingle with health risks and potential new outbreaks of diseases and pandemics. Following COVID-19, the resilience of the European healthcare systems and the overall health of citizens should become priorities and steps should be taken towards the introduction of provisions and measures that would ensure the EU's capacity to respond to such risks (we must also bear in mind the possibilities of biological warfare and terrorism in that respect).

However, often times, plans on paper and excessive ambitions do not align with reality. Climate destabilization poses numerous humanitarian, economic, and political risks (e.g., increased frequency and intensity of natural disasters, water and food scarcity, sea-level rise, geopolitical risks etc.). To address such risks, policy-makers must consider all available data in their decision-making processes. The belief that Europe will immediately become independent of carbon is misguided and has been irresponsibly spread to the public, serving a multitude of interests. Therefore, the appropriate policy mix must be determined through scientific research, which will enable the identification of practical alternatives to achieve optimal results.

Investments in alternative forms of energy must continue. However, this does not imply that the hydrocarbon industry should be vilified, leading to disinvestment and consequently, the risk of insufficient supply in the immediate future. The war in Ukraine and its impact have also put pressure on energy markets. The objective of adapting to a new environment should also be given equal importance to that of stabilizing global warming at levels of increase below 1.5 degrees Celsius. If the latter fails, the former should be already in place. Plans, infrastructure, and public awareness should be already present to achieve the best possible result. By following both directions instead of one, there is a higher probability of success. Furthermore, technologies such as carbon capture and storage, energy storage, or efficient and smart devices should receive more funding, and their research and usage should be promoted more extensively, even as policy instruments. Europe has the potential to become a leading force in the fight against climate change, revolutionizing the way we approach this subject. Zero policies, such as the zero-covid policy, have been proven ineffective in addressing complex issues like climate change. An absolutism mindset does not provide the flexibility required to solve such problems.

In addition, Europe must consider the geopolitical risks associated with the rapid transition to renewable energy sources. Access to resources required for the transition, such as lithium, nickel, copper, cobalt, and rare earth elements (REEs), mostly passes through Eurasia, and is largely controlled by China or other Asian countries that China could influence. Europe's reliance on Russia could turn into dependence on China, leading to a difficult partnership even if trading interests are strong. Europe must secure the necessary resources and supply routes it will require in the coming decades. Strategies and plans for Africa, the Middle East, and South America play a critical role in this regard, as well as deepening of ties with Asian states such as India - via targeted and multifaceted cooperation, joint programs etc. - which could cause a rift in Eurasian cohesion and geostrategic capabilities.

The EU is in the middle of a competitive geopolitical triangle between China, Russia, and the USA, and it must plan its strategy carefully and overcome internal conflicts of interests. Damage to the EU's interests will harm the interests of its member-states. In order to plan its strategy effectively, the EU must be realistic. Realism was notably lacking in the years leading up to the war. Germany deepened Europe's energy dependence while intending to keep Russia close, and policies promoting complete independence from Russia were simultaneously implemented. Thus, Europe was left vulnerable to Russian aggression and missing a potential opportunity to cooperate with Russia before the annexation of Crimea, integrating it into a joint strategic security plan after the fall of the Soviet Union. Had such cooperation occurred, it might have averted this war. Due to the lack of a clear strategic direction in both EU energy and foreign policies, European societies are ill-prepared. As a result, ambiguity surrounds Europe's intentions, leaving its partners and competitors uncertain and opening up opportunities for exploitation by others.

Europe faces an existential challenge in deciding whether to act as an equal and autonomous partner in the

Euro-Atlantic alliance or as a subordinate to the interests of the dominant superpower. Its role in preserving stability and security in Nicholas Spykman's Rimland - spanning from Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the Mediterranean to Southeast Asia - is crucial, but Europe must claim it. Political priorities must change, and strategies be adopted to undermine Chinese expansion into Africa and the Middle East, prevent Russian influence and aggression into Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, and establish a strong partnership with Turkey, a key player in the competition between Eurasian and Euro-Atlantic Powers, if the latter openly chooses to side with the West. Additionally, it should fortify its southern and eastern borders and establish a strong presence in the Eastern Mediterranean by explicitly supporting European member-states in the region, namely Greece and Cyprus. To accomplish this, a cohesive and stable foreign policy, a common security and defense policy, personnel and organizations dedicated to executing these policies, including operations outside of Europe, are necessary. Without the above, the EU will not be perceived as a credible and influential actor in the international arena by other powers.

New Realities, New Approaches: A Call for Strategic Thinking and the 3 “P’s”

The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation has crumbled Europe's confidence that the continent will never witness war again. The EU failed to anticipate and prepare for the imminent conflict at its borders due to member states' opposing national interests and a foreign policy that has been contradictory for the past few decades. Germany's energy policy and geostrategic choices have played a pivotal role in this regard. The COVID-19 pandemic, disruption of supply chains, surging inflation, and war have exacerbated global turmoil, creating many problems worldwide and raising fears of a forthcoming recession alongside energy and food shortages.

The aggression in Ukraine and statements by President Putin have sparked fears of resurgent nuclear arms antagonism among great powers and potential use of nuclear tactical weapons in the battlefield. The ongoing geostrategic antagonisms fueled by the retreat of globalization processes have created a background that is stirring up world's division into distinct geopolitical blocs with different political, cultural, and economic characteristics. Transnational cooperation is indispensable for the economic development of nations. However, in the context of these antagonisms, regions will be divided among friends and foes, while multinational corporations will try to relocate their activities and supply chains to feel protected against future crises.

Apart from Russia, China's leadership aspirations are evident in its expansionist plans to become a world power, setting aside the US and its primacy. The “One Belt, One Road” initiative is indicative of Beijing's way of manipulating countries by lending money and building infrastructure to extend its influence both eastwards and westwards. The US, with its allies, is trying to block these powers in Eastern Europe and the Pacific (The intention of accepting Ukraine into the EU and NATO, Sweden and Finland's applications to join NATO, military, logistical, and financial support to Ukraine, the AUKUS Agreement etc.). Meanwhile, other states such as India, Iran, and Turkey are trying to establish themselves as regional powers, enhance their abilities to exert influence and project power in their neighborhood, and potentially participate in the formulation of a new anti-NATO alliance in the Eurasian continent. This new Eurasian bloc is already expressing its anti-Western sentiment and, if coordinated politically, has the resources and the potential to openly oppose American and Western dominance.

Given the circumstances and the developing geopolitical trends, the EU must confront these new realities and seek to find a balance among the geostrategic antagonisms and emerging actors, its role within the Western alliance, and in particular, its relationship with the US, the new challenges arising from the 4th Industrial revolution, and the destabilization of regions adjacent to its border, such as North Africa and the Middle East. Some of the main risks facing Europe for years to come are EU-Russia, EU-China, and EU-US relations; geopolitical risks associated with emerging economies, powers, and blocs such as the SCO, and the energy transition; health and climate change risks; cybersecurity; migration and demographic decline; terrorism in its various forms; and internal political and socioeconomic cohesion and stability.

As a general principle, Europe must be: *able to predict and analyze* developments according to its well-conceived and clear interests based on its predetermined goals for the mutual future of its nation-states and their peoples; *prescriptive* in the notion of setting out specific plans and rules and strategizing its “tailored policy alternatives” to defend its place in a volatile era within a rapidly changing world; and *proactive instead of reactive*, anticipating developments and having contingency plans in place, ready to execute, with its institutions reformed in such a way to enable swift, rational and efficient decision-making and policy implementation. Therefore, the “3 P's”, “*Predictive-Prescriptive-Proactive*”, constitute the fundamental axis around which the EU Strategy for the 21st Century should build.

In a nutshell, all challenges facing Europe pose serious threats and risks but also opportunities for

European nations. As such, it is critical to consider how the EU should respond to these challenges. With ongoing geopolitical tensions and the reshuffling of global order, Europe must be clear about its role in shaping the future of international affairs. Should it be a protagonist or a secondary player? Once Europe has established a clear sense of its aspirations, it must begin to make informed decisions regarding its participation in global developments and act appropriately towards both its allies and adversaries. One key takeaway is that the EU should closely monitor and respond to potential aggressive acts from states that are members or affiliated with the emerging Eurasian alliance, and respectively work with the US. To promote stability and security, Europe should engage in economic cooperation, infrastructure development, trade collaboration, diplomacy, and conflict resolution. It is also vital to establish a common defense and security policy, which should include the creation of a “European Army” and other security agencies to promote the “European Security” concept.

As far as technological advancements are concerned, Europe must incorporate them to improve its competitiveness and the well-being of its citizens while acknowledging the risks and taking measures to safeguard its institutions and infrastructure against cyber threats, subversive propaganda, or the enormous power concentrated by the private corporations that drive this progress. Technology can also be an essential tool to address challenges related to climate change (e.g., carbon emissions reduction, renewable energy investments, mitigation and impact adaptation, more active promotion of targeted technologies such as carbon capture and storage etc.), migration and terrorism (surveillance and monitoring of threatening segments of populations used by aggressive state and non-state actors as we have seen in the cases of Turkey, Belarus and the Islamic State, and bioterrorism), and health risks (healthcare, monitoring of new diseases and pandemics, and counter-measures, biological warfare).

Moreover, Europe should focus on promoting internal political and socioeconomic cohesion, including necessary reforms to benefit the economic status of its people, establishing solidarity and justice, and reaching a consensus between conflicting ideological wings by agreeing on core issues and policy choices for the future of Europe, instead of trying to undermine and defeat each other (political and economic integration and stabilization, support of internal labor market, unified market integration). Adopting measures to reverse the effects of demographic decline will also help Europe achieve these goals. To this end, Europe must attract and retain skilled workers and specialized staff, increase its birth rate by providing the necessary incentives and introducing an alternative lifestyle, and improve the quality of life of its aging population. Migration must be carefully monitored, taking into account migrant and refugee countries of origin, to avoid excessive influence and control of internal affairs by Eurasian states (border control, support of source countries and handling of the root causes of migration, and bilateral agreements).

To conclude, Europe faces an array of challenges that demand deliberate contemplation and resolute measures. By addressing these challenges head-on and undertaking necessary steps to mitigate their potential ramifications, the EU can guarantee a more stable and prosperous future for its member-states and citizens. The “3 P’s” strategic linchpin can ensure this outcome for the Europeans insofar they are “*Predictive, Prescriptive, and Proactive*”. As the dictum goes, “*Si vis pacem, para bellum*” - if you want peace, prepare for war. Hurdles ahead are manifold and intricate. So, Europe, be prepared.

III. EUROPE



Romania's Sustainable Development for 2030. From Concept to Action in the Energy Field. A Green and Just Transition. A 2050 Taxonomy¹

PhD. Eng. Călin VILT

The subject of Sustainable Development has a longer history, but it began to be applied more definitely and decisively following the adoption, in the UN General Assembly, in September 2015, of the document Agenda 2030 and the COP 21 Paris Agreement in December 2015.

All international bodies, including the World Energy Council, got involved in this essential problem, and the RND-WEC paid full attention to these subjects included in the pages of the *Energy Messenger*, and two of its Scientific Advisors were involved in Sustainable Development activities (Prof. Ionuț Purica and Călin Vilt).

Both the UN document and the National Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 have established 17 major objectives (Picture 1 – *Sustainable Development Objectives*), which must be followed SYSTEMICALLY, for a better future, for the current generations, but mostly future ones. The 2030 Agenda is structured on three pillars: economic, social and environmental.

In Romania, the 2030 Agenda and the National Sustainable Development Strategy-NSDS were adopted through the Decision of the Romanian Government, no. 877/2018, at the proposal of the newly established Department of Sustainable Development within the GSG, led by the State Advisor to Prime Minister, Mr. László Borbély, who is in charge of coordinating this national strategic concept. The strategy is citizen-oriented, it is based on innovation, optimism, resilience and trust that the state is at the service of every citizen in a fair, efficient way, in a clean, balanced and integrated environment.

Chapter 1 of the NSDS includes the chronology of the EU and National concepts of sustainable development on an international level, and the related documents. In Chapter 2, the objectives and their implementation status were presented with the identification of specific areas where additional efforts and resources are needed for reaching the objectives of convergence and closeness to the EU average, with all national targets. Chapter 3 presents the implementation and monitoring actions to increase the coherence of government actions and those of other relevant factors in society in order to ensure the harmonious merging of the three dimensions of the Sustainable Development on all 17 levels, including the reporting systems to the UN and the EU. The pillars of the SD 2030 Agenda were defined in the Brundtland Commission Report of 1987 and were taken up by all subsequent UN and EU documents.

In developing countries social equity aims at meeting basic needs, employment, food, energy, water and sanitation. Economic growth aims at bringing countries like Romania closer to the quality of life from developed countries. The environment needs to be preserved, available resources need to be improved and



Picture 1 – Sustainable development objectives

¹The article "Romania's Sustainable Development 2023 – from Planning to Action in the Energy Sector" was published by the Geostrategic Pulse magazine with consent from the author Călin VILT, advisor within the Romanian National Committee (RNC) for the World Energy Council (WEC), member of the Advisory Council for Sustainable Development/Sustainable Development Objectives 7/ Energy. The article was also published in Mesagerul Energetic (Energy Messenger), no. 225, the November-December issue. It is a news bulletin of the Romanian National Committee for the World Energy Council, ISSN:2066-4974.

clean technologies with no emissions need to be used. In the NSDS 2030, Romania proposed an INTEGRATED and systemic approach to the 17 SDOs in order to achieve the established targets and objectives, all activity being focused on citizens and the needs of future generations.

In the five years since the adoption of the document, important progress has been made for Romania's transition towards a sustainable society. The Interdepartmental Committee, the Sustainable Development Advisory Council, the Sustainable Development Nuclei from the involved ministries were established. Consultations with other non-governmental organizations, which support the achievement of the objectives, were started. Funding from EU ACOP Funds was accessed, to support all the proposed actions. Consulting services were purchased, based on the Prime Minister's Decision no. 372/01.07.2021, the Sustainable Development Consultative Council-SDCC was established and started to operate for a period of three years, consisting of 34 experts, two for each Objective SD-SDD.

The Coalition for Sustainable Development was established, which included the entire social spectrum, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, employers, trade unions, the academic environment, the Rectors' Council, innovation research entities, the media, cults, farmers, the young and the elderly. Its purpose was to have a continuous dialogue with the civil society, in order to maintain a balance and take corrective actions to achieve the established objectives and permanently improve the activities.

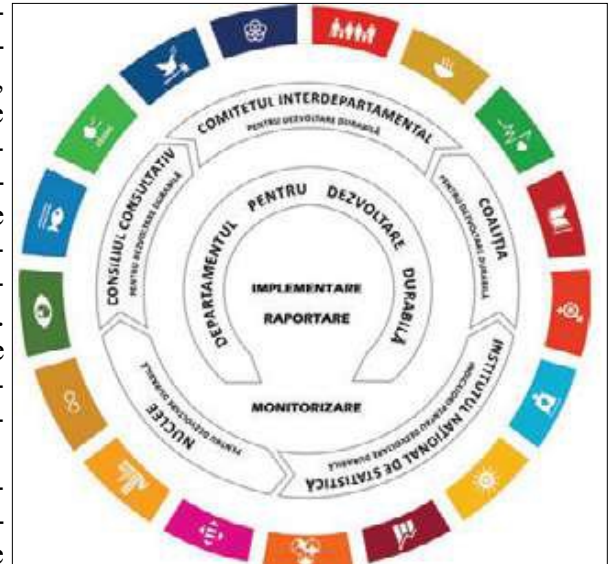
The National Action Plan for the 2030 Agenda was developed and it was approved by the GD no. 754/2022. This working paper for the entire government apparatus, and for the central and/or local institutions basically provides for four courses of action: **strengthening** and **expansion** of the governance framework for Development, **support** and **implementation** of the RNSDS 2030 through Education and Training programs for Sustainable Development, **promotion** of the Principles and Values of the Sustainable Development concept and a **monitoring** and **evaluation** component.

Between November 2022 and February 2023, the regional dissemination of these documents took place on the national territory. The action plan was launched during an international conference organized with the participation of the OECD (Romania is in the final phase of accession negotiations) and during an international presentation at the UN headquarters, in New York.

In February 2022, together with the National Institute of Statistics, the set of national indicators was defined. They helped with the implementation of the NSDS and the National Action Plan. It contained 98 basic indicators and another 196 secondary and tertiary indicators. A set of back-up indicators are still under consideration. There are no data sources, but they comply with international or national standards.

This year, Eurostat published the report "Monitoring Report Progress towards the SDGs in an EU Context" containing the progress of the past five years'. SDG 7 Energy is in 4th place with significant progress. The Sustainable Development Objective SDO 7 Clean and Affordable Energy is systemically correlated with all other objectives, but especially with: SDO 4 Education, SDO 6 Clean Water and Health, SDO 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDO 9 Industry Innovation and Infrastructure, SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 13 Climate Actions-Environment, SDG 14 Aquatic Life, SDG 15 Terrestrial Life, SDG 17 Partnerships to achieve the objectives.

The major macroeconomic objective is for all objectives to develop coherently and continuously in order to reach the targets set for 2030. "No one is left behind" is an important motto and in the SDG 7 Energy, it is much better appreciated and pursued, considering the very high investment values and the time they take to complete, which exceed political electoral cycles, requiring coherence, predictability and legislative stability, fiscal regulation and financing. The (careful and responsible!) liberalization of the energy and gas markets, the expansion and interconnection of energy and gas networks, interactive service systems (Metering and smart networks) for the reduction of costs borne by consumers were the objectives with which the journey started, but which were strongly affected by the pandemic, by the international crisis of the energy and gas markets, by the war in Ukraine. Maintaining a balanced energy mix with the use of internal resources, diversifying import sources (which could survive crises), modernizing and increasing the energy performance/efficiency of SEN installations, developing energy production from renewable sources (according to the requirements of the EU



2050 Taxonomy) or with reduced greenhouse gas emissions is needed.

The 2030 targets set for SDG 7 Energy are:

- Expansion of the Transmission and Distribution-T&D of electric energy and natural gas grids, in order to ensure the access of all household and industrial consumers to safe sources of energy at acceptable prices;
- Ensuring the cyber security of the monitoring platforms of electricity and natural gas T&D networks;
- Separating economic growth from resource depletion and environmental degradation processes by increasing energy efficiency (by at least 27% compared to the status quo scenario) and the extensive use of EU ETS schemes in predictable and stable market conditions (which did not happen and generated serious disruptions);
- Increasing renewable (and storage that is not clearly mentioned, but is implied as necessary) and low emissions sources in the transport sectors (electricity and hydrogen);
- Ensuring a stable and transparent regulatory framework for energy efficiency, especially in the field of public and residential buildings where there are very large deficiencies, as compared to the EU average.
- Supporting the development and implementation of increased energy efficiency standards for equipment and installations used for domestic, industrial and transport consumption, in accordance with the digital technological revolution (R 4.0).

The development of the Sustainable Development Concept meant new job descriptions for sustainable development experts. During 2022, the Academy of Economic Sciences trained the first 150 sustainable development experts working for the state apparatus, ministries, agencies, Court of Auditors, NIS, etc. By 2026, almost 2000 more experts will have had training. They will come from district and local administrative units. They will receive training after close collaboration with nine higher education institutions coordinated by the Department of Sustainable Development and the National Council of Rectors. Similar programs will be developed in various fields (provided by the Action Plan) so that all trade companies come closer to each of their fields included in this concept, as well as to the existing or developing international standards, assimilated as national standards.



The existing Sustainable Development Data Aggregator has recently become available on the website of the Department of Sustainable Development. This aggregator is under revision/tested/in progress and will be completed by February 2023. The aggregator uses a Tempo database where national, regional or EU indicators will be available, including links bringing the pieces of information to a secure national website.

Most recently (29.11.2022) the Court of Auditors of the EU draw up a very interesting report it analysed the quality of EU Eurostat Statistics, publishing a set of recommendations. CA recommendations were evaluated and analysed by the European Commission, becoming a particularly useful set of tools, especially for the sustainable development programme. The Sustainability Code adapted from the model used by Germany is under development.

The Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development is being established (with an OECD-WB international funding). The Advisory Council for Sustainable Development has drawn up several good practices articles, which will be uploaded on the website so that they could be used by authorities, specialists and the general public to understand and apply this concept.

At the level of the Sustainable Development Department, there is a particularly intense program of internal and international activities, dealing with information exchange and dissemination on these topics. Romania is the leading country in the EU on this matter, having had several important firsts.

III. EUROPE



The Republic of Croatia and the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union

Natalija LUKEC (Croatia)

The Republic of Croatia, as the youngest member of the European Union, in a very short period of time has grown from a country receiving international peace forces on its own soil in the 1990s, to a country which, with its own police and military capacities, actively participates in strengthening of international security through its participation in European Union's missions and operations around the world.

Croatia began its active contribution to the development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of European Union by participating in Common Security and Defence Policy missions with the engagement of members of its police forces in the EUPOL Afghanistan police mission in 2007. The first Common Security and Defence Policy operation for members of the Croatian Armed Forces was EUFOR Chad and the Central African Republic military operation in 2008.

Today, the Republic of Croatia has its police and military representatives in European Union's missions in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo), in Georgia (EUMM Georgia), in Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine), and in European Union's operations in Somalia (EUNAVFOR Somalia ATALANTA) and in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED IRINI).

The Republic of Croatia submitted a request for full membership in the European Union on 21 February 2003.

The initial steps in active participation in the Common Foreign and Security Policy were made shortly after the completion of the analysis of the compatibility of national legislation with European regulations and the beginning of negotiations on October 18, 2006.

The very next year, in 2007, the first police officers were dispatched to a Common Security and Defence Policy mission¹ in Afghanistan.

Members of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia joined the Common Security and Defence Policy operation in Chad and the Central African Republic for the first time a year later, in 2008.

After gaining initial experience, the Republic of Croatia continued its active participation in the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union by participating in four more civilian EU missions and three military EU operations. In the following text is presented, in chronological order (according to the date of inclusion), the participation of the Croatian police and military forces in the missions and operations of the European Union.

European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan – EUPOL Afghanistan

Police mission EUPOL Afghanistan was established on 30 May 2007, and its goal was to build a sustainable and efficient civilian police in Afghanistan, organized in accordance with international standards. It was carried out at the national, regional and provincial levels through monitoring and supervision, provision of advisory and mentoring support, and training of members and officials.

According to the Government's Decision from 2007, the Republic of Croatia could send up to two police officers to this mission. The mission ended its mandate in 2016, and a total of 11 Croatian police officers participated in it in 13 mandates.

¹In the terminology of the European Union, all civil interventions of the Common Security and Defence Policy - CSDP are called "missions", regardless of whether they have an executive or non-executive mandate, while military interventions with an executive mandate are called "operations", unlike those with a non-executive mandate, which, as well as civilian ones, they are also called "missions". (Author's comment)

Name of the peace-keeping mission/operation	State/territory	Start of participation	Staff included	Character of the mission/operation	Mission/operation participation status
EUPOL AFGHANISTAN	Afghanistan	in 2007	police	mission	completed
EUFOR TCHAD/RCA	Chad and the Central African Republic	in 2008	military	operation	completed
EU NAVFOR SOMALIA ATALANTA	Somalia	in 2009	military	operation	actively
EULEX KOSOVO	Kosovo	in 2013	police	mission	actively
EUMM GEORGIA	Georgia	in 2014	police	mission	actively
EUPOL COPPS	Palestine	in 2014	police	mission	completed
EUAM UKRAINE	Ukraine	in 2015	police	mission	actively
EU NAVFOR MED - SOPHIA	Mediterranean	in 2017	military	operation	completed
EU NAVFOR MED - IRINI	Mediterranean	in 2020	military	operation	actively

Table 1 - Participation of the Republic of Croatia in CSDP missions and operations of the European Union (as of 31 January 2023) – Source: Author

European Union Military Operation in Chad and The Central African Republic - EUFOR TCHAD/RCA

The European Union's Military Operation in Chad and the Central African Republic lasted from 17 March 2008, to 15 March 2009, when United Nations forces took over the area. The mandate included protection of civilians, facilitation of humanitarian aid delivery and ensuring the safety of UN personnel.

The Republic of Croatia participated in the Union's military operation for the first time by sending a reconnaissance team and two staff officers from October 2008 to March 2009.

European Union Naval Force Somalia Military Operation ATALANTA - EU NAVFOR Somalia Operation ATALANTA

The decision to launch the military operation EU NAVFOR Somalia - ATALANTA was made by the Council of the European Union on 8 December 2008. The area of operation included the southern waters of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the western waters of the Indian Ocean including the Seychelles and the coastal area, territorial and internal waters of Somalia. The tasks of the operation were defined as: providing protection to vessels of the World Food Program (WFP) and AMISOM ships (African Union Mission in Somalia), deterring, preventing and suppressing piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia, protection of other vulnerable vessels off the coast of Somalia (trade navy), and participation in monitoring fishing activities along the Somali coast.

In 2009, the Croatian Parliament made a Decision to send up to five members of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia (Croatian Navy) to the peace support operation, and in 2013 this number was increased to 25 members of the Armed Forces.

European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo – EULEX Kosovo

The main objective of the civilian mission of the European Union for the establishment of the rule of law in Kosovo - EULEX Kosovo, is to provide assistance and support in building independent, responsible and self-sustaining institutions of Kosovo in the area of the rule of law - responsibilities of judicial bodies and law

enforcement agencies, strengthening of the independent multi-ethnic judicial system, and multi-ethnic police and customs. EULEX Kosovo was established based on the Decision of the Council of the European Union, in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 in February 2008.

The active mandate of the peacekeeping mission has been extended until 14 June 2020. According to the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Croatia from 2013, up to 14 police officers of the Ministry of the Interior can participate in the mission.

Currently, two Croatian police officers are participating in the mission, and a total of 40 of them participated.

European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia – EUMM Georgia

The observation mission of the European Union in Georgia supervises the implementation of the Six-Point Agreement, which Georgia and Russia signed with the mediation of the Union on 12 August 2008, and the Agreement on Implementation Measures from 8 September 2008. It was established in October 2008, with the aim of contributing to the end of the armed conflict in Georgia by preventing the renewal of the armed conflict and maintaining security along the administrative demarcation lines. Mission activities are focused on observing the situation on the ground and reporting incidents.

According to the Government's Decision from 2014, Croatia can send up to three police officers to the mission. In the period until the beginning of 2023, a total of eleven participated. There are currently two members of the Croatian Police in Georgia.

European Union Police and Rule of Law for the Palestinian Territory – EUROPEAN Union Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support – EUPOL COPPS

EUPOL COPPS is a civilian police mission of the European Union in the West Bank, and it is an expression of the Union's support for the Palestinian Authority, especially in the area of security and the functioning of institutions, which began in January 2006. The aim of the mission is European Union's support in increasing the security of civil society in accordance with the national program of the Palestinian Authority in the field of strengthening the rule of law, through supporting the reform and development of the police and judicial institutions.

In 2014, the Government of the Republic of Croatia made a Decision to include up to two police officers in this mission.

European Union Advisory Mission Ukraine – EUAM Ukraine

The European Union security sector reform advisory mission (EUAM) was established on 22 July 2014, with the aim of providing assistance in the implementation of the reform of the civilian aspect of the security sector in Ukraine through strategic advice and practical support for reform measures based on international principles and European standards in the field of rule of law and protection of human rights.

According to the Government's Decision from 2015, the Republic of Croatia participates in the mission with up to three police officers, and currently there are two of them in Ukraine.

European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Military Operation SOPHIA – EU NAVFOR MED OPERATION SOPHIA

In May 2015, the European Union launched a naval operation in the Mediterranean (EU NAVFOR Med) - Operation SOPHIA. The aim of the operation is to neutralize the established human smuggling routes in the southern and central part of the Mediterranean Sea. The basic mandate of the operation was to take measures to identify, capture and remove ships and equipment that have been used or are suspected of being used to smuggle migrants by criminal groups and individuals, in order to prevent further casualties at sea.

The Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia began participating in the operation in 2017 by sending one officer to the command of the operation forces.

European Union Naval Force Mediterranean Military Operation IRINI – EU NAVFOR MED OPERATION IRINI

On 31 March 2020, after the closure of the EU NAVFOR Med SOPHIA, EU established another naval operation in the Mediterranean, to contribute the implementation of the UN arms embargo on Libya and UN measures to prevent the illicit export of petroleum from Libya. In addition, the operation shall assist in the development the capacities and in the training of the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy in law enforcement tasks at sea, as well as contribute to the disruption of the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks.

The Republic of Croatia is contributing with up to three Armed Forces members, according to Croatian Parliament's Decision from 2020.

In addition to the aforementioned CSDP missions and operations, the Republic of Croatia, in the role of the host country, contributed to Operation ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ensuring the use of Croatian air and sea space for the transport of forces and equipment.

It is also important to highlight Croatian participation in two joint FRONTEX operations (*Frontières Extérieures*), of the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union²: Operation POSEIDON SEA and Operation TRITON.

Operation POSEIDON SEA began in 2006, when Greece asked FRONTEX to monitor its borders with Turkey. The operation is divided into two parts: 1. Maritime operation – surveillance of the sea border of Greece (sea external borders of the European Union) and Turkey in the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas; and 2. Land operation - surveillance of the south eastern land border of Greece (the south eastern land external border of the European Union) and Turkey on the Evros River. As part of the operation, humanitarian aid is also provided to immigrants entering Greece from Turkey.

Croatia has been part of the joint action since 2012 with the participation of Croatian police officers, and from September 1, 2015, with the inclusion of the police vessel “Sveti Dujam” with members of the maritime police.

FRONTEX's Operation TRITON is a continuation of the Italian Maritime Operation MARE NOSTRUM, and its goal is to control and monitor the external sea borders of the European Union in the Mediterranean - within 30 nautical miles of the Italian coast. However, although this is not its primary goal, the humanitarian dimension has also become an integral part of the operation - rescuing emigrants from Africa, especially Libya. The country leading and coordinating the operation is Italy.

As part of Operation TRITON from August 1, 2015 until 31.10.2015 Croatian Navy ship BŠ 72 “Andrija Mohorovičić” operated with a crew of 49 members of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia, a medical team and 6 officers of the Border Police of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Croatia. His home port was Catania, and he was primarily in charge of overseeing part of the Ionian Sea. It is estimated that during the operation he rescued and delivered to Italian soil about 2,500 migrants.

Today, the Republic of Croatia participates with its police and military representatives in CSDP missions in Kosovo (EULEX Kosovo), in Georgia (EUMM Georgia), in Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine), and in CSDP operations in Somalia (EUNAVFOR Somalia - ATALANTA) and in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR Med – IRINI).

From the European Union's experiences, the will of the member states, even the youngest, and until recently fragile in its own national security field, to cooperate in the area of preserving the peace at European soil, but also throughout the world, is evident.

However, in the light of the recent changes on the world geopolitical scene, it will be interesting to follow not only the direction, but also the speed of development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, which will depend on the readiness of the member states to participate in global politics and ultimately on their choice between the concepts of transnationalism and supra-nationalism.

²The European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union was founded in 2005, and on 6. October, 2016. it was renamed the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. Its headquarters are in Warsaw, Poland.

Bibliography

1. French Delegation to the EU Political and Security Committee (2008): *Guide to the European Security and Defence Policy (ESOP)*, Brussels, <http://www.pravos.unios.hr>, (accessed 10 June 2019)
2. Knežević, Lidija (2015) Mohorovičić ends engagement in TRITON, *Defence and security*, <http://www.obris.org>, (accessed 10 June 2019)
3. *Eighteen-month program of the Council of the European Union (January 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020) – Continuation of work on the strategic program* (2018) compiled by the General Secretariat of the Council for the Romanian, Finnish and Croatian Presidencies, Brussels, <http://www.mvep.hr/files/2019/1901161416-st-14518-2018-rev-1-hr.pdf>, (accessed 25 June 2019)
4. The official website of the European External Action Service (European External Action Service – EEAS) http://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/missions-and-operations_eu, (accessed 20 February 2023)
5. Official website of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia. <http://www.morh.hr> – Conference “Lessons learned from the EUFOR operation in Chad and the Central African Republic”, 2009, (accessed 10 July 2019)
6. Official website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Croatia. <http://www.mup.gov.hr> – Peace engagement, (accessed 20 February 2023)
7. Official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia. <http://www.mvep.gov.hr> – multilateral relations, (accessed 20 February 2023)
8. Official website of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia. <http://www.osrh.hr/> – EU peace support operations, (accessed 20 February 2023)
9. Turunen, Tuula (2019) *Foreign Policy: Objectives, Instruments and Achievements*, www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/hr/FTU_5.1.1..pdf, European Parliament, Brussels, (accessed 8 July 2019)
10. Vukadinović, Radovan, Čehulić, Lidija (2005) *Politics of European integration*. Zagreb: Topical, Zagreb

IV. MIDDLE EAST



Iran and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO): Regional Opportunities and Challenges

Silvia Boltuc (Italy)

On September 15th, 2022, at the 22nd Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's (SCO) Summit, Iran's accession to the permanent membership to the Central Asian security body was officially announced. By signing the 'commitment document' for full membership to the organisation, Iran's full accession is expected to become effective in April 2023, when India takes over as chair.¹

Hossein Amirabdollahian, Iranian Foreign Minister, commented on the event on social media, stating, "by signing the document for full membership of the SCO, now Iran has entered a new stage of various economic, commercial, transit and energy cooperation"².

On February 13th, 2023, the Iranian Guardian Council spokesman affirmed that the remaining part of Iran's accession to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation was not found to be against Sharia and the Constitution. Accordingly, the legal procedures of Iran's membership in the SCO have ended.³

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the "Multipolar World"

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is an intergovernmental organisation founded in Shanghai on June 15th, 2001. The SCO currently comprises eight member states (China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan), four observer states interested in acceding to full membership (Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia) and six "dialogue partners" (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Turkey).⁴

Iran has been an observer member of SCO since 2005. Despite its reiterated bids to get a full membership, the organisation was concerned about the country being under United Nations sanctions and isolated. In 2021, the decision was made to start the accession process of Iran to the SCO as a full member, and Egypt, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia became dialogue partners.⁵

The emerging multipolar world order, particularly in the aftermath of the Ukrainian crisis, allegedly helped Iran get permanent membership. Although it cannot resolve Tehran's isolation from Western countries, it might serve as a framework for Iran to expand ties with leading regional actors.

Over the last decade, the Islamic Republic has pursued two main policies: "regionalism" and the "pivot to the east". As for the first, in the 1990s, the new geopolitical realities which emerged from the collapse of the Soviet Union in Central Asia and the Caucasus dominated Iran's agenda, bringing it closer to its Eurasian hinterland.⁶ While in the first decade after the Islamic Revolution, Iran has sought to export the Revolution

¹Vali Golmohammadi, 'Iran's SCO Accession: A timely yet insufficient gambit', ORF - Observer Research Foundation, september 19, 2022, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/irans-sco-accession-a-timely-yet-insufficient-gambit/>.

²Al Jazeera, 'Iran signs memorandum to join Shanghai Cooperation Organisation', Al Jazeera, september 15, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/15/iran-signs-memorandum-join-shanghai-cooperation-organisation>.

³Maryam Kanyab, 'Completing the legal procedures for Iran's membership in the "Shanghai Organization"', Mehr News Agency, february 13, 2023, <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/5708227/>. تکمیل مراحل قانونی-عضویت ایران در سازمان شانگهای.

⁴United Nations, 'Shanghai Cooperation Organization', Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, n.d., <https://dppa.un.org/en/shanghai-cooperation-organization>.

⁵Silvia Boltuc, 'Iranian possible membership in SCO: a geopolitical overview', Specialeurasia, september 15, 2022, <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2022/09/15/iran-membership-sco/>.

⁶Zahra Pishghahifard, M. Vasegh, Mohsen Zamani, 'Explanation of the Islamic Republic of Iran's Regionalism Approaches with emphasizing on the Caucasia and Central Asia', Human Geography Research Quarterly, vol. 52, no. 4, 2020, pp. 1511–1528.

Ideology by exploiting cultural and religious closeness, recently, Tehran adopted a strategy mainly based on economic, political and military cooperation.⁷

With the worsening of China-U.S./Europe relations and the fracture between the Western world and Russia, SCO might be a tool to nullify sanctions for leading members and bring Russia, China and Iran closer together. In this regard, it is vital to underline that another sanctioned country officially applied to become a SCO member, Belarus.

As for the 'pivot to the east', on November 30th, 2016, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, stated that "one of the priorities in Iran's foreign policy is preferring the east over the west, neighbour over distance, nations and countries that have common features with Iran over others". Khamenei explained this choice briefly, listing the economic advantages. The Supreme Leader underlined that the total population of Europe and America is about 1.3 billion people, while Asia alone, with more than 4.5 billion people, contains 60% of the world's population. Furthermore, due to the deep-rooted nature of Western industries, Iran's ability to compete with their products is much less than that of developing Asian countries. Ayatollah Khamenei also remarked on how SCO and ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) can reduce Iran's vulnerability to sanctions.⁸



On September 15th, 2022, SCO held a significant summit in Samarkand with high-level guests and meetings on the sidelines of the event.

The *Samarkand Declaration* was signed as a result of the Summit, along with over 40 papers.

Iran's Opportunities within the SCO

Although the Western world's perception of SCO is mainly economic-oriented, since its inception in 2001, the organisation has focused primarily on regional security issues and its fight against regional terrorism, ethnic separatism and religious extremism.

For Iran, the SCO's role in the security field is particularly relevant in the aftermath of the U.S. leaving Afghanistan and terrorism again threatening Central Asia. In this regard, membership of Iran is vital, as the country is heavily involved in the Afghan dynamics.

Iran and Afghanistan share a common border. The Taliban takeover of the Afghan government in 2021 has introduced new challenges to the two countries' relationship, although, in many ways, they have common regional interests. These challenges include access to water from Afghan rivers, Afghan refugees who fled to Iran, the flow of illicit drugs into the country, and attacks on Shia Muslim minorities⁹. Tehran fears new waves of refugees, weapons, drugs and extremism. The recent attack on the Pakistani embassy in Kabul on December 2nd, 2022, underlined how the Islamic Emirate has difficulties managing internal security; Iran questions both the safety of the Hazara Shiite communities inside the country and its border security. In this context, SCO is relevant as the countries involved in the Afghan dynamics (Uzbekistan, China, Russia, Pakistan and Tajikistan) are all members of the security organisation¹⁰. Therefore, Iranian membership might help coordinate the policies towards Kabul.

To date, the SCO's priorities also include regional development in trade, connectivity and energy supplies. In this regard, Iran can offer significant advantages to Eurasian partners.

⁷Silvia Boltuc, 'Iran's Interests and Strategy in Central Asia', *Geopolitical Repor*, vol. 23, no. 1, September 2022, <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2022/09/07/iran-interests-central-asia/>.

⁸Ayatollah Khamenei, 'Six reasons to prefer East to West', *Khamenei.ir*, November 30, 2016, <https://farsi.khamenei.ir/others-note?id=38981>.

⁹Grant Farr, *Iran and Afghanistan: Growing Tensions after the Return of the Taliban*, *E-International Relations*, August 23, 2022, <https://www.e-ir.info/2022/08/23/iran-and-afghanistan-growing-tensions-after-the-return-of-the-taliban/>.

¹⁰Reuters, 'Pakistani embassy in Kabul attacked, one injured', *Reuters*, December 2, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/pakistan-says-kabul-head-mission-target-attack-embassy-2022-12-02/>.

The country has a strategic location in the Persian Gulf, at the cross point of international energy and trade corridors, with access to open water and several port infrastructures. Moreover, Iran has vast gas reservoirs, which have been of high interest also for Europe.¹¹

Conclusion

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is the world's largest regional body consisting of 40 per cent of the world's population and 30 per cent of the global gross domestic product (GDP).¹² Accordingly, it plays a critical role both in Eurasia and international affairs.

Notably, Central Asia became the geographical core of the organisation. The region has always been considered part of Russian *blizhnee zarubezhe* (near abroad) and *lebensraum* (vital space); nevertheless, over the last decades, several leading regional and international actors have been looking at these oil and gas-rich countries. Turkey exploited the Pan-Turkism ideology to penetrate the region, while China chose the economic tool. In addition, with its fourth-largest natural gas reserves worldwide, Turkmenistan has become an essential target in the EU Energy Security Strategy.¹³

Turkey's decision to elevate its position from a dialogue partner of the SCO to becoming a full member is of vital relevance. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan claimed the SCO to be a "much more powerful, better organisation" than Europe, underlining its frustration for not being able to join the European Union after years of attempts.¹⁴ If on the one side, this is expected to cause some friction with other NATO members as the organisation is perceived as an anti-Western bloc, on the other side, with Turkey's membership, the SCO would bring together Eurasian leading actors and markets: Russia, China, India, Iran, Turkey and Central Asian Republics.

What many Western experts described as an anti-West alliance, more realistically, is the result of the shifting global order, where new rising Asian economies want to play a significant role internationally. In this context, the Shanghai organisation transformed from a security body into an economic platform.

Iranian 'pivot to the east' perfectly serves the emerging Asian multilateralism of SCO. As Russia repeatedly tried to enhance ties with Europe and China was one of the leading European trade partners, Iran's accession was initially blocked. The worsening relations between Beijing and Washington and the conflict in Ukraine, which isolated Moscow from the Western world, opened access to Tehran, and on February 13th, 2023, Iran ended the legal procedures of its membership.

The outcome of Iran's membership and of the SCO itself is difficult to predict given the significant instability in Eurasia that involved the Caucasus (escalation between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which also involved three SCO members: Iran, Pakistan and India), security issues over Iran (internal turmoil, protests of ethnic minorities and escalation with the U.S. and Israel), the Ukrainian conflict that created friction between Russia and some Eurasian actors who fear Western sanctions, the instability of Central Asian republics (particularly clashes between the two SCO members: Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), protests in Uzbekistan (in Karakalpakstan) and the Uighur issues in China.¹⁵ Nevertheless, it offers the Islamic Republic of Iran several opportunities to improve ties and sign trade agreements with leading regional markets. Moreover, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation might be a framework to settle regional disputes and address terrorism.

In conclusion, connectivity is another vital aspect of the SCO organisation, which overlaps with Tehran's regional strategy. Optimising transportation routes is essential, and Iran might become a leading transport, trade and energy hub.

¹¹Silvia Boltuc, *Geopolitica del porto iraniano di Chabahar*, *Geopolitical Report*, vol. 6, 2021.

¹²Shri Narendra Modi, 'Remarks by Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi at the SCO Summit', *SCO*, September 16, 2022, <http://eng.sectsc.org/archives/20220919/913585/English-Translation-of-Remarks-by-Prime-Minister-Shri-Narendra-Modi-at-the-SCO-Summit.html>.

¹³Giuliano Bifulchi, "Italy and Turkmenistan Discussed Business Opportunities: Might Rome Support EU Policy in Central Asia?", *Geopolitical Report*, vol. 28, no. 2, february 2023, <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2023/02/07/italy-turkmenistan-business/>.

¹⁴'Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit 2022: key takeaways | ODI: Think change', n.d., <https://odi.org/en/insights/shanghai-cooperation-organisation-summit-2022-key-takeaways/>.

¹⁵Giuliano Bifulchi, 'Geopolitical Risk in Central Asia and AfPak in 2023', *Geopolitical Report*, vol. 27, no. 1, January 2023, <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2023/01/02/geopolitical-risk-asia/>.

Silvia Boltuc, Giuliano Bifulchi, 'Geopolitical Risk of Iran and the Caucasus in 2023', *Geopolitical Report*, vol. 27, no. 2, January 2023, <https://www.specialeurasia.com/2023/01/02/geopolitical-risk-iran-caucasus/>.

Indeed, during the Samarkand Summit, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev urged the completion of the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran corridor, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged the acceleration of the Iranian Chabahar port project and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). In addition to the INSTC¹⁶, Iran is also part of the Persian Gulf-Black Sea project with Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, and Greece.

¹⁶Tasnim News Agency, "Kazakhstan Urges Completion of Iran Corridor", Tasnim News Agency, September 17, 2022, <https://www.tasnimnews.com/en/news/2022/09/17/2775312/kazakhstan-urges-completion-of-iran-corridor>.

V. Modern Terrorist Analysis



Profiling and Behavioural Analysis of the Modern Terrorist

PhD. Leliana Valentina Pârvulescu

Terrorist attacks, whether attributed to endogenous (indigenous) or exogenous organizations, aim at sowing panic, terror, and consequently inhibit the normal behaviour of a population. Spreading fear is the driving force and psychological goal of terrorism (Hudson, 1999). Even years from now we will remember not only the images published almost obsessively by the media – when it comes to a terrorist attack, but also when and how we became aware of the incident; we will remember who we were with and what we were doing when we saw the news.

As Eric D. Shaw states, experienced anxieties and identification mechanisms that are difficult to control, all the stronger the more the population directly affected by the attack is perceived as similar to the general population, result in the development of avoidance behaviours capable of affecting social and economic systems (Shaw, 2016). This happens because the immediate response to the terrorist act is the entire population breaking away irrationally from all similar situations related or evoking the event. Therefore, there will be a contraction of consumption, cinemas, theatres, restaurants, public transport will be avoided, the state will be discredited, seen as unable to protect citizens. Furthermore, in addition to direct victims, there will also be indirect victims, who will inevitably be conditioned by events that, together with the perception of the danger of new attacks, will their quality of life affected.

Terrorists actually want to strike at everyday life. As a result, in terrorism, the crime itself is but a means, killing more or less victims will have an extraordinary effect, it will spread fear and insecurity among the population and induce political and social destabilization (R. Unger, 2002). The mass media is capable of amplifying the anguish and conveying it to the entire population, not just the nation that was affected. The terrorist knows! Without newspapers and television, terrorism could not exist and for this reason the phenomenon has exploded in this century and in recent years. At the same time, precisely for this reason, terrorist organizations, besides being able adapt to changes, stay up to date and improve their technical training, know how to be exceptional communicators.

From this perspective, along with finding fundamental ways to fight and prevent the phenomenon, a deep understanding of the attackers' psychology is also necessary, which can make a significant contribution, especially in terms of prevention. In the phenomenon that we generically label as terrorism, the psychological component is generally very strong, both for causes and consequences, both for the perpetrators (dissent, revenge, hatred) and for the direct and indirect victims (fear, anxiety, increased discomfort, social inhibition, helplessness, fear of foreigners and those who are perceived as intruders within the population of a country (Galvin, 1983).

One of the main elements in terrorist action is related to the motivations of the attackers, which represents a psychological component, because the simplistic but reassuring myth that the terrorist is a terrorist



Source: <https://www.apa.org/education-career/guide/subfields/brain-science/education-training>

because he is crazy has been demolished by scientific studies since September 11, 2001. A psychopathological side to the personality of the terrorist is not to be excluded. An unbelievable trait, common to almost all terrorists is normality, as the scrupulous planning of attacks and their meticulous and often synchronized execution are difficult to attribute to individuals who have mental disorders (Shaw, 2016). Another reason why there are very few mentally ill individuals among terrorists is because terrorist organizations reject those who show signs of imbalance (Beck, 2002). In fact, leaders and recruiters are very selective and reject candidates who are mentally unstable or unpredictable (potentially dangerous to the organization itself).

The political or ideological filter through which the terrorist sees the world cannot be considered a disease. However, we can identify some traits that are common to this typology. Those that can be seen in most terrorists are rigidity of thinking, a closed mentality, non-existent inclination to compromise, rejection of alternative points of view, diminished sense of reality and hatred of society, isolation, racism and discrimination. In the vast majority of cases, active terrorists are men between the ages of 20 and 30, imbued with fanaticism. They are disciplined they need to be appreciated, prove they are committed, they are ready for action, speedy and have a high tolerance for stress, isolation and a stealthy life (Hassan,1999). So not to draw attention to them, they must have a common appearance. The motivation that drives them to act is in most cases hate. Of course, they are willing to blindly obey the orders of their leaders, even when martyrdom, the ultimate sacrifice, is required (Knutson, 1981).

As the criminologist Ruben De Luca states, the fanaticism of martyrdom is possible through such mechanisms as the ability to envisage an idealized afterlife in contrast to earthly life, an awareness of death, and the power of the ritual and tradition. Terrorist groups use cultural ritualization to convey to their followers, information such as the exaltation of the sacrifice of life for the glory of God, which is approximate and difficult to ascertain, but which, precisely because it is the same to all members, ensures a strong sense of belonging to the group (Behr, 1983). Also, belief in a charismatic, authoritative and unquestionable leader amplifies fanaticism. There is also the process of cancelling the identity of the human species, whereby the terrorist does not perceive the human beings outside the group, but sees them as enemies, as a different species in every way. It is this phenomenon, along with the demonization of the enemy, that dehumanizes the terrorist, makes him see himself only as part of the group, rather than as an individual in his own right, and thus allows the group to justify the atrocities they commit. In a sense, the mind of the members who totally identify with the organization no longer exists but is replaced by a kind of "hive mind". The new recruits will progressively detach themselves from reality and their fanaticism will become more and more radical and aggressive (Delcea, 2004).

So why is terrorism so widespread and powerful these days? Why is it structured in such widespread and effective forms, considered a threat to the whole world? How can we beat it? These are crucial questions to understand the phenomenon, however we cannot give general answers, primarily because there is no general consensus on the notion of terrorism. Global terrorism is not, in reality, a homogeneous phenomenon, in today's world there are terrorist acts of all kinds, but the one of Islamic origin seems to cause greater concern. Although the Islamic world is currently the main headquarters of terrorism, it is easy to prove that there is no single global terrorist organization and that terrorism is not an exclusive emanation of so-called Islamic fundamentalism. It is important to emphasize how, in many countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia, terrorism is a local phenomenon that rarely makes the front pages. These are limited phenomena with little impact on global scenarios. Until a few years ago, Islamic terrorism fell into these categories, public opinion devoted a small interest for it, but after 9/11 it crossed borders. The main characteristic that separates Islamic terrorism from other types of terrorism is religious suicide, the Islamic fighter carries out the massacre by blowing himself up with explosives.

Terrorist Psychology

Terrorism as a phenomenon is little studied in terms of its psychological implications, even at this time when the media pays it a lot of attention. As stated above, inducing negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, impeding activities and discouraging social behaviours is a way to condition and control how others behave. Violence and fear, expressed through both attacks and threats, have always been used as techniques to pressure the population. Acts of terrorism emotionally involve all people and not just the targets concerned, such as governments, politicians, armed forces. The terrorist obtains, with the killing of his victims, the inhibitory conditioning of the entire population, even if it is not directly involved. Distrust and hostility towards everything that is threatening, unknown, foreign to everyday life, rise (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994). People who already had, for personal reasons, a precarious psychological balance, such as those affected by the events of 9/11, found themselves unable to sleep, to be alone, refusing crowded places and heavily using psychiatric

drugs and sedatives. To involve as many people as possible, terrorism needs the media, which acts as an unconscious but necessary mechanism, because the phenomenon could not exist without newspapers and television. Terrorism operates in the spotlight; the terrorist knows that in the world of global communication there is nothing but what the television broadcasts (Berkowitz 1989). For example, the news that two planes had hit the Twin Towers would have been a piece of information with little emotional resonance, but watching the images over and over again, from multiple angles increased the destructive psychological impact on the population. Each death scene is for the viewer an evocation of his own death and, therefore, produces terror.

Regarding the psychological approach of the terrorist phenomenon, we should study the beliefs, personality, attitudes, motivations and career, leaving the political and social context of terrorist groups in the background. But who joins the terrorist group? The data analysed so far suggests that individuals who become terrorists are often unemployed, and alienated from the society they left behind. Some join the group to pursue a cause, others, on the other hand, may be motivated mostly by a desire to use the special abilities they possess (skills to build bombs). They may be driven by religious or political beliefs, especially the educated young. The potential members of terrorist groups often begin as sympathizers of the group, usually inserted with the help of a family member or a friend already in contact with extremist associations. Anyhow, joining an organization is a highly selective process; the recruit gradually moves forward before gaining full recognition within the group. Anyone who wants to join a group must be able to do so. Motivation is not enough, but the candidate must be suitable for the group's goals, have a personality that allows him to integrate into the organization, and be endowed with certain characteristics that the group specifically needs.

The Profile of the Terrorist

First, I must mention that terrorists are made, not born. There is no common physical, genetic or other trait that brings members of different groups together, labelling them as terrorists (Russell and Miller, 1977). Most of the analyses carried out have tried to highlight what motivates the terrorist or to describe his personal features, assuming that some attributes could be useful in identifying him (Gurr, 1968). However, it is difficult to provide a valid definition of the terrorist mindset, although an even partial understanding of it would be useful in identifying how and why some individuals choose to join a terrorist organization. In the vast majority of cases, they are young, it is the most vulnerable age group as it is prone to ideologies, fanaticism and direct action. Moreover, the young are endowed with that quickness of movement which makes them suitable for terrorist actions. In general, these are men of ordinary appearance, unable to draw attention to themselves. The young terrorists of the Muslim world have shown a medium-low level of culture and a dangerous tendency towards religious fanaticism. However, we cannot only stick to psychological terms in the psychological analysis of the phenomenon, ignoring the importance of the economic, political and social factors. They have always motivated radical activists. Furthermore, we cannot rule out that there are biological or physiological variables that actually influence the individual's choice to join a terrorist affiliation.

The basic premise from which we should begin profiling the terrorist is that the act of violence arises out of feelings of hatred, disillusionment, and anger (Oots & Wiegele, 1985). Unfortunately, not much is known about the terrorist as an individual, his psychology remains difficult to understand and the main reason for this lack of learning is essentially the lack of access, even to terrorists who end up incarcerated. We do not stop with the analysis only at the isolated terrorist, who does not belong to any group, because he is most often just a psychologically unbalanced individual. The most powerful forms of terrorism are those in which individuals are motivated by generational hatred. For this type of terrorist, rehabilitation is virtually impossible, given that animosity and hatred are passed down from generation to generation. There is little reliable evidence to support the theory that terrorists are typically mentally disturbed, as the careful and detailed planning, timing and timing of a terrorist attack requires control and self-control. On the contrary, terrorists are generally mentally healthy individuals (Borum, 2004). Of course, terrorists are extremely alienated from society, but alienation does not necessarily constitute a mental illness. Furthermore, psychopathology does not provide reliable evidence when trying to understand their actions; it can only lead to speculation about their motives and places them outside the common norms of behaviour. There are many differences between a psychopath and a terrorist, first of all, the psychopath is unable to learn from experience, pursues a strictly personal goal that does not fit the needs of a group, unable to be functional with the group's activity. The terrorist organization, on the other hand, needs reliable activists who know how to blend into a crowd after the operation is done, so they select their members very carefully, eliminating any unstable and potentially dangerous people. There does not seem to be a unique identifier of the terrorist's personality (Borum, 2004).

The analysis of the terrorist's personality must be closely related, of course, to the analysis of the groups to which he belongs. Each group must be studied and examined in their own cultural, political,

economic and social context, we must consider the mentality of each group, which largely reflects the personality and ideology of the leader. Knowing the mentality makes it considerably easier to understand the behavioural paths of a group and, consequently, the threats they pose; besides, it means knowing how the organization works.

Authors' Biographies



Ph.D. Cosmin DUMITRESCU

He is the Consul General of Romania in Los Angeles (USA). A career diplomat, with a degree in law, in foreign languages and a PhD in management, he previously headed the Consular Section of the Romanian Embassy in Rome, the National Centre for Diplomatic and Service Passports within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Romanian Consulate in Castellon de la Plana - Spain and the Consulate General of Romania in Trieste - Italy. He worked as a teacher at the Romanian Diplomatic Institute, at the Consular Training and Training Centre of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and represented Romania in expert committees of the European Council and the European Commission in Brussels. He has published papers on consular regulation, emergency and disaster management, and security studies. Specialist and connoisseur of English, Italian, Spanish and French languages.



Prof. Ph.D. Cristian BARNA

Training Manager at Intelligene4ALL, guest professor at Babeş Bolyai University in Cluj Napoca and University of Bucharest and former vice-rector and PhD coordinator of the National Information Academy in Bucharest. Cristian Barna holds a PhD in sociology and his areas of expertise are applied sociology, intelligence and security studies, geopolitics, security organizations, organized crime and terrorism studies. Cristian Barna is the author of several books.



Ph.D. Eng. Sorin DOBÎRCIANU

Sr. Lead Expert NATO, director at the Centre for International Relations and Lobby European Institute for Multidisciplinary Research. Sr. Excellence Lead Expert, Political Consultant & Regional Manager Eastern Europe. During his tenure at large companies and international organizations in the field of energy, defense and security, he successfully worked with various governments on specific programs to improve efficiency, leveraging significant experience in the fields of oil, gas, energy, political management, operational as well as in advisory and regulatory matters in the field of international trade and relations, energy policy, national defence, security and information, telecommunications, financial services. He is involved in promoting certain high-profile projects in the energy sector that will have a direct impact on regional and global energy security, working alongside: SPIC China, Yuanda China, Jereh China, Alexander Hughes, Doha Special Constructions, Enterprise Georgia, Kaz Munai Gas etc. He was awarded by the Romanian Army Academy, the Romanian Naval Academy, the Royal Holloway University of London, the British Council, the Government of Romania – the National Agency for Mineral Resources, the European University-Clermont-Ferrand France, the Federal Agency for Education and the University of Saint Petersburg, the Russian Federation and also obtained the medal of excellence in performance awarded by the Romanian Association of Petroleum and Gas Engineers, the University of Petroleum and Gas, the Black Sea University and Foundation, Petrom Company (member of OMV Group) & Expert Petroleum.



Silvia BOLTUC (Italy)



Managing Director at SpecialEurasia. Research Manager of the Energy & New Technology Department at CeSEM – Centro Studi Eurasia Mediterraneo. Geopolitical Intelligence analyst for European Affairs Magazine and Notizie Geopolitiche.

International affairs specialist and political analyst who has supported private and public institutions in the decision-making process, providing reports, risk assessments, and consultancy. She has travelled in Europe, the Middle East, South-East Asia, and the post-Soviet space assessing the domestic dynamic and situations and creating a network of local contacts. She contributes to Italian and foreign media agencies, magazines, and think tanks.



Prof. PhD. Adriean PÂRLOG

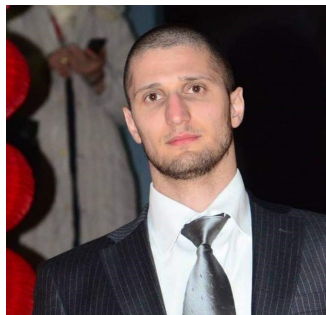


- Member of SCIP (Strategic Competitive Intelligence Professionals);
- Member of the Scientific Board of INFOSFERA Magazine;
- Business/Competitive Intelligence – Business Intelligence Magazine - Editorial Board;
- BEYOND HORIZONTURI magazine, Member of the Editorial Board;
- Associate professor at CNAp., UBB, ASE;
- President of ICSS – Integrated Corporate Strategic Services.

He is the author of numerous research projects, articles and scientific communications published in volumes of national scientific events and press articles. Author or co-author of books, including Information Production, Information Analysis Methods and Techniques, Information Activity, Preventive Diplomacy etc.



Giuliano Bifulchi (Italy)



Research Manager at SpecialEurasia, holds a PhD in Islamic History from the University of Rome Tor Vergata, a master's degree in Peacebuilding Management and International Relations from Pontifical University San Bonaventura, a master's degree in History from the University of Rome Tor Vergata. He has published several academic papers and researches on geopolitics, conflicts, and jihadist propaganda in the post-Soviet space and the Middle East.



Ph.D. Eng. Călin VILT

Advisor to the CNR - CME, Member of CCDD ODD 7 Energy, Member of the EU-USA Working Group for Intelligent Networks-Smart Grids and electric vehicles - Task Force Committee, Smart-Grids Program Director - CNTEE Transelectrica SA, former member of the Commissions and ministerial cabinets for energy issues and Smart Grids.



Natalija LUKEC (Croatia)



Natalija Lukec is a University Specialist for National Security, from Zagreb, Croatia.

Winner of a The Best Students of the University of Zagreb Scholarship, she holds university degrees in Political Sciences – National Security, International Politics and Diplomacy, Political Science Education, Intercultural German Studies and Pedagogical Sciences.

Her research fields are Weapons of Mass Destruction, Hybrid Warfare, Geopolitics of the Middle East Conflicts, The Building of the European Security Architecture and Systems Theory in Political Science.



Dimitrios Makousis (Greece)



He is a researcher and consultant at the Strategy International Think Tank, focusing on Regional Affairs, Energy Markets and Commodities, Sustainability, Geopolitical Intelligence, and Defense and Security. He specializes in energy geopolitics and publishes articles on topics such as geostrategy, natural resources, security architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean, Greek-Turkish relations, and the Cyprus question. His expertise and interest span a wide range of subjects, including great power competition, climate change politics, EU energy and foreign policy, energy transition, ideology and propaganda, and the socio-economic implications of the ongoing 4th Industrial Revolution. He has an academic background in environmental science, and holds an MSc with Distinction in Energy Law, Business, Regulation, and Policy from the International Hellenic University (IHU).



PhD. Leliana PÂRVULESCU

She is a specialist in applied psychology in the field of national security. Clinical psychologist and psychotherapist specialized in cognitive-behavioural psychotherapy, accredited by the Romanian College of Psychologists, trainer, sociologist, consultant for psychological profiler and political leadership, applied psychology in the field of national security, individual and group personal development. She is a graduate of the Faculty of Psychology, Sociology and the Faculty of Biotechnology, she consolidated her studies with a master's degree in forensic psychology and victimology, in cognitive-behavioural psychotherapy and forensic psychology, psychological profiler and political leadership, in genetic engineering and biotechnologies. She is the author of many specialized, profile works.



PhD. Eng. Stelian TEODORESCU

He is an aviation engineer and during his doctoral studies he was admitted to the Smart-SPODAS Project - "Transnational network for the integrated management of smart doctoral and postdoctoral research in the fields of Military Sciences", "Security and Information" and "Public Order and National Security" - Continuous training program for elite researchers - "SmartSPODAS", in this context participating in various research activities, among them being those organized by CRISMART in Sweden. During the first part of his career, he performed various executive within the Air Force Staff, and in the second part of his career, he was an executive and leadership positions within the Ministry of National Defence. He participated in various cooperation activities at the national and international level, gaining professional experience in the field of international relations and geopolitics. He carried out teaching activities in the academic environment (undergraduate and postgraduate studies).

GEOSTRATEGIC

PULSE

Editors: Pompilia VLĂDESCU and Stelian TEODORESCU

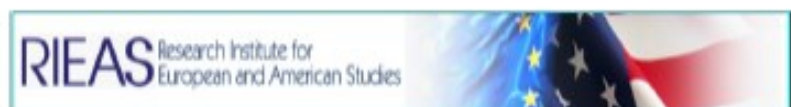
ISSN: 1843-701X

Founded in 2007 | Bucharest

Partners



**STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL
PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE**



Starting from December 2010, GEOSTRATEGIC PULSE is registered in the international catalogue INDEX COPERNICUS JOURNAL MASTERS LIST. This bulletin cannot be multiplied and reproduced without consent. It is allowed to use some materials or quotations with the preservation of accuracy and the original title, as well as with the express mention of the source. The opinions and ideas expressed in the content of the articles represent the point of view of the authors.