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I. EDITORIAL

Where Is the Current World Heading and
what Is the future of the World Order?

PhD. Eng. Stelian TEODORESCU

"Without friends, no one would want to live, even if he had all other goods."

Aristotle

After the pandemic crisis triggered by Covid-19, it seems that science came out victorious, and technological progress returned to a similar tempo with only a slight delay. The whole world, but especially managers, were surprised by the productivity of remote work. However, some types of activities could not transfer very well to the online mode and for various reasons specific to the activities performed, but also for reasons of ethnic and racial type, it was not possible to stay at home in absolutely all cases and they were thus disproportionately affected many areas, causing many major changes throughout the world.

Thus, most types of activities carried out worldwide have become some hybrids with an intense personalized, national or regional specificity. As a result of such development, numerous other challenges with medium and long-term effects have emerged, including in the field of defense and security.

Human behavior in all its complexity, subtlety and dynamics makes complete objectivity to remain only a desired, practically impossible to achieve.

We say this because, in the context of both the profound transformations taking place at the regional and global level, as well as the connections and interactions between various state and non-state actors, new models of political, economic, military, social, cultural, informational, demographic interdependence

Source: https://www.national.ro/social/marea-resetare-declara-razboi-omului-noua-ordine-mondiala-face-revolutie-pe-piata-muncii-

stand out, but also new types of international and transnational relations that not infrequently they are categorized in most environments as atypical.[1]

As a result, the dynamics and predictability of the current geopolitical and geostrategic environment are strongly influenced by the sometimes incomprehensible dynamics and transformations of the relations

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[1]*Multipolarism and Regional Security Developments, Defining Elements for the Future Geopolitical Architecture, Stelian Teodorescu, Defense and Security Monitor, August 17, 2020*

between the main global actors, as well as increasing the freedom of action and the influence of new regional actors.

Considering the type and unpredictability of developments, but also the results and consequences generated in the medium and long term, it becomes more and more realistic and current the position of the German scholar, Hanns W. Maull, expressed in one of his studies, which referred to the moment of the initiation of the process of transformation of the world order, asking the question: "dissolution or replacement?".[2]

Carefully analyzing the transformations that have taken place or continue to take place at the regional and global level, we can see that they are taking place with an increasingly accentuated dynamic and are marked by profound changes in terms of the states' ability to achieve certain areas of influence.

Thus, the collapse of the balance of power at the global level, to which are added the effects of crises of all types (economic, migration, energy, etc.), but also the historical ethnic or religious rivalries that have significantly come to the surface in the process of the disintegration of the bipolar system , seem to lead to a state of extreme fragility, a situation that can at any time escape the control of good management and degenerate into anarchy and even another world war.

According to the experts, geopolitics has always subsumed the globalization of the interests of the states that asserted themselves as poles of power and that sought to identify those areas, which through resources and location have special military and strategic significance, in order to control and manage their needs Safety.

However, the tensions and wars existing today in certain regions of the world are the result of the intersecting interests of these international actors, each separately, demanding the formal recognition of the status of pole of regional and global power, an indispensable status for participating in the process of adopting some strategic decisions at global level.

Given how much mutual mistrust has developed between Russia and China on the one hand, and Europe and the US on the other, it will be difficult for them to reach a consensus on reforming key international institutions. The decision-making activity of the UN Security Council has been paralyzed by the right of veto, especially by Russia and China, a fact that has confirmed to us for a long time that we live in an era of the formation of a new world order marked by multipolarity and multilateralism.

In such a tense context, it seems that the confrontational narratives that mark the US-China bilateral relationship now also contain specifically conflicting perspectives on the future of the global order. China seems to highlight the degree to which the West is seen to have imposed its presumptively universal values on the global system in the post-war period and which is perceived as favorable to the US. At the same time, the US interprets China's commitment to force the establishment of a new multipolar world order based on different values and driven by different norms more favorable to non-Western countries, because China has become a leading global power in this process, being perceived in various means that it wants to hold global supremacy. These two perspectives on the future of the global order seem to lead to greater divergence and create the atmosphere of a "new cold war", even as the US and China each say they want to avoid it.

As a result, we can unreservedly conclude that the future relationship between current and future power poles, but also between all other states is one of the mega-changes and mega-challenges of the whole world, because a wide range of significant gradual changes at a high level can suddenly leads to dramatic transformations of the current world order.

In conclusion, we can say that natural questions arise regarding the created context and future developments of the whole world: -can this current defining trend of the 21st century be managed peacefully? - will the contradiction between the strategies of the main poles of power be resolved, or will they all choose between authorizing a common narrative of mutually beneficial achievements, or will they choose to go towards the initiation of a world armed conflict whose risks and consequences are very difficult to quantify?

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[2]*Multipolarism and Regional Security Developments, Defining Elements for the Future Geopolitical Architecture, Stelian Teodorescu, Defense and Security Monitor, August 17, 2020*

II. GLOBAL SITUATION - MICRONATIONS

Geopolitical Significance of Micronations - A World in Miniature

Unpacking the Impact of Small Nations on the Global Arena

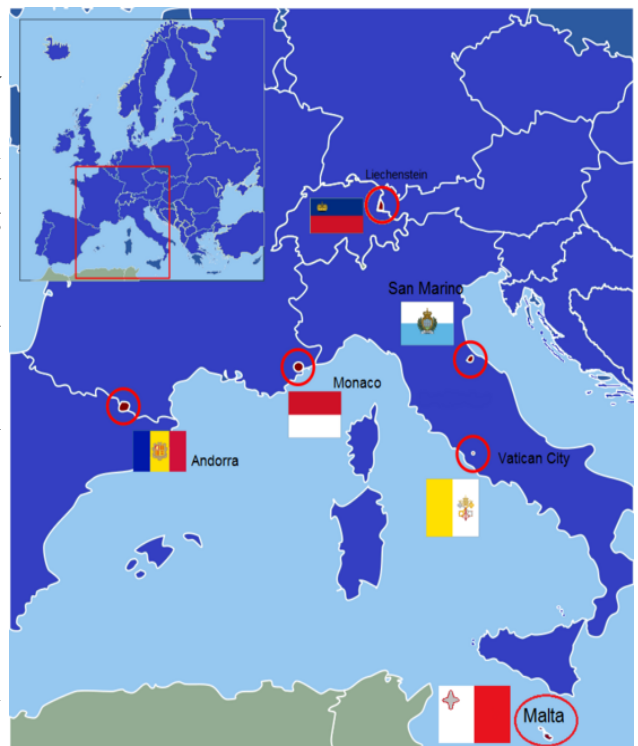*Juri FFERRARIO (San Marino)*

In the vast geopolitical landscape of the contemporary world, micronations often emerge as intriguing and often overlooked entities. Despite their small size in terms of territory and population, these autonomous entities assert their independence and sovereignty. But what is their true impact on the global geopolitical stage? This article will delve into the role of micronations, examining their history, the motivations driving them, and the influence they can exert within the context of 21st-century geopolitical dynamics.

In their diversity, micronations challenge traditional notions of statehood and sovereignty, questioning the very concepts of borders and citizenship. Despite often being considered eccentric curiosities, some of them have demonstrated remarkable political and economic resilience, while others have generated tensions in regional and international contexts.

In this article, we will examine how micronations have evolved over time, from the Principality of Seborga in the heart of Europe to the territory of Liberland along the Danube River, and even to virtual communities such as the Republic of Asgardia in low Earth orbit. We will uncover the motivations driving individuals to create and support these entities, and how they seek to establish diplomatic relations, promote cultural and economic projects, and even tackle environmental challenges.

As the world grapples with escalating geopolitical tensions and global challenges like climate change, it is essential to analyze the role of micronations in creating new perspectives and political innovation. Through a critical and objective analysis, we will endeavor to unveil how these

Source: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/ File:European_ministates_map.png

seemingly marginal entities could contribute to reshaping the concept of sovereignty and influence contemporary geopolitics.

Within the vast geopolitical landscape of the contemporary world, recognized micronations emerge as intriguing yet often overlooked entities. These nations, despite their limited territorial and population size,

have been formally acknowledged by one or more sovereign states. Nevertheless, their presence and influence within the international system remain open and complex subjects of discussion.

This article will explore the role of recognized micronations, delving into their history, the motivations that drive them, and the limited yet significant influence they can exert within the context of 21st-century geopolitical dynamics. Through a critical and objective analysis, we will endeavor to unveil how these entities, despite their modest dimensions, may contribute to reshaping the concept of sovereignty and impacting present-day geopolitics.

While recognized micronations may appear marginal in the context of international relations, their existence raises significant questions regarding the principles of self-determination, human rights, and regional stability. These entities present a challenge to the international system, challenging traditional notions of state sovereignty.

In this article, we will examine some of the most emblematic recognized micronations, including the Vatican City, Monaco, San Marino, and others. We will explore the reasons these nations maintain their independent sovereignty and how they have managed to do so in a world dominated by nation-states. Furthermore, we will analyze the diplomatic relations they maintain with other nations and the challenges they face in preserving their autonomy.

In the face of escalating global geopolitical tensions and challenges such as climate change and migration, the issue of recognized micronations is of increasing importance. This article aims to shed light on these often overlooked entities and their potential influence in the current geopolitical landscape.

Unlike world powers and large international organizations, recognized micronations serve as an example of how sovereignty can be preserved even in extremely limited territorial contexts. Their fascinating histories, rooted in a blend of historical traditions and contemporary political decisions, provide a unique perspective on the complexities of global politics.

This article aims to analyze recognized micronations at a time when the world faces unprecedented challenges. From issues related to international trade to global security and environmental cooperation, these nations demonstrate that even the smallest entities can influence the geopolitical landscape. We will explore how these entities address issues such as resource access, human rights protection, and peace promotion.

In conclusion, while the world remains focused on traditional powers, it is worth taking a closer look at recognized micronations. Despite their small size, they embody the importance of self-determination and offer a unique opportunity to reflect on contemporary geopolitical dynamics. This article seeks to explore the challenges and opportunities presented by these entities so that we can better understand their role in the current geopolitical landscape.

1. Recognized Micronations:

A. San Marino

<u>History and Current Status as a Recognized Micronation:</u>

San Marino, located in the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna, is one of the world's oldest micronations. According to tradition, it was founded in 301 A.D., making it nearly 1,700 years old as an independent state entity. One of San Marino's distinctive features is its formal recognition by various states, including Italy, in the 19th century.

This recognition has granted San Marino a special position within the realm of international relations. Despite being one of the smallest micronations in the world in terms of population and territory, San Marino has played an active role in various international organizations, such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

<u>San Marino's Role in International Relations:</u>

San Marino plays a significant diplomatic role as a representative of unique political and cultural interests. It participates in international negotiations on issues such as human rights, culture, and the environment. Furthermore, thanks to its neutrality, it serves as a mediator in regional conflicts.

Another crucial aspect is its economic model based on finance and tourism. San Marino boasts a stable and prosperous economy, in part due to its status as a tax haven and tourist destination. These factors allow it to indirectly influence the global economy.

San Marino, therefore, stands as a rare example of a recognized micronation that has established an impressive presence and influence in the geopolitical landscape. Its millennia-long history and involvement in

international organizations demonstrate that even the smallest countries can have a significant role on the world stage.

San Marino has also played a crucial role in promoting democratic values and human rights. Its history of political stability and peace, coupled with its commitment to protecting civil and political rights, has contributed to making it a respected player in global diplomacy.

San Marino's engagement with the United Nations is a tangible example of its geopolitical role. It has actively contributed to the promotion of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and supported initiatives to address global challenges such as climate change and migration.

Furthermore, San Marino has established diplomatic relations with numerous nations, thus contributing to the development of its bilateral relationships. Its network of embassies and consulates worldwide reflects its dedication to facilitating international cooperation.

However, even as a recognized micronation, San Marino is not immune to geopolitical challenges. It must navigate the pressures of major powers and negotiate with them to preserve its autonomy. Additionally, like other small nations, it must continually balance its cultural and historical identity with the demands of modern international politics.

In conclusion, San Marino stands as an emblematic example of a recognized micronation that has leveraged its unique status to play an active role in global geopolitics. Its history, political stability, and prosperous economy make it an intriguing case study for understanding how small nations can have a significant impact in international relations.

B. Liechtenstein

History and Motivations for Sovereignty:

Liechtenstein is another example of a recognized micronation with a unique history. This small nation situated between Switzerland and Austria acquired its sovereignty in the 19th century. Its origins date back to the acquisition of the Principality of Liechtenstein by the House of Liechtenstein in 1719, when Emperor Charles VI of the Holy Roman Empire granted it the title of Principality.

Despite its modest size, Liechtenstein has maintained its independence and sovereignty through a policy of neutrality and its status as a state of the Holy Roman Empire. Today, the Principality is known for its political stability and its advanced economy based on finance, international businesses, and tourism.

Liechtenstein has played an active role in promoting international cooperation and multilateral diplomacy. It is a member of the United Nations, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and has established ties with the European Union through the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA). This participation enables Liechtenstein to have a significant voice on issues such as international trade, human rights, and the environment.

Its policy of neutrality has been a crucial factor in promoting peace in Europe. Liechtenstein maintains a limited police force and does not have a military, emphasizing its commitment to peaceful conflict resolution.

Furthermore, the Principality is renowned for its generous philanthropic efforts through the Prince of Liechtenstein Foundation, which supports cultural and social projects worldwide.

Liechtenstein serves as a compelling example of how a recognized micronation can make significant contributions to international relations, both as a proponent of humanitarian values and as an economic player. Its success story in balancing sovereignty and international cooperation provides crucial lessons regarding the role of micronations in the contemporary geopolitical landscape.

C. Monaco

Monaco's History as a Micronation:

Monaco, located along the French Riviera, is one of the world's most renowned micronations. Its history traces back to the Middle Ages, but it gained its sovereignty in 1297 when Francesco Grimaldi, known as "Il Malizia," took control of the territory. Monaco is a microstate that has thrived through its economic model based on tourism, gambling, and finance.

Its Role in Global Diplomacy and the Economy:

Despite its small size, Monaco plays an influential role in international relations and the global economy. It is known for being a key fixture in the global diplomatic calendar due to the numerous

conferences and international organizations hosted in the Principality. Additionally, Monaco has close ties with the European Union, although it is not a member, and actively participates in global initiatives on climate change and sustainable development.

Economically, the Principality is famous for its status as a tax haven, attracting international businesses and high-net-worth individuals. This significantly contributes to its national income and allows it to play a substantial economic role in the region.

Monaco is also known for its corporate social responsibility and environmental sustainability policies, demonstrating how a micronation can balance economic interests with a commitment to crucial global issues.

Monaco's history and current role illustrate how a recognized micronation can have a remarkable impact on global diplomacy and the economy. Its ability to thrive in a world dominated by larger nation-states is an example of how political and economic ingenuity can enable these small nations to make their mark on the geopolitical stage.

D. Tuvalu

Tuvalu's Uniqueness as an Island Nation:

Tuvalu is a distinctive case among recognized micronations as it is a small island nation located in the Pacific Ocean. This archipelago, comprised of nine coral atolls, is one of the world's lowest-lying countries, with an average elevation of just two meters above sea level. Its vulnerability to climate change and rising sea levels makes it a significant player in discussions on environmental sustainability.

How It Addresses Challenges Related to Climate Change and Its Role in International Organizations:

Tuvalu has gained international recognition through its dedication to raising awareness about climate change and engaging in global negotiations. The nation is a strong advocate for measures to address climate change and protect small developing island nations from environmental impacts.

It actively participates in United Nations discussions and other international organizations to tackle environmental issues and has sought to raise global awareness about the challenges that island nations face due to global warming.

Tuvalu demonstrates how a recognized micronation can play a pivotal role in raising awareness and activism on global environmental issues. Its history of struggle for survival in a rapidly changing world underscores the importance of international cooperation and solidarity in addressing the most urgent challenges of our time.

In addition to environmental issues, Tuvalu manages a small economy primarily based on fishing, agriculture, and external financial transfers. However, its economic resources are limited, and the nation heavily relies on international aid to maintain its financial stability.

Tuvalu is also known for its commitment to human rights and democracy. Education and the promotion of civil rights are considered priorities for the government, demonstrating its determination to improve the quality of life for its citizens.

Furthermore, Tuvalu maintains diplomatic ties with several countries, including members of the European Union, Japan, and the United States. These connections allow the nation to promote its political and environmental interests on a global scale.

In summary, Tuvalu is a significant example of a recognized micronation facing unique challenges, including climate change and economic vulnerability. However, it also demonstrates how a small nation can play an active role in global diplomacy and the promotion of human rights. Its complex history and commitment to the well-being of its citizens and the environment underscore the importance of micronations in the current geopolitical landscape.

2. Unrecognized Micronations:

Let's now explore unrecognized micronations, focusing on a specific example

A. Liberland

Origins and Aspirations of Liberland:

Liberland is a fascinating case of an unrecognized micronation. Founded in 2015 by politician and activist Vit Jedlicka, it is located on a tiny piece of land along the Danube River, between Croatia and Serbia.

Its origins stem from a territorial dispute between the two countries, and Vit Jedlicka declared Liberland's independence in response to this dispute.

Liberland's aspirations are based on libertarian principles, with the goal of creating a minimal state based on individual freedom and reduced government intervention. The micronation promotes the use of cryptocurrencies and aims to become a utopia for those who share this political vision.

Diplomatic Obstacles and Recognition Issues:

Since its founding, Liberland has faced numerous diplomatic and legal obstacles. While Vit Jedlicka and his supporters claim Liberland's independence, neither Croatia nor Serbia has recognized it as a sovereign state. This lack of recognition by international actors has been a significant challenge for the micronation.

Liberland has also sparked debates about its legitimacy, with some considering it a mere political provocation. However, for its supporters, it represents an example of how determined individuals can seek to create a political entity based on specific ideals.

Liberland is a compelling example of how unrecognized micronations can emerge in response to controversial territorial contexts and how they can confront significant challenges in pursuing their independence. Its story highlights the complexities and uncertainties surrounding these entities and the debate over self-proclaimed sovereignty.

B. Sealand

The History of the Self-Proclaimed Principality of Sealand:

Sealand is one of the world's most iconic unrecognized micronations, thanks to its unusual history. It is located on a sea platform off the coast of England. This platform was initially constructed during World War II as an anti-aircraft naval platform. After the conflict, it remained abandoned until, in the 1960s, the Principality of Sealand was declared by Major Roy Bates and his family.

Sealand has been an example of self-proclaimed sovereignty, with the Bates family attempting to establish independent authority over this sea platform.

The Challenges of Being an Offshore Micronation:

Sealand has faced several challenges over the years, including invasion attempts, legal disputes with the United Kingdom, and the fundamental issue of international recognition. Despite these obstacles, the Principality of Sealand has persisted and maintained its self-proclaimed independence.

While not recognized as a sovereign state, Sealand has been involved in legal disputes and negotiations with various international actors and organizations. Its complex history serves as an interesting example of how difficult it is for an unrecognized micronation to gain legitimacy in the geopolitical arena.

Sealand has become an icon of unrecognized micronations and their struggle to pursue independence and sovereignty in unusual and unique contexts. Its unique story serves as a reference point for understanding the dilemmas related to the recognition and persistence of unrecognized micronations.

C. Seborga

The History and Culture of Seborga as an Italian Microstate:

Seborga is one of the most peculiar unrecognized micronations in Europe. Located in the inland region of Liguria in Italy, Seborga claims to be an independent state with a history dating back to the Middle Ages. The micronation is known for its tranquil lifestyle, unique culture, and self-proclaimed monarchy.

The "Principality of Seborga" is governed by a "Prince" elected by the citizens in a constitutional monarchy system. The local community takes pride in its identity and traditions, which are often celebrated in festivals and cultural events.

Its Relations with Italy and Local Impact:

Seborga is not recognized as a sovereign state but is a unique community within Italy. The inhabitants of Seborga maintain an ambivalent position regarding their affiliation with Italy, creating a unique situation of perceived dual sovereignty.

Although small in size, Seborga has a strong sense of identity and community that has influenced its culture, local politics, and tourism. It is an interesting example of how an unrecognized micronation can preserve its culture and autonomy within a larger context.

The history and culture of Seborga demonstrate how unrecognized micronations can maintain a sense of independence and cultural identity even when not recognized on the international stage. Their existence represents another facet of the geopolitical landscape, where the concept of sovereignty can be interpreted in unique and peculiar ways.

3. Geopolitical Influence

After exploring various recognized and unrecognized micronations, it is important to consider the overall influence of these entities on the geopolitical landscape.

<u>Comparative Analysis of the Influence and Importance of Recognized and Unrecognized Micronations:</u>

Comparing recognized and unrecognized micronations reveals significant differences in their geopolitical impact. Recognized micronations like San Marino, Liechtenstein, Monaco, and Tuvalu enjoy a more stable position in global diplomacy. They can actively participate in international organizations, influence global policies, and promote specific values, such as human rights or environmental sustainability.

On the other hand, unrecognized micronations like Liberland, Asgardia, Sealand, and Seborga face significant obstacles in seeking international recognition. Despite their creativity and unique aspirations, they often have to contend with skepticism and a lack of legitimacy in the eyes of the international community.

However, both categories of micronations offer insights into the concepts of sovereignty, self-determination, and influence in global politics. Recognized micronations demonstrate how small nations can have a significant role in international relations. On the other hand, unrecognized micronations raise questions about the challenges and opportunities that arise from self-proclaimed independence in a complex and interconnected world.

In the end, both recognized and unrecognized micronations contribute to the diversity of the current geopolitical landscape. Each of them offers a unique and thought-provoking perspective on how nations, large or small, can seek to shape the world around them.

4. The Future of Micronations

1. <u>Cooperation and Solidarity</u>: In the context of global challenges such as climate change, migration, and pandemics, both recognized and unrecognized micronations could seek innovative ways to cooperate and provide mutual support. Sharing resources, expertise, and experiences could strengthen their influence and their ability to address global challenges.

2. <u>Blockchain Technology and Cryptocurrencies</u>: Some unrecognized micronations, like Liberland, have embraced blockchain technology and cryptocurrencies as part of their identity. In the future, new forms of economic and political interaction based on these technologies may emerge, opening new opportunities for digital sovereignty.

3. <u>Digital Diplomacy</u>: Micronations are increasingly leveraging digital platforms and social media to promote their causes and establish international relationships. In the future, digital diplomacy could become an even more important element in micronations' strategies, enabling them to reach a global audience.

4. <u>Reforms of International Organizations</u>: The evolution of international organizations, such as the UN and the European Union, could open the door to greater involvement of recognized micronations. Global organizations may reconsider membership criteria and collaborate with micronations on specific issues.

5. <u>New Forms of Governance</u>: Micronations could serve as experimental laboratories for new forms of governance and social organization. Some may explore models of direct democracy, sharing-based economies, and innovative solutions for global challenges.

6. <u>Respect for Cultural Diversity</u>: Micronations that emphasize their unique cultural identity, like Seborga, could contribute to promoting respect for cultural diversity in the global context. These nations may continue to uphold their traditions and share their cultures with the world.

7. <u>Humanitarian Crises and Refugees</u>: Recognized micronations could play a more active role in responding to humanitarian crises and migration flows. Their commitment to providing assistance and refuge could be crucial in emergency situations.

8. <u>Recognition and Digital Sovereignty</u>: With the expansion of online activities and digital life, some micronations may seek recognition of their digital sovereignty, creating new forms of autonomy in the virtual space.

9. <u>Education and Research</u>: Some micronations may develop specific sectors such as higher education and scientific research to become hubs for knowledge and innovation. They could attract scholars, scientists,

and researchers from around the world to contribute to their aspirations.

10. <u>Resilience and Adaptation</u>: Island micronations like Tuvalu may focus on increasing their resilience to the effects of climate change, seeking innovative solutions to address environmental challenges. This could involve the adoption of sustainable technologies and the implementation of adaptation policies.

11. <u>Cultural and Artistic Influence</u>: Micronations could become cultural and artistic centers, promoting creativity and art. Through festivals, exhibitions, and cultural collaborations, they could share their cultural influence with the world.

12. <u>Peace and Cooperation</u>: In a world marked by conflicts and geopolitical tensions, recognized micronations could play a role in promoting peace and cooperation. They could act as mediators or advocates for peaceful diplomacy in international disputes.

In the ever-evolving world of micronations, the path forward is paved with boundless potential. These unique entities, ranging from recognized to unrecognized, are poised to navigate a complex interplay of geopolitical, technological, and social forces in shaping their destinies. As they chart their course, they remain an intriguing and dynamic facet of the global geopolitical tableau, providing an exclusive platform for redefining notions of sovereignty, cultural identity, and international involvement.

In this multifaceted landscape, some micronations will persist in their quest for formal recognition and global influence, while others will embark on innovative and unconventional routes to assert their place in the world. Their collective presence on the geopolitical stage promises to furnish fresh vantage points and pose new challenges, thereby contributing to a richer comprehension of global politics. As the world continues to witness the diversity and innovation of these micronations, their compelling narratives will undoubtedly unfold in ways that captivate our imaginations and expand the boundaries of what is possible.

5. Conclusion

In this article, we have explored the fascinating role of micronations in today's geopolitical landscape, focusing on some of the more well-known ones, both recognized and unrecognized. San Marino, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Tuvalu, Liberland, Asgardia, Sealand, and Seborga are just a few of the countless micronations that aim to make a difference in the world.

While some of these entities enjoy international recognition and actively influence global politics, others challenge conventional norms, seeking to assert their sovereignty in innovative ways. This diverse landscape of micronations offers a unique opportunity to explore the concepts of sovereignty, cultural identity, and international participation.

It should be noted that the micronations mentioned in this article are just the tip of the iceberg. The world is rich with other micronations, each with its own history, culture, and aspirations. In the future, we may delve deeper into these unique nations or explore new ones, providing further insights into the geopolitical and social dynamics that characterize our rapidly evolving world.

In an era where size and recognition are no longer the sole determinants of international influence, micronations continue to demonstrate that global politics is a playing field open to all sizes and ambitions. Stay tuned for further explorations of micronations in the future.

In a world where size and conventions are challenged, micronations remind us that global politics is a stage open to all voices and all dimensions. In their courage to dream big, these small nations teach us that even the brightest stars can emerge from the darkness. Stay tuned for further explorations of micronations in the future, as the world continues to amaze us with its diversity and innovation.

II. GLOBAL SITUATION - RADICALIZATION

The Radicalization Process

PhD. Leliana PÂRVULESCU

In the world we live in, radicalization has become an increasingly discussed and researched topic, in an attempt to understand the mechanisms which are the basis of the transformation of some individuals into followers of extreme ideologies. In the last two decades, researchers and practitioners in this field they came up with a series of explanatory models.

Randy Borum and Fathali M. Moghaddam are two reference names in this direction. Randy Borum developed a model which includes four essential stages in the radicalization process. The first is that of "lamentation". where the individual feels that things are not going as they should. The second stage, "injustice", it deepens this feeling through the conviction that the world is fundamentally unfair. In the third phase, "attribution", the individual begins to look for a culprit for his problems, externalizing his dissatisfaction. Finally, in the fourth stage, "distancing and devaluation", the person comes to consider others as his enemies, or even evil. These stages illustrate the gradual transformation of an individual from a disaffected person to a potential extremist.

On the other hand, Fathali M. Moghaddam describes radicalization as a "ladder of terrorism". At the first stage, we find young people who perceive everything as an injustice and who empathize with those who want to fight against it. As the scale goes up, the number of those willing to resort to violence becomes smaller and smaller, eventually reaching a very limited number of individuals who lose their moral inhibitions and become capable of violent acts. From my own experience, I would add that low self-esteem and a sense of non-belonging are catalytic factors in the radicalization process.

Source: https://www.euractiv.ro/politic-intern/radicalizare-romania-societate-politica-25985

And yet, many questions remain unanswered. What exactly triggers this process? Why do some reach the stage of extreme violence while others do not? When and how can this process be stopped? What are the factors and mechanisms that can stop the escalation of radicalization? Under what conditions does a person move from one stage to another in this dangerous "ladder"? Through this article, I hope to contribute to finding
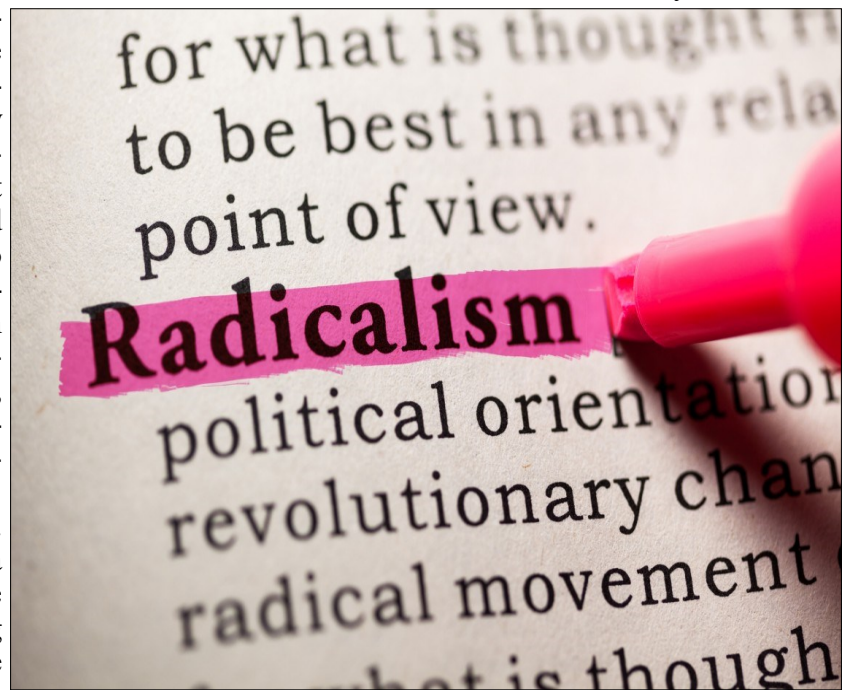
answers to these pressing questions, to help understand and prevent the phenomenon of radicalization in contemporary society.

In an effort to unravel the complexity of radicalization, experts and researchers have put under the microscope a complex mix of factors that appear to contribute to the process. Magnus Ranstorp, another leading researcher in this field, identifies variable factors ranging from individual to social and political. Feelings of alienation, humiliation and victimization, conspiracy theories, social exclusion, discrimination and contact with radical networks are just some of the elements that contribute to radicalization. At the political level, the perception of a conflict between "the West and Islam" or Islamophobia can accelerate this process. From the perspective of ideology and religion, violent interpretations of doctrines such as Islam or a negative view of Western society play a crucial role. In addition, an identity or belonging crisis, and traumatic events can act as triggering mechanisms.

Other studies suggest that signs of radicalization can be seen in visual, behavioral and attitudinal changes. For example, a change in the way of dressing or in the symbols used may indicate an alignment with an extreme ideology.

In this complex landscape, preventing radicalization has become a priority. Many governments, educators, social workers and civil society organizations are mobilizing to combat this phenomenon. Efforts are focused on raising awareness and resilience against the lure of violent extremism. Also known as "primary or generic prevention", this approach targets the entire population of children and young people, encouraging the development of qualities such as resilience, critical thinking and democratic values. Essentially, the focus is on strengthening positive personal resources to reduce risk factors. The ultimate objective is to transform young people into active and democratic citizens, aware of the dangers of radicalization and equipped with the necessary tools to combat it. Thus, understanding radicalization requires a multifactorial and interdisciplinary approach. From individual to sociopolitical factors, knowledge and awareness of the risks and mechanisms of radicalization remain vital in the fight against extremism.

So radicalization does not have a single cause, but is fueled by a variety of factors, meaning that there is no simple solution to the problem of radicalization. Prevention happens at different levels, each with its own target and strategy. Primary prevention focuses on the whole population, while secondary and tertiary prevention focuses on more defined groups that are at higher risk or are already involved in radical activities. Mobilizing and strengthening local communities and professionals working with young people is essential to identify early signs of radicalization and implement preventive measures. Prevention efforts can focus on developing personal skills such as resilience, critical thinking and democratic values that help individuals resist radical influences.

While schools are often thought of as on the front lines in the fight against radicalization and extremism, research suggests that these educational institutions may also play a role in exacerbating the feelings of alienation and marginalization that fuel these phenomena. This is because the education system can inadvertently promote a hegemonic culture, reflecting the values and norms of the majority, often middle class, population. For students from ethnic minorities or different socio-economic backgrounds, this can symbolize a hostile or alienating environment. They may perceive that they are labeled as "different" and may experience forms of cultural exclusion and marginalization. This sense of being outside the norm can in turn generate opposition to the educational system and even a search for belonging to other communities, thus fueling a vicious circle of alienation and exclusion.

Therefore, schools can unwittingly become fertile ground for the development of a counterculture where young people construct identities based on differentiation and opposition. However, this is not inevitable. Teachers and school administration can change this course by becoming aware of their role in this dynamic. If educators understand the risks associated with promoting a hegemonic culture and actively work to promote inclusion, diversity, and a sense of belonging for all students, they can have a profound and positive impact. Thus, schools have the potential not only to anticipate, but also to prevent pathways that can lead to radicalization and extremism. This involves cultivating an educational environment where all students feel seen, heard and valued, regardless of their cultural or socio-economic background.

In conclusion, addressing the prevention of radicalization and extremism is a complex process involving interventions at various levels and in various contexts. From primary prevention, which focuses on awareness and education for the general population, to secondary and tertiary prevention, which are more focused and personalized, all levels of prevention have a crucial role. However, should be approached with caution, taking into account the diversity and complexity of the factors involved in radicalization.

Schools, in particular, are an important setting for prevention, but they can also be a source of radicalization if not carefully managed. Research indicates that marginalization and cultural alienation experienced in

schools can contribute to feelings of exclusion and fuel radicalization. However, when teachers and administration are aware of these dynamics and take an active role in promoting inclusion and diversity, schools can become a powerful prevention tool.

Thus, the prevention of radicalization cannot be based on simple solutions or one-dimensional models, it requires a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach, which includes not only authorities and security professionals, but also those from education, social assistance and communities. It must be a concerted effort that brings together knowledge, understanding and action to address this complex and sensitive issue.

III. MIDDLE EAST- ISRAEL-GAZA STRIP

Israel and the Gaza Strip for Global Security

PhD. Rareş-Mihai MUŞAT

The conflict between the State of Israel and the State of Palestine is a conflict that dates back to 1947, when Great Britain was in control of the entire region. Practically this conflict represents the Israeli-Palestinian war, where we can say that the first inhabitants of these lands were the Jews, a fact attested in old history books. The place was known as Judea or Canaan Here the Jews began to build their Temple, the centre of their religion. After the Roman conquest and the prohibition of the entry of the Jews into Jerusalem, we can speak of the Arabs, who entered Palestine or Judea, following the leadership of Muhammad, who built a Mosque over the site of the old Jewish Temple. After their massacre during the Holocaust and the expulsion of the last Jews from Europe, they returned to their country of origin and formed the State of Israel.

During the Second World War, Stalin promised the American envoy to Moscow and the Jewish communities the Crimean Peninsula, and after the war he changed his mind and no longer kept to his promise – granting the Crimean Peninsula to the Jews. In 1947 in the UN, the representative of the USSR at that time argued that the establishment of the State of Israel corresponds to the legitimate need of the Jewish people, who do not yet have a country of their own, and a land that is theirs. On December 9, 1949, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution regarding the internationalization of the city of Jerusalem. At that time the idea of the State of Israel is categorically rejected, but on January 29, 1950, the Parliament proclaimed it the capital of the country. Then followed tensions between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and the peaked during the wars in 1956 and 1967.

Source: https://www.info-sud-est.ro/ce-este-fasia-gaza-butoiul-de-pulbere-de-la-granita-israelului-gandita-sa-devina-hong-kong-ul-orientului-mijlociu-astazi-este-unul-dintre-cele-mai-sarace-si-

October 7, 2023 was a fateful date, when at that music concert, the Hamas killed hundreds of young people[1], a point that determined the State of Israel to launch the offensive, and the Palestinians complain of the severe restrictions imposed by the Israeli police, who did not allow them to enter old Jerusalem, a holy city for them as well. Online networks were useful at this time, as various videos appeared that highlighted the violent conflicts between the Israelis and the Palestinians, events that reached a boiling point, when hundreds of far right Israeli extremists walked the streets of the city chanting "death to the Arabs". Another aspect that points

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[1]*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0AqIBpr2fOs.*

to the continuation of the conflict and fuels the frustrations of both sides, is the actions taken by the Israeli authorities, pertaining to the evacuation of dozens of Palestinians from East Jerusalem and the allocation of their homes to Jewish settlers.

The current Israeli legislation stipulates that any person, Israeli or not, who can prove they have a property title, obtained prior to 1948, can claim any property in Jerusalem today. It is the same for the Palestinians who lost their homes in West Jerusalem. The moment represents a real turning point and a crisis in Jerusalem, which is practically the centre of the crisis between Israel and Palestine. If we take a look at the history of the city, we cannot find a single moment of peace between Israel and Palestine. Palestine is very often identified with the land of Israel, the land of the Jews or the Holy land, and in Arabic it is called "Filistin".[2]

History shows that the Jews have not been able to understand anything of what had happened to them in the previous century. The most notable moment is their persecution during World War 2. They use the same methods and the same segregation techniques based on ethnic or racial criteria, especially on the weak, and employ "Apartheid"[2] technique/means. The policy of separating ethnic communities, or separating communities based on different ethnic or racial criteria, is a common technique in modern history. We can certainly observe how these techniques are applied to the current relationship between Israelis and Palestinians. We must make a real and very clear demarcation and not make the cruel mistake of justifying the action of Hamas in Israel, nor of making arguments in favour of the actions adopted by the Palestinian army with regard to the civilian population of Israel. They are out of fault. The massacre carried out at the music festival and the atrocities that followed are elements of truly reprehensible behaviour. If we take into account the motivation that drives Hamas to fight, we are at a loss – where does so much hatred and frustration come from, practically why do they behave like this, with the Israeli population?

Only the ill-willed cannot see that in this whole conflict there is not a side that can claim defeat. Moreover, there is no side that can honestly say that favours those who can responsibly say "we are the winners". At the same time, there is no legitimate group that is right or completely oppressed. We can clearly see that both sides willingly or unwillingly make mistakes. And Yet that is what they are – mistakes.


Source: https://vividmaps.com/palestinian-loss-of-land-1946-to-2000/

[2]*https://dexonline.ro/intrare/filistean/20855*
[3]*Queen Rania Al-Adbullah – Jordan: https://m.facebook.com/QueenRania/videos/interview-with-cnns-christiane-amanpour/653090170289328/ , https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQPlzuQdF8A , https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apartheid*

Source: https://ro.pinterest.com/pin/pinterest--657947826796096852/

At this point, we need to understand, basically, why did it get here and what are the Palestinians fighting for? I think that there is no way the parties can reach tranquillity, coexistence, harmony, peace, if between them there are constant dissensions and a permanent conflict.

Source: https://www.aa.com.tr/en/info/infographic/7653
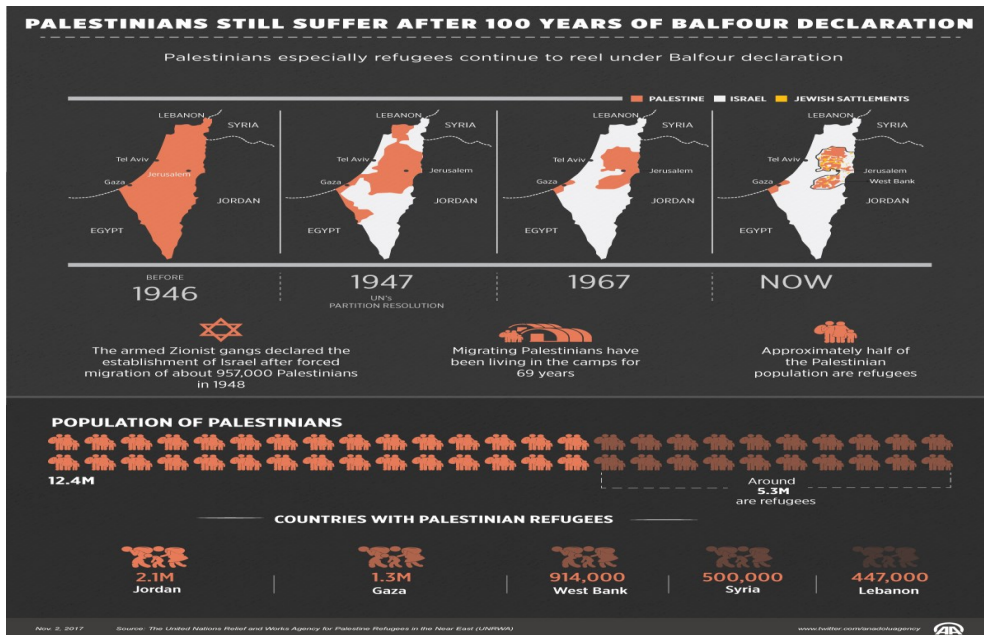
This conflict broke out again on the morning of October 7, 2023, when fighters of Palestinian origin, attacked. They identified themselves as part of the Hamas group, a group that has committed acts of terrorism and crimes against humanity. They also attacked several military bases, about 1,300 Israelis were killed and a dozen were taken prisoners and moved to the Gaza Strip to be used as leverage during prisoner exchanges. Many people who died in this first stage were civilians, among whom were also children. This marked the moment when Israel decided to declare a "complete siege" on terrorist organization Hamas. Taking these facts into account, on a global level, many governments have started to show a sense of real and explainable

empathy with the State of Israel, which began bombing the Gaza Strip, destroying Palestinian neighbourhoods and killing at least 1,900 Palestinians.

The State of Israel resorted to cutting off water, fuel, electricity and food. If we do not try to understand the real purpose, for which Hamas attacked the State of Israel, we have all the prerequisites to encounter a cyclical situation of endless repetition of this conflict. Until that moment, to the Israelis, everything was peaceful and normal, while for the Palestinians, daily life was defined by intolerable pain. We say this as we take into account the fact that for 16 years the Gaza Strip has been under Israeli siege, a siege so severe that the world called it "the largest open prison in the world"[4]. The United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, who described the Gaza Strip as "hell on earth"[5], encouraged the State of Israel to allow the access of international aid for the Palestinians and said, before the General Assembly, that he would launch as soon as possible an appeal for the funding of these aids. He said: "If there is hell on Earth, then it is represented by the lives of the children of Gaza today. The hostilities have caused severe damage to vital civilian infrastructure in Gaza, including roads and electricity infrastructures, fuelling a humanitarian crisis. Access roads to Gaza have been blocked and power outages are affecting the ability to supply drinking water to the region".

At the same time, this humanitarian catastrophe, this genocide, is reported by the United Nations as follows: in 2012 the UN warned that "if the State of Israel does not change anything in its relationship with the Gaza Strip"[6] it can very easily and quite quickly become a real war zone. The UN concluded that this small strip of land is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, with about "2,098,389 inhabitants / 360 km2"[7]. Practically this conflict began in 2007 when Hamas took over the Gaza Strip, just one year after winning the elections in Palestine. "Hamas is a Palestinian Islamic terrorist organization, and its goal is to conquer the State of Israel and turn it into a Palestinian Islamic state", and was founded on December 10, 1987. The group's policy is based on military principles, but at the same time it is and a political party, whose official doctrine is: "the liberation of the territories occupied by the Israelis"[9]. Its declared goal is the liberation of all of Palestine and the return of the Palestinian refugees exiled during the establishment of the State of Israel, in 1948. Hamas can achieve this objective only through the use of force. For more than 2,000,000 Palestinians are living in the Gaza Strip, where the State of Israel controls virtually everything about their lives.

The economy is devastated as the State of Israel restricts trade from the Gaza Strip to the outside world, leaving most of the population unemployed, the medical system is in crisis, because medicine is scarce, and patients are denied their requests to go abroad for medical services appropriate to their needs. Electricity is available only a few hours a day, because the State of Israel limits fuel entering the Gaza Strip. At some point, there were certain documents that drew the public eye. They showed that the State of Israel calculated the number of calories allowed in the Gaza Strip, what it considered the necessary amount to survive.

In the summer of 2014, as a result of Israeli bombings, almost 2,100 Palestinians and over 500 children were killed. On the other side only 72 Israelis were killed, of whom 66 were soldiers. In 2018, several tens of thousands of residents from the Gaza Strip tried to break the siege by organising non-violent marches on the border fence with the State of Israel. They took place every Friday for almost 2 years. They were met with gunfire, several hundreds were dead and thousands were injured. Among them were also journalists and doctors. If we take a look at the facts, long before Hamas took action in the Gaza Strip, we see that starting with 1990, the State of Israel has been slowly taking over the and sealing the entire Gaza Strip. These actions culminate with Palestinians being forbidden to enter or leave the Gaza Strip. However, there are some small exceptions namely citizens with Israeli permits. The policy that is basically based on a completely different scenario and strategic interests, defines the criterion of the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. This policy has been active for more than half a century.

Several international groups that have been fighting for human rights claim that the State of Israel has been issuing separate laws for the Israelis and the Palestinians. This is a fact that supports the idea that the State of Israel is a country that, depending on ethnicity, clearly refuses to respect the human rights and individual liberties of every Palestinian living in the territories ruled by the State of Israel.

According to the "1947 Palestine partition plan adopted by the United Nations, on May 14, 1948, after the expiration of the British mandate for Palestine, David Ben-Gurion, the president of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency for Palestine, proclaims the independence of the State of Israel within the

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[4]*https://www.euronews.ro/articole/de-ce-fasia-gaza-este-cea-mai-mare-inchisoare-in-aer-liber-granitele-dotate-cu-arme.*
[5]*https://www.digifm.ro/stiri/extern/secretarul-general-al-onu-fasia-gaza-este-iadul-pe-pamant-pentru-copii-102727*
[6]*Propunere de rezoluţie a Parlamentului European "B7-0526/2012" https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-7-2012-0526_RO.html.*
[7]*https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/F%C3%A2%C8%99ia_Gaza.*
[9]*https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamas.*

territorial lines included in the decision adopted by the United Nations Organization" [10-11]. Palestinians have come to the conclusion that peaceful marches, non-violent protests, negotiations, have failed to implement the respect of the rights and freedoms of the Palestinian population.

The State of Israel has been waging wars against Hamas in the Gaza Strip ever since 2008, 2012, 2014. With these wars they have been causing countless damages to the civilian population and on the infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, real humanitarian catastrophes.

Today we are talking about approximately 220 hostages taken by Hamas and the release of only four. At this point the international community must find a common ground to negotiate and help release all hostages. If afterwards they should decide that use of force is necessary, it does not mean that they must bomb everything without taking into account the need to reduce loss of human lives to zero.

If we take a close look at the "Cairo summit", a summit that ended "with not solutions to the Gaza crisis"[12], we see that the absentees were the State of Israel, the USA, Iran, China, Palestine. Furthermore, shortly after the Russian leader met with the Chinese leader[13], and the Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, met with the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, and with the Chinese President, Xi Jinping. The separate talks took place in China where Viktor Orbán[14] attended the "Belt and Road" Forum, a plan launched by Xi a decade ago. One of the most important issues at the Forum is the moment of the "zero encounter between the representative of Iran and the head of Hezbollah"[15]

Source: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/21/world-leaders-attend-cairo-peace-summit-to-de-escalate -israel-hamas-war

Conclusions:

1. If we find that after so many forceful attempts and the use of the entire military arsenal, we do not achieve significant results in annihilating/removing Hamas' organizational parties, should we not look for another way to settle all these disputes?
2. I believe that if we want peace in the Middle East, then we must bring the USA and China to the negotiating table.

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[10]*Brenner, Michael; Frisch, Shelley (aprilie 2003). Zionism: A Brief History. Markus Wiener Publishers, p. 184.*
[11]*"Zionist Leaders: David Ben-Gurion 1886-1973". Israel Ministryof Foreign Affairs. Accesat în 13 iulie 2011.*
[12]*https://www.mediafax.ro/externe/summitul-de-pace-de-la-cairo-s-a-incheiat-fara-solutii-pentru-criza-din-gaza-22164262*
[13]*https://www.rfi.ro/politica-160563-vladimir-putin-intalnire-cu-viktor-orban-china-la-forumul-belt-and-road*
[14]*https://romania.europalibera.org/a/ungaria-viktor-orban-atac-ue/32651928.html "Premierul Viktor Orbán a lansat un atac virulent împotriva Uniunii Europene la ceremonia de aniversare a Revoluției din 1956, organizată la Veszprém, Capitală Europeană a Culturii". [The Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán attacked the European Union during the ceremony that marked the anniversary of the 1956 revolution, which took place in Veszprém, the European Culture Capital].*
[15]*https://www.stiripesurse.ro/intalnire-de-gradul-zero-iranul-s-a-asezat-la-masa-cu-seful-hezbollah_3105389.html.*

3. When referring to achieving peace, once again I believe that once the USA and China reach common ground, they should meet with representatives from all the other entities: Qatar, Israel, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Yemen and the Palestinian territories (West Bank and Gaza Strip). Practically at certain times, the relations and the geostrategic negotiations, must take priority so as to avoid a third world war.

4. The protests in Paris, London, Milan, Rome, Warsaw, Berlin, and other countries and the actions that may take place driven by the concept of "lone wolf"[16], and the events that may follow in the future – protests/demonstrations, even if peaceful in the beginning, must be very well analysed. We should create a proper framework so they could stop, if we really want the current crises in the Gaza Strip to stop escalating.

5. I believe that ending the conflict in the Gaza Strip and stopping this regional conflict, or containing it in the area and preventing it from becoming global can be achieved only by using all diplomatic means and dialogue with all those involved.

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[16]*https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lup_singuratic_(terorism).*

IV. EUROPE - UKRAINE

Newton's Third Law and the Ukraine War

PhD. G. Doug DAVIS (USA)

PhD. Michael O. SLOBODCHIKOFF (USA)

Sir Isaac Newton's third law of motion states that for every action in nature there is an equal and opposite reaction. This holds true for conflict as well. When one side escalates the conflict, there is often a mistaken idea that the other party will passively accept the changes without reacting.[1] This is a dangerous mistake that ignores common sense—the other side will respond and initiate its own intensification of violence. For example, providing new and more lethal weapons in a conflict will necessitate a response by the adversary, which in turn leads to more escalation. The danger is that once this path is initiated, it is very difficult to stop—it leads to a conflict that neither side desired but resulted from the decision to escalate. It becomes a cycle of violence and upsurge. The Ukraine War is likely to accelerate as new, more destructive weapons are introduced by both parties. Washington is committed to arming Kyiv, while Moscow is dedicated to achieving a victory. As the conflict grows in intensity and violence, it is likely to produce an outcome neither side desires but is helpless to prevent.

Source: https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/international/momente-cheie-ale-razboiului-provocat-de-rusia-in-ucraina-de-la-zblitzkrieg-ul-rus-esuat-la-riposta-de-succes-a-kievului.html

Russia has experienced numerous frustrations and has had to change its strategy and tactics multiple times. As more technologically advanced weaponry have been provided to Kyiv, Ukrainian forces have gained some ground against the Russians, yet they have not been able to significantly shift the tide of the war. Currently, the status of the conflict is that of a long-term stalemate. he states supporting Ukraine wish to increase costs to Russian forces and ultimately weaken Putin. This will prevent Moscow from consolidating control in Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk and Donetsk—the regions that Russia has annexed. It is clear that Russia underestimated the support Ukraine would receive from the West, leading to a change in its strategic approach to the war.

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[1]Slobodchikoff, Michael O. "How effective are international organizations at resolving territorial disputes among member states: a look at the European Union." *SCS Journal 1, no. 2 (2012): 29-59.*

While the West has been successful in keeping the Russians from winning the war, there is a danger to this course of action.[2] More and more advanced weaponry is required to maintain the status quo and prevent Russian troops from overrunning Ukrainian positions. It's not that the Russians are winning the conflict, but neither are the Ukrainians. In fact, Zelensky has often argued that the only way Kyiv will win is if the West provides more and more advanced armaments in defense of Ukraine.

Putin has gambled everything on the Ukrainian war.[3]-[4] There is no way he can retreat and maintain rule. This is an existential struggle for the Russian leadership.[5] The introduction of increasingly sophisticated weaponry to Kyiv has weakened Putin's position, making it much more likely that he has to enhance Moscow's response to maintain control. By strengthening its military support of Kyiv, the Western position is likely to lead to a new escalation. Since Putin has staked his leadership on the Ukrainian conflict, he understands that his only option is to respond by introducing weapons of mass destruction, including tactical nuclear weapons. While both choices are bad, when faced with the decision between self-preservation or using weapons of mass destruction, Putin will choose to protect himself.[6] Ironically, Ukrainian battlefield successes require Moscow to respond and there are limited options. Moscow will not admit defeat. If Washington or its European allies continue to provide more and more weapons, it will eventually force Putin to go nuclear. This is not a matter of whether Moscow will use tactical nuclear weapons, but rather when they will resort to them.

Newton's third law applies to this conflict—every action that provides new lethal aid to the Ukrainians will see Russia respond and escalate.

The West is guided by short-term thinking and is unable to change course even though its policies may lead to the introduction of weapons of mass destruction. Once war increases in scale and becomes a mass effort supported broadly by industrial and financial sectors, it will be more difficult to adjust to new circumstances and all the players involved will be worse-off. The more complex the military, political, economic, and social network required to support a conflict, the more political costs to changing course.

While the Russian invasion of Ukraine is different from World War I, there are some insights that are very relevant to the conflict we see today. Barbara Tuchman's groundbreaking book *Guns of August* shows how the unprecedented destruction and death that emerged in the First World War resulted from mistaken ideas and assumptions regarding conflict. Military strategy mainly relied on experience from past wars which saw offensive tactics bring decisive conclusion to conflict; the offensive side had the advantage and would prevail.[7] When the actual war broke out, important technological advances had started to change the way war was fought. Modernized equipment gave the defensive side the capacity to halt attacks and prevent any decisive settlement of the war. Failure to perceive this in advance resulted into a longer and deadlier war than anyone had anticipated.

According to Tuchman, state leaders failed to see the changing realities of war and this led them to deploy self-destructive policies that impact us even today. The danger is that if nothing changes, the Ukraine war will lead to an outcome that neither side wants. Putin's governing position is linked to success in Ukraine and his political survival is dependent upon his victory. If he begins losing the conflict or cannot find a settlement, his response will likely be the use of a tactical nuclear weapon, which in turn will force a strong response from Washington, continuing the cycle of violence, and eventually leading to a new world war. It is imperative that clear minds prevail and a resolution to the conflict be found before we inadvertently embroil ourselves in a new global conflict, where the consequences of today's policies will lead to mutually assured destruction.

[2]Davis, G. Doug, and Michael O. Slobodchikoff. *Cultural Imperialism and the Decline of the Liberal Order: Russian and Western Soft Power in Eastern Europe. Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.*

[3]Davis, G. Douglas, and Michael O. Slobodchikoff. "Great-Power Competition and the Russian Invasion of Ukraine." *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs* (2022).

[4]Slobodchikoff, Michael O. "Challenging US hegemony: The Ukrainian crisis and Russian regional order." *the soviet and post-soviet review* 44, no. 1 (2017): 76-95.

[5]Davis, G. Douglas, and Michael O. Slobodchikoff. "Great Power Competition Following the Ukraine War." In *The Great Power Competition Volume 5: The Russian Invasion of Ukraine and Implications for the Central Region,* pp. 35-45. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2023.

[6]Slobodchikoff, Michael O. and G. Doug Davis. "Roots of Russian soft power: rethinking Russian national identity." *Сравнительная политика* 8, no. 2 (2017): 19-36.

[7]Slobodchikoff, Michael O., Brandon Stewart, and G. Doug Davis. "The Challenge to NATO: Global Security and the Atlantic Alliance." *The Challenge to NATO* (2021): 1-320.

IV. EUROPE - WESTERN BALKANS

The Western Balkans, a "Barrel of Explosive Powder" with a High Risk of Ignition and the Outbreak of a Second War in Europe

PhD. Eng. Stelian TEODORESCU

„You can't stop the waves, but you can learn to surf "

Jon Kabat Zinn

Now in its 21st month since Russia launched its invasion, the war in Ukraine remains a top priority for all of Europe and the US, but especially for states seeking to help Kiev restore its territorial integrity.

Meanwhile, however, tensions have escalated in another part of Europe, in the Western Balkans, a region that remains extremely volatile following several successive, brutal and complex conflicts, all of which can be said to have originated in the 1990s.

International analysts have on various occasions expressed their fear that the relations between Serbia and Kosovo - classified until now only as being extremely tense - have become more and more hostile in recent months. Violence erupted again in September 2023, but even more intensely than in other cases so far in northern Kosovo, and it is noteworthy that Belgrade has now responded more quickly and firmly with an increase in the presence of military forces on the border with its neighbor.

As a result, there are now concerns that the volatility in this southeastern European region could turn into armed conflict as the world's attention is drawn to the war in Ukraine and, more recently, the war between the Israelis and other occult forces, the first of which are the groups Hamas and Hezbollah. Given

Source: https://lexo.al/2022/04/baruti-i-fucise-se-ballkanit-perendimor/

the current global political and security environment, an outbreak of increasing violence in northern Kosovo "should raise alarm bells" to the entire world. "Resolving the dispute between Kosovo and Serbia is no longer

just a political issue, but a serious security issue for the region and for Europe as a whole," as Engjellushe Morina[1] and Majda Ruge[2], senior political researchers at the Council on European Relations, also pointed out External (ECFR).

For the US and the EU, the choice is no longer just between the failure and success of the dialogue, but between stability and a new escalation of violence in the Western Balkans. The latter scenario is the most likely, especially if, at the international level, a high level of credibility is not given to the fact that, in the context of the outbreak of the other mentioned wars in the world and a fierce international competition for the establishment of a new world order, Belgrade's role in the destabilization of Kosovo is still not fully recognized and, why not, a firmer attitude is not adopted regarding Russia's destabilizing influence on the future of the entire Western Balkans region.

E. Morina and M. Ruge pointed out that "violent incidents in the north have undermined the already difficult dialogue process between Serbia and Kosovo over the past year. "The President of Serbia, A. Vučić, used violence to challenge Kosovo's authority in the north and to promote the autonomy of the four majority-Serb municipalities in northern Kosovo, which would allow Serbia to intervene internally in Kosovo through its proxies."

E. Morina and M. Ruge noted that A. Vučić characterized the latest violent incident in northern Kosovo as a legitimate act of resistance by local Serbs. However, it should not be overlooked that the type and quantity of weapons seized after the incident "suggests that this was a large-scale, coordinated combat operation aimed at destabilizing the region."

The latest armed clashes in northern Kosovo have alarmed US and European officials, who have expressed deep concern over the violence and the "unprecedented" build-up of military forces in the region, despite NATO's significant military presence and, more recently, is growing in the region by adding herds.

Serbia has denied any intention to launch significant military deployments near its border with Kosovo and has said it has no intention of invading the entity. However, it is significant to note that senior Serbian military officials have stated that the number of troops along the border with Kosovo has been halved to around 4,500, confirming that they previously had a double military presence as a result of the violence in Banjska, in northern Kosovo. Serbian President A, Vučić also sought to reassure the West, saying he has no intention of ordering military forces to cross the border into Kosovo, saying it would be counterproductive to Belgrade's aspirations to join the EU. "Why would it be beneficial for Belgrade? What would be the point? Shall we destroy the position we have been building for a year? Destroy this in a day? Serbia does not want war", stressed A. Vučić.

Despite these assurances, as many defense analysts say, the current situation in the region can once again be categorized as an "explosive powder keg", with significant potential to ignite at the slightest spark.

"From zero land wars in Europe, we could be looking at two soon," said Ian Bremmer[3], founder of the Eurasia Group. He likened the tensions in the Western Balkans to the recent flash conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which culminated in lightning strikes by the Azeri army that captured the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh in a swift offensive with little outside intervention. "You have a long-standing and unsustainable status quo challenged by the dominant military, looking to see if anyone else cares enough to step in," Bremmer said, adding that "in this case, that's NATO - less distracted than Russia and more likely to intervene directly - but the prospect of an invasion has increased a lot recently." Serbia, however, is proving that it has aspirations to join the EU and is unlikely to want to jeopardize that or receive a direct response from NATO, according to Andrius Tursa, a risk consultancy in Central and Eastern Europe. "A direct military offensive by the Serbian army in northern Kosovo is very unlikely due to the presence of NATO peacekeeping forces and the risk of punitive Western sanctions as a result of such an action," A. Tursa also emphasized. "But from a political perspective, the saber rattling at a time when Belgrade is facing uncomfortable questions surrounding the Banjska attack, have increased Western perceptions of Serbia as a destabilizing actor."

In any case, the optics are worrying for Belgrade, according to A. Tursa. "Beyond the pressing need for de-escalation, prospects for a more durable solution to the long-running conflict between the two sides are dim, especially with nationalist leaders such as Serbian President A. Vučić and the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, who remain in power." A. Tursa added that earlier this year an agreement aimed at normalizing relations has so far proved ineffective and neither side seems ready for compromises made on "fundamental issues such as the sovereignty of Kosovo and the rights of ethnic minorities in northern Kosovo".

But here we are, we can analyze and forecast the future of developments in the Western Balkans and through the attitude and positions adopted by the leaders of the entities in this region regarding the situation in Israel. As the US and EU strongly sided with Israel over attacks by Hamas, some Balkan countries have remained more nuanced on this issue.

For example, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia have expressed their solidarity with Israel. Albania, Montenegro and Croatia did not hold any events for either Israel or Palestine. Their governments were all on the side of Israel.

Israel has the right to self-defense, but not to revenge and massacres, as Croatian President Zoran Milanović declared on October 12. "I condemned the crimes committed by Hamas, I even expressed my disgust. The right to self-defense, which Israel absolutely has, does not include the right to retaliate and massacre civilians. Even if you were my brother, I would treat you according to those criteria." also emphasized Z. Milanović.

In Serbia, the Israeli-Hamas conflict was not a major issue among Serbian politicians or society. However, in the predominantly Muslim Sandžak area of southwestern Serbia, it was announced that citizens of Novi Pazar planned to hold a protest called "Stop the War in Palestine" on October 14.

The Prime Minister of North Macedonia, Dimitar Kovacevski, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bujar Osmani, "strongly condemned" the attacks on Israel, categorizing them as "terrorist attacks". "Violence and attacks on the innocent population must not be tolerated," wrote D. Kovacevski. In North Macedonia, differing political views have led to some disciplinary actions. The Interior Ministry said it would launch disciplinary action against a police officer who is part of the police's VIP protection team after former Interior Minister Nake Culev pointed out that he had posted pro-Hamas comments on his profile Facebook, currently being released from office.

Kosovo also condemned the attacks against Israel. "Our thoughts are with the Israeli people at this incredibly challenging time. We condemn all acts of violence and stand in solidarity with those affected," the statement said. Here in Muslim-dominated Kosovo, the politicians and also the citizens were clearly on the side of Israel. On the evening of October 12, a group from the Jewish community in Kosovo lit candles for the victims in Israel following the Hamas attack. US Ambassador Jeffrey Hovenier joined the vigil and emphasized on Twitter that: "The US unequivocally condemns these heinous attacks. There is never any justification for terrorism. We stand in solidarity with the people of Israel."

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[3]*Ian Arthur Bremmer (born November 12, 1969) is an American political scientist, author, and entrepreneur focused on global political risk. He is the founder and chairman of Eurasia Group, a political risk research and consulting firm. He is also the founder of GZERO Media, a digital media company. Bremmer is of Armenian (from his maternal grandmother), Italian, and German descent, the son of Maria J. (born Scrivano) and Arthur Bremmer. His father served in the Korean War and died at the age of 46 when Bremmer was four. Bremmer earned a master's degree in 1991 and a doctorate in 1994, both in political science from Stanford University. His PhD thesis is entitled "The Politics of Ethnicity: Russians in Ukraine". Bremmer founded the political risk research and consulting firm Eurasia Group in 1998 in the offices of the Institute of World Policy in New York City.*

But some Balkan countries, such as Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), have followed and stand out following a more prudent policy we could say. BiH's Foreign Ministry said it condemned "all forms of violence, especially the killing of innocent civilians." Serbian President A. Vučić condemned the Hamas attacks but called for a long-term compromise between the parties. "We condemn the horrific attacks on Israel. The Jewish people have endured a history of suffering, and Israel deserves to live in peace and security. Now, more than ever, the world needs Israelis and Palestinians to come together and end the violence." he wrote on Twitter.

On October 12, several hundred people gathered in Sarajevo (BiH) by taking to the streets to express their support for the Palestinian people. The protest action, organized by an informal group "Friends of the State of Palestine", condemned the violence and killing of civilians. The Palestinian flag was raised on a high point in the city of Mostar, from southern BiH, while another flag was seen on the iconic Old Bridge from the Ottoman era. The escalating war in Israel and Gaza has again fueled divisions among Bosnian politicians. While all condemned the violence, Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik condemned only the Hamas attack on Israel.

While senior Montenegrin officials expressed solidarity with Israel, there was also sharp criticism on social media of what some saw as a biased stance and failure to acknowledge the Palestinian civilians killed.

"Full support for Kosovo, so it is at least admitted to the community of European states. I am following this and I am saying this because the International Court in The Hague, already in 2010, declared that all the conditions for the international recognition of the statehood of Kosovo have been met. After that, some EU member states, who said that will recognize Kosovo conditionally, they have entered into a silence for years which continues even today", said the President of the Republic of Croatia, Z. Milanović, after the meeting with the President of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani, who made an official visit to Croatia . "It would be good if other leaders asked for the recognition of Kosovo, as I did at the UN. It should be recognized. I try to look at things rationally, taking into account the interests of Croatia above all," the Croatian president added. President Z. Milanović commented on the recent attack in Banjska, in northern Kosovo, and asked Serbia to give answers about the events that took place. "In recent days, we have seen the escalation of conflicts and dangerous actions in northern Kosovo, behind which someone is in terms of organization, resources and finances - these are the facts. Our positions are clear. Serbia must give answers to some obvious things. All these are things we have seen before in history and we don't want to see them again. Someone is behind this and we need to know who so we can continue to live normally. Because if there are no consequences now, it means we are waiting for the next such event. And we must not allow that," Croatian President Z. Milanović also said.

In this context, President Z. Milanović also emphasized that the Serbian President, A. Vučić, must answer some questions: "Uniforms can be purchased online; however, weapons cannot be purchased this way. It's not an amusement park. To prepare for such a thing, you must have the approval of the supreme leader or at least some people close to him. A number of logical questions arise, to which Serbia must give answers." Responding to a question about Russia's possible involvement in the events in northern Kosovo with the aim of destabilizing the region, President Z. Milanović said: "I don't know if Russia has anything to do with the Banjska attack, but the events in Kosovo suit it surely. I'm more surprised by Serbia, which doesn't seem to know that it has lost everything it could lose in terms of developing a nation. A healthier, more rational policy would be more beneficial to them. Serbia certainly does not contribute constructively to relations with neighboring countries." In his statement to the press, the President of Kosovo emphasized that Croatia is a friend, ally and major partner of Kosovo. "You were on our side when our survival was threatened, you still support us today when Kosovo is one of the most consolidated democracies in the region," said President V. Osmani, adding that there are still forces in the region that want to go back to the past.

"Kosovo is determined to keep moving forward and we are happy to have allies like Croatia. President Z. Milanović continues to be our voice in the forums where we are not present, but where we strive to be present: in NATO, in the common family of European states and in the UN, where President Z. Milanović made a firm appeal to all countries that did not, so let's recognize the irreversible reality of the existence of an independent and sovereign state, Kosovo," said the Kosovar president. She also emphasized that Kosovo considers Croatia as one of its main allies, not only in the region. "We share part of a common history, the acquisition of freedom and independence. Hundreds of Albanian citizens fought together with Croatian citizens for Croatia to gain freedom and independence. Croatia is part of the KFOR peacekeeping mission in Kosovo, where Croatian soldiers have served in thirty contingents. I want to thank Croatia for its contribution to our stability and peace," said the president, V. Osmani, adding that economic cooperation between Kosovo and Croatia is also essential.

As I said before, the other component of the so-called "explosive powder keg" in the Western Balkans

is BiH. The secessionist politics of RS Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik is a key challenge to the political settlement that ended the 1992-1995 ethnic war, as pointed out by the High Representative for BiH, Christian Schmidt[4], in charge of the implementation of the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement. M. Dodik, who is the president of the RS, has long supported and continues to support the secession of the Serb-dominated region from BiH. "This is a danger," said C. Schmidt, who, as High Representative, he has powers to impose laws and dismiss officials deemed to be obstructing peace in the region.

In this context, it is significant to emphasize that the two autonomous entities, RS and FBiH are linked together by a weak central government. M. Dodik was charged in August for defying the decisions of C. Schmidt, after he had signed two laws which the High Representative revoked for violating the Constitution and the terms of the Peace Agreement. In this context, the pro-Russian M. Dodik forbade C. Schmidt, who he says is not a legitimate envoy because he was not endorsed by the UN Security Council, to enter the region, while his supporters launched protests against his accusation at the administrative borders between the two entities under the slogan "The border exists ". "M. Dodik plays with RS as if there had been no Dayton Agreement, and this is provocative and dangerous, we cannot follow this," said C. Schmidt. The High Representative also emphasized that M. Dodik could end up with his people as a kind of Transnistria, a reference to the pro-Russian region in the east of the Republic of Moldova that broke away in 1992, but still has no international recognition.

He also said that international partners negotiating BiH's path to EU integration should not negotiate with the nationalist M. Dodik on basic issues. "I strongly believe in European integration, but not in the prices set by Mr. Dodik, but in European standards," C. Schmidt said. He also warned against interference by neighboring Croatia and Serbia in the internal affairs of BiH and said that the Serbs' ally, Russia, could also play a destructive role.

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[4]*Hans Christian Friedrich Schmidt (born 26 August 1957) is a German politician serving as the High Representative for BiH since August 2021. He is a member of the Christian Social Union. C. Schmidt served as Minister of Food and Agriculture from 2014 to 2018. He was State Secretary in the German Federal Ministry of Defense from 2005 to 2013 and State Secretary in the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development , from December 2013 to February 2014. He was a member of the Bundestag from 1990 to 2021.*

Russia and China's Influence in the Western Balkans

Mona AGRIGOROAIEI

To balance the influence of the USA, Russia and China made their presence known in the Western Balkans, especially in the context of the war in Ukraine, as there already was a significant destabilisation of the situation in the region.

Russia's allies in the Western Balkans are Serbia and the Republic of Srpska, one of the two entities that are part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the same context, Russia opposes Kosovo's recognition, because this entity is supported by the USA, but it also built, in cooperation with Serbia, close to Niš, an emergency intervention base that allows joint actions in the region. The base, known as a humanitarian centre is close to Niš airport, 250 km away from Belgrade. The Airport in Niš could be used by the Russian rescue planes to bring humanitarian aid or aid in case of natural disasters, including for the countries in the region, should they ask for it. However, this base could be used for military or intelligence purposes. One cannot rule out the fact that it could be used to counter the NATO base in Camp Bondsteel, in Kosovo.[1]

Source: https://www.cotidianul.ro/ue-poate-pierde-balcanii-pe-mana-ei/

Dusan Stojanovic wrote an article on this Russian *espionage base* in Niš saying:

„Some Western NGOs and military analysts say the Russians have created a thinly disguised military base that gives ear to US military interests in the Balkans. While Serbia is still close to Russia, its neighbours are increasingly distrustful of Moscow's intentions and presence, particularly countries from the former Soviet bloc such as Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary, which have suffered for decades under iron communist rule, after World War 2. If it is a military operation, the base would be the Kremlin's first in Europe, outside the former Soviet Union, since the collapse of the Warsaw Pact in the early 1990s. Western analysts say the base — run jointly by the Serbian and Russian governments and located near the airport in the city of Niš, in southern Serbia — is the Kremlin's response to NATO's expansion in the region. Every country around Serbia is either in the Western military alliance or wants to be."[2]

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[1] *"În interiorul «bazei de spionaj» ruseşti din Balcani"* [Inside a Russian Espionage Base in the Balkans], https://apnews.com/article/03f70a64ec5b48bbb1c2f56bdea9255e , accessed on 12.10.2023.
[2] *Ibid.*

Russia also supports Milorad Dodik's regime, in Bania Luka, a leader who met with Vladimir Putin on December 3, 2021. After this meeting, M. Dodik dared to take further steps in his hostile behaviour towards the Muslim-Croatian Federation (FBiH) – on December 10, 2021.

The People's Assembly of RS, the legislative body of BiH, discussed the "transfer of power from BiH to RS" in specific areas such as – indirect taxation, justice, defence and security.[3]

In North Macedonia, Russia recently tried to turn the tide in its favour. North Macedonia was led until November 2021 by a coalition led by Prime Minister Zoran Zaev's LSDM (Social Democratic League of Macedonia), after having been led for many consecutive years by Nikola Gruevski and his party VMRO-DPMNE, seen at one point as pro-Russian. Although some data and information showed that the VMRO-DPMNE was funding Albanian groups intended as cannon fodder to destabilize North Macedonia, the VMRO still won local elections in Macedonia.

Zoran Zaev resigned as Prime Minister after the VMRO won the election, while the leading coalition was shaken by the fact that the Albanian party, BESA, quit the coalition (or at least some of its MPs). The VMRO was close to winning a new majority together with BESA, the Alliance for Albanians and Alternativa, but Alternativa made another "surprise move" and joined the majority, along with the LSDM.

Eventually, the Parliament approved Z. Zaev's resignation; a new prime minister was elected: Dimitar Kovaçevski. In conclusion, the Russian-led VMRO, together with its Albanian political satellites, wanted to shake NATO and the US' dominance in this Balkan "Bermuda Triangle", namely North Macedonia, but failed.

Recent events in Kosovo, showed that the Kosovar authorities claimed that Russia exerted its influence in northern Kosovo and even had members of the Wagner Group present there. " However, Balkan leaders are notorious for exaggerating for their personal gain and few of their claims can be taken for granted."[4]

For Russia, the Balkan Peninsula has important historical, cultural and religious ties. This is a general connection that is actively promoted and sometimes exaggerated by Russia's public diplomatic efforts and media. The strategic location of the region between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea and its proximity to the Middle East are also important for Moscow.[5]

The Black Sea gives Russia access to a warm port – its pursuit has historically been the driving force behind Russia's diplomatic and military activities in southeastern Europe, and as one of Europe's last regions, the Balkan Peninsula aims to slow or to prevent the expansion of the EU and NATO, as it has not yet been fully integrated into the Euro-Atlantic structure. By blocking expansion in the Balkans, Moscow hopes to prevent further talks on the accession of Georgia, Ukraine or other former Soviet countries.

The same analysis suggests that:

„Russia's influence operations encourage people-to-people connections with the goal of creating Russia-friendly local constituencies and levers of influence that could allow Moscow to inhibit further integration into Western economic, political, or security structures. Russia is also seeking to exacerbate political and social fissures in several Balkan countries, including providing financial and public relations support to far-right groups. Moscow's desire and ability to exacerbate and prolong political instability in certain Balkan countries seems aimed at undermining, or at least delaying, their EU and NATO integration prospects. [...] As xenophobia and populism overturn and replace political systems in European countries with much stronger institutions, the Kremlin's cultivation of far-right groups and authoritarian-style politicians in the Balkans is worrying. Russia's efforts will fuel withdrawal and political polarization – both thwarting the EU and NATO prospects of the countries in the Balkans".[6]

In conclusion, Russia's influence in the Balkans is related to these types of actions:

- **Co-optation**, Russia's preferred method in the Western Balkans, is achieved by building partnerships with local power holders in Serbia and the Republic of Srpska.
- **Military coercion** is less important for the Western Balkans. At the same time, mild coercion that is limited to disruption and interference in internal affairs is far from rare. Examples include trade embargoes and cyber-attacks, such as the one in Montenegro prior to joining NATO (2015-2017).
- **Subversion** is exemplified by tactics such as (dis)information campaigns and/or covert support for radical anti-Western actors (parties and civic associations). In the Western Balkans, the best example is

[3]*Bosnia din nou pe muchie de cuțit: 2022 va fi anul în care totul se prăbuşeşte? [Bosnia on Edge Again: Will 2022 Be the Year When It All Comes Crumbling Down] c a/bosnia-crises-secession-reform/31612425.html, accessed 12.10.2023.*
[4]*https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/89463, accessed on 12.10.2023.*
[5]*Ibid.*
[6]*Ibid.*

Russia's efforts to block Montenegro's accession to NATO and disrupt the process of changing the name of North Macedonia.[7]

China's influence in the Balkans increased in 2012; China is tied to 135 projects in the region.[8] China's diplomacy today seems to embody a dichotomy. One side has a liberal view, rooted in "ancient Chinese philosophy – Hu Jintao's legacy of the harmonious world" and "multilateralism"[9]. This refers to China's "core interests" and has been implemented, for example, in projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.[10]

„During Xi Jinping's first term, the concept of a "community with a common future for mankind" appeared in his public speeches on various occasions, but only as a continuation of the international partnership proposed by his predecessors, without a strong emphasis on global economic cooperation. In his second term, Xi elaborated on the concept of a world economy. At the 2016 G20 summit, Xi emphasized the importance of globalization in the development of the world economy. In January 2017, Xi Jinping delivered a speech – "Work Together to Build a Community of Shared Future for Mankind" – at the UN headquarters in Geneva, proposing four models of global governance. The concept was developed in response to the regression of globalization, the reversal of regionalization and the rise of populism. According to China's state propaganda, this was the first time a Chinese leader proposed a global governance".[11]

This liberal model only refers to a politics of non-essential interests. Whereas in the core political field, there is no room for negotiation and this has a fundamental realistic thinking. Here we are dealing with "Wolf Warrior diplomacy", a rhetorical style consisting of aggressive, insulting, assertive statements. It is specific to the Xi Jinping regime and the promotion of a growing nationalism in China under that regime.[12] Basic interests include sovereignty, security and development and highlight the concept of "red lines". It practically includes Taiwan, but also Tibet and.[13]

I agree with Satoshi Amako that the policy of "harmonious world" is that of "Wushi Zhuyi" (pragmatism), while the philosophy behind the "Wolf Warrior" diplomacy is "Wuxu Zhuyi" (ideology). China's ruling party and its leader[14] Xi Jinping are not pursuing a simple expansionist foreign policy. They are continuing a neo-Marxist ideological revolution, for which they are fighting. And I believe that this is the most important central interest of the CCP, with the goal of an "Asian century"[15]. The "harmonious world" policy is not opposed to this philosophy; it is a complementary method to achieve this main goal.

S. Amako established as a criterion for judging Chinese diplomatic actions, the dichotomy between form and benefit. "Wuxu's diplomacy should be seen as 'form diplomacy', the aim of which is to achieve a desirable form by directly interfering with the country's diplomatic principles, positioning and attitude. On the other hand, the purpose of Shi practice is to achieve 'benefit'. Wushi's diplomacy should be understood as 'benefit diplomacy', diplomacy closely related to national interests, including economic benefit, maritime interests, such as energy and security cooperation."[16]

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[7]*NATO Stratcom, Russia's Footprint in the Western Balkan Information Environment, https://stratcomcoe.org/publications/russias-footprint-in-the-western-balkan-information-environment-summary/51, pp. 2-3.*

[8]*Bojan Stojkovski, Ivana Jeremic, Samir Kajosevic, Ivana Nikolic, Ivan Angelovski, Fatjona Mejdini şi Irvin Pekmez, China in the Balkans Controversy and Costt https://balkaninsight.com/2021/12/15/china-in-the-balkans -controversy-and-cost/, accessed on 12.10.2023.*

[9]*Harmony in the World: Ancient Chinese Philosophy for a New International Order, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/cebw/eng/zt/zgjk/ t367341.htm#:~:text=Harmony%2C%20the%20ancient% 20Chinese%20philosophical,and%20economic%20order%2C%20Chen% 20says, accessed on 12.10.2023.*

[10]*Yaoyao Dai, Luwei Rose Luqiu - China's Wolf Warrior Diplomacy and Xi Jinping's Grand Diplomatic Strategy, https:// www.researchgate.net/ publication/350677590_China's_Wolf_Warrior_Diplomacy_and_Xi_Jinping's_Grand_Diplomatic.103202020.*

[11]*Idem, p.7.*

[12]*Idem, p.10.*

[13]*Idem, p.15.*

[14]*Tingbiao Hong and Zhirong Zhang, Dangdai zhongguo waijiao xinlun [Discussions on Chinese Contemporary Diplomacy], Lizhi Press, 2004, p. 65 apud. Satoshi AMAKO, China's Diplomatic Philosophy and View of the International Order in the 21st Century, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/24761028.2014.11869073, accessed on 12.10.2023.*

[15]*Secolul asiatic este pregătit să înceapă [Asia's Century Is About to Begin], https://www.ft.com/content/520cb6f6-2958-11e9-a5ab-ff8ef2b976c7, accessed on 12.10. 2023.*

[16]*Satoshi AMAKO, cited works, p.9.*

Moving to the Balkans, China's influence is part of its "harmonious world" policy and the notion of "debt trap". Montenegro has very recently found itself in such a trap, with almost 100% debt of its GDP, more than half of which is owed to China[17], and the risks are exacerbated by corruption and dictatorial and opaque governance. Diplomatically, China prefers to interact at the elite, institutional and national level, but is increasingly focused on a non-state, local and civil structure in the various states of the region.[18]

Highly relevant are China's presence in the region and the intensification of its geopolitical competition with the Western countries in fields such as the EU and NATO expansion, support for infrastructure and the security of critical infrastructures.[19]

„China's appearance on the regional map took many politicians by surprise, while others preferred to dismiss the importance of the dearth of reliable and accessible data and information. Meanwhile, an increase in interest in this matter from international official institutions, academia, research centres and private companies, illustrated the growing need for a more structured, systematic and long-term effort to collect and analyse input and Beijing's progress in the region."[20]

As far as Serbia is concerned, BIRN interviewed Wawa Wang, a programme manager with Just Finance International.

Wang said "the projects in question did not qualify for funding from Western investors or financiers because of policy restrictions, such as coal phase-out or questionable investment returns, and would likely have been dropped to make room for a sustainable and fair transition in Serbia and would not have been for the interest and support of the Chinese actors. These types of investments – all facilitated with some form of Chinese government support – are primarily beneficial to Chinese companies and state-owned enterprises looking for profit centres abroad as China tightens its pollution controls."[21]

Part of the Smederevo power plant, situated almost 50 km away from Belgrade is Chinese owned, even after it was bought by Hesteel (now the HBIS Glroup) in 2016[22]. China is also involved in building the thermal power plant in Kostolac, in Serbia[23]. Serbia is also deepening its ties with Huawei, even if in September 2020, Washington signed a contract to keep the Chinese technological giants away from 5G networks.[24]

The company signed a €150 million contract with state-owned Telekom Serbia to modernise its landlines, and was nominated as a partner in developing the 5G network alongside Telenor, a private company. Huawei and the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs also signed a partnership agreement for "eLTE" wireless broadband technologies to implement a "Smart City" public safety system, that includes a large surveillance network in the Serbian capital.[25]

As part of the Safe Society Project, Serbia's Ministry of Internal Affairs will work with a Chinese partner to install 8,100 biometric cameras, but biometric monitoring of Serbian citizens is currently prohibited by law.[26]

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, *"China is mostly focusing on direct business with the state, or on competitive auctions"[27]*, said the expert in economy, Admir Cavalic. *"Entring those areas is almost always tied to lobbying and other diplomatic efforts. It must be said that the overall risks are higher when it comes to infrastructure projects, because the rest of the economy depends on them".[28]*

According to BIRN, China is more present in BiH's Republic of Srpska in energy and infrastructure projects, and has 29 projects here, 18 related to infrastructure, while in Albania, Beijing's investments have decreased due to the Albanian authorities who pressured China to leave this country.[29]

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[17]*Vladimir Shapov, MAPPING CHINA'S RISE IN THE WESTERN BALKANS, https://ecfr.eu/special/china-balkans/, accessed on 12.10.2023.*
[18]*Ibid.*
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[21]*China în Balcani: controverse şi costuri [China in the Balkans: Controversies and Costs], cited works.*
[22]*Ibid.*
[23]*Ibid.*
[24]*Ibid.*
[25]*Ibid.*
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[27]*Ibid.*
[28]*Ibid.*
[29]*Ibid.*

If the relationship between China and Russia – at a geostrategic level – is a complex one due to the war in Ukraine, in the future we cannot exclude that, should the situation in the Western Balkans destabilise, the two powers will join hands in the region, especially with regard to Kosovo.

If for Russia, the Western Balkans can be defined as an attempt to open a second front – the first being Ukraine, we must note China's interest in infrastructure projects in the region, which still presupposes stability and a preserved status quo, not a destabilizing situation. In addition, with the recent escalation of the situation in Israel (fighting the terrorist organization Hamas), the attention of the public opinion is now divided between Ukraine and the Middle East.

This is why I believe that the Western Balkans will come in second in the geostrategic games of an emerging axis – Russia-China-Iran-North Korea ("the axis of autocracies"). One cannot exclude though, a new attempt to destabilise the Western Balkans in the future, because of the tense relations between Kosovo and Serbia, which suits Russia wonderfully, especially when it is almost losing in Ukraine.

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How the Ukraine War has Put an End to the 'Neutrality' Doctrine in the Nordic Countries? (Sweden - A Case Study)

Mohammed GACHI (Morocco)

Abstract

Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine which began in February 2022, has represented a 'Zeitenwende' according to the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, in other word, a 'watershed moment' in the European security and foreign policy. The war marks the end of the agreed common European security order post the cold war.

Yet, opposite to the widely common belief inside the Kremlin, that the war will continue to weaken the European Union and will divide the Western alliance, as well as the Russian leaders expected that war will lead to dividing the European position on Ukraine, as the Russian president Vladimir Putin had hoped. The war demonstrates an unprecedented unity between the 27-member states of the EU, along with it the revival of the transatlantic partnership (appeared a strong solidarity from both sides of the Atlantic). In parallel, while the war continues to backfire on Moscow politically, it convinced former neutral Nordic states (Finland and Sweden) to seek membership in NATO.

Through looking at the basic assumptions of Sweden's policy of neutrality, this policy paper aims to examine the shift of Sweden's foreign policy after the outbreak of the Ukraine war, where the 'neutrality' doctrine was put to the test and reappraised in the global politics, particularly in the European context. Thus, it zooms firstly on the birth of Sweden's policy of neutrality and its development over 200 years, stopped to four essential snapshots (WWI, WWII, the Cold War, and post-Cold War) to highlight the elements of continuity and change in Sweden doctrine policy. Secondly, we focus with more in-depth analysis on how the Ukraine war -as a critical juncture in contemporary European history- pushed Sweden to end/abandoned its neutrality doctrine, and go ahead -as its country sister Finland did- into the application for membership in NATO on May 2022? Then, finally, we analyze What military and political implications would a NATO membership entail, for Sweden and for the alliance itself? And its consequences on the European security architecture in the long term.

Source: https://noi.md/md/diverse/sua-doresc-ca-suedia-sa-adere-la-nato-pina-la-summitul-de-la-vilnius?prev=1%C3%83%C2%

Neutrality in I.R.

Neutrality has always been a much intriguing question in modern European history. However, despite its long history, it has been dismissed. The term "neutrality" was coined from the Latin language "Neuter denoting" which means "neither one of the two". While the British Encyclopedia defines neutrality as "the legal status arising from the abstention of a state from all participation in a war between other states".[1]

At the same point of view, according to Makowski "States which are not a party to the ongoing war are called neutrals, and the legal status … called neutrality"[2]. In a nutshell, the meaning of neutrality depends mainly on context and time, or the agent employing the term. So, we can talk about non-alignment, positive neutral, or even isolation policy. However, warfare has characterized a great part of our contemporary history, not least in the two last centuries, neutrality exists more in a world dominated by geopolitical tensions.[3]

Bearing in mind that neutrality historically has fulfilled various political functions, it is worth the different aspects, according to 'realistic theory' neutrality might work as an instrument of state foreign policy to maintain its security and pursues its national interest, mainly protecting sovereignty, national integrity and freedom. Mostly, realist tends to focus their analysis of neutrality on the balance of Power. While the 'liberal theory' it is perhaps emphasizing non-military means, tends to focus on the term of soft power, for instance, seen neutrality as a tool to promote international peace and stability.[4]

The Birth of Swedish Neutrality and its evolution

During the 17th century, Sweden was a mighty empire and the leading protestant power in continental Europe. After the Thirty Years' War, it controlled vast stretches of territory exactly much of Scandinavia and the Baltic region, as well as territories wrested from the Holy Roman Empire. However, after a series of military defeats, Sweden contented itself with a modest existence, as a small neutral power since the 19th century, the case which appeared obviously during world war II.

The preconditions for the Swedish policy of neutrality started to develop in the first half of the 19th century, under Crown Prince Charles John, who upon his arrival to the crown (1818) took the first steps towards a more passive foreign and security policy, which aimed clearly to "avoid being drawn into a war between Great Britain and Russia"[5]. Consequently, his successors would continue along the same route with the declaration of neutrality in 1853 during the Crimean War, due to neutrality was for a long time seen in Stockholm as the only viable alternative, and a means to maintain autonomy.[6]

It is worth notable that four major historical "events" – has been marked a critical juncture in global history, and depicted so far extent the trend of the policy of neutrality in Sweden.

First, there is the "Great War" that shattered the political order which had been painstakingly reconstructed at the Congress of Vienna (1815). In addition to the cost and violating the rule of international law, WWI marked too an end to the globalization process and free trade that had originated in the 19th century and divided Europe. Despite the war putting huge pressure on the neutral states (as in Belgium), however, the battles between the major powers were mainly concentrated in Central and Western Europe, while the Nordic states luckily were less important for the key-warring powers at that time. Hence, this situation allowed the Scandinavian states (Sweden, Denmark, and Norway) to declare the policy of neutrality which helped to maintain its security and avoided the war.[7]

Second, throughout WWII, Sweden's position was more problematic than ever, specifically with Hitler's vision of "Lebensraum" which was based primarily on expanding German territory as a necessity for its survival. The Swedish policy of neutrality was in trouble and challenged at its core, particularly after its neighbors: Norway and Denmark were attacked and occupied by Nazi Germany in April 1940. Following that, some Swedish voices were raised in favor of a non-neutral position. Yet, despite all the difficulties Sweden ultimately stay neutral and eluded the fate of its neighbors.[8]

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[1]*Britannica. (seen April, 2023). Neutrality international relations: British Encyclopedia. https://www.britannica.com/topic/neutrality*
[2]*R. M. Czarny, (2018). Sweden From Neutrality to International Solidarity. Switzerland, Springer I. publisging, pp. 4-5.*
[3]*L. Muller, (2019). Neutrality in World History. London: Routledge, p. 4.*
[4]*R. M. Czarny, op. cit., pp. 13-14.*
[5]*D. Brommesson and others. (September 2022). Sweden's Policy of Neutrality; Success through Flexibility? : Successful Public Policy in the Nordic Countries. Pp, (284, 305), pp. 297-99.*
[6]*Ibid.*
[7]*L. Muller, (2019). op. cit., pp. 126-28.*
[8]*D. Brommesson and others. op. cit., pp. 290-91.*

WWII has left a much deeper mark than the previous world war. According to that, Sweden like Switzerland calculated that neutrality worked as a means in foreign and security policy, hence, since early 1935 Sweden's minister of foreign affairs declared the term of (Aliansfri politik) non-alliance politics which presupposed abstaining from participation in any blocs at the team of peace to preserve neutrality at the time of war.

The third snapshot's the cold war, due to the limited room to maneuver for a state in size of Sweden. The decision-makers perceived an intense "neutrality" and "non-alignment" necessity in the conflict between East and West, and felt that Sweden should remain neutral in this major conflict. One important reason behind that is what so-called "Finland argument". While in many minds the name Finland has been associated with unprincipled subordination to the East. On the flip side, although they were ready to accept the case of neutrality between the blocs on pragmatic grounds (National Interest). Sweden has witnessed a tends in the West, for instance, many Swedish soldiers are aligned with the West, and NATO.[9]

Briefly, Sweden played an essential role as a mediator and bridge-builder in a deeply divided world. Yet, it is worth noting that there was a huge difference between Sweden's and Finland's neutrality during the Cold War. In the Swedish case, neutrality was a political desire of decision-makers in Stockholm as I've mentioned. In comparison with the Finish case, it was a precondition for Moscow's acknowledgment of Finland's Sovereignty. With that in mind, explains Helsinki's late accession to the UN and the Nordic Council.[10]

The fourth snapshot is the post-Cold War that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and German reunification (1990). These events represented a geopolitical shift in the European foreign and security policy, and the European neutrals were looking for a new position in the new global order. Consequently, Sweden's foreign policy gradually changed in nature towards a Europeanized focus. The first step was Sweden's accession to the EU (1995), as the outcome of the referendum. Beyond that date, Sweden enhanced its presence within the EU structures, with a shift from neutrality to lending and bringing assistance in the EU crises. Alongside this important contribution to promoting European peace and stability, Sweden declared its cooperation with NATO by pursuing the policy of humanitarian intervention.[11]

It is worth noting that, Russia's policy of aggression in Georgia (2008), and the occupation of Crimean (2014), should be considered particularly significant, it increased Sweden's alignment with NATO and pushed it ahead. Yet, neutrality was still alive. So, when Russia launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine (Feb 22, 2022), many questions come to mind, one of them: is Sweden's Neutrality still the right option? I pondered the question since the primary days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"Zeitenwende": How the Ukraine war changed the European assumptions in security and foreign policy?

Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine triggered a seismic shift in Europe's foreign policy and security according to the observers, and the war also reinforced the EU member states to reviewing their previous assumptions. Immediately, after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We witnessed strong solidarity between the European countries and a commitment to a common approach to European security. For instance, it took just five days after Russian troops stormed into Ukraine last year for Germany to throw off decades of what so-called eastern policy (Ostpolitik), based essentially on the principle of change through rapprochement, and the change through trade (Wandel durch Handel).

The war has crystallized a remarkable transformation of German foreign and security policy. It is a notable sign of the bankruptcy and failure of the "Eastern Policy". The idea of changing Russia through economic interdependence did not prevent the war but instead encouraged Putin to go after his goals. According to Putin's calculations the EU's dependence on Russian energy, particularly the awakening giant (Germany), and the economic opportunism of member states would lead to a split in the European position about Ukraine (a view built by Putin after the events of 2014) which did not prevent the German government from approving the sale of several gas stations to the Russian gas giant Gazprom (2015), and pursuit relations with Russia.[12]

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[9] *D. Brommesson and others. op. cit., pp. 292-93.*
[10] *L. Muller, (2019). op. cit., pp. 148-49.*
[11] *Ibid., pp. 299-300.*
[12] *M. Gachi, (December, 2022). The impact of Russian-Ukraine War on German Foreign Policy: the return of Geopolitics and the end of Ostpolitic: Trends for Research and Advisory. (in Arabic). https://n9.cl/d4j6p0*

giant (Germany), and the economic opportunism of member states would lead to a split in the European position about Ukraine (a view built by Putin after the events of 2014) which did not prevent the German government from approving the sale of several gas stations to the Russian gas giant Gazprom (2015).[13]

Thus, when planning to invade Ukraine, the Russian decision-makers calculated that the European Union was a weak regional and international actor suffering from internal divisions and differing visions, which prevented it from acting unitedly. Yet, the Ukrainian war proved the opposite: the mistake of Russian estimates, not only in Putin's claim that the war can be won easily and quickly but also in his belief that he will continue to divide Europe by using the energy card, specifically Germany (Achilles heel). So, Russia's conquest allowed the EU to reinvent itself as a geopolitical actor, rather than act only as a "commercial actor" and a "normative power", and has given the birth of "Geopolitical Identity" according to the EU High Representative of foreign and security affairs, Joseph Borrell.[14]

Russia's invasion of Ukraine appears to be prompting the German government to drop all of its long-standing taboos about defense. One at a time, from investing more in military to send weapons to the conflict zones. While Putin's miscalculation continues to backfire.

Along the same lines, Finland for instance, a traditionally non-aligned country is also delivering arms to help the Ukrainian army resist the Russian invasion. Finland move to join NATO, may have come suddenly for much of the world, but recent events had made accession widely popular among Finns without a need to a national referendum.[15]

Even Switzerland, a fabled neutral state, is ditching its sacrosanct neutrality to slap painful and mirrored almost all of the EU's sanctions against Moscow, including asset freezes against hundreds of individuals with ties to Vladimir Putin, many of whom have bank accounts in Switzerland (estimated value at least $100bn). Even more importantly, trading of Russian commodities has been curbed[16]. Besides that, the defense ministry tilting closer to Western military powers in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.[17]

Sweden, the country that enjoyed neutrality as a doctrine for its foreign and security policy since the Napoleonic wars in the early decades of the 19th century, is being forged to re-examine the status quo, under the direct threat posed by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Sweden, alongside Finland, spurred by the recent Russian brutal war, submitted a formal application to join NATO as a full member on May 18, 2022, which shifted its political identity as a neutral state for more than 200 years.[18]

Sweden-request for NATO membership

"Neutral in wartime, non-aligned in peacetime" was the slogan and the doctrine of Sweden's security and foreign policy, the core of its national identity, and the perception of its place in the world over two centuries at least. So, no one predicted -even the most optimists- that two hundred years of history will change overnight, but it seemingly has, under the direct impact of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (Feb 22, 2022), which marked a "watershed moment' in European history, and for Sweden has upended its old assumptions, and resulted in a deep shift in its foreign policy. On 16 May 2022, the Swedish cabinet decided to accede to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The day after, the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ann Linde, sent a request for NATO membership to the secretary general Mr. Jens Stoltenberg, informing him that Stockholm was ready to assume all obligations and rights under the NATO[19]. Thus, some questions have arisen; Why has Sweden abandoned the 'neutrality 'doctrine? Is Sweden applying for NATO membership unpredicted or a continuity? And what are NATO means for Sweden's interest?

There are many reasons behind Sweden's decision to abandon neutrality and applied for NATO membership. First, the Ukraine War made Europe and Sweden live in a new and perilous reality. The greatest test of its foreign policy and defense security since the second world war. For instance, in the past, there was a common sense in Sweden that if "the country declared neutrality, it could stay out of the fray.[20]

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[13]*Ibid.*

[14]*J. Borell, (March 03, 2022). Putin's War Has Given Birth to Geopolitical Europe: Project Syndicate. https://n9.cl/uj5i5*

[15]*R. Nyberg, (October 06, 2022). Russian Collateral Damage: Finland and Sweden's Accession to NATO: CARNEGIE ENDOWRNEMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE. https://n9.cl/64yyy*

[16]*C. Stelzenmuller, (November 22, 2022). Ukraine crisis could transform the future of neutrality: FINANCIAL TIMES. https://n9.cl/5rsi2*

[17]*J. Revill, (May 16, 2022). Neutral Switzerland leans closer to NATO in response to Russia: REUTERS. https://n9.cl/ok0ns*

[18]*NATO board. (May 18, 2022). Finland and Sweden submit application to join NATO: NATO official Website.*

[19]*Government Offices of Sweden. (May 17, 2022). Sweden request for NATO membership, a letter from Ann Linde: Ministry for foreign Affairs. file:///Users/user/Downloads/sweden-request-for-nato-membership.pdf*

[20]*I. Thomsen, (May 18, 2022). In the new Europe 'neutrality is no longer an option': NOURTHERN GLOBAL NEWS. https://n9.cl/ar/s/8makb1*

The Russian full-scale aggression is unjustified, violated international law, and has marked an end to the European agreed order constructed in the 1990s. For Sweden, the war led to a ground-breaking shift in its security policy doctrine, since that date "foreign and security policy of Sweden will be coined by greater realism", said Sweden Minister Ulf Kristerson. And he added that "NATO membership and a heavy rearmament of Swedish defense are an immediate consequence of this insight".[21]

Like its sister country Finland, the war led to a change in the common belief, and as an outcome, the Swedish cabinet recognized that "neutrality" is no longer an option for its security, stability, and prosperity in the long term. Sweden's foreign minister, Ann Linde, said obviously "We came to the conclusion after discussion with all the parliamentary partners, no, we don't—we are not safe anymore"[22]. In a nutshell, this decision has generally been supported broadly by Riksdag (Sweden Parliament) and public opinion, also greeted with enthusiasm, as a testimony of Western unity.

Second, the decision is relatively seen as a continuity of a process that began in the early years of the 21st century, definitely with the declaration of 2003, which did not include for the first-time post-cold War the slightest reference to neutrality. Moreover, Sweden's involvement with NATO and European bodies increased significantly after the Russian policy of aggression whether in Georgia (2008) or in Crimean (2014). But there was a divide of opinion and many taboos, Sweden had to wait for the Russian brutal war to abandon their neutrality doctrine definitely.[23]

Third, although Sweden's Cold War policy neutrality required strong defense forces – the fourth largest air force in the world- and amounted to 4 percent of GDP, Sweden's defense spending reduced to only 1.3 percent of GDP. As a result of the Ukraine War, the defense minister announced that Swedish defense expenditure would increase to 2 percent of GDP. However, Sweden's application for NATO will allow the country to benefit from the collective security guarantee enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty.[24]

Finally, Europe including Sweden is living in the most serious security situation since the Second World War. The decision-makers in Stockholm acknowledge that becoming a member of NATO is the best way to safeguard Sweden's security and, in the spirit of solidarity, contribute to strengthening the security of the entire Euro-Atlantic area. Sweden has thus applied for NATO membership with broad parliamentary support, for instance, on 22 March – The Riksdag approves Sweden's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty.[25]

What military and political implications would a NATO membership entail, for Sweden and for the alliance itself?

In a nutshell, for Sweden as for Finland, NATO membership will make it more secure, Sweden will benefit essentially from an agreement regulating NATO privileges and immunities, - the principle of collective defense is at the very heart of NATO's founding treaty- as known[26]. Hence, according to the minister of foreign affairs, Tobias Billström; Becoming a member of NATO is the best way to safeguard Sweden's security and, in the spirit of solidarity, contribute to strengthening the security of the entire Euro-Atlantic area. And he added, "NATO is more important than at any other time since the Cold War".[27]

Politically, The Sweden bid for NATO is a clear result of Russia's aggression war against Ukraine, that marked a "Zeitenwende" or a "watershed moment" in the European history, according to the Chancellor Olaf Scholz. The membership must be restrained Russia Putin 's policy of aggression, and retreat on threaten further European countries in the future. Because the world living a new era of great-power competition. I argue that War will increase and support the trend of foreign policy values-based, that seen "values and interests are not a contradiction, but two sides of the same coin". This premise could be indicated by the widely used term 'like-minded' partners these days. Over time, this grouping of leading democracies cooperating in the security realm could play a crucial role to counter the threats to the free world, including from China.[28]

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[21]*P. M. of Sweden Ulf kristerson. (January 09, 2023). Sweden's role in NATO; a Speech. Government offices of Sweden.*

[22]*BY ATLANTIC COUNCIL. (June 29, 2022). Foreign ministers from France, Italy and Sweden dissect NATO's new Strategic Concept: ATLANTIC COUNCIL. https://n9.cl/ar/s/cztby*

[23]*Government Office of Sweden. (April 17, 2023). History of Sweden and NATO: Ministry for foreign Affairs.*

[24]*P. Neuding, (May 09, 2022). The end of Nordic neutrality: PROJECT SYNDICATE. https://n9.cl/psvvs*

[25]*Government Office of Sweden. (March 08, 2023). Government has presented bill on Sweden's membership of NATO to the Riksdag: Ministry for foreign Affairs. https://n9.cl/8gdb4*

[26]*According to Article 5 of the NATO founding treaty, collective defense means that an attack against one Ally is considered an attack against all Allies, and it remains a unique and enduring principle that binds its members together. See North Atlantic Treaty Organization. (last updated April 14, 2023). Collective defence and Article: NATO. https://n9.cl/eho38*

[27]*K. Walla, (December 07, 2022). The new Swedish government's agenda for its EU presidency: forging unity on Ukraine, defence, and trade: ATLANTIC COUNCIL. https://n9.cl/e6za5*

[28]*- J. Cimmino, and M. Kroenig, (December, 2020). Strengthen likeminded allies and partners and the rules-based international system; ATLANTIC COUNCIL. https://n9.cl/d7y8b*

Conclusion

This study concluded that 'neutrality' doctrine shaped and imprinted Sweden's foreign policy history over the past 200 years. However, Russia's brutal war against Ukraine has shaken the basic assumptions of the EU member states foreign and security policy, including Sweden. Indeed, the War has given the geopolitical birth of the EU according to the high representative of the EU J. Borell. Linked to this, each country must re-define itself as a geopolitical actor to strengthen the EU common security, supranational and multilateral institutions based on international law by reformulating its foreign policy approach, and increasing available resources for European defense. For instance, Germany ended decades of so-called 'Ostpolitik' based on change through trade. While the change in Berlin's policy toward Moscow is visible to all. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the Nordic states Sweden and Finland as well, have seen one of the most striking changes in institutional terms—one that can rightfully be referred to as Zeitenwende, particularly with Finland and Sweden officially applying for NATO membership in May 2022, that mark an end of two centuries of neutrality. Thus, ironically Putin's calculations to prevent NATO enlargement had achieved the exact opposite, it precipitated the process indeed.

One of the most important lessons of the Ukraine War is Peace and stability in Europe are not possible with Putin's Russia, but only against it. There is a long way to go, but it is time to start this process now to secure the future of the European security order and prosperity, and this requires "courageous political decisions" according to the German chancellor Scholz. For this to happen, Sweden and Finland have taken the first step, by applying for NATO membership (May 2022), which marked the end of 200 years of 'neutrality' and joining the EU's Western efforts to prevent Vladimir Putin from achieving his goals from the war, whether by the huge participation in the Western economic sanctions against Russia, or by armament Kiev.

On the other side, the War demonstrated the strong commitment of the US to European security. For example, the Biden administration has offering a huge military and financially support to the Ukraine since the outbreak of war, and deployed more troops to NATO's eastern flank and strongly supports Sweden and Finland's membership (by putting pressure on the Turkish government), and as the outcome of that the US arms sales increased. While in the short and medium run, the US remains strongly committed to defending the status quo in Europe - a widely shared stance- among the European capitals after the outbreak of the Ukraine war. Yet, the European allies must take a leadership role in supporting Ukraine and in the reshaping European security architecture. In this context, Europe has the resources to compete with Russia – it just needs to mobilize them. Sweden must work with Germany, France and the rest to strengthen the EU defenses. By doing this the EU security order might step up and play a crucial role in maintaining the liberal global order based-rule that becoming more uncertain.

Instability in the Sahel Region: Threats and Challenges

Mohamed MLILESS[1] (Morocco)

Introduction

The Sahel region, a vast land that stretches across the African continent just south of the Sahara Desert, is currently struggling with a multidimensional humanitarian crisis of alarming proportions. Several interrelated factors have contributed to this dramatic situation.

Humanitarian crises[2] in the Sahel region, whether caused by conflicts or natural disasters, necessitate international intervention as the influx of refugees into neighboring countries has created tensions and conflicts amid local populations, potentially destabilizing them. In the Sahel, the complex interplay of political instability, extremism, economic challenges, climate change-induced factors, and illicit trafficking and criminal networks present a significant challenge to regional and international peace and stability.

Political instability[3] in many countries within the Sahel creates a vacuum that is exploited by extremist groups and criminal

Source: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10668-022-02303-9

networks. These entities have particularly flourished in this region where the rule of law is weak, thereby exacerbating existing instability. As a consequence, the unstable situation perpetuates a cycle of violence that further undermines political stability and spills over into neighboring regions, thereby threatening international peace. For instance, extremist groups[4] pose a direct threat to peace and stability. Their ideologies, particularly those inciting violence and terrorism, have resulted in the deaths of thousands and have created a climate of fear that forces others to flee regions of tension.

In such a volatile environment, economic challenges[5] fuel social unrest, which in turn feed into the already prevalent political unrest. Furthermore, economic hardships make individuals in the Sahel more susceptible to recruitment by extremist groups or involvement in illicit activities as a means of survival. On a larger scale, economic instability in the region has repercussions for the global economy, further destabilizing international peace.

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[2]*https://www.icrc.org/en/humanitarian-crisis-sahel*
[3]*https://www.csis.org/analysis/politics-heart-crisis-sahel*
[4]*https://www.visionofhumanity.org/sahel-emerges-as-the-new-epicentre-of-terrorism/*
[5]*https://eurodefense.eu/2021/02/21/challenges-in-the-sahel-opportunities-for-europe/#:~:text=Many%20suffer%20from%20economic%20dependence%20on%20neighbouring%20countries%3B,the%20fragmentation%20and%20unviability%20of%20the%20Sahel%20states.*

Climate change-induced factors[6] compound these challenges. Droughts, floods, and extreme weather events exacerbate economic difficulties by disrupting agriculture and other key sectors. These environmental crises have forced millions of people of the Sahel to move to more favorable areas. The displacement of populations has led to humanitarian crises that strain resources and increase tensions within and between regions.

Finally, the Sahel has evolved into a crossroads for illegal trafficking and criminal networks[7], including human trafficking, drug smuggling, and the illegal arms trade. These illegal operations not only undermine law and order, but they also deny governments' much-needed money. Insecurity and instability in the region not only jeopardise the well-being of its residents, but it also support transnational crime, terrorism, and irregular migration, raising it to a worldwide problem. Illicit trafficking and criminal networks not only contribute to local insecurity, but they also have global consequences.

Humanitarian Crises

Political instability, extremism, economic deficiencies, climatic change, illegal trafficking, and criminal networks have all contributed to the Sahel's insecurity, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. The humanitarian catastrophe, aggravated by displacement as a result of the aforementioned circumstances, necessitates international engagement, with millions of people in need of immediate aid. The flood of migrants into neighbouring regions has heightened tensions and confrontations with local communities, potentially destabilising other areas as well. Additionally, the region has long been plagued by complex security[8] issues due to violent extremism, weak governance[9], and economic decline.

Over the last decade, violence, conflict, and crime have surged, transcending the Sahel borders and posing significant challenges to countries both within and outside the region. The Liptako-Gourma and Lake Chad Basin sub-regions are the focal points of violent events. Furthermore, recurrent and frequent droughts, irregular rainfall, and soil degradation, which have rendered millions of people unable to get food on a consistent basis, have added to the misery of the population in the Sahel. In the same direction, the instability in the region is linked to the collapse of the Libyan state[10] in 2011, which resulted in the widespread distribution of weapons and armed fighters[11] in the region. The influx of extremists into northern Mali reignited the dormant Tuareg rebellion[12] in 2012. The region has been engulfed in violence and instability as a result of armed conflict and the growth of extremist organisations. This has resulted in emigration, the loss of livelihoods, and the breakdown of key services. Moreover, the local population faces further hardship due to a lack of access to clean water, healthcare, and education.

In order to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the Sahel, immediate and sustained international attention and aid are required due to the convergence of environmental, security, and development issues. The efforts of the international community regarding the humanitarian crises are evidenced in the engagement of many international organizations. For instance, organizations[13] like the International Committee of the Red Cross[14] and World Health Organization[15] are working tirelessly to provide life-saving support[16] to displaced and vulnerable persons affected by the growing crises in the Sahel region.

Political Instability

Political instability is a significant challenge to the Sahel. Frequent changes in government[17] and weak institutions[18] have impeded the region's development and exacerbated existing problems. This instability often

[6]https://www.brookings.edu/articles/political-turmoil-in-the-sahel-does-climate-change-play-a-role/
[7]https://www.unodc.org/toc/en/crimes/organized-crime.html
[8]https://folyoirat.ludovika.hu/index.php/aarms/article/view/1801
[9]https://theasialive.com/niger-coup-and-sahel-crisis-implications-for-west-africa/2023/10/06/
[10]https://mepc.org/journal/libyan-crisis-case-failed-collective-security#:~:text=The%20collapse%20of%20the%20Qadhafi%20regime%20in%202011,turn%20destabilizing%20the%20entire%20North%20African-Sahelian%20subregional%20system.
[11]https://afsa.org/slaughter-south-sahara-no-scope-business-usual
[12]https://www.globalresearch.ca/the-crisis-in-mali-a-historical-perspective-on-the-tuareg-people/5321407
[13]https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15325.doc.htm
[14]https://www.icrc.org/en/humanitarian-crisis-sahel
[15]https://www.who.int/emergencies/situations/humanitarian-crisis-in-sahel-region-of-africa
[16]https://crisisresponse.iom.int/response/central-sahel-crisis-response-plan-2022
[17]https://reliefweb.int/report/world/coups-detat-and-political-instability-sahel-implications-fight-against-terrorism-and-violent-extremism-april-2022
[18]https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03932729.2020.1835324#:~:text=The%20Sahel%20can%20be%20seen%20as%20a%20region,be%20exacerbated%20by%20the%20effects%20of%20climate%20change.

leads to a <u>vacuum of control</u>[19] over the territory that extremist groups and criminal networks have already appropriated. These groups flourish in environments where the rule of law is weak, thereby intensifying the existing instability. This has pushed the region into a cycle of violence that has further undermined its political stability and has the potential to leak over into neighboring regions, posing a threat to international peace.

The Sahel has long been affected by severe and complex security and humanitarian crises due to <u>extremism</u>. The correlation of these factors is exacerbated by weak governance, economic decline, and the worsening effects of climate change. Over the last decade, violence, conflict, and crime have surged, transcending national borders and posing significant challenges to countries both within and outside the region. Today, the region is witnessing a surge in <u>attacks</u>[20] from militant Islamist groups, contributing significantly to the region's instability. Recent and violent <u>extremist activities</u>[21] have made the Sahel the <u>deadliest peacekeeping mission</u>[22] in the world. The proliferation of terrorist and other non-State armed groups, including those linked to the Islamic State and al-Qaida is tightening their <u>grip over the region</u>[23], leading to a catastrophic humanitarian situation. To illustrate this situation, consider the sub-regions of Liptako-Gourma and the Lake Chad Basin, which are currently the <u>epicentres</u>[24] of violence and humanitarian crisis. The instability in these areas can be traced back to the collapse of the Libyan state in 2011, an event that led to the dispersal of weapons and armed fighters across the region.

Despite the establishment of a <u>joint force</u>[25] in 2014 to combat these groups, their advances have not been halted. This has led to a senior U.N. official warning that without greater international support and regional cooperation, the <u>instability will expand</u>[26] toward West African coastal countries. The <u>United Nations</u>[27] has been working diligently to stabilize the <u>political situation</u>[28] in the Sahel region. For instance, the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of a <u>peacekeeping mission</u>[29] to assist Mali in its journey towards stability. Additionally, efforts are underway to implement the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) <u>Regional Action Plan</u>.[30]

In addition to political instability, the Sahel region is dealing with security issues connected to the emergence of extremism, which has distorted stability in the region and prompted groups and tribes to move to safer locations in neighbouring nations. The Sahel is now experiencing humanitarian challenges such as poverty, food insecurity, and inadequate access to essential amenities. The situation has deteriorated as a result of forced displacement, which has limited sources of income and rendered vulnerable individuals easy prey for extremism and criminal activity.

Extremism

Extremism is a significant <u>security concern</u>[31] in the Sahel. Various extremist groups are exploiting the region's instability, using it as an incubator to establish strongholds and spread their ideologies. This has led to an increase in violence and conflict, further destabilizing the region. Extremism poses a direct <u>threat to peace and stability</u>[32] and incites violence and terrorism, leading to loss of lives and widespread fear. Moreover, the global reach of extremist propaganda can influence individuals beyond the region of origin, posing a threat to international peace. The escalating insecurity, characterized by the expansion of terrorist and other non-State armed factions, in conjunction with political instability, is engendering a crisis in the Sahel that constitutes a <u>global threat</u>[33]. These non-State armed factions are intensifying their lethal influence over the region and are

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[19]*https://global-strategy.org/the-root-causes-of-violence-in-the-sahel/*
[20]*https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-66991696*
[21]*https://accesswdun.com/article/2023/9/1203127*
[22]*https://africacenter.org/in-focus/the-sahel/*
[23]*https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/conflict-between-al-qaeda-and-islamic-state-sahel-year-29305*
[24]*https://www.fao.org/africa/news/detail-news/zh/c/1492516/#:~:text=The%20Central%20Sahel%20region%2C%20and%20more%20specifically%20the,and%20the%20effects%20of%20the%20Covid%2019%20pandemic.*
[25]*https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=101399*
[26]*https://apnews.com/article/extremism-africa-sahel-islamic-state-7e99e8323e2836f849587754960fe594*
[27]*https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15325.doc.htm*
[28]*https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/sahel-10-years-instability-local-regional-and-international-dynamics-36174*
[29]*https://betterworldcampaign.org/resources/briefing-book-2022/peacekeeping-global-peace-stability#:~:text=The%20UN%20Security%20Council%20voted%20to%20deploy%20UN,had%20taken%20over%20the%20country%E2%80%99s%20vast%20northern%20regions.*
[30]*https://edup.ecowas.int/allevents/categories/key-resources/regional-action-plan/*
[31]*https://documents.page/document/security-challenges-and-issues-in-the-sahelo-saharan-region-.html?page=1*
[32]*https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1127571*
[33]*https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1127571#:~:text=Rising%20insecurity%2C%20including%20the%20proliferation%20of%20terrorist%20and,closed%20doors%20at%20UN%20Headquarters%20in%20New%20York.*

even attempting to expand their presence into the Gulf of Guinea countries. This insecurity is exacerbating an already catastrophic humanitarian situation, leaving some beleaguered national institutions without any access to their own communities. Actually, the region struggles with many threats and challenges[34] as it is persistently targeted by various extremist factions[35], including Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Boko Haram[36], and affiliates of ISIS[37]. These groups exploit the region's existing governance deficiencies, ethnic discord, and economic vulnerabilities to establish their niche.

Furthermore, the challenging situation in the Sahel has been influenced by political, social, and economic developments in the region and terrorist organizations fuelled by the broader instability and proxy wars[38] in the Middle East. A significant shift occurred in the Sahel region in 2012 when a Tuareg-dominated separatist armed group, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA)[39], bolstered by the return from Libya of several thousand fighters, almost entirely occupied northern Mali and declared Gao the capital of their self-declared state.

Efforts by the international community to assist the Sahel countries in combating extremism[40] have been implemented. The United Nations[41] has been actively involved in combating the rise of extremism[42] in the Sahel region. The joint force first deployed in 2017 by the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) countries, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, is a vital part of the security response to extremist armed groups[43]. The UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee's Executive Directorate (CTED) has also noted that terrorist threats have worsened since 2015[44].

In addition to extremism, the Sahel is facing severe economic deficiencies that have aggravated the humanitarian situation. Today, the region suffers from economic crises, such as poverty, food insecurity, and limited access to basic services. The economic situation is worsened as the sources of income have been reduced, and the vulnerability of the population has increased. Therefore, addressing the economic challenges in the Sahel region is essential for improving the humanitarian situation and building resilience.

Economic Challenges

Economic challenges are indeed prevalent. Despite being rich in natural resources, many countries in the Sahel are among the poorest[45] in the world. High unemployment rates, particularly among young people, coupled with rapid population growth, have created a volatile mix that threatens social cohesion. Economic challenges[46] have fuelled discontent and social unrest, which in turn deeded into political instability. Moreover, economic hardships have made individuals more susceptible to recruitment[47] by extremist groups or involvement in illicit activities as a means of survival.

Economic challenges have been a significant factor contributing to the instability in the Sahel. The region is home to some of the world's most vulnerable communities, where families face chronic food shortages[48], environmental degradation, a harsh climate characterized by droughts and floods, and high unemployment. The Sahel countries also rank among the countries with the highest employment rates[49] in the agricultural sector, with Chad at the highest level. Climate change poses a particularly severe set of economic and humanitarian challenges in this arid region. The West Africa and Sahel region, bordering the Sahara Desert, are among the world's most fragile areas[50].

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[34]https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/international-review-of-the-red-cross/article/sahel-challenges-and-opportunities/25F09D6436A0A7644739C0F18E3845CE
[35]https://www.e-ir.info/2021/04/09/terrorism-in-africa-explaining-the-rise-of-extremist-violence-against-civilians/
[36]https://oecd-development-matters.org/2017/09/29/the-blurred-boundaries-of-political-violence-in-the-sahel-sahara/
[37]https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2023/01/02/why-extremist-insurgencies-spread-insights-from-the-sahel/
[38]https://www.visionofhumanity.org/sahel-emerges-as-the-new-epicentre-of-terrorism/
[39]https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/mali-crisis-a-historical-perspective-of-the-azawad-movement/
[40]https://apnews.com/article/extremism-africa-sahel-islamic-state-7e99e8323e2836f849587754960fe594
[41]https://press.un.org/en/2021/sc14523.doc.htm
[42]https://africacenter.org/publication/responding-rise-violent-extremism-sahel/
[43]https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-extremism-sahel
[44]https://www.un.org/africarenewal/web-features/uniting-against-terrorism-across-sahara
[45]https://hal.science/hal-01653339/document
[46]https://english.elpais.com/international/2023-08-14/extreme-poverty-and-terrorist-violence-fuel-instability-in-the-sahel-region.html
[47]https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1068316X.2022.2027944
[48]https://www.icrc.org/en/document/sahel-food-crisis-fueled-conflict-set-worsen-during-lean-period
[49]https://borgenproject.org/facts-about-poverty-in-africas-sahel-region/
[50]https://www.nato-pa.int/download-file?filename=sites/default/files/2020-06/042%20GSM%2020%20E%20-%20CHALLENGES%20IN%20THE%20SAHEL_0.pdf

Despite substantial local and international efforts to stabilize the Sahel region, insecurity has permeated permeable borders with dramatic repercussions for the region's communities. This conflict further impoverishes a region already burdened with endemic poverty, inequality, and social and political exclusion. Efforts by the international community have been deployed to address the economic challenges[51]. For instance, The World Bank has been supporting Sahelian countries to boost and diversify their economies[52] to tackle climate crises and food insecurity. They have also provided a roadmap to help countries scale up reforms and investments. Climate change is further compounding these crises, with soil erosion and the drying-up of water sources contributing to severe food insecurity and heightening tensions between farmers and herders. The region is also facing a systemic debt crisis that could have continent-wide repercussions.

Climate Change-Induced Factors

In Africa, the Sahel is indeed on the front lines of climate change[53], with increasing temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns. The detrimental effects of climate change serve as a threat multiplier[54], intensifying the existing strife and instability in the region. These climate change-induced factors have resulted in crop failures and livestock deaths, leading to food insecurity[55] and increasing competition for scarce resources. Climate change-induced factors, such as droughts, floods, and extreme weather events, are exacerbating economic challenges by disrupting agriculture and key related sectors. These environmental crises have lead to displacement[56] of populations, creating humanitarian crises[57] , and insurgencies[58] that strain resources and increase tensions within and between regions. In terms of security, climate change has been a significant catalyst for tensions within and between regions of the Sahel. One of the primary impacts is human migration[59], driven by climate-induced droughts and crop failures, which often lead to competition over resources with local communities. In the same sense, climate change-induced factors (e.g. scarcity of rain) have had a significant impact on the region's stability in terms of agriculture. The United Nations estimates that approximately 80% of the Sahel's farmland is degraded due to climate change[60]. Temperatures in the region are rising 1.5 times faster than the global average, resulting in longer and more frequent droughts, which undermine food production. This resource scarcity, particularly in terms of usable land and water, is further intensifying tensions[61] and disputes[62] between farming and herding communities. Moreover, these effects of climate change are escalating conflicts in countries like Mali and Niger, exacerbating issues of underdevelopment[63], poverty, and insurgency[64].

These adverse effects of climate change impede the enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to health, water and sanitation, food, and adequate housing. In some areas, climate driven impacts are rendering lands uninhabitable or unable to support the livelihoods that communities have relied upon for centuries. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has identified the Sahel region of Africa as a climate hot spot.[65] To mitigate these challenges, international initiatives such as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the G5 Sahel Joint Force have been established. Efforts by the international community have been made to mitigate the impact of climate change-induced factors. In this regard, the World Bank has been actively involved in helping Sahelian countries prioritize climate adaptation[66] to alleviate humanitarian issues related to poverty and food insecurity[67].

[51]*https://dmarketforces.com/dfc-financing-to-advance-economic-growth-in-west-africa-sahel-region/*
[52]*https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/12/15/the-world-bank-boosts-support-to-the-sahel-for-a-resilient-recovery-from-the-security-and-economic-crisis*
[53]*https://www.brookings.edu/articles/political-turmoil-in-the-sahel-does-climate-change-play-a-role/*
[54]*https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/01/1031322*
[55]*https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/all-the-warning-signs-are-showing-in-the-sahel-we-must-act-now/*
[56]*https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/reports/human-rights-climate-change-and-migration-sahel*
[57]*https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/11/new-un-report-puts-human-face-climate-crisis-sahel*
[58]*https://globalriskinsights.com/2019/07/sahel-climate-change-insurgency/*
[59]*https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/11/new-un-report-puts-human-face-climate-crisis-sahel*
[60]*https://www.icrc.org/en/document/mali-niger-climate-change-and-conflict-make-explosive-mix-sahel#:~:text=The%20UN%20estimates%20that%20roughly%2080%25%20of%20the,in%20the%20Sahel%20are%20classified%20as%20food%20insecure.*
[61]*https://www.icrc.org/en/document/mali-niger-climate-change-and-conflict-make-explosive-mix-sahel*
[62]*https://www.iied.org/does-climate-change-cause-conflicts-sahel*
[63]*https://www.icrc.org/en/document/mali-niger-climate-change-and-conflict-make-explosive-mix-sahel*
[64]*https://globalriskinsights.com/2019/07/sahel-climate-change-insurgency/*
[65]*https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ar4-wg2-chapter9-1.pdf*
[66]*https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2017-07/Economic%20Community%20of%20West%20African%20States%20%28ECOWAS%29.pdf*
[67]*https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/11/new-un-report-puts-human-face-climate-crisis-sahel*

They have also encouraged these countries to accelerate growth and diversify their economies in more resilient and inclusive ways. The Sahel also serves as a hub for criminal networks and illicit trafficking, adding another layer of complexity to the situation. These interconnected and overlapping themes contribute to the complexity and challenge of the situation in the region.

Illicit Trafficking and Criminal Networks

Finally, the Sahel has become a hub for <u>illicit trafficking</u>[68] and <u>criminal networks</u>[69], including <u>human</u> , <u>drug</u>[70] , and <u>arms</u>[71] trafficking. These illicit activities not only undermine law and order but also deprive local governments of revenue. The instability in the region not only endangers the welfare of its inhabitants but also fuels transnational crime, terrorism, and irregular migration, thereby elevating it to a matter of <u>global concern</u>[72].

Illicit trafficking and criminal networks are not only a source of local instability but also have global implications for many states in the Sahel region. In fact, <u>criminal activities</u>[73] are threatening governance and social stability in the entire region and beyond. The Sahel has become an <u>inextricable puzzle</u>[74] for uncontrolled transnational organized crime and illicit cross-border trafficking in drugs, arms, and people, compounded by poor governance and the risk of collapsing state authority. The region is also confronting an escalation of attacks from militant <u>Islamist groups</u>[75], coupled with <u>cross-border challenges</u>[76] such as human and narcotics trafficking, migration, and population displacement. These challenges have prompted a series of regional and international security responses. Criminal networks have intensified their operations in the Sahel and expanded their illicit trade activities across the entire region. Millennia-old trade routes crisscrossing the Sahel are being exploited for smuggling various <u>commodities</u>[77] such as chilli peppers, counterfeit medicine, fuel, gold, guns, humans, and more. This illegal practice is a growing problem in this fragile African region.

To combat illicit trafficking and criminality in the region, <u>regional</u>[78] and international assistance have been deployed. For example, the United Nations has been working with various countries in the Sahel region to combat <u>drug trafficking and organized crime</u>[79]. They have also set up the <u>West Africa Coast Initiative</u>[80] (WACI) to work in synergy to support the implementation of the <u>ECOWAS Regional Action Plan</u>[81] to Address the growing problem of illicit drug trafficking, organized crime, and drug abuse in West Africa and the Sahel.

In conclusion, addressing these challenges necessitates a comprehensive approach that not only tackles the symptoms but also addresses the underlying causes. Additionally, the military option of resolving political issues in the Sahel region may have short-term impacts, such as changing regimes, but in the long run, it could only aggravate the situation and favor more violence and radicalization in the region. What we propose is international cooperation at all levels - local, national, and regional - and across all sectors. The threats are interconnected, and their collective impact on regional and international peace and stability is significant. Therefore, a comprehensive approach that considers the interplay between these factors is essential.

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[68]*https://www.theepochtimes.com/article/tentacles-of-organized-crime-groups-in-africa-now-stretch-around-the-world-says-global-report-5503834*

[69]*https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/human-smuggling-trafficking-ecosystems-north-africa-sahel/*

[70]*https://jasoninstitute.com/drug-trafficking-in-the-sahel/*

[71]*https://newstimes.org.ng/2023/06/trafficking-in-the-sahel-muzzling-the-illicit-arms-trade/*

[72]*https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1127571#:~:text=Rising%20insecurity%2C%20including%20the%20proliferation%20of%20terrorist%20and,closed%20doors%20at%20UN%20Headquarters%20in%20New%20York.*

[73]*https://www.nato-pa.int/download-file?filename=/sites/default/files/2021-02/042%20GSM%2020%20E%20rev%202%20fin%20%20-%20DEVELOPMENT%20AND%20SECURITY%20CHALLENGES%20IN%20THE%20SAHEL%20REGION_0.pdf*

[74]*https://thesecuritydistillery.org/all-articles/organised-crime-in-the-sahel-an-inextricable-puzzle*

[75]*https://africacenter.org/spotlight/militant-islamist-group-activity-sahel-rises/#:~:text=The%20violent%20events%20linked%20to%20militant%20Islamist%20groups,Jama%E2%80%99at%20Nusrat%20al%20Islam%20wal%20Muslimin%20%28JNIM%29%20umbrella.*

[76]*https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/cct/counter-terrorism-in-the-sahel#:~:text=The%20recent%20spread%20of%20terrorism%20and%20violent%20extremism%2C,increased%20the%20amounts%20of%20assistance%20to%20the%20region.*

[77]*https://nigeriansketch.com/trafficking-in-the-sahel-guns-gas-and-gold/*

[78]*https://africacenter.org/spotlight/review-regional-security-efforts-sahel/*

[79]*https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136847*

[80]*https://unowas.unmissions.org/drug-trafficking-and-organised-crime*

[81]*https://edup.ecowas.int/all-about/the-ecowas-drug-unit-edu/#:~:text=The%20ECOWAS%20Commission%2C%20after%20series%20of%20consultation%2C%20drew,Drug%20Trafficking%2C%20Organized%20Crime%20and%20Drug%20Abuse%20%282016-2020%29.*

VII. CYBERSECURITY

The Complexities of Cybersecurity and its Modern Threats

PhD. Mohamad AL-MOKDAD (Lebanon)

The digital revolution has brought unparalleled convenience and innovation, transforming the way we live, work, and communicate. Yet, this transformation has also birthed a new breed of challenges — cybersecurity threats that lurk in the shadows of our interconnected world. In this in-depth exploration, we unravel the intricate layers of cybersecurity in the modern age. From the intricacies of cyber threats to cutting-edge defense strategies, this article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the cyber landscape that defines our digital future.

Cyber Threats: A Multifaceted Menace

In the ever-expanding digital landscape, cyber threats have evolved into a multifaceted menace that requires a nuanced understanding. These threats, often intangible and elusive, can disrupt economies, jeopardize national security, and compromise the privacy of individuals. Here's a deeper exploration of the various dimensions of this intricate challenge:

- APTs represent highly sophisticated and targeted cyber attacks, often orchestrated by nation-states or well-funded criminal organizations. Unlike typical cyber attacks, APTs are characterized by their prolonged and covert nature. These threats involve a meticulous strategy, often aiming to infiltrate specific targets like government agencies, corporations, or research institutions. APTs exploit vulnerabilities over an extended period, siphoning off sensitive data or disrupting operations discreetly.

Source: https://www.defenseromania.ro/tendintele-anului-2023-in-materie-de-securitate-cibernetica_620300.html

- Malware, a portmanteau of "malicious software," encompasses a broad category of cyber threats. This includes viruses, worms, Trojans, ransomware, and spyware. Viruses attach themselves to legitimate programs, spreading when the infected program is executed. Worms self-replicate and spread across networks. Trojans disguise themselves as legitimate software but contain malicious code. Ransomware encrypts files, demanding a ransom for their release, while

spyware clandestinely monitors user activities. Each type of malware presents unique challenges in detection and mitigation.

- Cybercriminals often exploit human psychology through social engineering tactics. Phishing, for instance, involves deceptive emails or messages that lure recipients into revealing sensitive information, such as passwords or financial details. Spear-phishing is a targeted form of phishing, personalized for specific individuals or organizations, making it more convincing and difficult to detect. Other tactics include pretexting, baiting, and quid pro quo attacks, all designed to manipulate human behavior for nefarious purposes.

- The dark web, a hidden part of the internet not indexed by search engines, serves as a haven for illegal activities. Cybercriminals leverage the dark web to trade stolen data, buy and sell hacking tools, and exchange tactics and strategies. Cybercrime marketplaces within the dark web offer a wide array of services, from hacking-for-hire to the sale of stolen credentials, enabling criminals to operate with relative anonymity and facilitating the proliferation of cyber threats.

- Insider threats occur when individuals within an organization misuse their access privileges to compromise security. This could be a disgruntled employee seeking revenge or a negligent staff member inadvertently exposing sensitive information. Insider threats can be especially challenging to detect and prevent, as the perpetrators often have legitimate access to systems and data.

Understanding these multifaceted cyber threats is crucial, as it allows organizations and individuals to develop robust defense strategies. From implementing advanced intrusion detection systems to educating employees about social engineering tactics, a comprehensive approach is necessary to mitigate the diverse and ever-evolving cyber risks that define the digital age. By staying vigilant and informed, individuals and organizations can better protect themselves against this complex menace.

The Role of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

In the relentless cat-and-mouse game of cybersecurity, where cyber threats evolve at an alarming pace, defenders are increasingly turning to cutting-edge technologies to bolster their defenses. Among these technologies, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) have emerged as pivotal tools in the fight against cyber adversaries. Here's an in-depth look at their role in the complex landscape of cybersecurity:

- AI and ML algorithms excel at analyzing vast datasets to identify patterns and trends. In cybersecurity, this capability is harnessed for predictive analytics. By analyzing historical data, these algorithms can predict potential threats and vulnerabilities, allowing organizations to proactively bolster their defenses. Predictive analytics, coupled with threat intelligence, enables security professionals to anticipate attacks, identify emerging threats, and fortify their systems before cybercriminals exploit weaknesses.

- Traditional cybersecurity tools often rely on predefined signatures to identify known threats. However, AI and ML introduce a paradigm shift by enabling behavioral analysis. These technologies establish a baseline of normal behavior within a network or system. Deviations from this baseline, indicating anomalies, can be indicative of a cyber attack. ML algorithms can detect subtle patterns and deviations that might escape human observation, enhancing the ability to identify zero-day attacks and sophisticated threats.

- AI and ML not only aid in threat detection but also enable automated responses to security incidents. When a potential threat is detected, AI-driven systems can initiate automated responses, such as isolating affected systems, blocking malicious traffic, or quarantining compromised devices. This swift response is crucial in mitigating the impact of cyber attacks, especially in large-scale environments where manual responses might be too slow to prevent significant damage.

- In the realm of financial services and online transactions, AI and ML play a crucial role in fraud prevention. Machine learning algorithms analyze user behavior patterns, transaction history, and other contextual data to detect fraudulent activities in real-time. Moreover, these technologies are utilized in adaptive authentication systems. By continuously learning and recognizing user behavior patterns, these systems can differentiate between legitimate users and potential intruders, enhancing security without compromising user experience.

- AI-driven vulnerability management tools assess an organization's digital infrastructure, identifying potential vulnerabilities. These tools can prioritize vulnerabilities based on their criticality and the organization's specific risk profile. Machine learning algorithms analyze data on patch deployments, system configurations, and historical vulnerabilities to recommend the most effective patching strategies. This data-driven approach ensures that limited resources are directed toward addressing the most significant risks.

- As AI and ML technologies advance, cybercriminals have started exploiting them too. Adversarial Machine Learning involves manipulating AI models to provide false results, leading to incorrect threat assessments or evading detection. As a result, the development of AI-based cybersecurity measures must also

include strategies to defend against adversarial attacks, ensuring the reliability and accuracy of these advanced systems.

In essence, the integration of AI and ML into cybersecurity practices empowers defenders to stay ahead in the ever-evolving landscape of cyber threats. By leveraging the capabilities of these technologies, organizations can bolster their defenses, respond swiftly to incidents, and anticipate future threats, ensuring a proactive and adaptive approach to cybersecurity in the modern age.

As we journey further into the digital age, the complexities of cybersecurity demand continuous vigilance, innovation, and collaboration. Understanding the multifaceted nature of cyber threats, embracing the human element in cybersecurity strategies, leveraging the power of AI and ML, securing the hyperconnected world of IoT, and fostering international collaboration are essential components of a robust cybersecurity posture. In this ever-evolving cyber wilderness, the collective efforts of individuals, organizations, and nations are paramount. By staying ahead of the curve, embracing emerging technologies, and fostering a culture of cybersecurity awareness, we can navigate the digital landscape securely, ensuring a safer, more resilient future for all.

Authors Biographies

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He is a consummate entrepreneur and exceptional communicator who has achieved remarkable success throughout his career. With a strong educational background and strong business acumen, Juri has consistently demonstrated outstanding leadership skills and strategic thinking. In 2001, Juri founded Ibusiness International, an innovative company specializing in outsourcing, software and web services. Through his exceptional communication skills and visionary leadership, Juri has propelled Ibusiness International to become a prominent player in the Latin American and European markets. Juri Ferrario's exceptional communication skills have garnered widespread acclaim, with his LinkedIn profile being one of the most visited and respected in the business community. Through his eloquence and ability to articulate complex concepts, Juri has earned praise and recognition from industry experts. Furthermore, Juri's outstanding leadership and strategic thinking have been recognized through high-profile projects such as the "Made in Italy" promotion for La Lega Della Terra. Juri Ferrario's outstanding achievements, combined with his educational background and exceptional communication and management skills, position him as a visionary leader and valued influencer.

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She is President of Zivac Group and of the Center for Research and Prevention of Bioterrorism in Romania; PhD in genetic engineering, PhD in intelligence and national security, expert in behavioural analysis. She is a clinical psychologist and a psychologist specialized in applied psychology in the field of national security and in psychological profiler, forensic psychologist, sociologist, trainer certified by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour. Being concerned with understanding man and explaining human behaviour, rigorous scientific training, allowing him to approach human behaviour from a genetic, psychological, behavioural point of view, results in the publication of numerous research studies, books, articles. Special skills in behavioural analysis and assessment have led to the identification and expertise of many cases of deviant behaviour related to crimes, crimes, fraud, scams. Thousands of people have attended his frequent courses in Behavioural Analysis and Assessment, Business Intelligence, Criminal Profiling, Business Profiling and personal development.

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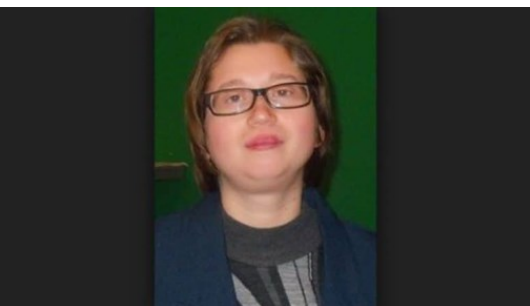
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Born on August 8, 1984, in Iasi. She graduated in Political Science - Bachelor and Master in Political Marketing and Communication at "Al.Ioan Cuza" University in Iaşi. In 2023 she also graduated with a second master's degree "Security and Diplomacy" at SNSPA, Bucharest. She followed an internship at the "Center for Conflict Prevention and Early Warning during her studies at SNSPA. She specializes in academic research and exploration of Western Balkan political and security topics, publishing several analyzes in the media of this area in various newspapers in Albania , Kosovo, North Macedonia.Also published two books of poems in Albanian language in Pristina, Kosovo in 2014 and 2022.

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He graduated from the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, and has Master studies within the Faculty of History and Philosophy at the same Babeş Bolyai University, in Cluj-Napoca. He has a degree attesting his competencies as a documentary teacher at the University of Bucharest, Department of Biology of the Faculty of Letters and Information Sciences. He completed doctoral studies at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Sociology and Social Work. Demonstrates good communication skills acquired through own experience as a teacher. He completed numerous courses to develop the evaluation skills of teaching staff, modern learning methods, non-violent education, research on monographic and demographic topics, counselling and orientation in pre-university education, project management.

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Dr. G. Doug DAVIS (USA)

He is the director of the Master's of Science in International Relations program at Troy University where he is a European Security and Middle East regional expert. In addition to a doctorate in political science from the University of Arizona, he has a graduate degree from the Pontificia Università Lateranense. He has published academic papers and is the co-author, with Dr Michael Slobodchikoff, of Cultural Imperialism and the Decline of the Liberal Order: Russian and Western Soft Power in Eastern Europe. Most recently he is the coeditor of The Challenge to NATO: Global Security and the Atlantic Alliance (Potomac Books), which is coedited with Michael O. Slobodchikoff and Brandon Stewart. His academic work has been translated and published in nine languages. He has international development experience in the Middle East where he has worked on projects funded by the European Union, Italian government, and the World Bank. He has international banking experience and has worked to open financial institutions internationally.

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PhD. Michael O. SLOBODCHIKOFF (USA)

He is the author of several peer-reviewed publications and of three books. He is the author of Strategic Cooperation: Overcoming the Barriers of Global Anarchy (Lexington Books), Building Hegemonic Order Russia's Way: Rules, Stability and predictability in the Post-Soviet Space (Lexington Books), Cultural Imperialism and the Decline of the Liberal Order: Russian and Western Soft Power in Eastern Europe (Lexington Books), which is coauthored with G. Doug Davis. He has also published an edited volume entitled The Challenge to NATO: Global Security and the Atlantic Alliance (Potomac Books) with G. Doug Davis. His most recent book project, India as Kingmaker, was just published by the University of Michigan Press. Dr. Slobodchikoff is a leading expert on security in Eastern Europe. He is the Founding Director of the Center for Eastern and Central European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies at Troy University. He has often served as an analyst on Russian relations with Ukraine and the West for BBC World News, Al Asharq News, and Al Qahera News.

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PhD. Mohammed GACHI (Morocco)

He completed his doctorate studies, with the theme "F. German P. to Morocco and Turkey", at Mohammad V University, College of Social Sciences, Rabat, and Master's studies, at Ibn Tofayl University, Kenitra, Morocco. He is an academic researcher, political analyst and consultant. He obtained a PhD from the Department of International History and Foreign Affairs, University Mohamed V Rabat, Morocco. His research interests include IR theory, geopolitics and foreign policy, with a focus on EU affairs (EU Strategy towards the Indo-Pacific and MENA), the shift in German foreign and security policy (Zeitenwende), especially towards Russia and China. In addition to the future of the transatlantic partnership, the global order and the possibilities and limits of soft power. He has published in several journals, including Trends Research & Advisory (UAE), The Royal Academy (Morocco), Geostrategic Pulse (Romania), Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies (Qatar) and Tafaaul Center for Social Sciences. He is co-author of the collective book "Understanding Morocco 2010-2020". He is the author of the books "Shift Power: The Possibilities and the Limits of Soft Power in the Time of Crises" (Strategic Trends Series) and "The EU Foreign Policy Towards Indo-Pacific: Search for an Effective Geopolitical Role" (Policy Paper). In addition, he is about to publish two books "Trends in German Foreign Policy: From Bismarck to the Beginning of Scholz" and "Jihad Made in Germany: A Rereading of German Foreign Policy Towards the Ottoman Empire and Morocco during the First World War ". In addition, he attended many seminars and winter and summer schools.

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PhD. Mohamed MLILESS (Morocco)

He is an independent researcher in Ecolinguistics and Critical Analysis of Political Discourse and the Environment. He holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Moulay Ismail University in Meknes, Morocco. He has published three books on legal and environmental discourse. Many scientific articles he has written and co-authored focus on social and environmental issues. PhD. Mliless is a member of the International Ecolinguistics Association (IEA), board member of AS Microbiology Journal of Acta Scientific Open International Library, India; board member of the Journal of Education, Teaching and Social Studies (JETSS); board member of Sustainability in Environment Journal (Scholink); member of the editorial team of ARBITRER magazine from Andalas University, Indonesia; committee board Journal for Sustainability and Environment (SEJ); editorial board member of the University of Surakarta (SELJU), Indonesia. In addition, PhD Mliless is a reviewer in many international journals including International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology (IJSA), International Journal of English and Literature (IJEL), African Journal of Political Science and International Relations (AJPSIR), Journal of Language and Literature (JOLL), Journal Arbitrer and International Journal of Environmental Protection and Policy (IJEPP).

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PhD. Mohammad AL-MOKDAD (Lebanon)

PhD in Geopolitics (2021 - Present) PSG IKI - France, PhD in International Relations and Diplomacy CEDS - France, (2021 - Present), Master in Social Policies (2019 - 2021), Lebanese University Strategic and Diplomatic Studies, (2017 - 2019), Military Studies, at the Military College. He knows Arabic, English, French and Italian. He is a graduate of numerous military, diplomacy, public order and security courses in Lebanon and abroad.

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PhD. Eng. Stelian TEODORESCU

He is an aviation engineer and during his doctoral studies he was admitted to the SmartSPODAS 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).

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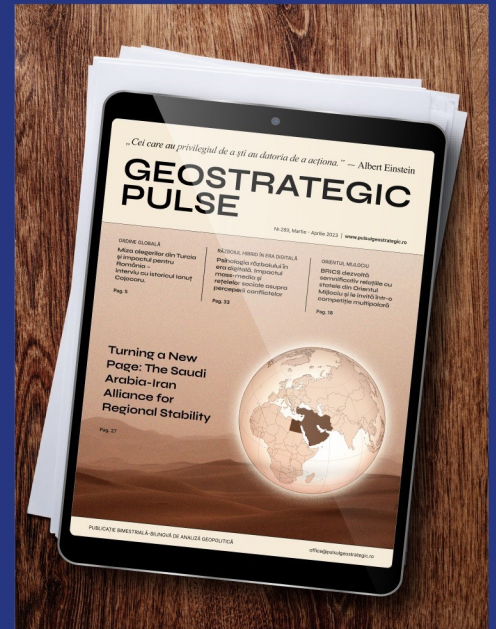
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