

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

# GEOSTRATEGIC PULSE

No. 295 March - April 2024 | [www.pulsulgeostrategic.ro](http://www.pulsulgeostrategic.ro)

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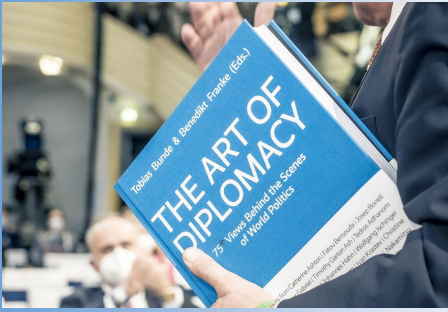
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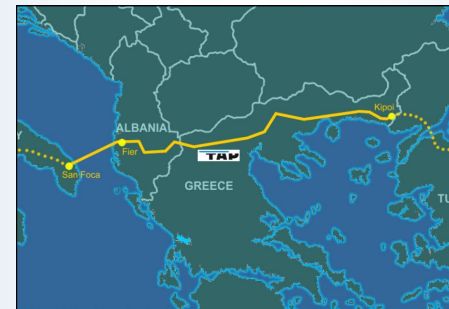
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## 1. EDITORIAL



### The Politics of Force vs. Diplomacy - the Crucial Test of the Reconfiguration of the World Order

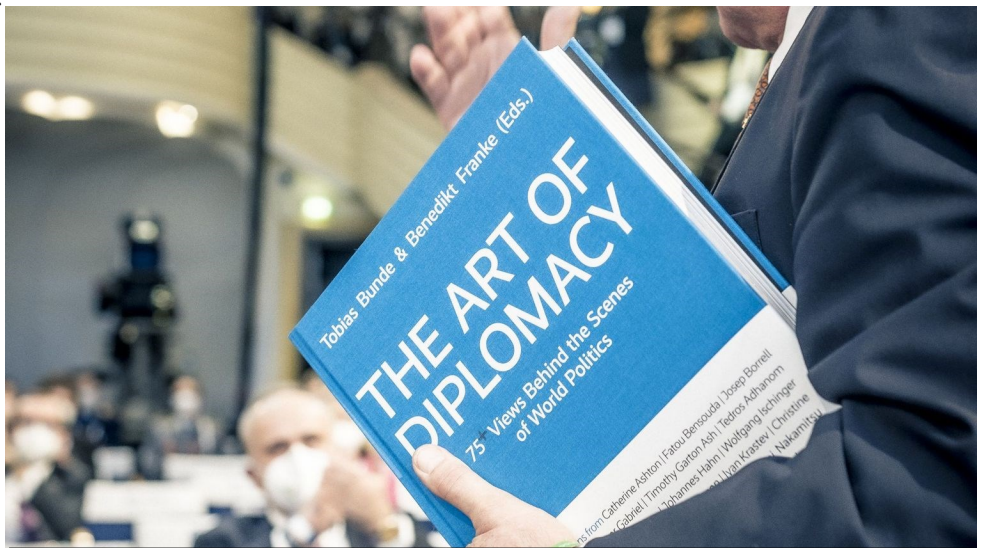
PhD. Eng. Stelian TEODORESCU

*“Endurance is patiente concentrated.”*

Thomas Carlyle

After 32 years and 5 months since the end of the Cold War, a period that was marked by developments characterized by relative successes, but also by the deepening of some contradictions, the international community faces, now more than ever, the crucial test of reconfiguring the geopolitical architecture and transforming the system of international relations.

The concept of “geopolitical architecture” was introduced for the first time during the International Seminar “The New Architecture of World Politics”, held in Piedmont, Italy (October 28-29, 2006). In the same context, it is significant to mention here that the specialists in the field have emphasized that the key moment of the transition from unipolarity to multipolarity was constituted by the speech of the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin (February 10, 2007) during the Munich Conference, when he spoke out against the unipolar order. He believed that the presence of several centres of power was beneficial for international relations.



Source: <https://securityconference.org/en/publications/the-art-of-diplomacy/>

Thus, an important step in the re-evaluation of the new geopolitical architecture took place within the Franco-German-Russian Summit (October 18-19, 2010), in Deauville, Normandy (France), with the participation of N. Sarkozy, A. Merkel and D. Medvedev. According to the points of view expressed by some historians, this event is considered to be an important one when the European leaders recognized the existence of a new multipolar Europe, a Europe flanked by NATO, which expands to the east, but in which China, Russia, Turkey, Iran and many other states develop their own foreign and competitive policies.

Considering the need to dissect the role of multipolarity in the process of analysing the reconfiguration of geopolitical architecture and, implicitly, for a better understanding of this phenomenon in the context of current realities, some very clear definitions specific to this field must be highlighted here:

- A pole of power is an instrument capable of producing order or generating disorder;
- Poles of power are often regional powers with a global vision;
- Within a multipolar world, a pole of power could be defined as an actor that influences global results beyond its borders;

- A multipolar system is a system in which power is distributed among at least 3 significant power poles that concentrate wealth and/or military capabilities and are able to block or disrupt any major political arrangement that threatens their own interests. Currently, as a result of the deep transformations that are taking place at the regional level and, implicitly, at the world level, of the connections and interactions that are developed between state actors, but also between them and non-state actors, new models of political interdependence are emerging, economic, military, cultural, informational, social and demographic, but also new types of international and transnational relations which are often categorized as atypical. Most of the new challenges, which take place at an extremely fast pace and demonstrate a very high level of unpredictability, are most likely the result of existing prejudices and deficiencies in the field of good governance. All of them contribute directly to the development and amplification of economic regression, the development of uncontrolled migration, the increase of vulnerabilities of human societies, the development of populism and the significant amplification of ethnic and religious tensions. All these tend to erode, degrade and enforce the permanent adaptation of the system of relations and, implicitly, of the political, military and security system at the regional and global level.

In such an evolving context, for many international actors, the concept of “preventive diplomacy” has remained a mere technical term, as many conflicts have erupted and escalated between various nations, a fact that contributed to the imbalance of the security situation on a regional and international level. Among the multiple definitions of diplomacy, considered by some an art, by others a science, we dwell on the one according to which *diplomacy is the science of relations and interests between states or the art of reconciling the interests of peoples with each other*, so, basically, the science or art of negotiation. *Stricto sensu*, diplomacy is not a science, as is, for example, mathematics, nor can it be seen as related to art. From a scientific perspective, diplomacy aims to study the political or legal relations of various states, as well as the interests they generate. As an art, diplomacy deals with the administration of international affairs, which involves the ability to command and conduct political negotiations. Today, we can talk about state diplomacy, as well as about the diplomacy of coalitions, groups or international associations.

The art of negotiation and diplomacy have evolved from simple practical solutions to sophisticated epistemological frameworks. The common observation that is imposed is that negotiation, just like diplomacy (theoretical and practical) is taught and imposed on people as the “exercise of patience” or the “tactic of defeating the opponent with weapons”. Both (diplomacy and negotiation), in fact, involve tactics and strategies that can influence not only the international political field, but through foreign policy (with broad-based negotiations), can generate crucial changes for all mankind.

Thus, regional and global security has become, equally, the responsibility of the leaders of all countries in the world, raising the interest of many and diverse specialists. That is why a series of concepts, relevant methods and ways forward for the pro-active resolution of conflicts have been proposed and established, in order not to reach a general disaster:

- capitalizing on early warnings and implementing the most efficient and effective actions to prevent escalation;
- acquiring and perfecting communication, negotiation and conflict mediation skills to avoid security imbalances;
- facilitating reconciliations through negotiations and diplomatic actions in order to resolve conflicts;
- building a culture of prevention through negotiations and diplomacy.

In the context of the transformations currently taking place, it is necessary to adapt to the current international reality, which requires both the pro-active development of knowledge and understanding of the causes, evolution, unpredictability and size of the effects generated by new types of conflicts, as well as the permanent updating of the national and international legislative system in line with today’s new political, economic, military and security realities. As a result, regional or global security, which is practically a sum of security concepts – economic, ethnic, state and other entities – is built through the involvement of states, based on the concept of identifying “solutions to common regional or global issues, through regional or global cooperation”, in order to counter current risks and threats.

The disappearance of some subjects of international law and the appearance of new ones, as well as the definition of a new international security context, highlight the need for a permanent adaptation to the efficient and effective approach to the latest and most important issues of today’s international security environment. The development and consequences of multipolarity, together with the significant tendency to develop populism and nationalism, will probably determine the heading of the global order – towards a hybrid system of international relations, with a fragile level of stability, but characterized by a stronger commitment at the regional level.

## II. REGIONAL SECURITY



### Algerian Army's Encroachment on National Democracy and Regional Security

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#### Abstract

Military involvement in a country's governance and public affairs can have profound and far-reaching impacts. These impacts can be seen across various domains, including political, economic, social, and international relations. This study delves into the multifaceted role of the Algerian Army within the nation's political, economic, and social spheres, and its consequential impact on regional security. It scrutinizes the intricate relationship between the military and political power, the army's control over scarce resources, and its economic involvement. The Algerian military's engagement in various international situations is also examined. The study reveals that the military's influence permeates national borders, significantly shaping regional security dynamics. This research employs a theoretical analysis methodology, underpinned by established theories and prior research findings. The assumptions made are substantiated and serve as the foundation for logically developed and coherently presented arguments. The findings suggest that the military exerts considerable influence on social media, information dissemination, press freedom, and the education sector. Furthermore, the military's influence is found to extend beyond national borders, markedly affecting regional security dynamics. This is exemplified by the army's extensive cooperation with neighboring countries, particularly its involvement in border disputes and territorial conflicts with Morocco. The study aims to enrich understanding of the Algerian Army's pivotal role in regional security and its central role in shaping Algeria's trajectory, offering valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and observers of Algerian politics.

**Keywords:** Algerian army, civil governance, foreign policy, political power, regional security, social influence

#### Introduction

This report delves into the pivotal role of the Algerian Army in the nation's political, economic, and societal spheres, and its far-reaching influence on regional security. It scrutinizes the army's ties with the political leadership, its stewardship of limited resources, and its economic contributions. The study further explores the army's effects on social media, the spread of information, press freedom, and the education system. The army's influence is not confined to Algeria, but has profound repercussions on the security dynamics of the region. The report sheds light on the army's partnerships with neighbouring countries and its participation in territorial disputes and conflicts, particularly with Morocco. The aim of this study is to enhance understanding of the Algerian Army's crucial role in regional security, offering valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, and observers of Algeria.

The military's significant role in the government is evident through its control of key institutions, influence over decision-making processes, economic activities, and strategic sectors (Ghanem, 2022). Despite civilian presidencies, the military-backed civilian government remains prevalent, with significant influence over civilian leadership and state direction, thereby consolidating its power within the country (Elguettaa, 2021). The military holds significant power in Algeria, shaping its culture and influencing the country's governance. The People's National Army is seen as guardians of the nation, and its role in the Algerian government is a subject of ongoing political dynamics (Chanderli, n.d.). The five pillars that sustain the Algerian regime are the military, opposition co-optation, civil society fragmentation, rent distribution, and repression.



**Fig. 1 - Tebboune's Visit to Djelfa**  
(Source: dzair-tube.dz)



**Fig. 2 - National football team welcomed by President and military chief**  
(Source: echoroukonline.com)



**Fig. 3 - FIFA President, Gianni Infantino, sweeps away a strange individual.**  
(Source: en.africatopsports.com)

## Methodology

This study employs a theoretical analysis methodology, grounded in established theories and findings from previous research. The assumptions made are justified and form the basis of arguments logically developed and coherently presented. The study draws upon similar research conducted on each element, positioning our study within the broader academic discourse. It extensively reviews and synthesizes secondary sources such as books, peer-reviewed articles, and reliable online resources. A critical review of the assumptions and arguments presented in the existing literature is also included, identifying any gaps or weaknesses in previous studies that our study aims to address. This methodology ensures a rigorous and comprehensive exploration of the topic, offering valuable insights for scholars, policymakers, and observers of Algerian politics. It also ensures the study's findings are grounded in robust theoretical evidence, enhancing their reliability and validity.

## Research Questions

Moving forward, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- How does the Algerian Army's control over political, economic, and social domains shape the nation's trajectory?
- What is the impact of the Algerian Army's influence on regional security dynamics?

## Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical analysis and review of existing literature, the study proposes the following hypotheses:

- The Algerian Army's control over political, economic, and social domains significantly influences the nation's trajectory.
- The Algerian Army's influence extends beyond national borders, significantly impacting regional security dynamics.

These research questions and hypotheses will guide the subsequent analysis and discussion in this study.

## **Results**

The results of the study are bifurcated into two distinct aspects. The first aspect delves into the impact of the Algerian Army on the nation's trajectory, exploring its influence on political, economic, and social domains within Algeria. The second aspect focuses on the regional implications of the Algerian Army's actions and strategies, particularly its impact on neighboring countries and the broader Sahel region. Each aspect provides a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted role of the Algerian Army in shaping both national and regional dynamics.

### **The Algerian Army and Its Impact on the Nation's Trajectory**

The results reveal a significant intersection of military and political power in Algeria, with the Algerian Army playing a pivotal role since the country's independence. The intricate relationship between the Army and the Presidency in Algeria has been a defining factor in the nation's trajectory. The Army's involvement in nation-building and politics has shaped the political landscape of the country.

The Algerian Army's substantial involvement in the economy has been a significant factor in shaping economic policies and resource allocation. The Army's economic role is multifaceted, extending from direct control over certain sectors to indirect influence through its involvement in policy-making processes. This involvement has had far-reaching implications for the country's economic development and growth. The Army's control over resources, particularly in sectors such as energy and mining, has influenced the distribution of wealth and opportunities within the country. This has had significant social and economic impacts, affecting income inequality and social mobility. Furthermore, the Army's influence on economic policies has shaped the business environment in Algeria. This includes policies related to foreign investment, taxation, and regulation, which have a direct impact on the country's economic competitiveness and attractiveness to investors.

The study also highlights the Army's significant influence on media freedom and information dissemination. The Army's control over media outlets and its role in regulating the media sector have had a profound impact on the public sphere. This includes influencing the narrative around key issues, controlling the flow of information, and shaping public opinion. The Army's role in information dissemination extends beyond traditional media to include social media and other digital platforms. This has implications for freedom of expression, access to information, and the nature of public discourse in Algeria. The repression of post "Hirak" activists is another critical finding, underscoring the Algerian Army's role in maintaining social order and stability. The "Hirak" movement, which began in 2019, saw widespread protests calling for political change in Algeria. The Army's response to these protests has been a subject of intense scrutiny.

The Army has played a crucial role in the government's efforts to suppress these protests. This has involved a range of measures, from the arrest and detention of activists to the use of force during protests. The Army's actions have been justified on the grounds of maintaining social order and stability, but they have also raised serious concerns about human rights and freedom of expression. Moreover, the Army's role in the repression of "Hirak" activists has had significant implications for the political landscape in Algeria. Furthermore, the repression of "Hirak" activists has also had an impact on Algeria's international relations. It has attracted criticism from international human rights organizations and has affected Algeria's image abroad.

### **Algerian Army and Its Impact on the Region**

The Algerian Army's doctrine has had a significant impact on regional dynamics, particularly in relation to Morocco. The study reveals that the Army's approach to border disputes and territorial conflicts has shaped the bilateral relations between the two countries. The Algerian Army's doctrine has been an important factor in shaping regional dynamics, particularly in its relationship with Morocco. This has led to a series of stand-offs with Morocco, further straining the bilateral relations between the two countries. The Army's approach has not only shaped the nature of these disputes but has also influenced the broader political discourse around these issues in Algeria regarding Morocco.

Moreover, the Algerian Army's doctrine has also influenced its engagement with international institutions and regional security initiatives. Its positions on various issues have often been influenced by its doctrine,



leading to a distinct approach to regional security that has had far-reaching implications in the Sahel region.

## Discussion

### 1. The Algerian Army and Its Impact on the Nation's Trajectory

A military-backed civilian government, where the military supports and influences civilian leadership, can take various forms (Emizet, 2000), including military dictatorships or military juntas (Britannica, 2023a). Despite a civilian government, the military may continue to exert control and influence. The military's involvement in a civilian government can significantly impact the balance of power and decision-making processes within the state, and the establishment of a civilian government does not necessarily lead to democracy (Britannica, 2023a). Algeria has a military-backed civilian government since its independence (Lenze, 2021), with the military acting as a state within a state. This system allows military elites to govern alongside authoritarian civilians, excluding those with democratic inclinations (Ghanem, 2022; Elguettaa, 2021; Ghanem, 2019). The military's role in Algeria's government is a subject of ongoing political dynamics, impacting governance and stability (Camara & Charles, 2023; King, 2023).

The army's importance in Algeria is unparalleled, even compared to Libya at the time of President Gaddafi. During 1963-1964, the Algerian army was a diverse assembly, but Houari Boumediene transformed it into a unified instrument loyal to him (Daguzan, 1999). Despite its weaknesses, the army was the country's sole organized force and administration capable of structuring it for new elites. Under Boumediene's leadership, Daguzan mentions that the army's engagement in the Algerian state and society manifested ideologically, politically, by maintaining power while delegating governance to a single party (Front de Liberation Nationale, FLN), and structurally, by assuming control of civil society's command levers.

#### 1.1 Intersection of Military and Political

Levet and Tolila's (2023) made an analogy to the interference of the military in the public life as "The Algerian Malaise." In fact, the Algerian malaise started when Boumediene took power in 1965. Originally, Houari Boumediene gained power in Algeria through a peaceful coup d'état in 1965. He was a military officer and Minister of Defense under President Ahmed Ben Bella. Boumediene and his allies arrested Ben Bella and his supporters. He governed through a Revolutionary Council and consolidated power after a coup attempt in 1967. After a new constitution, he was elected President of Algeria until 1978. The book by Levet and Tolila provides a comprehensive analysis of Algeria's regime's pathologies and the genesis of its power structure. To explain more, Qattab (2023) mentions that Levet and Tolila's book, which was based on a five-and-a-half-year official mission, highlights the roots of the problem established in 1962 by Boumediene and perpetuated by corrupt generals, which influence governance and lead to detrimental economic decisions in the country. To praise the role of the army more, the Algerian constitutions reflect the army's unique position at the nation's core. In 1988, the armed forces' image suffered due to deteriorating living conditions. President Chadli seized this opportunity to consolidate power, implementing a new constitution that strengthened his position as a mediator. However, this system spawned a formidable adversary, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), further strengthening his position.



*Fig. 4 The politician and the military (Source: [le360.ma](https://le360.ma))*

### 1.2. Impact of the Algerian Army since Independence

In Algeria, the army's unified stance in safeguarding its caste interests has led to a division into two primary currents. One current consists of French army officers who defected to join the National Liberation Front (FLN) during Algeria's independence, while the other comprises officers trained in Arab countries advocating a hard line towards the West (Lugan, 2022). This division has shaped Algeria's political landscape, blurring the boundary between politics and the military. As indicated in Yefsah (1992) and Ait Kaki (2004), the Algerian army, a dominant political force, is fragmented into divergent economic interest groups, with well-organized regional or political clans sharing power and resources without disrupting rival groups. Algerians facing social hardships benefit from privileges like access to exclusive stores and vacation clubs owned by the army. Successive Algerian presidents often act as trustees of military clans, with their role limited to arbitrating clan prerogatives.

### 1.3. Intricate Relationship between the Army and the Presidency in Algeria

In Algeria, the Constitution depicts the army as a state institution closely linked to the Presidency of the Republic. However, the reality is more complex: the Presidency essentially functions as an extension of the army, acting as an annex of the Ministry of Defense. Military personnel in civilian roles, such as Secretary General and Chief of Staff, hold key positions within the Presidency, enabling the army to exert control over the state and influence government decisions (Lahouari, 1999).

Over time, the relationship between the army and the presidency in Algeria has evolved. Since independence, the army has been a significant player in Algerian politics, adapting to its role as a conventional military force. Despite constitutional limitations on the military's involvement during President Bouteflika's term, questions persist about his connections to the army. The military continues to wield influence in Algerian politics, maintaining its self-perception as the nation's protectors (Kaci & Boumediene, 2016; Ghanem, 2019).



*Fig. 5 - Algerian presidents and military chiefs  
(Source: middleeasteye.net & almayadeen.net)*

The army's intervention in Algeria during the 1980s led to significant abuses of power, including the reduction of the state to administrative roles, expansion of corruption networks, and the exploitation of Islam for political manipulation (Gèze, 2005). After the democratic interlude of 1989-1991, Algeria was almost split into two distinct countries: an "Algeria of power" consisting of military decision-makers and civilians, and an "Algeria of the people," a stateless nation of around thirty million people. In December 1990, Defense Minister Khaled Nezzar submitted the "Nezzar plan," a document revealing the unique relationship between the Algerian army and executive power. The plan proposed illegal measures of manipulation and disinformation to eliminate the "Islamist threat," highlighting the long-term impacts on democratic processes and good governance.

### 1.4. Nation-Building and Politics

The Algerian army has significantly influenced Algeria's politics and economy since independence. Prioritizing military spending over other sectors has led to underinvestment in essential areas like infrastructure, education, and healthcare, hampered the country's economic progress and worsened the country's protracted economic crisis. This power extends beyond politics to the economy.

To explain more, the Algerian army has been a key player in the country's politics since its independence. It was the only organized group capable of filling the institutional void left by the French state and

played a significant role in nation-building, guided by a dominant planning ideology (Nemar, 2010). The army achieved this through various means, including controlling key positions and secret services. However, while the army aimed to regulate the Algerian political regime, it refrained from getting involved in the daily governance of the country, which is a defining characteristic of its influence on the Algerian regime, says Nemar in his article on the role of the Algerian army whose mission transcends the barracks.

Of great importance to the interference of the army in the public matters, the Algerian army holds a significant, often described as hegemonic, position in the state apparatus, rooted in the struggle for independence (Lahouari, 2001; Jesús, 2005; Fakir & Ghebouli, 2022). It's the National Liberation Army that established the first Algerian state, distinguishing Algeria from other Arab countries. However, the political system in place for fifty years cannot be fully classified as a military regime, which implies direct and permanent military control over public affairs. The term 'military regime' is only applicable during the civil war between 1992 and 1999 (Sorenson, 2007), without a general takeover of the military over the institutions. After Abdelaziz Bouteflika, the first non-military executive head took power gradually from the military to civilians. Outside this period, the army exercised varying degrees of control or guardianship, but did not directly govern (Cook, 2007). Even during Boumediene's presidency (1965-1978), who came to power through a military coup, the regime was only semi-military as civilians held prominent positions (Bourrat, 2012).

### 1.5. Involvement in the Economy

The Algerian military's control over scarce resources and influence on the economy has a significant impact on governance and external relations (Majeed & MacDonald, 2010; Perlo-Freeman & Brauner, 2012; Alam, 2014; Camara & Charles, 2023). Algeria's rich oil and gas resources contrast with its need to import all consumption needs, including hydrocarbons (Asmlal, 2021). The country's oil-and-gas-based economy, characterized by its rentier nature, provides high defense budgets without parliamentary accountability or media scrutiny, preventing the development of an Algerian military economy model where the military and civilians create wealth through social and military business (Elguettaa, 2021; Ghebouli, 2023).

The military's interference in Algeria's economy raises concerns due to its potential to obstruct foreign and local investments. This interference can create a monopolistic environment, discouraging competition and hindering the entry of new market players (Lee & Merrill, 2022). Additionally, military involvement in politics has led to political instability, deterring investors who prefer predictable rules (Thrall & Dorminey, 2018). Military involvement in the economy often lacks transparency and is associated with high levels of corruption, increasing the cost of doing business and creating an uneven playing field. Policy priorities in the military have resulted in underinvestment in critical areas like infrastructure, education, and healthcare, which are vital for sustainable economic growth (Lee & Merrill, 2022). Countries with heavy military involvement face higher risks of conflict, deterring both local and foreign investors. In Algeria, while military involvement may bring short-term stability, it can create an unfavourable environment for investment and economic growth in the long run.

Algeria's military involvement in the economy has significant implications for foreign and local investments (Porter, 2019). The military's control over key resources and strategic sectors creates a monopolistic environment, discouraging competition and hindering market entry. Political instability deters investors who prefer stable environments. Additionally, the lack of transparency and high corruption levels increase the cost of doing business and create an uneven playing field (International Trade Administration, 2023). Also, economic policies often prioritize military spending over critical areas like infrastructure, education, and healthcare, leading to underinvestment and impeding sustainable economic growth (Lloyd Bank, 2023). Countries with heavy military involvement face higher risks of conflict, deterring both local and foreign investors (Porter, 2019). While military involvement in public life in Algeria may bring short-term stability, it creates an unfavourable environment for investment and economic growth in the long run (Amira, 2023). In the country, the intersection of military involvement and economic activities has significantly impacted foreign and local investments and obstructed import and export operations.

In the same sense, Algeria's military has significantly influenced the country's economy and politics by taking over export and import mechanisms and prohibiting the private sector. This has led to harassment, coercion, and sometimes imprisonment of private sector leaders under the pretence of inflated bill accusations such as possession of false documents, undeclared currency, forgery and use of forgery (Le Monde, 2029), and violation of the legislation and regulations on foreign exchange and capital movements to and from abroad (Jeune Afrique, 2019). The military's deep involvement in politics has contributed to undermining defence governance and the development of a corrupt government system. Parliamentary oversight is virtually non-existent due to the military's power, and audit institutions are ineffective in carrying out checks on defence

institutions. Financial transparency is also undermined by the prevalence of off-budget military expenditure, which is a secretive slush fund for the executive. The military is also involved in revenue-generating activities that are not subject to oversight (Boudina, 2023). Despite the military's influence, the encroachment on the private sector impedes the development of civil society and favours an underground economy, which is estimated to be around 45% of Algeria's trade (Yolcu, 2019). The private sector is composed of small companies working with cash. However, specific instances of harassment, coercion, and imprisonment of private sector leaders under the pretence of inflated bill accusations are not explicitly mentioned in available sources (Strachan, 2018).



*Fig. 6 - The President of the Republic signs the Finance Law of 2024  
(Source : <https://www.el-mouradia.dz>)*

### 1.7. Media Freedom and Information Dissemination

The military's influence over the government in Algeria extends to the media, impacting the freedom of the press and the dissemination of information. The military's power on the media has played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and controlling narratives surrounding national and international events (Mliless, 2020, 2021; Mliless & Handoko, 2022). The use of media influences to suppress and regulate information flow strengthens the military's hold on power. While it's challenging to measure the level of influence that military and political officials wield over newspapers, the debate within Algeria suggests that the military's involvement in the media is significant (El-Issawi, 2017). The shadow of the military is seen in the media landscape, with the use of propaganda to serve its objectives being a behaviour established in the Algerian doctrine since independence (Sparks, 2011). Today, the freedom of speech and press in Algeria are restricted, and the media often echo the versions presented by the authorities (Mena Associates, 2022; Human Rights Watch, n.d.; Reporters without Borders, n.d.; Aljazeera, 2023). In terms of regulation, the Algerian media law of 2014 has been criticized for not meeting international standards of freedom of expression as the private press in Algeria has been limited to thematic programs and forced to broadcast propaganda messages. More than ever, the freedom of expression is facing government pressures, censorship, financial constraints, and violence against journalists.

The state's control of the broadcast media in Algeria has limited the opportunities for the political opposition to voice its criticisms, contributing to a lack of media pluralism (International Crisis Group, 1998; Campagna, 1999; Reporters without Frontiers, 2015; El-Issawi, 2017; Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, 2023). Additionally, a prevailing state of fear among journalists has led to self-censorship, further restricting the dissemination of information and prompting journalists to withhold certain information due to fear of repercussions (Majeed & MacDonald, 2010). This can limit the scope of information available to the public and hinder the media's role as a government watchdog. Following a period of relative openness that ensued from the broad popular movement initiated in February 2019, the Algerian media are once again experiencing pressure. This pressure manifests in various forms, ranging from censorship to arrests (RSF, 2015; Freedom House, 2023; AP, 2023; Amnesty International, 2023). These dynamic underscores the significant influence of

the military in shaping Algeria's media landscape.

When military pressure is applied to media outlets, especially those that expose the official agenda, the result is often that mainstream media propagate the political stance of a country. This is evident in the relations between Morocco and Algeria, which have been affected by Algeria's interference in Moroccan internal affairs, particularly regarding the Moroccan Sahara issue. Since the onset of the conflict in 1975, the Algerian governments, supported by the military, have consistently functioned under military directives. Mliless (2020) used theories of agenda-setting, framing, and priming to study how the Algerian Press Service (APS) serves the Algerian political strategy. The findings revealed that the linguistic expressions used were derogatory and explicitly expressed that Algeria supports both separatism and instability in Morocco.

Pro military public media (*APS, AL 24, Echourouk, Ennahar, and Algerian National TV* among others) and the military magazine (*El Djeich*) are used to reinforce the army's control over both internal and external affairs in Algeria. Mliless and Handoko (2022) critically analyzed editorials published by *El-Djeich* during a period of heightened tension with Morocco. The study found that the editorials of the military magazine "*El Djeich*" use a conspiracy narrative to portray Morocco as a threat, aiming to divert public attention from internal political, social, and economic issues. The military's influence on the media serves to reinforce its power and undermine the social protest movement "*Hirak*"<sup>1</sup> which advocates for a '*civil and not a military state*'. Mliless and Handoko (2022) argued that the editorials were part of a broader strategy to rally the Algerian population against an external enemy and divert attention from internal issues. This aligns with our discussion on the military's significant influence in shaping Algeria's political and economic landscape, extending to the sphere of export and import, and its impact on the private sector.

The military not only maintains supremacy over the media, but it also manipulates the elite to undermine Morocco's quest for territorial unification. The Algerian elite, including academics, politicians, and diplomats, has been using public and private media to portray Morocco as Algeria's classical enemy (Mliless, 2021). This hatred-driven campaign, marked by aggression, insults, and threats, aligns with the military's influence in shaping internal issues and manipulating the masses to support a political agenda crafted by military intelligence.

The military's influence in Algeria has not only infiltrated the media, but it has also permeated other sectors such as education. The military role as a "*ruling but not governing power*" (Cook, 2007), is evident through its control over certain institutions and promotion of a specific narrative. This influence extends to the education sector, shaping freedom of expression, research, and ideology. The military's involvement in Algeria's education sector is rooted in the country's history, where it played a significant role in the struggle for independence. The Algerian military's interference in the education sector is evident, with restrictions on researchers who expose the military's infiltration. For example, Sidhoum (2017) highlights the military's efforts to suppress researchers who criticize the systematic process orchestrated by the military. Sidhoum's thesis, which focuses on the ruling elite's role in Algeria's democratic transition, was withheld by her university due to political stances. The Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Algiers (3) accused the University of censorship and intimidation. Sidhoum's thesis contained ideological allegations and claims about the army, the president, and the Islamic Salvation Front party.

### 1.8. Repression of Post "*Hirak*" Activists

The military's control over the media in Algeria has played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and directing the narrative around major events. This dominance has been used to suppress opposition and control information flow, thereby strengthening the military's hold on power. The February 22, 2019 anonymous protest was spread through social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, breaking down fear and ensuring massive participation (Thieux, 2020). The virtual space-controlled slogans, organization, schedules, and marches were meant to maintain peace and avoid confrontation with security forces.

In response to the "*Hirak*" movement, Algerian political authorities adopted a series of measures aimed at loosening the military's grip on "*Hirak*" activists (Dris, 2021). These included new laws on parties, associations, and the media, as a continuation of reforms implemented by President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in 2011. With these new regulations, the military gained substantial influence over mainstream media and social networks, primarily used to curtail calls for protests advocating for a "*civil and not military state*". In an effort to demonize the images of activists, the existing authority initiated the establishment of over forty television channels. These channels, offering a variety of content, serve as unofficial representatives for the political and

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<sup>1</sup>The *Hirak* in Algeria, also known as the Algerian protests, is a series of weekly demonstrations that took place between 2019 and 2021 to oppose then-President Abdelaziz Bouteflika's bid for a fifth term. The term "*Hirak*" is an Arabic word that etymologically means "*movement*". (Benderra et al., 2020)

military power. In practice, these channels adopted an internal agenda with the aim of strengthening the domestic front against the advocates of the ‘Hirak’. Externally, they sought to confront Morocco, which is traditionally considered the country’s adversary.

El Kadi (2023) examines the Algerian military’s role in suppressing activists of the “*Hirak*” movement, focusing on the repression of journalists and social network activists. The military’s influence on Algeria’s political landscape is significant. Journalist Ihsane El Kadi was sentenced to seven years in prison, three of which were firm, in June 2023. El Kadi’s arrest and trial could be linked to an article he wrote on the role of the army in Algerian politics, suggesting that the People’s National Army does not want to replicate the power delegation mechanism established with Abdelaziz Bouteflika and Abdelmadjid Tebboune.

## 2. Algerian Army and Its Impact on the Region

Algeria’s military’s influence on foreign policy significantly affects regional stability and international relations. Its control over key institutions and government involvement has led to regional tensions with neighbouring countries like Morocco and Spain (Holleis, 2021, Barba, 2022; France 24, 2022). The military’s involvement in Algeria’s political and diplomatic spheres shapes the country’s political landscape, economic governance, and external relations. Algeria’s political and institutional future is uncertain, with the future of the army and its security appendage being a critical question (Alam, 2014). The military’s withdrawal from politics is irreversible due to the current hierarchy’s commitment to the national reconciliation charter and recent regional security upheavals. The military’s prestige and legitimacy have been damaged due to its involvement in suppressing the 1988 riots, civil war, and 2019 “*Hirak*” movement.

### 2.1. Algerian Army Doctrine and Its Impact on Morocco

Since Houari Boumediene’s military coup in 1965-1978, Algeria has been a state doctrine that counters Morocco’s interests (Britannica, 2023b). Despite His Majesty King Mohamed VI’s “*Open Hand*” appeals (Mliless, 2023a), the Algerian-Moroccan relationship has remained steadfastly based on the “*pebble and shoe*” metaphor to undermine all that is Moroccan (Drissi, 2022). The Algerian-Moroccan relationship has remained based on this dynamic, with the expulsion of Moroccans from Algeria in 1975 as a response to the late king Hassan II’s “*Green March*”<sup>2</sup> (H 24, 2023). This event has had lasting effects on Algeria-Moroccan relations, with associations like the Association for the Defence of Moroccans Expelled from Algeria working to defend the rights of the expelled Moroccans and raise international awareness (Hammoudi, 2021; Mezziane, 2022).

Algeria and Morocco have a long history of rivalry and competition in politics, economy, sports, and culture (Mliless, 2023b). Morocco has become a psychological complex for Algerian military, making the Moroccan Sahara a national question. The Algerian state and Morocco’s relationship is marked by a long-standing rivalry and tense relations, primarily due to the conflict over the Moroccan Sahara and divergent foreign policy strategies (Holleis, 2021). Morocco views its sovereignty over the Sahara provinces as an inviolable national cause, while Algeria arms, supports, and funds a separatist group within its borders, offering them sanctuary (Rachidi, 2022; Africa Defence Forum, 2023). This has led to limited regional cooperation and a strained relationship due to ideological and political differences, historical grievances, and strategic alliances (Lounnas & Messari, 2018).

The Moroccan monarchy under the leadership of His Majesty King Mohamed VI has demonstrated a conciliatory stance towards Algeria (Gain, 2022) showing his “*extended hand*” as an offer of reconciliation to improve bilateral relations (Camara, 2022; Mliless, 2023a). However, the Algerian authority, which is pro-military, has never demonstrated goodwill towards restoring ties. In fact, it has escalated tensions with Morocco by severing diplomatic relations, alleging the killing of Moroccan citizens, and bolstering its military presence and exercises along the Moroccan border. (Mliless, 2023b; Africa Defence Forum, 2023)

The Algerian authority, backed by the military, not only has disputes and frictions with Morocco, but its behavior is also a pandemic that is ravaging the Sahel countries. This behaviour, much like an endemic disease, is consistently present and affects the stability of the region. Today, Algeria, a crucial broker of stability in North Africa and the Sahel (International Crisis Group, 2015), has been less engaged in the region, particularly under its new military leadership (Dworkin, 2022; Cerdán, 2023). The country is currently identified as a failing state (Mliless, 2023c) due to political upheaval, a lack of strategic vision, and reliance on hydrocarbon exports, which expose it to global oil price fluctuations. Instead of seeking solutions, Algeria exports its

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<sup>2</sup>The Green March, a strategic mass demonstration, occurred in November 1975 with the objective of compelling Spain to relinquish control of the contested Sahara province to Morocco. This demonstration involved approximately 350,000 unarmed Moroccans who marched into the territory, expressing widespread support for its liberation from Spanish colonial rule.

internal deficiencies and neighbouring tensions to the regional environment, jeopardizing stability, economic advancement, and trade and investment fluidity (MAP, 2023; North Africa Post, 2023).

## 2.2. Algerian State Doctrine and Its Impact on the Sahel Region

The Sahel region, located south of the Sahara Desert, is facing a severe humanitarian crisis due to a complex conflict between Algeria and the Sahel states. Algeria, a rising power in North Africa, has been involved in the Sahel region due to concerns over security, particularly the threat of terrorism and instability (Strachan, 2014). The ongoing jihadist insurgency, including the presence of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), has heightened Algeria's focus on terrorism and instability (Tandoğan & Bouacha, 2017). Despite reduced engagement, Algeria's regional diplomatic influence, military strength, and experience in combating terrorism make it a potential key player in preventing political and security collapse in the Sahel region escalating (APA NEWS, 2023). For instance, the relations between Mali and Algeria are escalating. The ambassadors of the two countries were respectively recalled by their authorities. "Interference" by Algiers in Malian "internal affairs" is singled out by Bamako (TV 5 Monde, 2023). So, where do the tensions between the former Tuareg rebellion and the Malian government come from?

The Algerian army is fuelling diplomatic friction in northern Mali, as the former Tuareg rebellion claims to have been attacked by the Malian armed forces and the Wagner paramilitary force (Hutton, 2023). The gap between the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) and the Malian army has been widening (Eboulé, 2023). The 2015 Algiers peace agreement is critical in northern Mali, as it ended hostilities triggered by the independence insurgencies, such as the Tuareg rebels of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and the Salafists of the Ansar Dine movement of 2012. Clashes took place on September 12 in Bourem, where the CMA declared that tactical units of the Azawad forces launched anticipatory action against the Malian army and its terrorist militia partners Wagner (France 24, 2023; Diallo, 2023). The CSP-PSD declared that it would adopt all self-defence measures against the transitional authorities, raising questions about the validity of the 2015 peace agreement.

Colonel Assimi Goïta, the president of the transitional government in Mali, has announced the death of the Algiers agreement, aiming to provide opportunities for direct inter-Malian dialogue for peace and reconciliation (Kane, 2024). The decision excludes Algiers from the inter-Malian dialogue, aiming to eliminate the roots of community and intercommunity conflicts. Observers believe this decision is due to diplomatic tensions between Bamako and Algiers, and Algeria used its status as a mediator to manipulate the situation in the sub-region (France 24, 2024).

Recently, the tension between Algiers and the Sahel countries is escalating due to the proposal by His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco to open the Atlantic for the Sahel countries. All Sahel countries are landlocked in the African continent, south of the Maghreb countries. In response, foreign ministers from Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad, and Morocco convened on December 23 to explore opportunities for opening up the Sahelian countries (Courier International, 2023). This event coincided with a diplomatic rift between Mali and Algeria, leading to Algeria's discontent over the potential shift in the regional geostrategic balance. The escalating economic and social advantages that Sahel countries could gain through partnership with Morocco could potentially be thwarted by Algeria, impacting both the Maghreb region and the Sahel region.

## **Conclusion**

The Algerian military's dominance in politics, economy, and media has been a significant obstacle to the country's transition to a more democratic and transparent political system. Since its independence, the military has had a substantial impact on Algeria's political environment, leading to policies prioritizing military spending over other sectors, such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare. This has hampered the country's economic progress and worsened the country's protracted economic crisis. The military's control over major institutions and sectors of the economy has resulted in a lack of accountability and transparency, contributing to corruption and economic mismanagement. The Algerian army, along with all Algerian heads of state, maintains control over public political, economic, and social life, with no significant changes observed in this regard since 1962. The concentration of power within the army has disrupted the democratic balance of power in Algeria, potentially leading to the erosion of civil liberties, suppression of dissent, and curtailment of democratic processes. The involvement of the Algerian army in sectors such as media and education can shape societal values and public discourse, but it also has limited intellectual freedom and diversity of thought.

The hierarchical structure of the Algerian Army may have brought about administrative efficiency, but it has not always translated into effective public administration. The potential lack of transparency and accountability associated with high military personnel has posed challenges to the principles of good governance.

The critical question now is whether the Algerian army will persist as the backbone of the political system as “presidents’ maker,” continually interfering in civil and political affairs. There is no clear indication that the Algerian army will undergo a democratic metamorphosis and modernization to become a “real” army, which would require a change in approach, an explicit ability to develop a military doctrine aligned with national security, and an interest in new forms of warfare. If this transformation does not occur, and the Algerian army continues to engage in politics, it may be necessary to contemplate the establishment of an alternative military force to handle pure military affairs.

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## II. REGIONAL SECURITY



### Iran's Expanding Influence: Algeria the Fifth Gate

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#### Abstract

This article looks into the intricate structure of Iran's increasing power in the Middle East and North Africa, with a particular emphasis on its strategic cooperation with Algeria, referred to as "The Fifth Gate." Using a compilation of scientific papers, strategic analyses, and news accounts, the research closely explores important variables such as Iran's connections with Baghdad, Sanaa, Damascus, Beirut, and Bahrain, shedding light on the political, proxy warfare, strategic, and unsuccessful influence dynamics in these regions. Furthermore, the article explains Iran's desire for Algeria as a gateway to the African continent, examining the strategic ramifications and Iran's infiltration techniques in conflict zones.

**Keywords:** Fifth gate, Iran's Power in the MENA, Influence Dynamics in Conflict Zones, Iran's Infiltration Techniques

#### Introduction

The complex geopolitical landscape of the Arab world is characterized by a pervasive and ongoing involvement of Iran. However, it would be an oversimplification to confine Iran's influence solely to the conventional Middle Eastern nations. Hence, this article explores not only Iran's four known gates of invasion in the middle east— Baghdad, Sanaa, Damascus, and Beirut, but a new one – namely, Algeria in North Africa, justifying its designation as the fifth gate, meaning not just another door of entry, though one that significantly leads us to a perspective of Iran's attention to the African continent. Consequently, the full picture of Iran's ambition, the means of its involvement, and the possible outcomes for the Arab countries and beyond is the aim of this article. As we navigate through this complex issue, the article will engage in a comprehensive exploration of Iran's expanding sphere of influence and its potential impact on regional stability.

Iran's impact on Iraq, Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon is clear evidence of its substantial and varied presence in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) area. It does this by taking advantage of the circumstances in these nations rather than by invading them (García, 2022). This presence includes these nations' security and intelligence agencies as well as civilian entities. Iran has maintained its diplomatic and security policy toward these areas under the direction of President Ebrahim Raisi, who took office in July 2021.

Iran's nuclear and missile programs, as well as its support for armed non-state entities like the Houthis and Hezbollah are all part of its strategic defensive thinking. Furthermore, Iran has endeavored to implement strategies with its neighboring regions. The Iranian-backed al-Fatah Movement gained 17 seats in the October



Source: <https://nournews.ir/en/news/145099/Development-of-Iran-Algeria-relations>

2021 parliamentary elections, signaling a significant change in the Iranian dominance inside the Iraqi government.

In terms of commerce, 40% of Iran's exports come from trade with Iraq, making it the country's second-most significant trading partner behind China. Moreover, Iran is active in a number of areas, such as Iraq, Yemen, and Syria (Rivetti, 2024). Finally, Iran has long maintained a cross-border presence in the Middle East. It has a track record of forging alliances with non-state groups to intervene in times of war and conflict.

### **Baghdad: The Political Nexus**

This axis examines Iran's political sway on Iraq, emphasizing how it has shaped the political climate there. Iran's presence has had a significant impact on Iraqi politics, making Baghdad a crucial political hub in the area. Iran has greatly influenced political decision-making in Iraq by taking advantage of its close relations to Shia political groups in the country. The Coordination Framework, supported by Iran, serves as an example of this and had a significant role in the formation of the present Mohammed Chia al-Soudani's cabinet (Hamasaheed, 2024). Nonetheless, the prime minister has made an effort to maintain a balance in Iraq's ties with Iran and the US while realizing that common ground in foreign policy must be found in the pursuit of shared objectives. (International Crisis Group, 2024)

There is still political unrest in Iraq, as seen by the continuous disputes over oil and gas revenues between the federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) (Hamasaheed, 2024). Protests and disputes have resulted from the Iraqi government's increased control over the Kurdish area and reduction of its autonomy (Global Conflict Tracker, 2024). Furthermore, the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), an organization supported by Iran, continue to be a cause for worry due to their involvement in organized crime and other violent acts that threaten the sovereignty of the Iraqi state. (Kulić & Bolhuis, 2023; Hanelt et al., 2004)

Notwithstanding these obstacles, the present Iraqi administration led by Prime Minister Al-Sudani has demonstrated a sincere intention to resolve the nation's urgent problems, such as its infrastructure and economic shortcomings, and to bolster the capacities and sovereignty of the Iraqi state (Hanelt et al., 2004). Though there are still many challenges ahead, the prime minister appears eager to steer the nation in a more constructive direction based on his recent trip to the US and his attempts to settle disagreements with the KRG.

### **Sanaa: The Proxy Warfront**

This section explores Iran's role in Yemen, namely its backing of the Houthi rebels, and the consequences of this conflict fought by proxy. Because of Iran's participation in Yemen, Sanaa is becoming a major proxy battleground in the area. Since they toppled the internationally recognized government in 2014, the Houthi rebels, who are allied with Iran, have been in charge of Sanaa, the capital of Yemen (Motamedi, 2022). Iran has armed, trained, and financially supported the Houthis, strengthening their military capacities and enabling them to project influence throughout Yemen and into Saudi Arabia. (Robinson, 2024; Middle East Council on Global Affairs, 2024)

The Yemeni people have suffered greatly as a result of this proxy conflict between Iran and the coalition led by Saudi Arabia that is backing the Yemeni government. There is a severe humanitarian catastrophe as a result of the fighting, including widespread sickness, starvation, and displacement. In addition, the Houthis are charged with violating human rights and imposing oppressive rule in the regions they own. (Center Wilson, 2022).

Stability in the area has also been jeopardized by the Houthi-Iranian alliance outside of Yemen. The Houthis have interfered with international trade in the Red Sea and undertaken missile and drone assaults against Saudi Arabia and other Gulf governments. The United States and its allies are furious about this and are attempting to stop Iranian arms shipments to the Houthis as well as undermine the group's military might. (Robinson, 2024)

Even with continuous attempts to mediate a settlement, the Yemeni war is unwinnable as neither side is prepared to make concessions. The Houthis' ability to retain their military superiority and fend off efforts to engage in negotiations appears to be largely due to Iran's assistance for them (Robinson, 2024). Finding a political solution that balances the conflicting interests of the many factions within Yemen itself will probably be necessary in addition to resolving the larger regional tensions between Iran and its adversaries.

### **Damascus: The Strategic Ally**

Under this title we explore Iran's alliance with Syria, emphasizing the relationship's strategic significance in Iran's regional policy. Iran's regional strategy places great strategic weight on its partnership with

Syria, which helps to shape the geopolitical environment in the Middle East. Since 1979, Iran and Syria have maintained a lasting alliance based on mutual support for each other's strategic requirements in the areas of trade, diplomacy, and politics. With Iran supporting the Assad administration since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011 and Syria supporting Iran throughout its war against Iraq, this relationship has been essential in shaping Middle East politics (Sadjadpour, 2014). The two countries have maintained a strong cooperation in spite of their divergent ideologies because they have similar worries about mutual foes and threats, such as opposing Israel, Iraq, and U.S. hegemony (Risseuw, 2018). Iran's role as a major actor in Southwest Asia and the Persian Gulf, together with Syria's advantageous Middle East location, highlight the geopolitical significance of their relationship. Iran's resistance axis against the US and Israel relies heavily on Syria as a major geographic link to support the Lebanese Shia group Hezbollah (Goodarzi, 2020). Their same strategic objectives in Lebanon, where they have coordinated military operations to help Lebanese Shia militias, have further strengthened the alliance between Syria and Iran (Byman, 2006).

Iran and Syria have formed an alliance based on more than just military cooperation; it also includes agreements on trade, cultural exchanges, and mutual defense. Iran's significant investments in Syria, which span a number of industries including petroleum, agriculture, and telecommunications, demonstrate the breadth of their collaboration. According to Risseuw (2018), the two countries' relationship is further strengthened by Iran's financial assistance for the reconstruction of Shiite shrines in Syria and the development of religious tourism.

To sum up, the alliance between Iran and Syria is a vital component of Tehran's regional policy, giving it a valuable ally in the pursuit of its geopolitical objectives and the defense against shared enemies. This relationship's strategic significance goes beyond military cooperation; it also includes diplomatic, cultural, and economic aspects that highlight how long-lasting their partnership is.

### **Beirut: The Non-State Actor**

In this section our focus is on Iran's connections to Hezbollah in Lebanon, showing how Iran uses non-state entities to further its regional goals. Iran's regional policy heavily relies on its partnership with Hezbollah, a non-state player in Lebanon. Since the group's foundation in 1982 with Iran's assistance, Hezbollah, a Shia Islamist political party and militant organization, has played a significant role as an Iranian proxy in Lebanon. Iran has given Hezbollah significant financial, military, and ideological support, enabling it to become a formidable organization capable of extending Iranian dominance throughout the Levant. (Byman, 2006)

Iran has been able to threaten Israel and thwart Western interests in the area by establishing a strategic presence in Lebanon thanks to its relationship with Hezbollah. Hezbollah is an essential part of Iran's "axis of resistance" against Israel and the US because of its military prowess, which includes its stockpile of rockets and missiles (Sadjadpour, 2014). Additionally, the organization has played a significant role in bolstering the Assad government in Syria, therefore solidifying Iran's dominance in the area.

But there are complications in Hezbollah's connection with Iran. The organization has established a unique Lebanese identity and political agenda, despite its continued reliance on Iranian assistance (Hokayem, 2010). According to Hokayem, Hezbollah has attempted to strike a balance between its internal Lebanese concerns and its Iranian support, occasionally deviating from Tehran's wishes to preserve its position in Lebanon's precarious political environment.

The strength of the relationship between Iran and Hezbollah has had a big impact on Lebanon as well. Sectarian tensions have increased in Lebanon as a result of Hezbollah's increasing influence and strength. In the same vein, Hokayem (2010) mentions that many Lebanese, especially Sunnis and Christians, see the group as an Iranian proxy that poses a danger to the security and sovereignty of their nation. The group's participation in the Syrian crisis has exacerbated political division in Lebanon and added to the current political and economic challenges facing the nation. (Sadjadpour, 2014; Byman, 2006)

To sum up this section, Iran's partnership with Hezbollah, a non-state player in Lebanon, is an essential part of its regional strategy since it gives it the ability to oppose its enemies and project influence. But this partnership has also contributed to Lebanon's instability, highlighting the convoluted and frequently problematic ways in which Iran uses non-state groups to further its Middle East ambitions.

### **Bahrain: The Unsuccessful Influence of Iran**

Iran hasn't been totally effective in influencing Bahrain's Shiite unrest. Iran made an effort to seize control of Manama, a major Gulf metropolis, during the Arab Spring, which was a time of severe political unrest that rocked several Arab nations. Bahrain was once considered to be Iran's fourteenth province, according to Iran's long-standing claims of sovereignty over Bahrain (Segall, 2011).

For more than two years, Iran has been actively instigating the Shiite people to participate in protests and establishing covert cells in Bahrain in an attempt to topple the government. Iran may lose political clout among Shiite Arabs, nonetheless, if it is unable to assist Bahraini demonstrators (Khalaji, 2011). Shiite Iran, according to Khalaji, has been unable or unwilling to support its fellow Persians in Bahrain, even in the face of brutality. This conflict may cause Tehran's ties with Arab countries to deteriorate significantly and result in a major loss of Iran's political influence among Shiite Arabs (Khalaji, 2011). According to Ukkasha (2011), the Islamic Republic of Iran has always insisted that it was not involved in assisting or igniting the uprisings in Bahrain.

Finally, Iran's attempts to sway the Bahraini Shiite revolution did not turn out to be as successful as anticipated. There might be several reasons for this, such as Bahrain's robust government measures to quell continuing populist movements and Iran's contradictory stance toward Bahrain. (Khalaji, 2011)

### **Algiers: The African Gateway**

In relation to the fifth gate, this section discusses the possible consequences for the Arab nations and the continent of Africa while exposing Iran's growing interest in Algeria as a point of entry into Africa. The Arab world and the African continent will be greatly impacted by Algeria and Iran's expanding connection. This axis reveals Iran's growing interest in Algeria as a point of entry into Africa, a calculated maneuver that has the potential to change the dynamics of the area.

Iran has found Algeria to be a desirable partner in its efforts to increase its influence throughout the continent because of its advantageous location and significant involvement in the African Union. Iran has a variety of interests in Algeria, including political, cultural, and economic collaboration. With high-level visits and the signing of several agreements in recent years, the two nations have been enhancing their bilateral ties (Al-Monitor, 2024; Naeni, 2021; Saada, 2019).

Based on the lessons learnt from reporting the American hostage situation in Iran, known as the "Algerian Connection" (Colton, 2024), Algeria is viewed by Iran as a vital entry point into the African market, offering access to a huge and diversified continent with substantial unrealized economic potential. Iran hopes to challenge the longstanding dominance of Arab nations and Western powers in the area by forging a strategic footing in Africa by bolstering its ties with Algeria (United Against Nuclear Iran, 2024). The Islamic Republic of Iran and Algeria have been collaborating to increase collaboration in fields such as technology, innovation, energy, and tourism. Iran sees chances in Algeria to increase its investments and exports while also using the nation as a gateway to reach other African markets. Iran's ideological campaign of disinformation against Algerian Shia Muslims and its efforts to propagate Shiite Islam throughout the nation have sparked worries about sectarian strife (Middle East Monitor, 2023).

Given Algeria's strategic location and role as a major gas supplier to Europe, geopolitically, Iran's growing partnership with Algeria is seen as part of its efforts to counter Western influence in Africa and create a "southern pressure" on Europe from the continent (Ghosh, 2023). This is particularly concerning. In an effort to replace Russian gas, the United States has urged Algeria to increase its gas shipments to Europe; however, this dynamic is complicated by Algeria's strengthening relations with both Russia and Iran.

The relationship between Iran and Algeria has a wide range of ramifications. The expanding alliance between Iran and Algeria may be viewed by the Arab nations as a challenge to their hegemony in the area and the precarious balance of power in the Middle East and North Africa. Arab countries may be concerned about the possibility of more Iranian influence in Africa since they see it as a threat to their own political and economic interests there. Despite certain historical conflicts, Algeria and Iran have been improving their diplomatic, military, and economic cooperation in recent years. "Economic and diplomatic ties quickly increased through multilateral and bilateral cooperation agreements and high-level state visits," according to the search results (Farrar-Wellman, 2010). Agreements on energy, tourism, and other industries are included in this. (Lucente, 2024)

Some Arab nations in the area are concerned about this alliance between Iran and Algeria. For instance, "Algeria's refusal to take sides in the conflict [between Iran and Saudi Arabia] allowed it to speak to and coordinate with both Iran and Saudi Arabia." (Willis, 2023). However, Willis argues that the Saudis have been "greatly angered" by this neutral posture and have responded by adding Algeria to their own "black list of countries supporting terrorism." According to Willis (2023), the possibility of greater Iranian influence in Africa as a result of this alliance is also considered as a threat to Arab interests there.

The Arab nations and the African Union must keep a careful eye on how the Iran-Algeria axis is changing and devise preemptive plans to deal with any possible fallout. Navigating the intricacies of this new geopolitical landscape may need constructive conversation, more regional collaboration, and the promotion of



inclusive development initiatives.

### Why Iran Preferred Algeria?

Many reasons contribute to Iran's preference for Algeria over other countries in north Africa, including Morocco. First, Iran's backing for Algeria and the Polisario Front in the Moroccan Sahara makes its geopolitical objectives clear and puts pressure on Morocco to change its position toward Iran. Second, Iran sees improving its growing bilateral relations with Algeria as a first step toward gaining more clout in Africa. Further solidifying their relationship is Iran's support for Algeria's opposition to Israel's admission to the African Union and its position against Syria's readmission to the Arab League, both of which are in line with its ideological goals. Another factor is historical tensions. Morocco and Iran have had shaky relations ever since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, which culminated by Morocco cutting its connections with Iran in 2009 over worries about the growth of Shiism. Last but not least, the decision by President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of Algeria to heighten frictions with Morocco in 2021 made Algeria a more desirable regional partner for Iran.

### Iran's Strategic Choice of Algeria as a Gateway to the Region

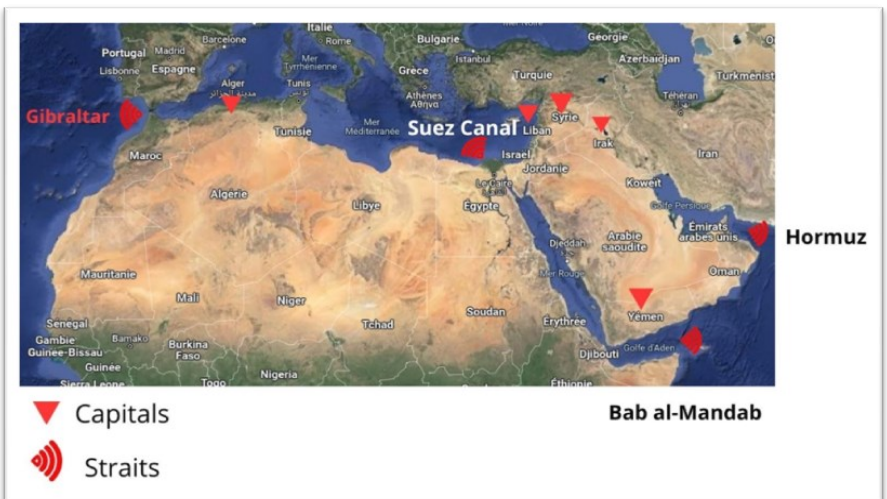
Iran made a complex decision that was affected by a number of variables when it chose Algeria as a conduit for implementing its ideological goals throughout the region. Above all, Iran has supported Algeria and the Polisario Front against Morocco in the Moroccan Sahara conflict due to its geopolitical objectives (Salami, 2023). This backing is a component of Tehran's larger geopolitical and strategic goals, which include utilizing the Moroccan Sahara issue as leverage against Morocco's approach to Iran. Second, Iran has made it clear that it wants to strengthen its already-strong bilateral ties with Algeria, which it calls "excellent" (Middle East Monitor, 2023). It is thought that Iran would use this connection as a springboard to increase its power throughout Africa. Furthermore, Algeria and Iran share a common stance on numerous international issues, strengthening their bilateral ties.

Apart from political congruence, economic prospects also exert an influence. Iran may benefit economically from Algeria's recent adoption of new investment regulations that provide incentives to draw in international capital. It is possible that Iran will be one of the first nations to invest in Algeria, strengthening its position there. Additionally, Iran's opposition to Israeli influence, Syria's readmission to the Arab League, and Algeria's vote against Israel's admission to the African Union, has made of Algeria Iran's praise strong ally in the region (Middle East Monitor, 2021). Algeria is now even more in line with Iran's ideological goals due to their mutual opposition to Israeli dominance in the area.

To close this section on Algeria and Iran ties, we can say that Algeria is presenting an attractive entry point for Iran to spread its ideological agenda throughout the region due to the combination of these variables. But given how dynamic and quickly changing the dynamics of international relations are, it's important to keep up with the most recent advancements in order to have a more accurate grasp.

### Iran's Strategy of Infiltration in Areas of Tension

The Islamic Republic of Iran has been observed to strategically exploit regions of conflict as a conduit for its expansionist ambitions within Arab nations. This is achieved through the deployment of its military and intelligence apparatus, either directly or indirectly via proxies, to intensify existing tensions. This modus operandi is discernible in the ongoing crises in Iraq, Yemen, Syria, and Lebanon. These nations have all experienced significant repercussions as a result of Iran's pervasive influence. This pattern of behavior underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of Iran's foreign policy and its implications for regional stability.



**Fig. 1:** Map of the MENA region with Capitals and Straits

It appears that Algeria, a nation that has been embroiled in conflict over the Moroccan Sahara provinces for more than 50 years, is now included in this approach. Iran may use the Polisario group as a pawn to wreak havoc and instability throughout the area. That being said, Iran has never prioritized political or economic issues over all others. Rather, it has always been motivated by the religious conviction to disseminate the revolutionary ideas of the Shiite philosophy that Ayatollah Khomeini founded in the early 1970s. The foundation of Iran's foreign policy and its attempts to increase its power in the area is its ideological motivation.

It is important to acknowledge that these are intricate and delicate matters, and circumstances are subject to swift changes. A sobering reminder of the possible repercussions of international engagement is the humanitarian and the security situation in Yemen, where outside forces have driven the country to chaos (Robinson, 2023). Eight years into the conflict, the main players in Yemen are the internationally recognized government, which is supported by a military coalition led by Saudi Arabia, and the Houthi rebels, who are backed by Iran. A humanitarian catastrophe involving severe starvation, sickness, and attacks on civilians has resulted from this.

To compare with Algeria, a similar situation would arise if Iran were to exert a considerable amount of influence over the country's political leadership. Algeria may be a useful functional state for Iran as it has expressed interest in growing its influence on the continent due to its strategic location and important role (Reuters, 2024; Bin Awdah, 2022). But, like the situation in Yemen, such a development may upset the balance of power in the area and perhaps spark violence. To stop such a situation from happening, the international community must continue to exercise caution. Iran could be able to reproduce the disruptive situation that is currently taking place in Yemen if it were to exert a substantial amount of influence over the political leadership in Algeria. Iran's backing of the Houthi rebel group in Yemen has exacerbated a long-running civil conflict and jeopardized maritime security in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb Strait. With support from Iran, the Houthis have attacked commercial ships, driving up prices and endangering international trade.

In the Mediterranean, a similar dynamic may arise if Iran were to capitalize on its ties with Algeria. Iran may utilize its clout to sway terrorist proxies from Lebanon and Yemen to carry out disruptive operations along the Mediterranean coast. Furthermore, Iran may attempt to undermine maritime security in the Mediterranean Sea by projecting its asymmetric naval capabilities – which include the employment of drones and missiles – from Algerian territory. Global shipping channels may be disrupted as a result, and insurance costs may rise along with the region's geopolitical unrest. Iran's support for a scenario in the Mediterranean might endanger peace and security in this vital international waterway, much as the conflict in Yemen has destabilized the Red Sea.

### AI Disclosure Statement

In order to improve the article's punctuation correctness and linguistic clarity, artificial intelligence (AI) methods were applied. These technologies also made it easier to find sources and references from a variety of academic fields, which made it possible to create a modern literature review with a topic. Before incorporating any of the sources referenced in the literature study into this article, the author carefully checked their content and verified by hand that they were legitimate. This meticulous procedure demonstrates our dedication to providing accurate and trustworthy information.

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## II. REGIONAL SECURITY



### Navigating through the Contemporary Mediterranean Security Landscape

*Lieutenant Colonel (INF-SF) Georgios KOUKAKIS (Greece)*

*What is the Mediterranean? A thousand things at once. Not one landscape, but landscapes without number. Not one sea, but a succession of seas. Not one civilization, but a number of civilizations, superimposed one on top of the other. [...] All this is because the Mediterranean is a very ancient crossroads on which, for thousands of years, everything has converged men, beasts of burden, vehicles, merchandise, ships, ideas, religions and the arts of living.*

*Fernand Braudel (1902-1985)*

#### Abstract

The present article presents the key elements and the dynamics of the contemporary security environment of the Mediterranean region. Its importance lies in the fact that it draws information from several strategic documents and provides insights regarding the evolution of major regional security issues. Current research indicates that the presence of crises in several policy fields is going to be the norm in the future security environment. Thus, the article contributes in existing literature as it provides information about the security situation in the Mediterranean and its future prospects. Its purpose is to highlight the contemporary conditions and (f)actors that affect regional security. First, it defines the types and dimensions of security, then it briefly presents the characteristics of the Mediterranean region, after that it refers to the major regional and international Mediterranean actors, proceeds to the presentation of several collaborative schemes between states and the key security threats/risks they are facing, and concludes by examining the main strategic priorities of the Mediterranean actors in addition to future challenges and opportunities related to regional security.

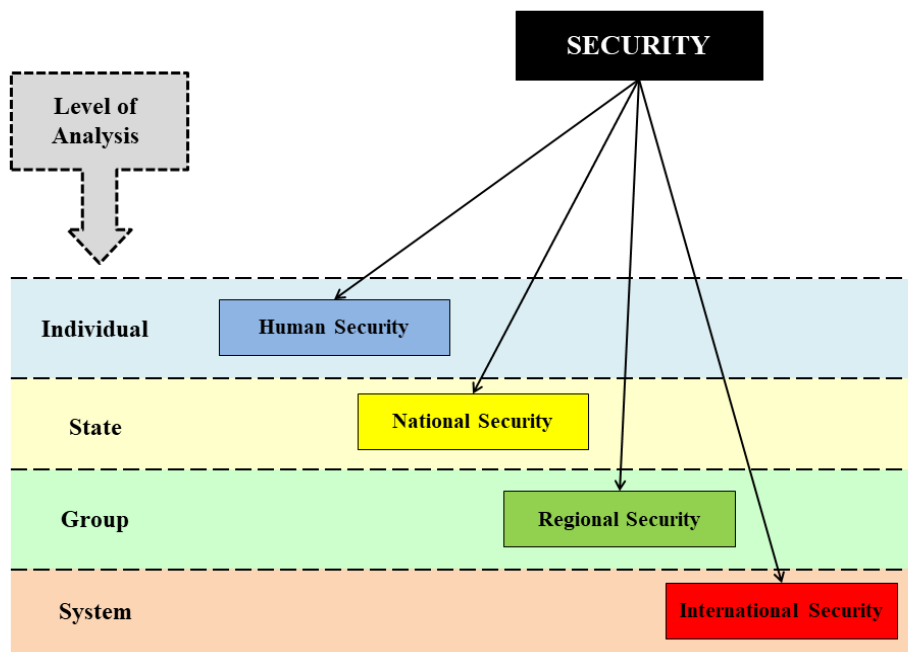


*Source: [https://cimsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/hires\\_130323-N-GC639-175.jpg](https://cimsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/hires_130323-N-GC639-175.jpg)*

## Introduction

The contemporary international security environment is full of military, energy, food, health and economic crises, leading many scholars to characterize our era as an era of **polycrises** and **permacrises**<sup>1</sup>. The security situation in the Mediterranean region couldn't be any different, not only due to the phenomenon of globalisation but also because of its unique diverse geographical, religious, political and cultural characteristics that facilitate competitiveness and rise tensions. In this context, security is of vital importance for every Mediterranean state and non-state actor, as it contributes to the promotion of its (national) interests and the wellbeing of its citizens/personnel.

The term '**security**' originates from the Latin word '**securitas/securus**' whose first compound is the word '**sine**' meaning 'without' and the second compound the word '**cura**' meaning 'fear', 'worry', 'anxiety', etc<sup>2</sup>. Thus, security is the state in which fear, worry, and anxiety are absent, due to the necessary actions taken by an actor (individual, group, state, organization, etc.) in order to be protected against threats and/or risks. Therefore, security can be categorized according to the level of analysis (*Picture 1*) into **four types**; human security (individual level), national security (state level), regional security (group level), and international security (system level).



**Picture 1: The 4 types of security**  
Source: Georgios Koukakis

At first security was mainly related to **national security** (the protection of the state), a concept that was introduced by the United States of America (USA) through the **National Security Act** signed in 1947<sup>3</sup>. This new paradigm related security to the internal structure of each state, reflecting its interaction with the security environment, a relation that is based on the state's perception of insecurity<sup>4</sup>. Later on, the United Nations (UN) related security to people and the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment<sup>5</sup>, introducing the concept of

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

<sup>2</sup>Neocleous, M. (2000). 'Against security'. *Radical Philosophy*, 100, pp. 7-15. <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/against-security> (21/04/2024)

<sup>3</sup>Department of State. (n.d.). *National Security Act of 1947*. [https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/national-security-act#:~:text=The%20National%20Security%20Act%20of,National%20Security%20Council%20\(NSC\)](https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/national-security-act#:~:text=The%20National%20Security%20Act%20of,National%20Security%20Council%20(NSC)). (21/04/2024).

<sup>4</sup>Buzan, B. (1983). *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*. Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, p. 69.

<sup>5</sup>Buzan, B. and Hansen, L. (2009). *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 203.

**human security** through the **Human Development Report** that was published in 1994<sup>6</sup>. As far as **regional security** is concerned, despite the fact that it (etymologically) comprises the national security of the states of a specific region, it also expresses the strong relations developed among them due to their similar cultural, political and legal systems<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, it enables them to act collectively against common threats and cooperate in several fields in order to facilitate development –as security and development are two closely related terms<sup>8</sup>, leading to the establishment of several regional organisations such as the EU.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, **international security** is closely related to globalization<sup>10</sup>, mostly dealing with global threats through international organizations such as the United Nations<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, security –regardless the institutional level in which it is examined– encompasses several **dimensions**, depending on the specific aspect/policy field that is endangered and/or the origin of threats/risks. These include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Military security,
2. Economic security,
3. Energy security,
4. Critical infrastructure security,
5. Maritime security,
6. Food security,
7. Environmental security,
8. Health security,
9. Domestic/internal security,
10. Cyber security,
11. Cultural security,
12. Demographic security,
13. Water security,
14. Information security, and
15. Space security.

### Characteristics of the Mediterranean Region

As highlighted by **Fernand Braudel**, the Mediterranean is probably one of the most unique regions worldwide.<sup>12</sup> Being in the crossroads of three continents (Europe, Asia and Africa) the Mediterranean Sea brings together different civilizations that – depending on the conditions that prevail at the time – either complement or confront each other. The **European states** of the Mediterranean Region include Spain, France, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Greece, Cyprus and Malta, the **Asian states** Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Israel, and the **African states** Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco (*Picture 2*). It must also be stressed that until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century most of the African states were European colonies<sup>13</sup>, a fact that –despite the negative impact on public opinion– is still responsible for the strong bilateral relations between several states.

Being maritime states, the majority of the aforementioned Mediterranean states have developed strong relations with non-Mediterranean states in other regions, mainly due to commerce activities, allowing them to expand their sphere of influence across continents, since one of the main characteristics of the Mediterranean Sea is the fact that three (3) out of twelve (12) global **shipping chokepoints** (Gibraltar Strait, Bosphorus Strait

<sup>6</sup>United Nations Development Programme. (1994). *Human Development Report 1994*. <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdr1994encompletenostatpdf.pdf> (21/04/2024).

<sup>7</sup>Graham, K. & Felicio, T. (2005). 'Regional Security and Global Governance: A Proposal for a 'Regional-Global Security Mechanism' in Light of the UN High-Level Panel's Report', *Egmont Paper*, 4. <http://aei.pitt.edu/8985/> (21/04/2024).

<sup>8</sup>Krause, K. & Jütersonke, O. (2005). 'Peace, Security and Development', *Security Dialogue*, 36(4), pp. 447-462. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0967010605060449> (21/04/2024).

<sup>9</sup>Bailes, A. & Cottey, A. (2006). 'Regional security cooperation in the early 21st century', in Bailes, A. (ed.) *SIPRI Yearbook 2006: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 195–223.

<sup>10</sup>Cha, V. (2000). 'Globalization and the Study of International Security', *Journal of Peace Research*, 37(3), pp. 391-403. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0022343300037003007> (21/04/2024).

<sup>11</sup>United Nations. (2023). *Determined: Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization*. [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg\\_annual\\_report\\_2023\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_annual_report_2023_en_0.pdf) (21/04/2024).

<sup>12</sup>Braudel, F. (1985). *The Mediterranean: land, sea, history*. *The UNESCO Courier: a window open on the world*, XXXVIII, 12, p. 4-12. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000067988> (19/04/2024).

<sup>13</sup>Office of the Historian. (n.d.). *Decolonization of Asia and Africa, 1945–1960*. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/asia-and-africa> (19/04/2024).

and the Suez Canal) are located in the Mediterranean Sea (Picture 2)<sup>14</sup>. Another geographical characteristic, is the fact that the distance between the coastline of opposite states is shorter than **200 nautical miles (n.m.)**, which –according to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)– means that every Mediterranean state must come to an agreement with its (geographically) opposite state in order to delimit its **Continental Shelf** and **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** and be able to exploit underwater energy resources, an activity that mainly concerns the Eastern Mediterranean states because of the major discoveries during the past decade (Picture 3).



**Picture 2: The Mediterranean Region**

**Source:** <https://www.worldatlas.com/seas/mediterranean-sea.html>

**Key recent gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean**

Gas field	Country	Year of discovery	Resources
Tamar	Israel	2009	280 bcm <small>(Gross mean resources)</small>
Leviathan	Israel	2010	620 bcm <small>(Gross mean resources)</small>
Aphrodite	Cyprus	2011	140 bcm <small>(Gross mean resources)</small>
Zohr	Egypt	2015	850 bcm <small>(Potential of lean gas in place)</small>

Data sources: Noble Energy and Eni (2015) [bcm: billion cubic metres].

**Picture 3: Major natural gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean**

**Source:** <https://www.bruegel.org/blog-post/egypt-catalyst-new-eastern->

Finally, two of the main differences between the **Northern** (European) and the **Southern/Eastern** (African/Asian) Mediterranean states are their **political system** and their **religious believes**. Indeed, the vast

<sup>14</sup>The rest nine (9) global shipping chokepoints include: (1) the Panama Canal, (2) the English Channel, (3) the Danish Strait, (4) the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, (5) the Strait of Hormuz, (6) the Malacca Strait, (7) the Lombok-Makassar Strait, (8) the South China Sea and (9) the East China Sea. For further information visit: Buchholz, K. (2024, January 03). 'Global Shipping's Chokepoints'. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/chart/31489/shipping-chokepoints/> (21/04/2024).



majority of the Northern Mediterranean states implement a democratic political system comprised by Christian citizens, while the majority of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean states implement an autocratic political system comprising Muslim citizens, having as a result the implementation of different domestic policies - especially as far as human rights and fundamental freedoms are concerned - and major differences in their foreign policy goals.

### Major actors of the Mediterranean

As far as their area size is concerned, the largest (in square kilometers) Mediterranean states are: **Algeria** (11<sup>th</sup> in the world with an area of 2,381,740 km<sup>2</sup>), **Libya** (18<sup>th</sup> in the world with an area of 1,759,540 km<sup>2</sup>), **Egypt** (31<sup>st</sup> in the world with an area of 1,001,450 km<sup>2</sup>), **Turkey** (38<sup>th</sup> in the world with an area of 783,562 km<sup>2</sup>), **Morocco** (41<sup>st</sup> in the world with an area of 716,550 km<sup>2</sup>), **France** (45<sup>th</sup> in the world with an area of 643,801 km<sup>2</sup>), **Spain** (54<sup>th</sup> in the world with an area of 505,370 km<sup>2</sup>), **Italy** (73<sup>rd</sup> in the world with an area of 301,340 km<sup>2</sup>), **Syria** (89<sup>th</sup> in the world with an area of 187,437 km<sup>2</sup>), **Tunisia** (93<sup>rd</sup> in the world with an area of 163,610 km<sup>2</sup>), **Greece** (97<sup>th</sup> in the world with an area of 131,957 km<sup>2</sup>), **Croatia** (127<sup>th</sup> in the world with an area of 56,594 km<sup>2</sup>), **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (128<sup>th</sup> in the world with an area of 51,197 km<sup>2</sup>), **Albania** (144<sup>th</sup> in the world with an area of 28,748 km<sup>2</sup>), **Israel** (152<sup>nd</sup> in the world with an area of 21,937 km<sup>2</sup>), **Slovenia** (154<sup>th</sup> in the world with an area of 20,273 km<sup>2</sup>) and **Montenegro** (161<sup>st</sup> in the world with an area of 13,812 km<sup>2</sup>).<sup>15</sup>

As far as their population is concerned, the most populated Mediterranean states are: **Egypt** (15<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world with a population of 109,546,720), **Turkey** (19<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world with a population of 83,593,483), **France** (21<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world with a population of 68,521,974), **Italy** (24<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world with a population of 61,021,855), **Spain** (32<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world with a population of 47,222,613), **Algeria** (33<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world with a population of 44,758,398), **Morocco** (40<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world with a population of 37,067,420), **Syria** (59<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world with a population of 22,933,531), **Tunisia** (81<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world with a population of 11,976,182), **Greece** (89<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world with a population of 10,497,595), and **Israel** (98<sup>th</sup> most populated country in the world with a population of 9,043,387).<sup>16</sup>

As far as the size of the economy is concerned, the most economic developed –according to their GDP (purchasing power parity) – states are: **France** (10<sup>th</sup> largest economy in world with a GDP of \$3,120,000,000,000), **Turkey** (11<sup>th</sup> largest economy in world with a GDP of \$2,817,000,000,000), **Italy** (12<sup>th</sup> largest economy in world with a GDP of \$2,611,000,000,000), **Spain** (15<sup>th</sup> largest economy in world with a GDP of \$1,922,000,000,000), **Egypt** (18<sup>th</sup> largest economy in world with a GDP of \$1,419,000,000,000), **Algeria** (44<sup>th</sup> largest economy in world with a GDP of \$502,837,000,000), **Israel** (48<sup>th</sup> largest economy in world with a GDP of \$424,289,000,000), **Greece** (55<sup>th</sup> largest economy in world with a GDP of \$330,579,000,000), **Morocco** (56<sup>th</sup> largest economy in world with a GDP of \$307,442,000,000), **Libya** (83<sup>th</sup> largest economy in world with a GDP of \$134,861,000,000), **Croatia** (84<sup>th</sup> largest economy in world with a GDP of \$132,256,000,000) and **Tunisia** (85<sup>th</sup> largest economy in world with a GDP of \$130,592,000,000).<sup>17</sup>

As far as security and defense is concerned, the states with the largest military expenditures – as a percentage of their GDP – are: **Algeria** (1<sup>st</sup> in the world with a percentage of 9% of GDP), **Syria** (3<sup>rd</sup> in the world with a percentage of 6.5% of GDP), **Morocco** (10<sup>th</sup> in the world with a percentage of 4.5% of GDP), **Israel** (12<sup>th</sup> in the world with a percentage of 4.5% of GDP), **Lebanon** (27<sup>th</sup> in the world with a percentage of 3.2% of GDP), **Greece** (28<sup>th</sup> in the world with a percentage of 3.1% of GDP), **Tunisia** (42<sup>th</sup> in the world with a percentage of 2.5% of GDP), **Cyprus** (64<sup>th</sup> in the world with a percentage of 2% of GDP), **France** (66<sup>th</sup> in the world with a percentage of 1.9% of GDP), **Croatia** (70<sup>th</sup> in the world with a percentage of 1.8% of GDP), **Albania** (75<sup>th</sup> in the world with a percentage of 1.7% of GDP), **Türkiye** (86<sup>th</sup> in the world with a percentage of 1.6% of GDP), **Italy** (91<sup>st</sup> in the world with a percentage of 1.5% of GDP) and **Slovenia** (103<sup>rd</sup> in the world with a percentage of 1.3% of GDP).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Central Intelligence Agency. (n.d.). 'Country Comparisons – Area [The World Factbook]' <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/area/country-comparison/> (21/04/2024).

<sup>16</sup>Central Intelligence Agency. (n.d.). 'Country Comparisons – Population [The World Factbook]'. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/population/country-comparison/> (21/04/2024).

<sup>17</sup>Central Intelligence Agency. (n.d.). 'Country Comparisons – Real GDP (purchasing power parity) [The World Factbook]'. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/real-gdp-purchasing-power-parity/country-comparison/> (21/04/2024).

<sup>18</sup>Central Intelligence Agency. (n.d.). 'Country Comparisons – Military expenditures [The World Factbook]'. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/military-expenditures/country-comparison/> (21/04/2024).



**Picture 4: The US military bases in Greece**

Source: <https://nordicmonitor.com/2022/05/erdogan-continues-disinformation-about-american-military-bases-in-greece-despite-state-agency-refutes-him/>

Finally, the Mediterranean hosts several non-Mediterranean actors that seek to promote their national interests through their military, commercial, economic or political presence in the region, such as the **United Kingdom** which maintains two (2) Sovereign Base Areas (SBA) in Cyprus<sup>19</sup>, the **United States** which maintain military bases in Spain<sup>20</sup>, Italy<sup>21</sup>, Turkey<sup>22</sup> and Greece (Picture 4)<sup>23</sup>, in addition to warships in certain areas of operations<sup>24</sup>, **Russia** with a military presence in Syria, Libya and Eastern Mediterranean<sup>25</sup>, which also maintains naval presence in the region<sup>26</sup>, **China** with an economic presence through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)<sup>27</sup>, and most recently **India** through the development of the 'India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor' (IMEC) that was announced in 2023.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>19</sup>United Kingdom/Ministry of Defence. (n.d.). Deployments Cyprus. <https://www.army.mod.uk/deployments/cyprus/> (22/04/2024).

<sup>20</sup>Military Bases. (n.d.). 'US Military Bases in Spain'. <https://militarybases.com/overseas/spain/> (22/04/2024).

<sup>21</sup>Military Bases. (n.d.). 'US Military Bases in Italy'. <https://militarybases.com/overseas/italy/> (22/04/2024).

<sup>22</sup>Military Bases. (n.d.). 'Turkey Military Bases'. <https://militarybases.com/overseas/turkey/> (22/04/2024).

<sup>23</sup>Military Bases. (n.d.). 'US Military Bases in Greece'. <https://militarybases.com/overseas/greece/> (22/04/2024).

<sup>24</sup>Gatopoulos, D. (2024, January 19). 'The U.S. reshuffles its warships in the Mediterranean as Middle East tensions soar'. PBS NewsHour. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/the-u-s-reshuffles-its-warships-in-the-mediterranean-as-middle-east-tensions-soar> (22/04/2024).

<sup>25</sup>Gasimov, Z. (2022). Russia under Putin in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Soviet Legacy, Flexibility, and New Dynamics. *Comparative Southeast European Studies*, 70(3), 462-485. <https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2021-0061> (22/04/2024).

<sup>26</sup>Gorenburg, D. (2019, July).

<sup>27</sup>Karpathiotaki, P. (2023, December 29). 'Ten years of Belt and Road Initiative'. *H NAYTEMPIOPIKH*. <https://www.naftemporiki.gr/english/1558066/ten-years-of-belt-and-road-initiative/> (22/04/2024).

<sup>28</sup>Khan, A. M. (2023, December 12). 'The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC): Too Little, Too Late?'. *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/91214> (21/04/2024).

## Collaborative Schemes

Despite the aforementioned cultural, economic, political and social differences, the Mediterranean states have also demonstrated a strong political will for cooperation in several policy fields by establishing intergovernmental organizations, fora, bilateral and multilateral partnerships, and/or the signature of agreements, memoranda or joint declarations, in order to enhance their national security.

The most known regional organization in the Mediterranean is the **European Union (EU)**<sup>29</sup>, an economic organization established in **1951** that has gradually become an ambitious security provider through the implementation of its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)<sup>30</sup>. Other regional organizations are the **African Union (AU)** which was established in **2002** in order to promote unity, solidarity, and cooperation, facilitate the development, and safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of African states<sup>31</sup>, the **League of Arab States** that was formed in **1945** focusing on economic (mainly) and military affairs<sup>32</sup>, and the **Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)** that was established in **2008** (Picture 5) in order to strengthen cooperation and dialogue between the Northern and Southern Mediterranean states in addition to facilitating development, stability and integration in the Euro-Mediterranean area.<sup>33</sup>



**Picture 5:** The logo of the Union for the Mediterranean  
**Source:** <https://ufmsecretariat.org/>

Another recent cooperative scheme focusing on energy security is the **East-Mediterranean Gas Forum (EGMF)** that was established in **2019**, bringing together Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, and Palestine in order to set common strategies based on a shared vision, form a competitive regional gas market, ensure security of supply and demand, and coordinate their efforts to optimize resource development<sup>34</sup>. Moreover, several states established additional cooperative schemes in order to promote energy security, such as the trilateral partnerships ‘**Greece-Cyprus-Israel**’<sup>35</sup> and ‘**Greece-Cyprus-Egypt**’<sup>36</sup> that resulted in the development of major underwater energy projects such as the ‘Eastern Mediterranean natural gas

<sup>29</sup>European Union. (n.d.). ‘History of the EU’. [https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu_en) (21/04/2024).

<sup>30</sup>European Commission. (n.d.). ‘Common foreign and security policy’. [https://fpi.ec.europa.eu/what-we-do/common-foreign-and-security-policy\\_en](https://fpi.ec.europa.eu/what-we-do/common-foreign-and-security-policy_en) (21/04/2024).

<sup>31</sup>African Union. (n.d.). ‘About the African Union’. <https://au.int/en/overview> (21/04/2024).

<sup>32</sup>Masters, J. & Aly Sergie, M. (2023, May 25). ‘The Arab League’. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/background/arab-league> (21/04/2024).

<sup>33</sup>Union for the Mediterranean. (n.d.). ‘Who we are’. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/who-we-are/> (21/4/2024).

<sup>34</sup>East-Mediterranean Gas Forum. (n.d.). ‘Overview’. <https://emgf.org/> (21/04/2024).

<sup>35</sup>Koukakis, G. (2023). “The 9th Trilateral Summit of Cyprus, Greece and Israel: Türkiye’s struggle for power in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Competition between India and China in the Middle East, and the New Era of Economic Peace”. HERMES Institute of International Affairs, Security and Geoeconomy, Occasional Paper 1/2023. <https://www.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.18271.84645> (26/04/2024).

<sup>36</sup>Shama, N. (2019). “Between Alliance and Entente: The Egyptian-Greek-Cypriot Partnership” in Tziarras Zenonas (ed.), *The New Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean: Trilateral Partnerships and Regional Security. Re-imagining the Eastern Mediterranean Series: PCC Report, 3*. Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 95-110. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/zypem/15662.pdf> (26/04/2024).

<sup>37</sup>NS Energy. (n.d.). ‘Eastern Mediterranean Pipeline Project’. <https://www.nsenerybusiness.com/projects/eastern-mediterranean-pipeline-project/> (21/04/2024).

pipeline' (mostly known as East-med)<sup>37</sup>, the 'EuroAsia Interconnector'<sup>38</sup> electricity cable and the 'EuroAfrica Interconnector' electricity cable<sup>39</sup>. Moreover, the first trilateral partnership has lately led to the development of the IMEC an economic/trade corridor connecting India and Europe through the Mediterranean.

Finally, several Mediterranean regional actors have signed a number of agreements in order to promote their cooperation in several policy fields. One of these agreements is the 'Strategic Partnership on cooperation in Defence and Security' between the Government of the Hellenic Republic (Greece) and the Government of the French Republic that was signed in Paris on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021<sup>40</sup>, the 'Africa-EU Partnership' between the EU and the African Union (AU) that was established on 3-4 April 2000 in Cairo in order to strengthen economic cooperation and to promote sustainable development<sup>41</sup>, and the 'Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership' between the EU and Arab Republic of Egypt that was established on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2024 in Cairo, focusing on political relations, economic stability, investments, trade, water issues, migration & mobility, security and demography & human capital.<sup>42</sup>

### Contemporary Threats/Risks and Destabilizing (F)Actors

According to the strategic documents of five major actors –the EU 'Strategic Compass', the NATO 'Strategic Concept' and the 'National Security Strategy' of the USA, Germany and Japan– the most pressing national security threats/risks include terrorism, cyberattacks, proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), climate change, regional conflicts, financial instability, pandemics and the degradation of critical infrastructure/supply chains<sup>43</sup>. Moreover, the 2024 'Annual Threat Assessment' of the U.S. Intelligence Community defines as worldwide threats the Gaza Conflict, Disruptive Technology, Digital Authoritarianism and Transnational Repression, WMD, Environmental Change and Extreme Weather, Health Security, Migration, Transnational Organized Crime (TOC), Human Trafficking, Global Terrorism and Private Military & Security Companies.<sup>44</sup>

As far as regional security is concerned, according to the 'Risk Analysis for 2023/2024' of FONTEX, the contemporary key regional risks to the EU's external borders include: irregular migration at the sea and land borders (*Picture 6*), Clandestine entry, Document fraud, Smuggling of illicit drugs, Firearms smuggling, Vehicle crime, Tobacco smuggling, Trafficking in human beings, Terrorism, also highlighting that irregular migration to Europe and TOC is expected to rise, while migration will most probably continue to be instrumentalized by several actors<sup>45</sup>. Moreover, the latest 'Global Trends to 2040' (*Picture 8*) report of the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS) indicates that the EU will be greatly affected in the medium to long term by a variety of global trends such as: hybrid warfare, the battle of narratives, foreign disinformation, information manipulation and interference (FIMI), the battle for primacy in cyberspace and outer space, sustained economic and technological rivalry between the US and China, the emergence of new regional blocs, the ageing of the population, immigration flows, climate change and environmental degradation, energy transition competition, the quest for equality between states, growing geopolitical technological rivalry, the management of health system, urbanization and democratic backsliding.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>38</sup>NS Energy. (n.d.). 'EuroAsia Interconnector Project, Greece-Cyprus-Israel'. <https://www.nsenenergybusiness.com/projects/euroasia-interconnector-project-greece-cyprus-israel/> (21/04/2024).

<sup>39</sup>NS Energy. (n.d.). 'EuroAfrica Interconnector Project'. <https://www.nsenenergybusiness.com/projects/euroafrica-interconnector-project/> (21/04/2024).

<sup>40</sup>Hellenic Republic/Prime Minister. (2021, September 28). 'Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis' remarks after the signing of the Strategic Partnership Agreement for Cooperation in Defence and Security between Greece and France at the Élysée Palace'. <https://www.primeminister.gr/en/2021/09/28/27610> (21/04/2024).

<sup>41</sup>European Commission. (n.d.). 'Africa-EU Partnership'. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/africa-eu-partnership\\_en#:~:text=The%20Africa%20DEU%20Partnership%20is,actors%2C%20and%20the%20private%20sector.](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/africa-eu-partnership_en#:~:text=The%20Africa%20DEU%20Partnership%20is,actors%2C%20and%20the%20private%20sector.) (21/04/2024).

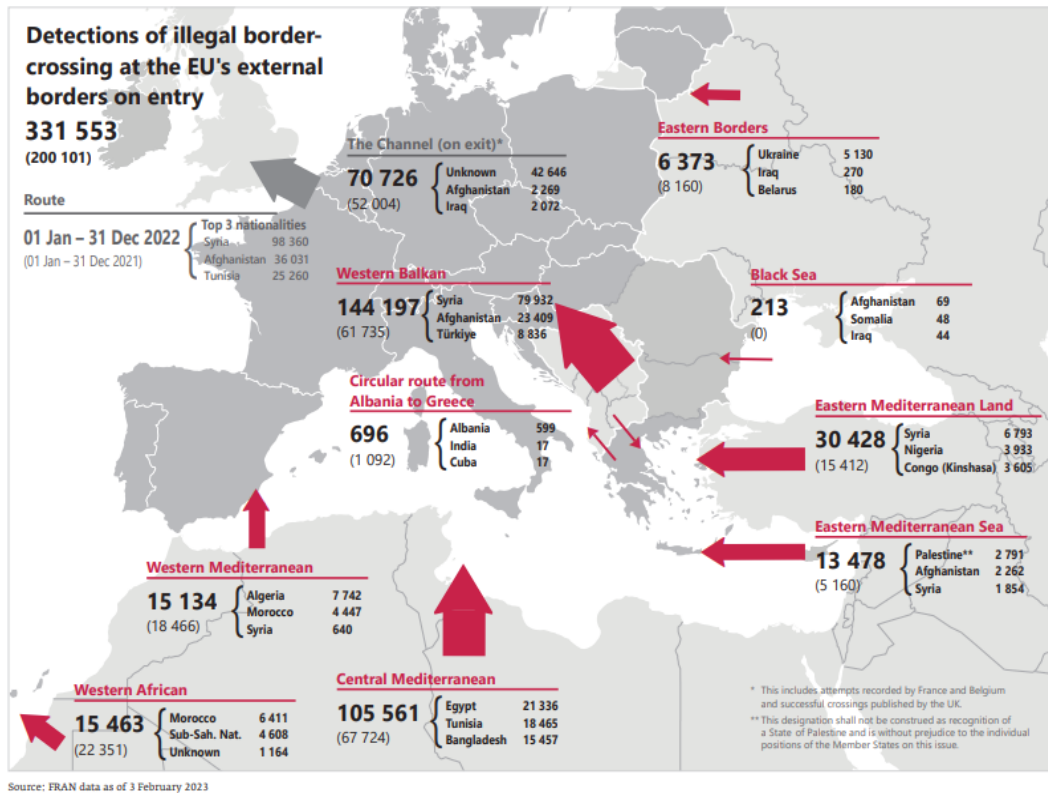
<sup>42</sup>European Commission. (2024, March 17). 'Joint Declaration on the Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership between The Arab Republic Of Egypt and the European Union'. [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/joint-declaration-strategic-and-comprehensive-partnership-between-arab-republic-egypt-and-european-2024-03-17\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/joint-declaration-strategic-and-comprehensive-partnership-between-arab-republic-egypt-and-european-2024-03-17_en) (21/04/2024).

<sup>43</sup>Koukakis, G. (2023). *Permacrises and Polycrises: Outlining the Contemporary Security Environment through References to Strategic Documents of Regional and International Actors*. HAPSc Policy Briefs Series, 4(2), 55–64. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hapscpbs.36661> (22/04/2024).

<sup>44</sup>Office of the Director of National Intelligence. (2024, February 05). *Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*. <https://www.odni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/ATA-2024-Unclassified-Report.pdf> (22/04/2024).

<sup>45</sup>FRONTEX. (2024, August 18). *Risk Analysis for 2023/2024*. [https://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/ARA\\_2023.pdf](https://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/ARA_2023.pdf) (22/04/2024).

<sup>46</sup>European Strategy and Policy Analysis System. (2024, April 15). *Global Trends to 2040: Choosing Europe's Future*. [https://espas.eu/files/espas\\_files/about/2024-ESPAS-Global-Trends-to-2040-Choosing-Europes-Future.pdf](https://espas.eu/files/espas_files/about/2024-ESPAS-Global-Trends-to-2040-Choosing-Europes-Future.pdf) (22/04/2024).



**Picture 6:** Detections of illegal border crossing at the EU's external borders on entry (as of 03 February 2023)

Source: [https://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/ARA\\_2023.pdf](https://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/General/ARA_2023.pdf)

Finally, one of the main destabilizing factors affecting regional security in the Mediterranean is the **aggressive Turkish foreign policy** in the Eastern Mediterranean during the past decades, which has been stressed in several official EU documents such as the Joint Communication of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission (HR/VP) entitled '**State of play of EU-Turkey political, economic and trade relations**' published on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021<sup>47</sup>. However, Turkey seems to have been following a more moderate foreign policy in the Mediterranean region since 2023 leading to a more favorable assessment of its relations with the EU. However the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023 EU document (Picture 7) stated that:

*"[...] Turkey has shown a more constructive attitude on various issues, including in its bilateral relations with several EU Member States and on a number of long-standing trade irritants. [...] Nevertheless, this process of re-engagement remains fragile. Turkey's stance on the Cyprus issue and its vocal promotion of a "two state solution" for the island constitute a major challenge. Turkey's support to military means in regional conflicts and its views on Hamas are at odds with EU positions"*<sup>48</sup>.

It must also be stressed that Turkey, despite the fact that has been a candidate country of the EU since 1999, its accession negotiations remain have frozen since 2018 due to the **negative situation** that prevails in several chapters<sup>49</sup>, and its **neighborly relations and regional cooperation** which are an essential part of

<sup>47</sup>Council of the European Union. (2021, March 26). JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL State of play of EU-Turkey political, economic and trade relations (7416/1/21, REV 1). <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7416-2021-REV-1/en/pdf> (24/04/2024).

<sup>48</sup>European Commission. (2023, November 29). 'JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL State of play of EU-Turkey political, economic and trade relations 2023'. [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/joint-communication-european-council-state-play-eu-turkiye-political-economic-and-trade-relations-0\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/joint-communication-european-council-state-play-eu-turkiye-political-economic-and-trade-relations-0_en) (24/04/2024).

<sup>49</sup>European Commission. (2012, June 06). "Chapters of the acquis". [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/conditions-membership/chapters-acquis\\_en](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/conditions-membership/chapters-acquis_en) (24/04/2024).

Turkey's accession process In fact, the '**Turkey 2023 Report**' stresses inter alia that:

*“Turkey continued to refuse to recognize the Republic of Cyprus. [...] Turkey's military exercises in the maritime zones of Cyprus continued. Violations by Turkish unmanned aerial vehicles in the Nicosia flight information region and the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus also continued unabated. Turkey continued to increase the militarization of the occupied area by upgrading the military drone base in Lefkoniko and the naval base in Bogazi. The harassment of Cypriot fishing vessels by Turkey also continued. [...] Turkey repeatedly advocated for a two-state solution in Cyprus, contrary to relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.[...] Relations between Turkey and Greece deteriorated until early 2023. Hostile rhetoric grew during this period, including threatening statements regarding the sovereignty of Greek islands. [...] The 1995 declaration of the Turkish Grand National Assembly that any unilateral action by Greece to extend its territorial waters would be considered a casus belli, still holds [...]”*<sup>50</sup>

Other destabilizing factors in the Mediterranean region include the most recent **war in Gaza** between Hamas and Israel that has resulted in a major humanitarian crisis, the ongoing conflicts in **Libya**<sup>51</sup> and **Syria**<sup>52</sup> and the instability in **Lebanon**<sup>53</sup>, the **climate change** that adds up to the increased migration flows from the southern to the northern parts of the Mediterranean, **disinformation** and – last but not least – the **vast technological progress** that facilitates the spread of terrorism, also affecting the global and regional balance of power.

### Strategic Choices & Priorities

According to the '**Global Trends to 2040**' report, the EU (*Picture 8*) –in its effort to ensure that it is equipped both to face challenges and to seize the opportunities that lie ahead– is estimated that will face six (6) strategic choices:

1. Establish itself as a smart global power able to effectively navigate an **uncertain geopolitical landscape**, acting with partners where possible and autonomously where necessary.
2. Ensure that the **green transition** will be both effective and achieved in a socially and economically equitable way.
3. Accept **economic risks and frictions** in exchange for enhanced geopolitical and technological sovereignty.
4. Assess the effectiveness of the EU's current **economic model** and possibly proceed to a major update to ensure long-term sustainability and wellbeing.
5. Incentivize **innovation** and deliver **economic benefits** while safeguarding against potential harms through the EU regulatory framework.
6. Strengthen opportunities for all citizens, in order to prevent **social fragmentation** and consolidate support for the coming transitions and mitigate anti-democratic tendencies through social protection instruments.

Moreover, according to the '**2024 Annual Work Programme**' of the UfM<sup>54</sup>, its strategic priorities in the Euro-Mediterranean area comprise the following:

1. **Economic development:** Establish a rules-based trading system, foster resilient economies, fight market access barriers, enhance regulatory convergence and promote regional integration and cooperation.

<sup>50</sup>European Commission. (2023, November 08). COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Türkiye 2023 Report [SWD(2023) 696 final]. [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD\\_2023\\_696%20T%C3%BCrkiye%20report.pdf](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_696%20T%C3%BCrkiye%20report.pdf) (24/04/2024).

<sup>51</sup>Center for Preventive Action. (2023, September 19). 'Civil Conflict in Libya'. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/civil-war-libya> (22/04/2024).

<sup>52</sup>Center for Preventive Action. (2024, February 13). 'Conflict in Syria'. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-syria> (22/04/2024).

<sup>53</sup>Center for Preventive Action. (2024, February 13). 'Instability in Lebanon'. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/political-instability-lebanon> (22/04/2024).

<sup>54</sup>Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean. (2024). ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2024. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/UfMS-2024-Work-Programme-FINAL-APROVED-BY-SOM.pdf> (24/04/2024).

2. **Employment:** Promote an economy that works for people with youth- and gender-responsive employment and social policies; support women's and youth engagement in building socio-economic resilience and recovery, while paying due attention to the most vulnerable people.
3. **Higher education:** Step up cooperation in areas such as governance, internationalization, social inclusion and gender, digital education, greening education, and shared academic values.
4. **Research and Innovation (R&I):** Fostering R&I in health, climate change and renewable energy, mobilising resources including from national funding agencies, creating synergies with bilateral programmes, R&I actions, capacity building actions, research infrastructures, coordination and communication actions and horizontal integration/cross cutting issues.
5. **Women Empowerment:** Increase gender-responsive investment in the framework of climate change and in environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes, promote the establishment of regional platforms aiming at supporting Women Economic Empowerment in the Euro-Mediterranean region, promote gender equality and inclusive models of leadership since early-age education and in all fields, support and encourage women's entrepreneurship, provide comprehensive legal counseling, legal services, and social support for victims of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).
6. **Youth:** Promote and support innovative young entrepreneurs and support young Mediterranean people in accessing opportunities in the social economy sector.
7. **Civil protection:** Preparation of a UfM Ministerial Meeting on Civil protection for 2025.
8. **Disability:** Building a UfM Regional Dialogue on Disability.
9. **Transport:** Develop a safe, secure, sustainable, efficient and connected transport system based on harmonized transport rules and standards, as well as an integrated multimodal transport connectivity network.
10. **Urban Development:** Promote citizen engagement and co-creation, identify strategies to improve urban health, encourage joint work in sustainable port-city transformation and port-city cooperation, address the promotion of public policies and programmes to tackle affordable housing, boosting energy efficiency in buildings, promote the valuation and dissemination of vernacular architecture and traditional building skills, methodologies, and materials, increase the safety of the citizens and the resilience of cities in the face of natural and man-made disasters, and emphasize the consideration for urban-rural linkages.



**Picture 7:** The EU 'Global Trends to 2040' report

Source: [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/global-trends-2040-choosing-europe%E2%80%99s-future-0\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/global-trends-2040-choosing-europe%E2%80%99s-future-0_en)

11. **Water:** Enhance regional cooperation towards sustainable and integrated water management in the UfM region, as well as to mainstream efforts towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and targets, in particular SDG 6 on availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

12. **Environment:** Support the transition to a green, circular and socially inclusive economy based on sustainable consumption and production practices and nature-based solutions, prevent and reduce pollution on land, sea and air, and protect, preserve, manage, and restore natural resources in the Mediterranean region within an integrated ecosystem approach, including terrestrial, marine and coastal dimension.

13. **Blue economy:** Advance the endorsed priority axes of work, namely: (i) governance and the future of sea basin strategies in the Mediterranean region, (ii) marine research and innovation, skills, careers and employment, (iii) sustainable food from the sea: fisheries and aquaculture, (iv) sustainable, climate-neutral and zero-pollution maritime transport and ports, (v) interactions between marine litter and the blue economy, (vi) coastal and maritime tourism, (vii) maritime Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Zone Management, (viii) marine renewable energies, (ix) maritime safety and security of blue economy activities, and (x) sustainable investment in the blue economy.

14. **Energy:** Facilitate the adoption of a regional technical and regulatory framework, facilitate the development of green hydrogen solutions, back programmes on energy efficiency, especially in the public sector and at the level of local authorities, and promote the Mediterranean energy agenda in global processes.

15. **Climate action:** Use science-based reports to inform decision making on climate policies and increase public awareness on climate change, strengthen institutions, plans, and policies linked to the development and advancement of national climate change targets, enhance the enabling policy frameworks, institutional capacities, and instruments for financing and investment in UfM Member States, facilitate awareness, understanding and implications of international regulations and policies impacting the Mediterranean region to UfM Members States, and strengthen the visibility of Mediterranean regional challenges and solutions in global climate processes.

### Future Challenges and Opportunities

Keeping in mind the aforementioned official documents and the information presented in this article in addition to the use of the PESTEL analysis framework<sup>55</sup>, the main **challenges** and **opportunities** that the Mediterranean actors have to address regarding the dynamics of the contemporary Mediterranean security environment can be categorized as follows:

#### Political Field

As far as the political field is concerned, the main challenge lies in the de-escalation of existing and the prevention of future regional conflicts and crises in addition to the mitigation of the **aggressive Turkish foreign policy**, while the key opportunity lies in the enhancement of the **cooperation** between actors, an action that will facilitate the effective tackling of threats/risks and promote peace and stability in the Mediterranean.

#### Economic Field

As far as the economic field is concerned, the main challenge lies in establishing a **resilient and rules-based 'green' economy**, while the key opportunity lies in enhancing the **economic cooperation** between Mediterranean states and like-minded actors in order to facilitate growth and reduce unemployment.

#### Social Field

As far as the social field is concerned, the main challenge lies in maintaining **social cohesion**, reversing the **negative demographic trends** and promoting **cultural diversity**, while the key opportunity lies in the **integration of migrants**.

#### Technological Field

As far as the technological field is concerned, the main challenge lies in addressing **emerging and disruptive technologies** (EDTs) and new types of threats such as **cyber-attacks** and **disinformation**, while the key opportunity lies in **integrating new technologies** –especially Artificial Intelligence (AI)– in several policy fields and promoting R&I.

<sup>55</sup>Washington State University. (n.d.). 'PESTEL Analysis'. <https://libguides.libraries.wsu.edu/c.php?g=996573&p=7214435> (23/04/2024).



### **Environmental Field**

As far as the environmental field is concerned, the main challenge lies in mitigating **climate change**, **global warming** and **water scarcity**, while the key opportunity lies in exploiting **renewable energy** such as solar and wind power.

### **Legal Field**

Finally, as far as the legal field is concerned, the main challenge lies in ensuring the implementation of **International Law** – especially UNCLOS – and protecting **human rights**, while the key opportunity lies in using the current geopolitical turbulence as a catalyst for overcoming differences and advancing cooperation through the signature of **legal agreements**.

### **Concluding Remarks**

To conclude, it must be noted that – despite the fact they the Indo-Pacific has become the new center of attention for international actors– **the Eastern Mediterranean remains a region of increased interest** not only because of the recent war in Gaza but also due to the expressed intention on developing the IMEC economic/trade corridor that will allow India to infiltrate in the European market. In this context, Greece and Cyprus constitute two important pillars of stability in the region, as they have repeatedly shown their political will for cooperation with other actors through the collaborative initiatives that they have been implementing as part of their foreign policy. Turkey on the other hand, must decide whether it wants to continue its aggressive foreign policy or cooperate with the rest of the Mediterranean actors and comply with International Law, which is the only way to restore trust among other actors and protect its national interests as according to the Stoic philosopher *Seneca*:

*“There is no favorable wind for the sailor who doesn’t know where to go”.*

## II. REGIONAL SECURITY



### **The Geopolitical Value of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Role of Greece in Europe's Energy Security, through Energy Interconnections and Natural Energy Deposits**

*Konstantinos LOUSIOS (Greece)*

The purpose of this article is to approach briefly the current difficulties in the energy supply of Europe and in particular of the European Union, a global actor in the matters of economy, geopolitics, security, technology and culture. All this under the influence of the Ukraine-Russia war and the rapidly developing instability in the Middle East.

At the same time, it will try to highlight the value of the Eastern Mediterranean region, both as a crossroads of global trade routes and conflict of geopolitical forces, and as a source of energy as well as a transit hub for the European Union.

In this context, Greece and additionally the Republic of Cyprus contribute significantly to promoting the value of the region geopolitically, economically, energetically and militarily.

**Keywords:** Eastern Mediterranean, Natural Gas, Electrical Interconnections, Natural Gas Pipelines, Hydrogen

#### **Introduction – Observing the Map**

First, by studying the map of the Mediterranean and the Middle East we recognize that the critical points are specific and unchanging over time. Western entry-exit point to and from the Atlantic Ocean, Gibraltar. The northeastern point of communication with the Black Sea is the Straits of the Hellespont and the Bosphorus, with the southern extension of the Aegean Sea and the Greek islands, while the southeastern point is the Suez Canal located in Egypt and the Red Sea, which ends south of Arabian Peninsula in the Indian Ocean. Both Cyprus and the island of Crete affect the entry and exit of Suez. A huge part of the world's trade from Asia to Europe is carried out through this passage. (Picture 1)

Ukraine, Russia, Romania and Bulgaria also communicate by sea through the Aegean Sea and the Bosphorus Straits. Also other countries of Eastern Europe, through the mouth of the Danube River, with the Eastern Mediterranean and by extension the Indian Ocean and Asia. Furthermore, the port of Thessaloniki mainly, but also those of Kavala and Alexandroupoli, are maritime gateways of the Balkan countries to the Eastern Mediterranean. (Picture 2)



Picture 1 - Source : <https://www.google.com>



Picture 2 - Source: <https://www.google.com>

### Problems in Energy Supply

The energy supply of most of the countries of the European Union concerned the import of oil and natural gas from Russia. Countries such as Germany, Poland, Italy and Greece used oil and natural gas to generate electricity. With the decisions taken to limit the use of coal and oil in the production of electricity, to protect the environment and to deal with climate change, emphasis was placed on the use of natural gas, as the cheapest and ecological fuel. The largest producer and supplier in Europe was Russia.

### The War in Ukraine and Instability in the Middle East

The Russian attack on Ukraine in February 2022 changed the scene in Europe. Suddenly, geopolitical correlations led countries to take decisions to limit and eventually cut off supplies from Russia. This of course affected everyday life and immediately caused problems in the supply, as there were no easy alternatives.

The Middle East is further away and there are already problems of conflict and instability such as the war in Syria and the rise of terrorism in parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

North African countries with rich hydrocarbon deposits, such as Libya, have huge problems of instability due to civil war and the absence of a stable government that controls the country and can enter into international and efficient agreements with other countries on energy issues.

### **Europe's Energy Supply Sources**

The majority of European Union countries use oil and natural gas, and less coal, to produce electricity. Countries such as Germany have not adopted nuclear energy in the production of electricity and use a greater percentage of natural gas, followed immediately by oil and fossil fuels. Others such as France have a higher percentage of nuclear energy and then the other forms.

Smaller percentages exist in production from renewable sources such as wind and solar energy. On the one hand, we have the import of natural gas and oil from Russia and other countries in the Middle East or North Africa, so we refer to dependence. On the other hand, there is an attempt to introduce new forms of energy and produce electricity from them for both ecological and geostrategic reasons (limitation of dependence on others).

### **Alternative Sources for Europe**

After the start of the Russia-Ukraine war and the gradual restriction of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 natural gas pipelines, the supply of natural gas to the European Union was reduced drastically. Supply replacement solutions were immediately sought such as limiting consumption and rationalizing use, renewable wind-solar sources, the import and utilization of fossil fuels (lignite). However, mainly the liquefied gas from areas where natural gas is produced.

Europe is looking for sources that will be economically advantageous, will supply its markets safely and in a short time, will be within the policies it has established to protect the natural environment and to deal with climate change.

The ideal would be to have member countries where they could offer energy resources or routes to approach areas with energy sources.

### **European Union Energy Security Programs and Policies**

To deal with the problems arising from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the sanctions of the European Union against Russia and the energy supply problems, the European Union proceeded to establish policies and programs that will make the countries dependent on Russian fuel and they will help to move more quickly to autonomy solutions, friendly to the environment.

As an example, we mention the RepowerEU program [4], for saving energy, improving energy efficiency, diversifying the energy supply and transitioning to cleaner forms of energy. All this is financed by the unused loans of the recovery and resilience fund.

Another action was the creation of the EU ENERGY PLATFORM [5]. It is a process of unifying the needs and coordinating the use of the energy infrastructure at the union level as well as negotiating the necessary quantities and the price of natural gas, with other suppliers worldwide, except for Russia.

This process lays the foundations for a more rational management of natural gas and hydrogen supply sources in the future for all members of the European Union.

### **The Future in Energy**

Of the fossil fuels, natural gas exists in large quantities in various parts of our planet. It has less pollution than coal and oil and thus has been chosen for the production of electricity and transport. In general it is the fuel, which by making use of existing electricity generation infrastructure, it will be able to maintain the stability of electricity networks in a world that needs more and more energy. It is the transition state in a time horizon up to 2050.

At the same time, however, with the utilization of natural gas deposits, the utilization of other energy sources, which are available everywhere in the world, such as the sun and the wind, has progressed. These energy sources, of course, need the appropriate technological infrastructures such as photovoltaic systems and wind turbines, as well as the respective locations to perform at their maximum. Thus in Europe, each country makes the corresponding effort and investment to produce electricity and strengthen its electrical system. In cases of overproduction, the surplus will need to be exported elsewhere or stored for use at a more suitable time. When there is not enough sun and wind, the system does not produce, so the production is done with the

classic fossil fuels.

Hydrogen production technology is in progress and has yet to advance to become the successor state at some point. Hydrogen is abundant in nature, but to produce it requires methods such as electrolysis of water, partial oxidation – gasification of heavy hydrocarbons such as oil and reforming of hydrocarbons with water. With both of them latest methods, 20-30% of hydrocarbons are used and greenhouse gases are released. In addition, the use of electricity produced by burning fossil fuels does not lead to an ecological production.

However, if the electricity used to produce hydrogen is produced from renewable sources, then we have an environmentally clean production of hydrogen. The subsequent use of this element can be made in industry, in combustion engines and in the movement of vehicles with appropriate technology.

In conclusion, hydrogen in the future is the ecological fuel and will be a means of energy storage and conversely energy production for heating and movement. [2] [3]

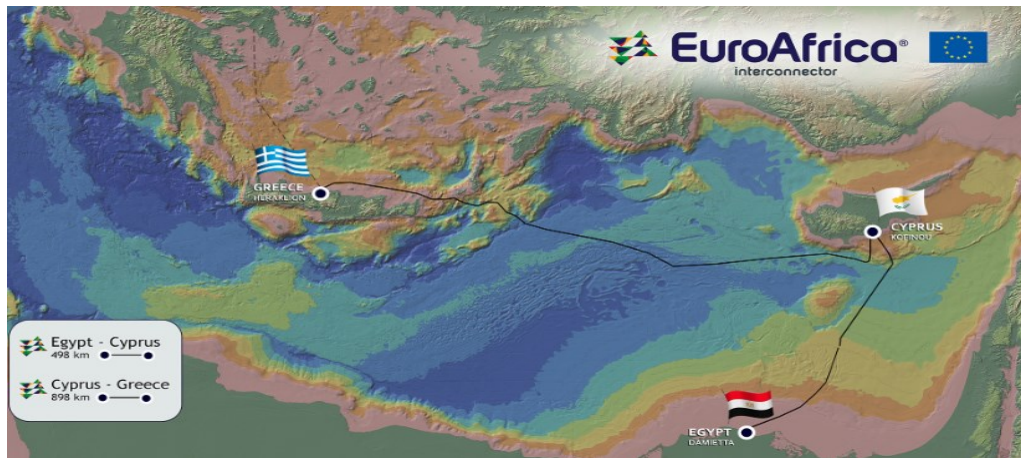
### **The Role of Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean Electrical Connections - Egypt - Cyprus**

The electrical interconnection of Greece with Egypt was a project, which initially concerned the export of energy from Greece to Egypt. However, the development of things leads to the transfer of energy from Egypt to Greece and then to the European Union.

It is about the installation of a double submarine cable with a transmission capacity of 3 GW from the El Sallum area of Egypt to New Makri of Greece bypassing the Exclusive Economic Zone of Libya, with a total cost of 3.569 Billion Euros. The European Union provides funding. Energy transfer will start from the photovoltaic parks that Egypt will develop by 2035, with a total power of 61 GW. We are therefore referring to ecological energy, in accordance with the environmental decisions of the Union, while Egypt covers its needs using natural gas.

The completion of the project by 2026 will bring 3 GW of which 1 will end up in the Union network, 1 will be consumed in Greece and the remaining 1 will be used for the production of green hydrogen, fuel of the future for the needs of the European Union. [14]

Recently, the value of this effort was also upgraded with political initiatives of the European Union and Egypt where the electrical interconnection was considered a project of critical importance.



**Picture 3 - Source: <https://www.euroafrica-interconnector.com/>**

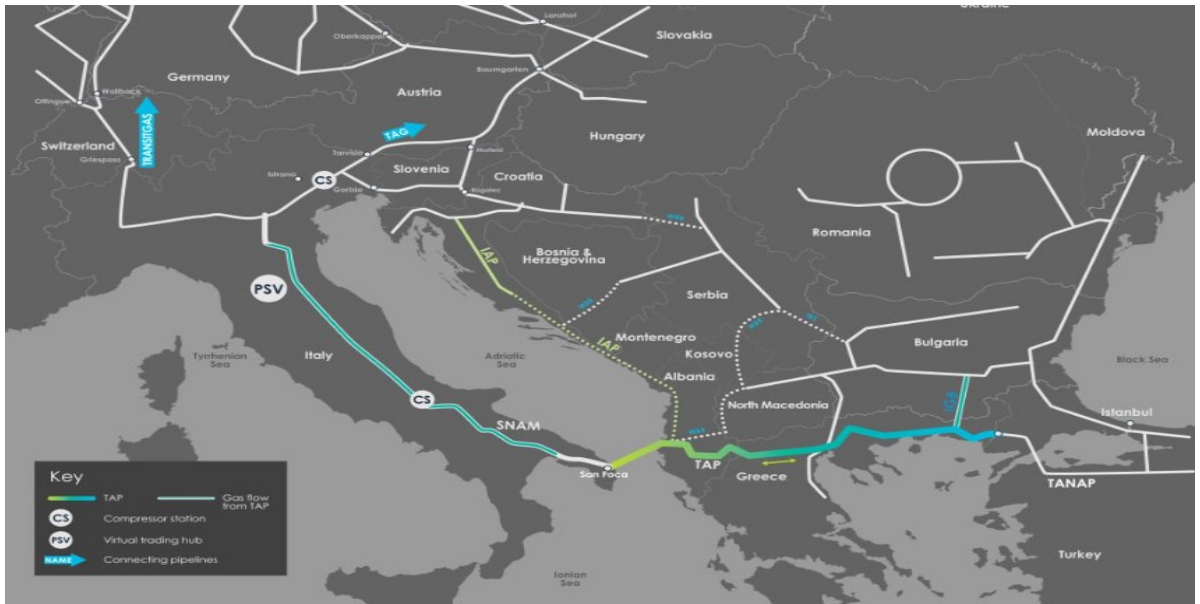
Another connection is the one via Cyprus within the Euroafrica interconnector project. A link with a total length of 1396 km, which connects the three countries with a cable that reaches a depth of up to 3000 meters and carries 2000 MW of energy and meets the needs of 3 million homes.[6] (Picture 3).

### **Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP)**

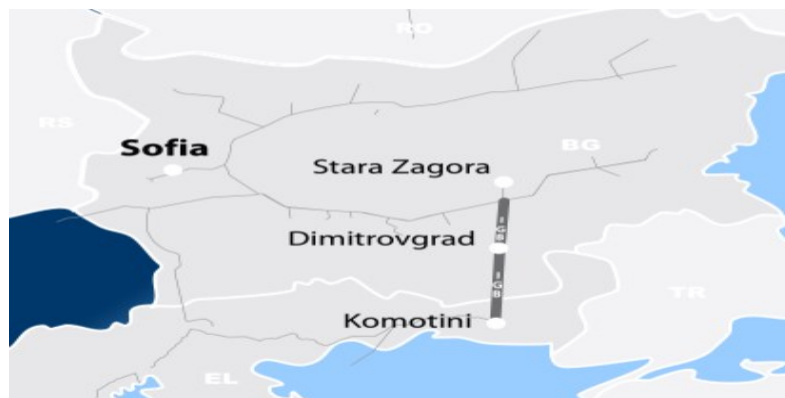
The TAP pipeline starts from Azerbaijan, runs through Turkey, passes through Northern Greece for a length of 550 kilometers and then through Albania after 214 kilometers it reaches the Adriatic Sea where after 105 kilometers it ends in Italy. Thus, natural gas from Azerbaijan is channeled to the Greek network, to the rest of Europe via Italy [7], while with the IGB program of the European Union [8], there is a connecting vertical axis from Greece to Bulgaria. Its length is 182 kilometers and from the city of Komotini, it reaches Stara Zagora. In this way member countries of the Union in the Southeast Europe (Balkans) are connected to natural gas pipelines. (Pictures 4, 5, 6)



Picture 4 - Source: <https://www.tap-ag.com/about-tap/the-big-picture>



Picture 5 - Source: <https://www.tap-ag.com/about-tap/the-big-picture>



Picture 6 - Source: <https://www.icgb.eu/>

## Liquefied Natural Gas – Ship Use



**Picture 7** - Source: <https://www.newmoney.gr/tag/fsru-alexandroupolis/>

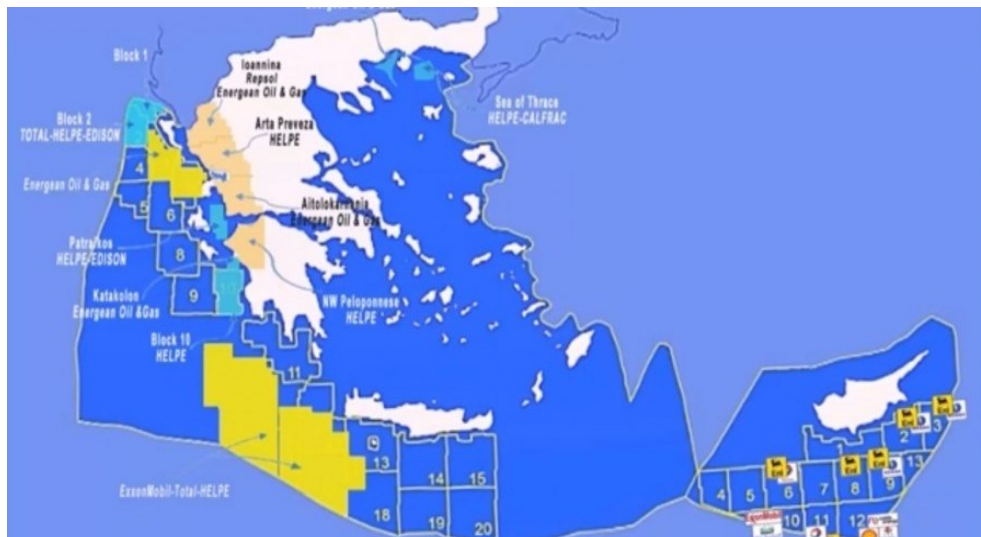
In addition, in the port of Alexandroupoli, in Thrace [1], a station for converting liquefied gas into gaseous form and then entering the pipelines will operate on a special type of ship. Thus Greece from the port of Alexandroupoli, but also with a corresponding facility in its southern part, can import into its own network quantities of gas in liquefied form and supply the European networks as well. (Picture 7)

It welcomes ships carrying liquefied gas and then converts it to be transported by pipeline to all European markets.

### Gas Deposits in Greece and the Republic of Cyprus

According to the estimates of the scientists and the preliminary research carried out by the companies concerned, following tenders of the Greek state, it appears that in the areas west of Greece as well as south of Crete, there are possible natural gas deposits of the order of 600 billion cubic meters. This means that when the extraction works go ahead, Greece, as well as Europe, will have a source of natural gas for several years. [9]

The same also applies to the Republic of Cyprus, where the deposit called “Aphrodite” is estimated to have a capacity of over 140 billion cubic meters. These indications give the two countries the potential to be considered future energy producers. (Picture 8)



**Picture 8** - Source: <https://economico.gr/endeixeis-gia-terastio-koitasma-fysikoy-arioy-notia-tis-kritis-tha-mporoyse-na-kalypsei-tis-anagkes-tis-choras-gia-70-chronia-ti-edexan-oi-seismikes-ereynes-ton-elpe/>

## Common Pipeline (Eastmed Project)

Eastern Mediterranean countries such as the Republic of Cyprus, Israel and Egypt, have demarcated their Exclusive Economic Zones and, following scientific research, discovered natural gas deposits, which, when mined, can be transported to Europe to cover its energy needs and independence from Russia.

For this purpose, the East Med project was prepared for the construction of a pipeline with a total length of 2,200 kilometers, most of it undersea, which will start from the coast of Israel, will join with a section from Egypt, will be directed to the Republic of Cyprus and from there to Greece (Crete) with final destination Italy. This is a huge project in cost and technical difficulty. Initially, the agreements of the involved states were made, with the support of the United States of America. The project was later deemed unprofitable due to cost and is on hold. (Picture 9).

Today's data favors as an alternative solution the liquefaction and transport of gas with special type of ships to ports where it will be transformed again into a gaseous form and will be introduced into a network of pipelines.

In any case, Egypt's "Zor" deposit of 850 billion cubic meters, Israel's "Tamar" deposit with an estimated 280 billion cubic meters provide, if exploited, a future dimension of supply to European markets, either through a pipeline system or by ship transport in liquefied form .

Greece and the Republic of Cyprus are at the center of this effort, which started several years ago, faced, many difficulties and is nowadays in the stage of development with many perspectives.



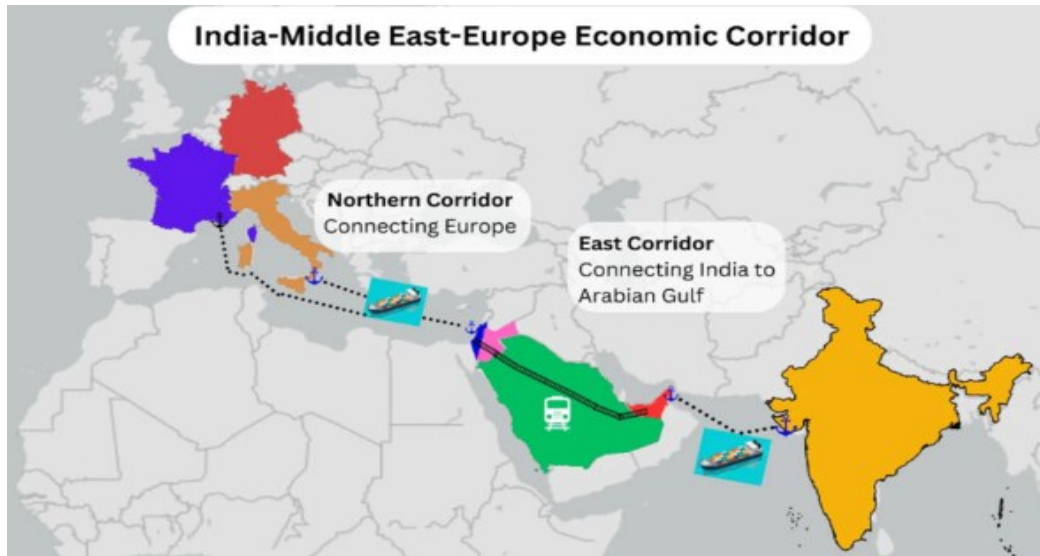
**Picture 9** - Source: <https://www.protothema.gr/economy/article/841878/sumfonia-elladas-kuprou-kai-israil-gia-tin-kataskeui-tou-agogou-eastmed/>

## Conclusion

1. Greece is a geostrategic gateway of Southeast Europe and in the broader sense of all of Europe. This has been imposed by Geography and the broader correlations of forces and interests for many years.

2. As a member of the European Union, it becomes economic as well as border entry [10]. The roads of the would-be giants of Asia such as India [11] and China end in the Eastern Mediterranean and find stability and security through the Greek space. (Pictures 10, 11) At the same time, the country manages the immigration issue through and with the support of the European Union and is, together with the other countries of the European Mediterranean (Republic of Cyprus, Malta, Italy, and Spain), the first line of entry and control.





**Picture 10** - Source: <https://www.studyiq.com/articles/india-middle-east-europe-economic-corridor/>

3. The hosting of the military forces of the United States of America, within the framework of NATO, facilitates allied planning in dealing with the challenges and threats coming from the east of NATO's borders as well as the Middle East.

4. The country's military presence in the Red Sea with a navy frigate [12] to counter pirate and terrorist acts by forces destabilizing international legitimacy, free navigation and the smooth supply of European markets both in energy and other goods, shows the country's great interest in the prevalence of peace and stability. In the same context, the presence of the Greek Patriot Anti-Aircraft System in Saudi Arabia [13], to protect oil facilities from asymmetric aerial threats, in a country that supplies hydrocarbons to the markets of the West, is included in the same context.



**Picture 11** - Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/greece-gateway-to-asia-indias-gateway-to-europe/article67864162.ece>

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## II. REGIONAL SECURITY



### The Contribution of Northern Greece to Europe's Energy Security

*Stella BOURBOUTELI (Greece)*

#### Introduction

In recent years, Europe has been facing enormous challenges, both in terms of geostrategic challenges and energy insecurity. The war in Ukraine was the trigger for Europe to emerge from the lethargy it had been in for decades, namely that its energy future would always be secure. The economic crisis in the Eurozone and the ensuing energy crisis brought European officials face to face with historic decisions. Energy independence in gas, oil and critical raw materials is a one-way street in Europe's decision to move to a 'green, digital, carbon-free era.

The challenge with history has begun, and all decision-makers should leave a positive footprint on future generations. In this uncertain climate, Greece has a pivotal role to play in Europe's energy future on the one hand, and on the other hand, to highlight its geopolitical role in South-Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean. Greece has many advantages. In particular, the role of Northern Greece in the Union's energy supply is proving to be particularly important. Firstly, its geographical location helps it to supply Europe with natural gas by pipeline, which is very important for the countries of the Southern Corridor.

In addition, the modern LNG regasification infrastructure in specially designed floating platforms enables Greece to receive energy cargoes from diversified sources of supply. As everyone knows of course, natural gas plays a pivotal and transitional role in the Union's energy security, as Europe's ultimate goal is the complete decarbonisation of fossil fuels by 2050 and the dynamic participation of renewable energy sources in its energy mix. In view of all that is required by European environmental regulations, as well as for the evolutionary and developmental course of the European economy with zero pollutants as its main objective, Northern Greece seems to be an ideal framework for the implementation of major projects.

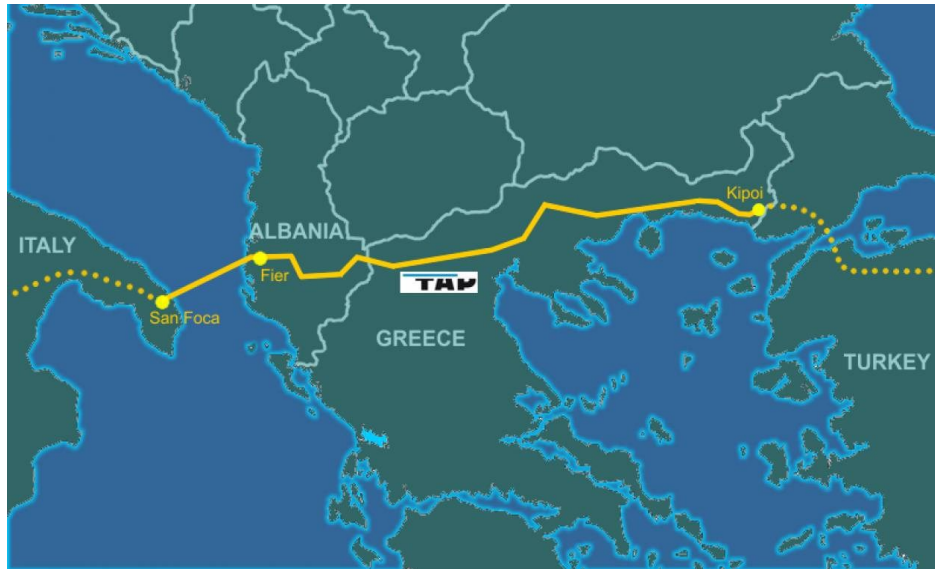
Starting with the planning of large offshore wind farms in the Thracian Sea, the "South Kavala Underground Storage", a potential natural gas storage project in a depleted field and the outstanding project of carbon storage in Prinos "Prinos CO2 Storage" in the wider Kavala region, put the region of Northern Greece in the frame of geopolitical developments.

#### The Politics of Pipelines

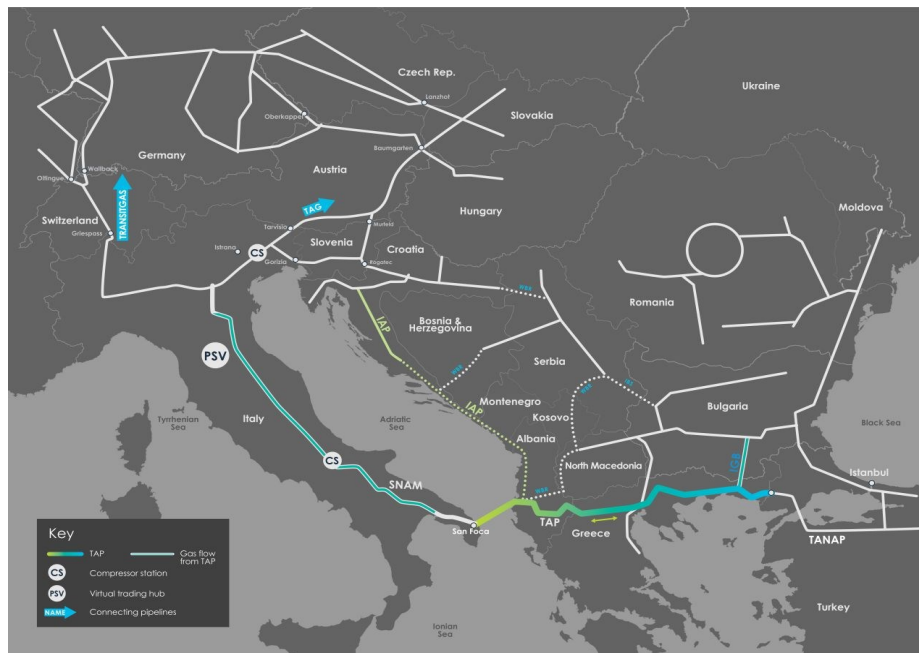
One of the most important aspects of the Greek energy policy launched in 2011 was the careful planning and implementation of gas pipelines, which would contribute to the country's upgrade to a key energy hub in Europe. With this in mind, a very serious effort was launched in the period between 2010-2014 to shape infrastructure and pipelines that ended up being included and subsequently funded by the "Joint European Programmes PCIs". Years later we see the TAP (Trans Adriatic Pipeline), the Greece-Bulgaria Interconnector IGB

and the Alexandroupolis FSRU playing a leading role in the energy and diplomatic game that international developments dictate.<sup>1</sup>

Through the TAP pipeline, with an initial potential of 10 bcm per year and the potential to grow to 20 bcm, natural gas is transported from the Shah Deniz field located in Azerbaijan in the Caspian Sea to Europe. From there it crosses the northern side of Turkey via the TANAP (Trans-Anatolian Pipeline) pipeline, enters Greece and then Albania with a final destination in the South of Italy. It is very important to mention that the TAP pipeline is connected to the IGB ensuring the energy supply of Bulgaria. Moreover, with the prospect of being connected to other pipelines in the European territory, it offers the possibility of supplying natural gas to the markets of South-Eastern Europe and the Balkans. **Maps 1-2** show exactly the route of the pipeline.



**Figure 1 - Source:** <https://cdn.bbmd.gr/media/news/2018/03/28/872336/main/tap.png>

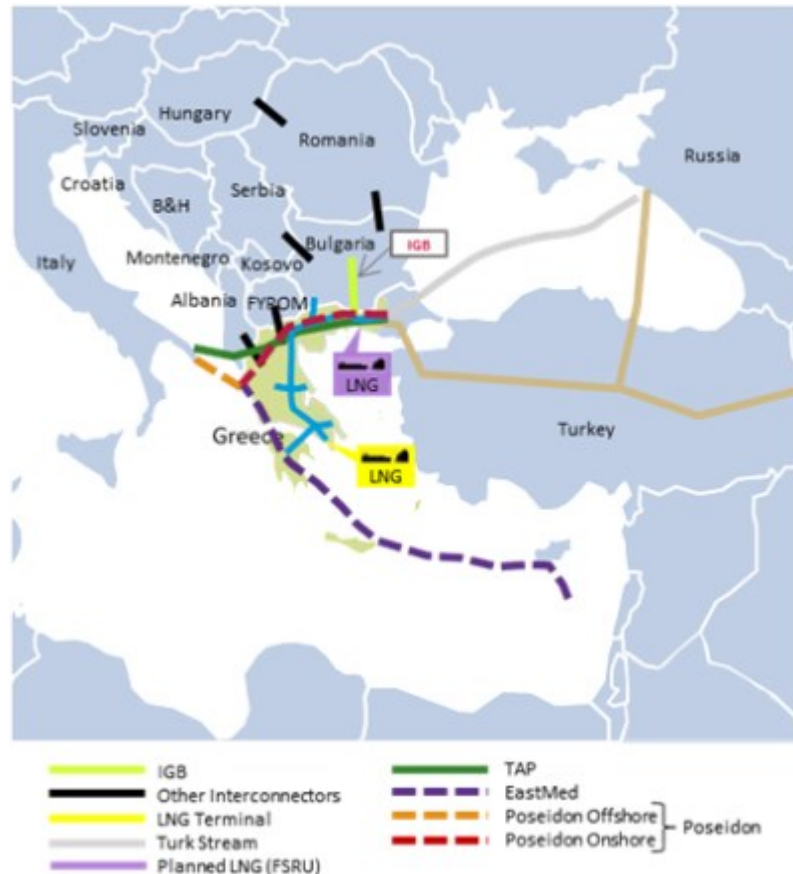


**Figure 2 -**

**Source:** [https://www.tap-ag.gr/uploads/1280/c4287b84-485d-557f-a084-b85582cd7248/3378058817/MAP\\_The%20big%20Picture%20%282%29.jpg](https://www.tap-ag.gr/uploads/1280/c4287b84-485d-557f-a084-b85582cd7248/3378058817/MAP_The%20big%20Picture%20%282%29.jpg)

<sup>1</sup>Dalis Sotiris, 2020, *Mare Nostrum: Power Shifts in the Geopolitical Map of the Mediterranean*, p. 385-386, Athens, Papazisis Publications.

As mentioned above, the TAP pipeline connects in the area of Komotini with the IGB interconnector, which terminates in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria. The IGB pipeline is a high-security project for the energy supply not only of Bulgaria but also of the surrounding countries such as North Macedonia, Romania and Serbia<sup>2</sup>. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Balkan countries had to act quickly and efficiently to create an "energy alliance", which aims to diversify not only the source of gas but also the supply route. Russia, playing the game of energy blackmail, paved the way for Azeri gas to play a leading role in the Balkans' energy sufficiency. It is worth noting that the IGB is a two-way pipeline, enabling Greece not only to supply gas to the countries of the Vertical Corridor, but also to receive cargoes from any energy player, which then through LNG terminals, such as Revithoussa in Attica, can supply gas to countries in the wider region<sup>3</sup>. **Map 3** shows the route of the IGB which has an annual capacity of 3 bcm per year. We should mention of course that the Interconnector Pipeline connected to the Alexandroupolis FSRU gives the possibility of development to 5 bcm per year, further promoting the decoupling from Russian gas.



**Figure 3 -**

Source: [https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fdepa-int.gr%2Fagogos-greece-bulgaria%](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fdepa-int.gr%2Fagogos-greece-bulgaria%2F&psig=AOvVaw0_yQxtR17oILg3X_ioCUFJ&ust=1712082707791000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBiQjRxFwoTCLiM5J7ToYUDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAR)

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fdepa-int.gr%2Fagogos-greece-bulgaria%2F&psig=AOvVaw0\\_yQxtR17oILg3X\\_ioCUFJ&ust=1712082707791000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBiQjRxFwoTCLiM5J7ToYUDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAR](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fdepa-int.gr%2Fagogos-greece-bulgaria%2F&psig=AOvVaw0_yQxtR17oILg3X_ioCUFJ&ust=1712082707791000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBiQjRxFwoTCLiM5J7ToYUDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAR)

Next, the new floating LNG storage and regasification plant located off the Thracian Sea, a few miles away from Alexandroupolis, the capital of Evros, is considered a key project in the effort to decouple from Russian gas and simultaneously import LNG from diversified sources such as the US. The project is, of course, a geostrategic upgrade of the port of Alexandroupolis which is finally being recognized for its strategic importance in the wider Balkan and Eastern Mediterranean region. The floating platform is designed to be connected to an undersea and onshore pipeline to transport high pressure gas from the "Greek Gas Transmission System" to the country's networks, but primarily it is planned to supply gas to countries in South-Eastern

<sup>2</sup><https://www.capital.gr/oikonomia/3661786/ta-xarakteristika-tou-agogou-igb-pou-egkainiazetai-simera-sti-boulgaria/>

<sup>3</sup><https://energypress.gr/news/xekinaei-amfidromi-roi-ston-agogo-aerioy-voylgarias-elladas>



Europe, as a leader in initiatives to take action against climate change, is shaping a framework to support entrepreneurship based on zero-emission technologies. The legislation which has been presented “NetZero Industry Act” aims in this direction, offering Europe’s energy system a secure and sustainable future. With this target, the Commission is working to strengthen the Union’s capacity to capture 50 million tons of carbon dioxide in key areas of the European territory by 2030. The carbon injections are expected to take place in depleted gas and oil fields<sup>6</sup>. In other words, the higher the cost of CO2 emission rights (around 100 euros per ton), the more urgent the need to look for locations with potential benefits.<sup>7</sup>

So Greece is trying to create a competitive advantage in new carbon footprint reduction technologies by presenting a highly ambitious project that aims to contribute to the energy transition of the European Union. This is the planned carbon storage in Prinos “Prinos CO2 Storage”, an area on the island of Thassos, in the prefecture of Kavala. This project is intended to play a catalytic role in Europe’s efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from the atmosphere, since this technology is based on the capture, transport and storage of carbon dioxide produced by energy-intensive industrial plants such as the aluminium and steel industries and power plants. According to Energean studies, the potential CO2 storage capacity could reach 3 million tonnes over a period of 25 years<sup>8</sup>. This site will be the first in the whole of South-Eastern Europe, a milestone for Europe’s future free of greenhouse gas pollutants. Equally importantly, CCS technology has the potential to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.<sup>9</sup>

For the European Union, the projects for “Underground Natural Gas Storage”, are a matter of major interest, given the unstable energy context it has been experiencing in recent years. With Regulation EU/2022/1032 the Commission makes these facilities of strategic importance and therefore seeks the presence of such infrastructure throughout the European territory<sup>10</sup>. The usefulness of this infrastructure is demonstrated by the fact that it can cope with fluctuations in demand for natural gas in a highly variable environment. This means that it is possible to store natural gas at times when demand is low and, on the other hand, to take the necessary withdrawals when there is a great need for energy supply. In addition, it enables the State to take advantage in the most profitable way of opportunities from price differentiation, which means that it can store gas and sell it when prices are high.<sup>11</sup>

The South Kavala region could host such a project of great importance for energy security and security of supply, exploiting the depleted field and turning it into a gas storage facility. The Greek state, however, seems reluctant to respond to the implementation of such a project. Already the Commission has set an obligation for all European states to maintain a reserve of 15% of the average consumption of the last five years by 2022. Unfortunately, Greece decided to turn to Italy to meet this obligation, with the result that the cost is very high.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, another dynamic investment comes with the upcoming installation of offshore wind farms in the Thracian Sea. These are two projects with a total capacity of around 600 MW. Almost 13 years have passed since Greek governments put projects of this magnitude on the shelf and today, as we face the major issue of the Climate Crisis and the aim to decarbonize Europe by 2050, the participation of RES in the Union’s energy mix is inevitable. Greece’s goal is to have them operational by 2030, so that the country can become a pole of attraction for investment capital and in turn contribute to the production of green energy.

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.naftemporiki.gr/maritime/1451688/e-e-epitachynsi-sti-desmeysi-kai-apothikeysi-anthraka/>.

<sup>7</sup>[https://www.energymag.gr/energeia/68874\\_edeyep-simantika-ofeli-apo-tin-desmeysi-kai-apothikeysi-dioxeidiy-toy-anthraka](https://www.energymag.gr/energeia/68874_edeyep-simantika-ofeli-apo-tin-desmeysi-kai-apothikeysi-dioxeidiy-toy-anthraka).

<sup>8</sup><https://www.energean.com/el/home/projects>.

<sup>9</sup>[https://www.businessdaily.gr/oikonomia/82336\\_apothiki-dioxeidiy-anthraka-ston-prino-me-eyropaiki-hrimatodotisi](https://www.businessdaily.gr/oikonomia/82336_apothiki-dioxeidiy-anthraka-ston-prino-me-eyropaiki-hrimatodotisi).

<sup>10</sup><https://herema.gr/el/ccs-ugs/underground-gas-storage/>.

<sup>11</sup>[https://www.iene.gr/energy-development2010/articlefiles/4thSession/nikolaou\\_k.pdf](https://www.iene.gr/energy-development2010/articlefiles/4thSession/nikolaou_k.pdf).

<sup>12</sup><https://energypress.gr/news/taiped-epistrefei-sto-dimosio-tin-ypogeia-apothiki-tis-kabalas-o-rolis-tis-raaey-kai-i-hameni>.

## II. REGIONAL SECURITY



### **“Regional” Conflicts - Weakening Global Security and Creating a Favorable Framework for Changing the World Order**

*PhD. Eng. Stelian TEODORESCU*

*“I know notwith what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.”*

*Albert Einstein*

The nature of armed conflicts and violence in many countries has seen substantial changes recently, with conflicts now tending to be much more deadly and, of course, generated by various extremist-terrorist groups, at the regional level, rather by aggressor states.

Through a thorough analysis at a global level, we can say that there is a significant increase in conflicts and violence, with many of these generated today by non-state actors such as political militias, international criminal and terrorist groups, but also with unresolved regional tensions. Currently, we can say that in certain parts of the world we are witnessing the disappearance of the rule of law, the increase of absent state institutions, or co-opted by various malign entities, obtaining illicit economic gains and increasing resource scarcity, exacerbated by climate change, all of which are becoming dominant drivers of hybrid conflicts.

Since 2008, many countries have experienced violent conflicts, these becoming increasingly fragmented due to the increasing number of armed groups involved. Due to the regionalization of conflicts and, especially, due to the intensification of those geopolitical interests to create a new world order that interconnects political, socio-economic, military and security issues across borders, it can be said that most conflicts have become longer in duration and very expensive and last but not least less receptive to traditional forms of resolution.

The most affected region, currently, is the Middle East and North Africa where there are over 45 armed conflicts in the following territories: Cyprus, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Turkey,



*Source: <https://ro.linkedin.com/pulse/aspecte-de-securitate-ale-statelor-riverane-la-marea-georgiana-golea>*



Yemen and Western Sahara. Most conflicts are not international, involving a multitude of armed non-state actors and foreign interventions by Western powers, Russia and neighboring countries – except for the conflicts taking place in Egypt and Turkey. “Syria is the most affected country in the region. There are several overlapping internal conflicts taking place in the country – involving numerous armed groups who fight against the government and against each other”, as Dr. Chiara Redealli, researcher at the Geneva Academy, explains.

Africa occupies second place in terms of the number of armed conflicts in the region, with over 35 internal armed conflicts taking place in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan South and Sudan. Several armed groups – fighting against government forces and/or against each other – are involved in these conflicts. Certain Western international actors and/or neighboring countries are intervening in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria and Somalia.

Asia is the theater of 19 internal armed conflicts in which 19 armed groups are involved. These are happening in Afghanistan, India, Myanmar, Pakistan and the Philippines. Two international armed conflicts are also taking place in the region – respectively between India and Pakistan and between India and China. “Pakistan and the Philippines are topping the list with six internal conflicts for each country. In Pakistan, government forces are fighting with different armed groups operating throughout the territory, particularly Taliban-affiliated groups in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and independence fighters in Balochistan. In the Philippines, most of the internal conflicts take place in the Mindanao region, where government forces are fighting against several armed groups including the Moro National Liberation Front, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, the Maute Group and the Abu Sayyaf Group”, as Dr. Chiara Redealli explains to us.

The following military occupations account for the majority of armed conflicts taking place in Europe, four out of seven conflicts: Russia currently occupies Crimea (Ukraine), Transnistria (Moldova), as well as South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Georgia), while Nagorno Karabakh still is the basis of the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Europe is also the theater of a major international armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia and two other internal armed conflicts in Ukraine in which they oppose government forces with those of the self-proclaimed “People’s Republics” of Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine. “Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has not changed our classification of armed conflicts in the region. Indeed, according to the criteria, there has been one international armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine and two internal conflicts in Ukraine since 2014. What has changed, since February 2022, is the intensity of the violence and its impact on the civilian population. This means, according to our analysis, that however war crimes could have already taken place before March 2022,” as Dr. Chiara Redealli pointed out.

In Latin America, the six internal armed conflicts taking place in the region are split equally between Mexico and Colombia. “While Colombia went through one of the longest internal armed conflicts in modern times and is still the scene of three such conflicts, Mexico is characterized by three internal armed conflicts involving gang drug cartels. It is the first time that we classify armed violence involving criminal organizations as an internal armed conflict, and we have done so considering the level of organization of the cartels and the intensity of the violence,” as Dr. Chiara Redealli pointed out.

Technological advances contribute to the development of the whole world, but also to changing the nature of conflicts. Thus, there are the biggest concerns about both the environment and the level of use of the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) and cyber-attacks, all of which are categorized as more precise, harder to attribute and easier to carry out by groups with small herds and maybe even some “lone wolves”.

As plausible arguments we can say that, according to statistical data provided by IBM X-Force Incident Response and Intelligence Services, the number of cyber-attacks doubled in the first half of 2019 compared to the second half of 2018, with the majority targeting manufacturers, oil and gas companies and educational institutes. The owners of critical infrastructures are especially at risk, because malicious actors are trying to target airport control towers, nuclear power plants, hospitals and dams.

By 2020, over a hundred cyber incidents have been identified with the potential to undermine international peace and security. Such attacks would cause substantial damage and casualties. On the other hand, advances in artificial intelligence and other technologies also provide new preventive tools and strategies for police and counterintelligence structures to better prevent attacks and identify perpetrators. But here too there are risks. For example, so-called predictive analytics of police and security structures can produce their own disadvantages, including embedded racial and religious biases, which can generate radicalization to violent extremism.

As a result of such an evolutionary context, today we are witnessing the disintegration of the

international architecture of arms management, supervision and control, which until yesterday supported global stability and transparency. However, continued existence of nuclear weapons is a growing threat to the survival of humanity. While the number of nuclear weapons has declined from over 60,000 during the Cold War to about 14,000 today, nuclear weapons are more powerful today. At the same time, relations of understanding and mediation among nuclear-weapon states appear to be breaking down, and divisions over the pace and extent of disarmament are growing significantly. Total elimination of nuclear weapons can still be achieved, but it will require a renewed commitment of trust and cooperation among the world's most powerful countries.

It should not be forgotten that in 1945 the UN was conceived primarily as a tool for managing interstate relations while the world was reeling from the horrors of two world wars. While today's world is in many ways more secure, the nature of the threat has evolved considerably, new threats, more complex and sophisticated require complex answers and bold, as well as strengthened collaboration between states, as well as between the private sector and civil society within states. Institutional boundaries must also be overcome, so that political partners, for human rights and development partners to work together.

A big part of the planet is engulfed in violent conflict, not just the crises in Ukraine and the Middle East, which dominate international media and political attention, but also ongoing raging violence – with unimaginable civilian suffering – for example in South Sudan, Yemen, Syria and many other places around the globe.

We can say that pervasive violence remains a sad reality globally, and it is important to understand that all wars characterized as “regional” are in fact not just regional. That is, some localized wars in certain areas or regions today may actually be geopolitical challenges capable of rapidly spreading out of control, beyond the region where they broke out, even involving various great powers from other regions of the world.

In this context, we can say that there are two essential factors that I believe today contribute to the exact identification of these dangerous hot spots: firstly, the direct or indirect involvement of a superpower in the war, and secondly, one of the combatants holds an arsenal of nuclear weapons. An edifying example of this is the case of the war in Ukraine, where one of the combatants, Russia, is a superpower participating in a military conflict, presumably to expand its sphere of influence and, according to the Russian leaders, to protect their borders from a perceived NATO invasion.

The current crisis in the Middle East also fits the criteria for defining a regional conflict apparently as a dangerous war, which may have the potential to spread in highly unpredictable ways to other regions of the world and may generate special effects in all areas of daily life.

In this situation, the major global powers also have a serious stake in the outcome of the now-declared war, which has gone from a savage terrorist attack by Hamas on mostly civilian southern Israel to a massive counter-offensive by Israel's military forces in the Strip Gaza. It is very clear and very important to point out that the parties interested in the outcome of this regional conflict include Iran, Lebanon and other Arab nations, as well as Russia, the US and other allies of Israel.

And here, as in Ukraine, one of the direct combatants is a nuclear power. And to be very clear, if Israel considers the threat of its destruction potentially imminent, especially in a region where it is not universally recognized that it even has the right to exist, the use of nuclear weapons for self-defense would not be excluded.

In short, the current state of regional wars is dire for all the civilian peoples of the world caught in the crossfire. What is new now, however, is that the regional wars in Ukraine and Israel/Gaza Strip make us think about the dire prospect of other similar regional conflicts and, at worst, the outbreak of a third nuclear war from one of these crisis areas.

I think the time has come to remove prejudices and understand the reality and the risks that can be generated in the most dangerous hotspots in the world such as Ukraine and the Middle East. This will require complex and difficult challenges and equally understood by all regional and global actors. First of all, this process must include Russia and Ukraine who must agree on a ceasefire with certain concessions and, most importantly, the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine. Last but not least, Hamas will have to be eliminated as a terrorist organization and presence in the Middle East region, which it proved to be especially on September 7, 2023, and Israel will likely have to withdraw from Palestinian settlements such as the West Bank. We can hope for the realization of such a wish only if there is a real global commitment from all international actors to put above of all their own interests the withdrawal from the brink of a third world war, most likely nuclear.

## II. REGIONAL SECURITY



### Rape as a Weapon of War: The Case of Ukraine

*Ioanna SANTA (Greece)*

#### Abstract

This paper delves into the complex issues of “Conflict Related Sexual Violence” (CRSV), with a particular focus on rape. It begins with a holistic examination of the origins of violence and provides a historical overview of the use of rape as a weapon of war, and continues with the causes and consequences of rape in the community receiving the CRSVs during and after the war. In short, it offers an analysis of the Ukrainian case study, examining on one hand the occurrence and impact of rape following Russia’s illegal invasion on 24 February 2022 and on the other the necessary actions to be taken to rebuild society after the end of the war.

**Key-words:** CRSV, rape, Ukraine, social impact, international community.

#### Introduction

In contemporary society, sexual violence has become a pervasive occurrence in many communities worldwide. This phenomenon finds its roots predominantly in gender inequality and the prevailing patriarchal framework and stereotypes, which endows men with specific traits and privileges such as strength, authority, and valor. Conversely, women are often characterized as timid, subservient, and vulnerable, assuming roles primarily as caregivers reliant on the protection of a male. Consequently, an exaggerated number of men perpetrate acts of sexual violence, while women endure its harrowing effects as victims across the globe.

Sexual violence persists during times of both peace and conflict, although with heightened frequency and intensity during wartime. Thus, instances of rape and other forms of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) are not isolated incidents but rather



Source: <https://www.ziarulnational.md/noi-marturii-despre-violurile-comise-de-soldatii-rusi-in-ucraina-cand-au-vazut-ca-vor-fi-infranti-au-inceput-sa-violeze/>

to acknowledge that not all armed factions engage in such unacceptable acts; however, communities characterized by significant gender inequalities are more susceptible to committing CRSV within conflict zones. The motivations underlying these actions are multifaceted and depend on the objectives pursued by the respective armed groups.

Crucially, individuals' perceptions of gender roles and norms in peacetime significantly influence their behavior during periods of conflict. This underscores the link between social attitudes towards gender and the manifestation of violence in wartime.

### **History of Rape in Wartime**

Mass rape and the sexual killing of civilians appear to have become normalized in certain contexts, suggesting that rape during wartime is perceived as a regrettably commonplace aspect of human behavior. The historical prevalence of rape in armed conflicts underlines its status as a longstanding phenomenon rather than a contemporary issue. Indeed, historical records, including those from Hebrew, Anglo-Saxon, and Chinese chronicles, document instances of rape perpetrated against women because of military defeat. Medieval sieges, for example, often ended up in acts of sexual violence and mutilation directed at the defeated, defenders and surrenders (Littlewood, 1997).

Beyond its historical and factual contexts, rape has also been portrayed in mythology as a tool used by powerful men to subjugate and dominate vulnerable women. This narrative further emphasizes the established nature of sexual violence as a means of exerting control and asserting dominance over marginalized individuals within society.

One cannot overlook the staggering numbers of mass rape victims, such as the 600,000 Muslim women in Bosnia or the 900,000 raped women in Germany by the Allies after the end of World War II (DW, 2020). Similarly, rape was widespread on both sides during the Vietnam War, and among the one and a half million Tutsi civilians who were raped in Rwanda in 1994 (Littlewood, 1997). Reports from Asia Watch indicate that Indian soldiers in Kashmir engaged in systematic rape during house-to-house searches, aiming to sow discord and humiliation within the community through sexual violence. These examples underline the widespread and systematic nature of rape as a weapon of war, used to punish and humiliate entire communities.

### **Causes and Consequences**

To commence, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights defines as Conflict related sexual violence *“any violence, physical or psychological carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality. This includes rape and attempted rape, forced nudity, sexual mutilation, sexual slavery and forcing a person to perform sexual acts”* (UN Security Council Resolution, 2008). Rape or collective sexual violence represents the most blatant manifestation of men's power over women, often wielded as a form of political domination over women. A scrutiny of gender portrayals reveals women depicted as asexual, defenseless, and innocent beings in need of protection. Conversely, men are portrayed as fighters, soldiers, and protectors, frequently engaging in sexual activities, and regarding women's bodies as trophies (Littlewood, 1997).

The central issue is that CRSV is deliberately employed as a systematic weapon of political violence by armed groups to terrorize, humiliate, punish, and decimate targeted population (Meger S., 2011). Elisabeth Wood has proposed a typology of sexual violence in conflict, shedding light in three reasons that CRSV happens: opportunity, strategy, and practice. As regards opportunity, Woods refers to the perpetrator's individual and often spontaneous reasons for engaging in sexual violence, while the strategy aspect is driven by commander's orders, which are intended to achieve specific target. Finally, the concept of practice describes sexual violence as a societal norm, stemming from horizontal social pressures and tactic understanding among members of an armed unit (Wood, E.J, 2014).

Not only women but also men are rape victims in most conflicts. The purposes are the same, armed groups want to humiliate, dehumanize, and objectify male civilians, make them to feel “females” something that in the patriarchal society is related with shame and weakness.

These acts have profound impacts on individuals as well as in entire community. Primarily, rape causes physical consequences such as genital trauma, sexual transmitted infections HIV/AIDS sometimes intentionally, undesirable pregnancy, maternal mortality, and other related health issues. In psychological aspect rape can lead to the development of anxiety disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and increased suicidal ideation among survivors (Stark L., Mukwege D., e.t, 2022). Furthermore, the economic and social impact is also deep and enduring. In many cultures, rape touches core themes of honor, shame, and stigma, in most cases victims are marginalized from their community or re-targeted for violence, usually domestic violence. Sometimes victims isolated by their spouses or experience rejections and blame from their family for

what was happened to them. Additionally, rape that aim ethnic cleansing causing long-term social disruption, while children born from rape encounter stigmatization, social exclusion, and an increasing risk of abandonment and further violence. Consequently, the bonds within communities are fractured, heightening the risk of conflict recurrence during peacetime, and contributing to the destabilization of societal and economic structures, hindering prospects for recovery and progress.

### **The Case of Ukraine**

Given the increased levels of propaganda surrounding the conflict in Ukraine, caution must be taken in the dissemination of information. However, according to the Human Rights Watch report (2023), from 24 February to 21 October 2022, 86 instances of sexual violence, predominantly perpetrated by Russian forces, have been documented. These cases include rape, gang rape, forced nudity, and forced public stripping. Illustratively, a woman recounted her harrowing experience of enduring repeated rape while seeking refuge with her family in a school in the Kharkiv region. Additionally, she reported being subjected to physical assault and having her face, hair and neck cut. Such violence targeted civilians indiscriminately, serving to instill fear and exert control over the populace.

By September 2023, Ukrainian authorities documented 231 cases of CRSV, in involving individuals aged 19 to 83, perpetrated by Russian forces in occupied areas of Ukraine and within Russia detection facilities (Human Rights Watch, 2024). In each instance, the OPG identified 30 Russian militaries responsible for committing rape and sexual violence during the conflict. All 30 men have been prosecuted, with two receiving formal sentences for 12 and 10 years in prison, respectively (New Lines Institute, 2023). There appears to be a consistent pattern in the behavior of Russian forces, in every occupied territory in the east and south of Ukraine, whenever the Russian military was stationed, Russian forces used sexual violence to subdue communities and break family and community bonds. Moreover, reports from different regions indicate similarities, suggesting a systematic use of rape by Russian military, potential amounting act of genocide. Additionally, there is significant evidence implicating Russian commanders in issuing orders for their soldiers to rape Ukrainian civilians.

The significant challenge lie in how Ukrainian authorities will investigate cases of CRSV, and how the international community will help Ukrainian society in its recovery efforts. Beginning with the international community they must adopt a survivor-oriented and justice-oriented approach, prioritized the rapid social reconstruction of Ukraine's traumatized communities. Both international and national judicial systems must safeguard victims from pseudo-psychiatric diagnoses, which may be used by soldier perpetrators diagnosed with PTSD to evade accountability by claiming to be victims of war "trauma" in general. Moreover, during all peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine it is crucial not only to incorporate the "Women, Peace, and Security Agenda" but also to integrate a feminist perspective to prevent future war crimes such as CRSV. By emphasizing these perspectives, the international community can contribute to building a more just and resilient society in Ukraine, fostering sustainable peace and security for all its citizens.

Furthermore, the Ukrainian government must adopt a victim-oriented and state-centered policy, offering free legal counseling and comprehensive psychosocial and healthcare support. Concerns about the potential success of illegal Russian occupation heighten apprehensions regarding the rights of victims residing in these areas. Hence, Ukraine should draw insights from the challenges to justice encountered in neighboring Bosnia and proactively address them.

Numerous obstacles remain, with the major issue revolving around sharing, collecting, and presented evidence and documents. Some victims avoid testifying out of fear, but without such evidence and testimony, holding the perpetrators accountable becomes difficult. However, it is perfectly understandable for individuals to be afraid to testify. In addition to psychological and physical barriers, fear of Russian reprisal, Ukrainian sexism and corruption of Ukrainian law enforcement agencies act as notable deterrents. These systemic challenges must be addressed to ensure that justice prevails.

### **Conclusions**

As evident from the discussion, CRSV represents a significant but often overlooked issue within the realm of international relations and strategic studies, despite its frequent use as a military tactic. Rape causes not only immediate harm but also confusion and despair to affected communities, hindering their ability to recover and restore normality. This vulnerability leaves societies susceptible to manipulation and exploitation by both state and non-state actors driven by economic and other interests.

The task of rebuilding war-ravaged communities is major and requires a holistic perspective that prioritizes the well-being of the citizens who form the backbone of the state. The case of Ukraine serves us a litmus

test for the application of universally recognized human rights principles and the efficacy of legal systems in swiftly punishing perpetrators. Also provides an opportunity to reassess the laws governing war and the protection of civilians, which often seem inadequate.

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### III. EURASIA



## New Economic Realities Shape the Eurasian Economic and Strategic Space

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While the world has been rocked by a series of financial, economic, strategic and security crises in the past ten years, other processes of a constructive nature have been progressing unhindered. The rise of China as the world's largest industrial economy, and with it the rise of many Asian nations, has continued and accelerated despite major impediments like the trade war with the U.S., COVID 19 pandemic, and the global inflation crisis following the launching of the war in Ukraine by Russia in February 2022. Another such process was the expansion of the Belt and Road Initiative to include 152 nations in 2023 by the time of the celebration of the tenth anniversary of its launching in 2013. The Expansion of both the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation westward to include Iran as a full member, and Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Qatar as observes, and more importantly, the expansion of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) to include Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Ethiopia as full members, all have contributed to the creation of a new Eurasian reality which is more determined by geoeconomics rather than geopolitics. The withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan in August 2021, symbolically marked the end of more than 200 years of the geopolitical Great Game. The fact that China rushed to establish formal relations with the Taliban-controlled government in Kabul was more than a symbolic gesture.



Source: <https://www.estica.ro/article/care-eurasia/>

### China as the Industrial Superpower

A number of indicators published in the 2023 OECD Trade in Value Added (TiVA <https://www.oecd.org/sti/ind/measuring-trade-in-value-added.htm>) and analysed by Professor Richard Baldwin (<https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/china-worlds-sole-manufacturing-superpower-line-sketch-rise>) should send shivers down the spines of geopolitically-minded Western leaders who wish to see China's economy slowing down or grinding to a halt.

First, China continues to be the world's largest manufacturing economy, holding 35% of the world

manufacturing. All G-7 countries combined cannot reach this level, with the U.S. keeping 12%. China is also the absolute leader in creation of added value in manufacturing, holding 29% of the world's total, with the U.S. lagging behind with 16% and the rest of the G-7 with 17%. Another extremely important indicator is the exposure to foreign supply chains, and how dependent the Western industrial nations are on China even in their own industrial production as their imports of intermediate goods from China has increased dramatically since 2002. China by now have built an astounding industrial supply chain at home. It has also achieved an absolute monopoly of certain sensitive sectors like the refining and supply of rare-earth metals with a 95% control of the global supply <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/western-miners-look-for-premium-pricing-rare-earth-metals-break-china-grip-2023-11-08/> . This means that the U.S., for example, became by 2022 three times more reliant on China than China is on the U.S. as the source of industrial inputs.

On telling example of this process was revealed in December 2023 in South Korean media (<https://www.chosun.com/english/industry-en/2023/12/14/27JQZ4GT6TP2SEIIGRIDNSEWPU/>).

Which reported that “Korea has suffered a trade deficit with its biggest market China this year for the first time in 31 years”. According to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy, Korea's exports to China totalled \$114 billion in the first 11 months of 2023, while imports amounted to \$132 billion, resulting in an \$18 billion deficit. One of the explanations given for the deficit against the Chinese market is that China no longer needs to import a large number of industrial and technological components from South Korea, because these can be produced now domestically in China. What this factor means is that decoupling by the West and other industrial powers from China has become impossible.

By 2030, China is intending to become the dominant manufacturer in such areas as aerospace equipment, aircraft, high-end CNC machines and basic manufacturing equipment, robots, engineering machinery and biomedicine industries. China is already the world leader in construction sectors like high-speed and standard-gauge rail and associated infrastructure such as tunnelling and bridge building. China is also the world leader in hydropower construction. It is making major advances in commercialization of its domestically-developed third generation nuclear power plants (with two plants in Karachi, Pakistan) and also the new fourth generation High Temperature Gas-Cooled Reactor-Pebble-bed Module (HTR-PM) <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2024-01-06/How-the-world-s-first-fourth-generation-nuclear-power-plant-works-1q8JzrGNrj2/p.html#:~:text=The%20world's%20first%20fourth%2Dgeneration%20nuclear%20power%20plant%2C%20Huaneng%20Shandong,to%20officials%20at%20the%20plant.>

### **New Markets and Partners**

Another indicator of significance that these statistics reveal is that China's reliance on the American market for selling its products is decreasing. It is a matter of fact that some of the new emerging major trade partners of China are its own neighbours in the ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations), the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) which includes ASEAN plus Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia. The Arab countries are another emerging trade and economic partner that has the potential to surpass the EU in its importance for China in the coming years. The fact that China has replaced the EU as Russia's main trade partner and helped it survive the sanctions and isolation imposed on it should ring alarm bells in the power corridors of the West.

What these factors imply for the nations of the Global South and to be a partner of the world's largest manufacturing power is that the tools of economic progress, i.e. machinery and technologies of all kinds are now available from China. China has shown willingness to share these tools with other nations, for example through the Belt and Road Initiative, but always staying ahead of the wave technologically. Here, the issue is not the much-hyped Chinese export of solar panels and electric vehicles, which are of interest mostly in Europe and the U.S. and not in developing countries. Developing countries in Asia and Africa need construction machinery, infrastructure engineering, telecommunications, power generation capacity, healthcare and skill capacity development. Nations in Africa and Latin America are realizing that they have been robbed through the process of being mere suppliers of cheap raw materials to an industrial world which would resell finished products to them with a much higher added value. Nations in Africa are demanding that they become part of the industrial supply chain. For example, Zimbabwe banned the export of raw lithium in 2023 and declared that it would only cooperate with nations that help build a domestic lithium battery industry in Zimbabwe. China was readily willing to comply ([https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/chinese-firm-to-manufacture-lithium-batteries-in-zim?fbclid=IwAR1mLO8py-F\\_nyuVJ5RIIVClbIX486waZ6UBcUOyev8EFTpOYjv2hv3pKo](https://www.sundaymail.co.zw/chinese-firm-to-manufacture-lithium-batteries-in-zim?fbclid=IwAR1mLO8py-F_nyuVJ5RIIVClbIX486waZ6UBcUOyev8EFTpOYjv2hv3pKo)), because it would be a winner no matter how the coin falls, as it has the technology and capacity to provide the industrial equipment for those countries to industrialize. China is assisting Ethiopia in its plans to build industrial parks where textiles, leather ware, and even car assembly lines for production of affordable Chinese cars



for the national and Africa markets are being built.

### **New Go West Strategy**

China is developing a new strategy of “going west” pivoting on making Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region a launching pad and centre for this policy. I explain this policy in a detailed report I wrote recently after touring the region (<https://www.brixsweden.org/will-xinjiang-become-the-new-miracle-of-eurasia/>). The policy focuses on making Xinjiang both as an industrial and logistics hub focussing on trade with Central Asia, West Asia, and Europe. The Chinese government is pouring unfathomable amounts of money in investments in new infrastructure and industrial and logistics zones in Xinjiang, reaching the equivalent of US\$ 70 billion only in 2023.

In May 2023, a historic summit held in Xi'an brought together China's President Xi Jinping with the leaders of the five Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan). This summit and the subsequent March 2024 establishment of the joint secretariat and other mechanisms of free trade and communication brought the role of Xinjiang and the Central Asian nations into a new light. Several new transport infrastructure projects are under way, the most important of which is the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Highway and the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan highway and phase two of the China-Tajikistan Highway. Trade between China and the Central Asian nations reached US\$ 90 billion in 2023, an increase of 27% year on year, and is poised to increase even more. Xinjiang takes the lion's share of this trade.

China and Kazakhstan have many plans to enhance the China-EU Express Rail (CEER) capacity and add new routes to it, such as the Middle Corridor (also known as the Trans-Caspian International Transport Corridor) that would link China to the Black Sea from Kazakhstan's Caspian Sea port of Aktau to Azerbaijan, Georgia, and also with a branch to Turkey.

The Central Asian nations, especially Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, are becoming more than a land-bridge between China and Europe. Their economies are booming with foreign direct investments from both East and West pouring into their emerging economies. With the New Silk Road, the disadvantage of being landlocked nations is disappearing. Their natural resources are coming into play in the international economy. The growth of their economies will be boosted by machinery and technology provided by the new industrial zones of Xinjiang. The case of Afghanistan and Pakistan, although less shiny examples than the Central Asian nations, are on a much better path towards development than the past 40 years of geopolitical proxy wars.

Further to the West, Iran and the Arab countries in the Gulf and Egypt are emerging as new economic centres. If you draw a circle that encompasses Iran, Arab Gulf states, Yemen, Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt, Syria, Turkey and Iraq, what you get is one of the most interesting regions in the world in terms of economic potential. However, this region has been a geopolitical playground of global politics, with the Arab-Israeli conflict at its core. While the war in Gaza has brought the whole region to the brink of a regional war, it is still unable to diminish this region's importance of the global economy. It is home to about two-thirds of the world's known reserves of oil and gas. It has a unique geographical location between world continents and seas. It has a very large, very young, and relatively well-educated population of more than 500 million people and rapidly growing, surpassing the stagnating total population of the EU (448 million). Add to all this the fact that the sovereign wealth funds of the region contain more than US\$ trillion generated largely by export of oil and gas. This wealth was previously mostly invested in Western financial and economic institutions and assets, in addition to real-estate projects. Currently, a certain portion of this money is repatriated to be invested in infrastructure and industrial projects at home and in productive economic investments in Asia and even Africa. The Asian Infrastructure Development Bank and the BRICS New Development Bank are in dire need for such fresh inputs. The severe oil shocks of 2014-2016, and 2020-2021 when the oil price dipped to below 30 \$ / barrel and caused real economic and financial crises for the oil exporting countries, represented very harsh lessons. Diversifying the economic activity and sources of income have become the battle cry of the governments of the region, with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 as a good example of the shift taking place.

This area has slowly but certainly become a focus of China's economic and foreign policy since President Xi presented his “1+2+3” policy in the China-Arab Summit of 2014 [http://iq.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zygx/201406/t20140612\\_2309127.htm](http://iq.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zygx/201406/t20140612_2309127.htm). The December 2022 summit between President Xi and the leaders of the Arab World in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, highlighted the enormous potential that exists for cooperation, industrialization, and trade. “China is now the largest trading partner of the Arab states, with last year's trade volume almost doubling from the 2012 level to 431.4 billion U.S. dollars,” said President Xi Jinping in his speech to the Arab leaders. <https://english.news.cn/20230922/6600f65c818541a4b394b08385017977/c.html>

In his speech to the GCC leaders in Riyadh on December 10, 2022, President Xi outlined the concrete economic and financial measures China was offering to work with the GCC immediately. The “five points” Xi

presented should be of interest to study for any serious analyst <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202212/10/WS6393e690a31057c47eba3b6c.html> . They include long-term trade in oil and gas in local currencies, infrastructure projects extending to nuclear power, space exploration and space technology, telecommunications and AI, industrial projects, and transport infrastructure projects. One day before the China-GCC Summit President Xi and Saudi King Salman ben Abdul-Aziz reached a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement. This partnership is symbiotic with Saudi Vision 2030. Immediately, 30 memoranda of understanding (MoUs) were signed between Chinese and Saudi entities. These were concretized as contracts worth US\$ 10 billion during the China-Arab Business Forum in Saudi Arabia in June 2023.

The Irony is that when U.S. President Joe Biden visited Saudi Arabia in July 2022, he made it clear that “the bottom line is: This trip is about once again positioning America in this region for the future. We are not going to leave a vacuum in the Middle East for Russia or China to fill. And we’re getting results.” <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/07/15/remarks-by-president-biden-on-his-meetings-in-saudi-arabia/> It seems that the complete opposite happened a few months later. Not only China was filling a huge vacuum left by U.S. lack of interest in building stronger economic partnerships, but the Gulf countries and OPEC continued coordinating oil export policies with Russia within the framework of OPEC Plus. The vacuum seems to come not from actions of Russia or China, but instead from the fact that the U.S. is solely focused on security and military matters in the region with no interest in trade and economic cooperation with the nations there.

In February 2023 Iran (a non-Arab country) finalised a 25-year comprehensive strategic cooperation agreement with China, during the state visit by President Ibrahim Raisi to Beijing. Surprisingly. A month later, in March 2023, China brokered the Iran-Saudi Arabia restoration of diplomatic relations. By the end of the year 2023, Iran, Saudi Arabian, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Ethiopia were all admitted into the BRICS (Brazil, India, Russia, China, and South Africa) creating the BRIX Plus. These nations are also either full members or observers in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) which is increasingly moving from being a mere security cooperation organisation into an economic cooperation mechanism. Xinjiang plays a major role in all these architectures.

### **Securing the Energy Flows**

China’s energy security in the coming decades will depend on securing, through cooperation and diplomacy, this whole region to the shores of the Red Sea. Central Asia and the Persian Gulf countries are the main suppliers of China’s oil and gas needs. Russia has also emerged as the complementary major energy exporter to China. China’s economic stability depends largely on the safe and continuous flow of oil and gas from these regions to its ports. Geopolitical tension can make strategic chokepoints like the Hormuz Strait and the Malacca Strait a major source of insecurity for China and its partners. Therefore, land-based energy corridors along the Economic Belt of the New Silk Road and Xinjiang will assume increasing importance and attention in the coming decades. Currently, four major pipelines carry around 55 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually from Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan to China through Xinjiang. This is exactly as much gas as the ill-fated Baltic-Sea based Nord Stream 1 was carrying from Russia to Germany before it was sabotaged in September 2022.

### **Conclusion**

The withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan in August 2021 was a major watershed, probably marking the end of the Great Game that lasted for almost three centuries. Using Afghanistan and other Central Asian Khanates (local tribal kingdoms) as a security buffer zone and a destabilization source for both Russia and China have ended. With China managing successfully to end the threat of terrorism and separatism in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and consolidating its relations with the Central Asian nations, and now through diplomatic relations with the Taliban-steered Kabul, it is moving towards securing the realm around it. Russia’s role remains strong in the region, and its intervention in January 2022 in Kazakhstan to prevent a colour revolution was decisive. Although a certain level of tensions between these countries and Russia still exists and attempts by the EU and the U.S. to persuade them to reduce their reliance on Russia and China continue, realities of geography and history cannot be changed.

With the Arab countries, Iran, and the central Asian countries emerging as China’s key economic partners, geo-economy is emerging as the key element of foreign policy rather than geopolitics. Economy will have a final saying in many of the issues that have determined the policies of the nations of the “heartland” of the Eurasian continent.

## IV. EUROPE



### Enlargement Strategy and Trade Policy in the Process of European Integration: Core-Periphery Relations and the Case of Southeastern Europe

Gregory PATRIKAKOS (Greece)

#### Introduction

In the 21st century, power relations are changing, poles of security and development are taking on a dispersion, not only geographically, but also diplomatically, commercially, militarily, culturally. The actors in the international agenda are not only the state entities, but also multinational companies, Non-Governmental Organizations, criminal and terrorist networks, etc., regional and international non-state actors that modify the classic interstate competition in a diverse game of successive intersubjective and collective crises. In the age of the risk society (Beck 1992), new technologies and means of communication play a catalytic role in the conduct of a war, as well as in the well-being of a state. Crises such as fiscal, pandemic, energy, food, etc., are very difficult undertakings, both for dealing with them and for the appropriate preparation of each society and state, to become resistant to the modern challenges of the international system.



Source: <https://www.ziarulprofit.ro/ue-s-a-dovedit-a-fi-foarte-benefica-pentru-europa-de-est/>

In its strategic underbelly and within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy and the partnerships it has concluded, the EU faces the challenge of three military conflicts. The Russian-Ukrainian war, the armed conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as the Israeli-Palestinian hostilities, create a very big geopolitical challenge for the security of the EU. At the same time, the strengthening of China at a political, institutional and economic level, the emergence of new regional powers with non-western characteristics such as Iran, as well as non-liberal regimes (in the perspective of western state models) with revisionist tendencies such as Turkey and Russia, strengthen the institutional tendency of the European Institutions in recent years for more enlargement, setting state entities, such as those of the Western Balkans, in the perspective of their integration into western institutions, such as the EU and NATO.

Within the specific international contexts, the EU is called upon to take very important institutional and strategic decisions, answering a question of central, if not existential importance, which, since almost the beginning of the process of European Integration, has been an integral identifying element. The question of deepening or widening concerns the administrative and organizational bodies, as well as the respective experts of the Union project. In this study, emphasis is placed on the trade policy of the EU and mainly on the effects of trade liberalization encountered by the newly acceding states of Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, after their accession to the EU in 2007 and 2013 respectively, from the enlargement processes of the European edifice. Based on the specific model, a research simulation is attempted, because of the process of integration of the Western Balkans into the European Institutions and the corresponding problems that will be encountered by the specific Balkan entities. The two sectors studied are those of industrial-technological and agricultural products, where they are the dominant productive and export items in the European core and the European periphery respectively, within the framework of the theory of Uneven Development (Myrdal 1957 and Wallerstein 2004).

A theory (in its revised version, in terms of the Global North and not the development models of the Global South, because we analyze states of the European periphery), which is based in the fields of economic geography and international political economy and finds fertile ground in international relations, since the greater the degree of unequal development between two or more state actors, the more the Security Dilemma emerges between them, as well as with other regional and international actors (Gilpin 1983). For purely technical reasons, a distinction is made between the core states and the peripheral states. Through the scientific dialogue, the theories and models developed in the last decades, the schools of thought and the theoreticians of the specific field differ greatly, both for the definitions of the core and the periphery, as well as for the criteria and conditions for their separation.

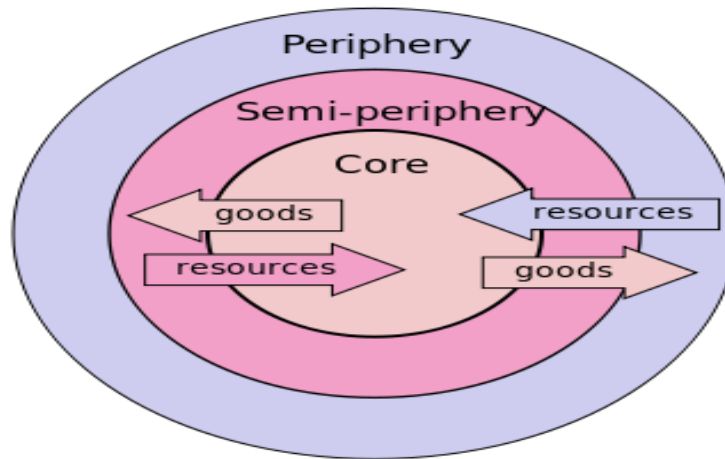
Temporally and spatially, many theories have been developed about intra-European regional inequalities (in this study, the regions are recruited as groups of states with a developmental sign according to the theory and not as parts of specific national territories), where after the predominance of the neoclassical model in academic and political level, this theory was considered obsolete. One of the arguments of its criticism from other competing theories, is that Wallerstein, for example, demonstrates the conflicting historical moment (event or phenomenon) where the collapse of the existing uneven development model will occur, the respective regional system and the entire international system will transition to another model of product exchange and governance, but does not specify its nature and characteristics.

Nevertheless, the contemporary disparities within the EU, as its endogenous characteristics, and the external challenges with regional geostrategic rivalries in the EU's strategic underbelly, prompt this study to employ the center-periphery theory as a security dilemma for the EU based on the above geopolitical challenges, it is a very good interpretative scheme both for the development inequalities within the EU, and for the new challenges of deepening and widening that the European Institutions face, mainly in South-Eastern Europe, with the aim of making the European edifice more resistant to the new international system.

### **Geography of the Economic Growth of Core and Periphery States in the Process of European Integration**

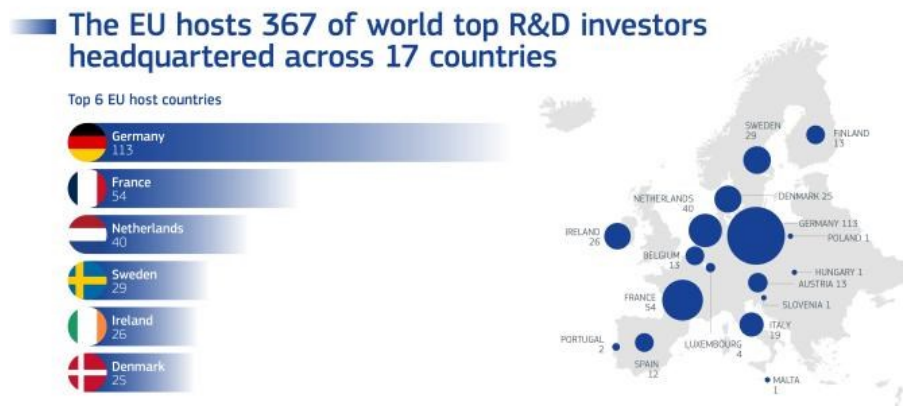
Within the framework of the EU, the periphery states consist of the states of Central and Eastern Europe, such as Visegrad and the Baltic, as well as South-Eastern Europe, such as Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Slovenia. Also, an integral part of them are the countries of the European South, Greece, Cyprus, Portugal, Ireland, Italy and Spain, with the last two and especially in the case of Italy (Semi-periphery states) (the model of Third Italy is characteristic) that they are also countries that have developed the secondary sector and are the third and fourth largest economy respectively in the EU (different methodological approaches, categorize with different theoretical criteria, which states belong to the core, the semi-periphery and the region). All these regional state entities are governed by an economic model that emphasizes the primary sector (agricultural

production, agricultural products, livestock, fisheries, etc.) and expects benefits from the tertiary sector. A typical example is that of Greece, with the tourism and shipping sectors accounting for a large percentage of the country's total GDP (Putnam 1993).



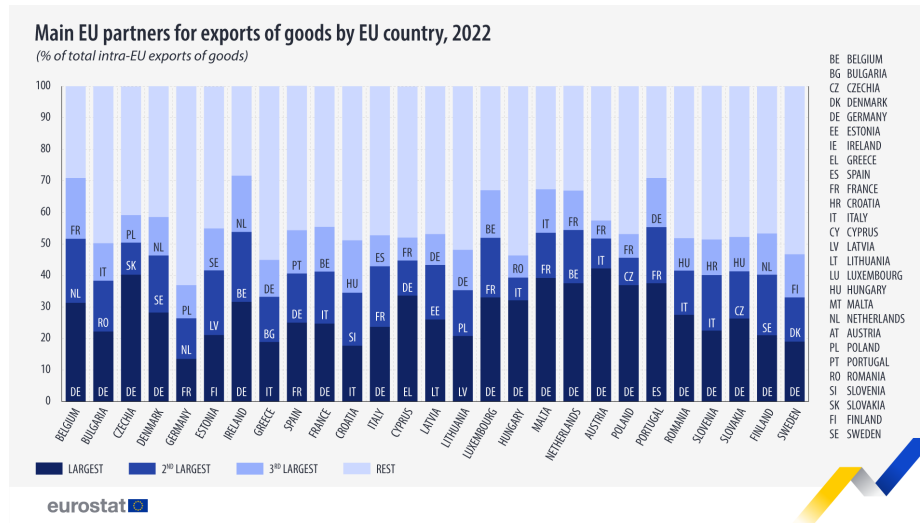
**Figure 1.** Schematic representation of resources and goods traded between core, semi-peripheral and peripheral states of the EU, Source: <https://ourpolitics.net/andre-gunder-frank-dependency-theory/>

The core states are found in Northern and Western Europe, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, as well as the United Kingdom, which, although it was one of the strongest economic countries in the EU, due to Brexit is no longer included in the countries of the European core. They are governed by an economic model, which emphasizes the secondary sector. Germany is the most typical example, with the size of its industrial production, its investments in high-tech products, its exports in large quantities and many different commercial recipients internationally, being the largest economy in the EU. While in the tertiary sector, the state entities of the core, they host the operation of mainly large and well-known (Brand Name) financial giants, where multinational companies and large investment groups with a large volume of capital and stock market value are based. Also, in their spatial boundaries, smart city hubs and clusters of technology parks and start-ups are active (Pavlinek 2022).



**Figure 2.** The majority of the 367 largest R&D investment firms in the technology sector are based in EU core states, Source: [https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-news-and-updates/industrial-rd-investment-eus-growth-highest-2015-2023-12-14\\_en](https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-news-and-updates/industrial-rd-investment-eus-growth-highest-2015-2023-12-14_en)

Over time and according to the theory of uneven development, the countries of the core show higher growth rates than the state entities of the periphery. This phenomenon, in addition to historical, cultural, social, political, institutional, military, environmental, geographical, and other factors, is based on the conditions and contexts in which commercial activities are carried out between European states and especially between the states of the core and the periphery the process and operation of European Integration. The developed countries of the core are constantly opening the development gap with the less developed countries of the periphery, since there is a disproportion between the exportable agricultural products that the countries of the periphery produce and “exchange” with the technological products that the countries of the core produce (Short 1993).

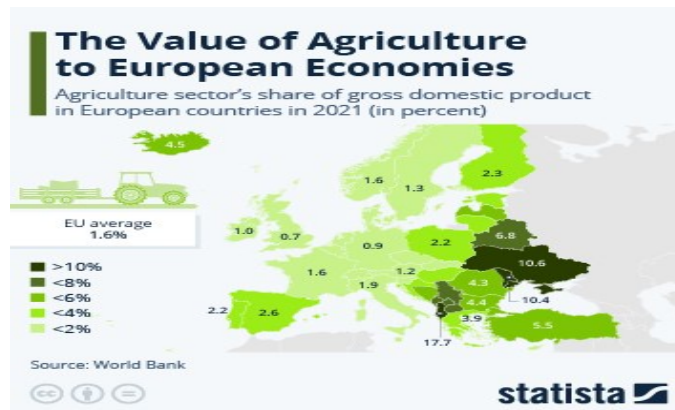


**Figure 3.** The three EU countries most frequently ranked as the top three intra-EU export partners are Germany, followed by France (EU core) and Italy (EU semi-periphery),

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/DDN-20230502-1>

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Historically, the value of basic goods exported by countries in the periphery has been cheaper and has been on a downward trend. Innovative changes are presented even in the agri-food sector, with the transfer of high technology and know-how to modern agricultural methods, the change of cultivation methods, the introduction of new agricultural species and the change of nutritional and dietary habits, which usually the countries of the periphery are unable to integrate into their productive model (OECD 2021).

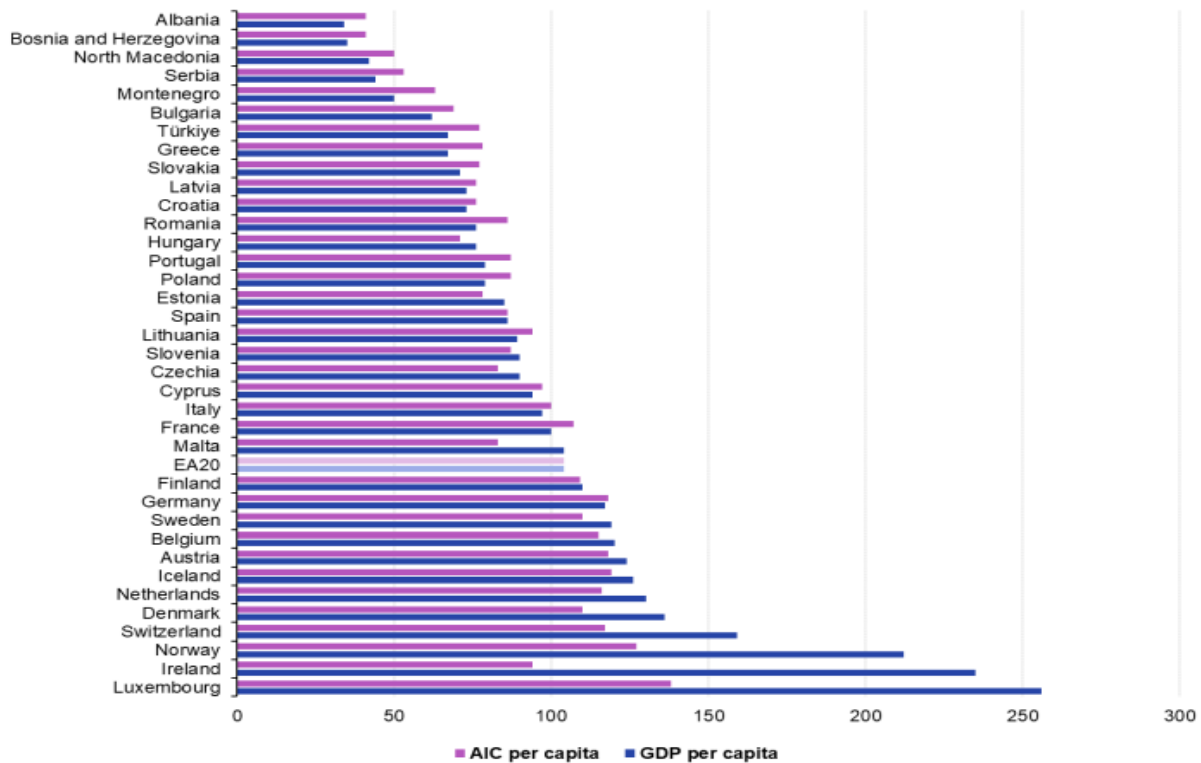


**Map 2.** For the states of Southeast Europe, in contrast to the core states, the primary sector constitutes a very important percentage of their GDP,

Source: <https://www.statista.com/chart/30483/agriculture-sector-as-share-of-gdp-in-european-countries/>

On the contrary, the value of the industrial products exported by the core countries within the framework of the European trade networks, the change in the consumption habits of the European citizens, the rise in the standard of living, the population movement from the countryside to the large urban centers, the international competition with other technologically advanced markets such as Japan, China, India, the reduction of transportation costs, etc., contribute to the increase in the relative value of technological products and services and are even for the countries of the region a strategic commercial objective to satisfy policies and social needs, with disproportionate cost-benefit for the trading partners of the core and periphery states (Krugman 1991).

**Volume indices of GDP and AIC per capita, 2022, (EU=100)**



Source: Eurostat (online data code: prc\_ppp\_ind)

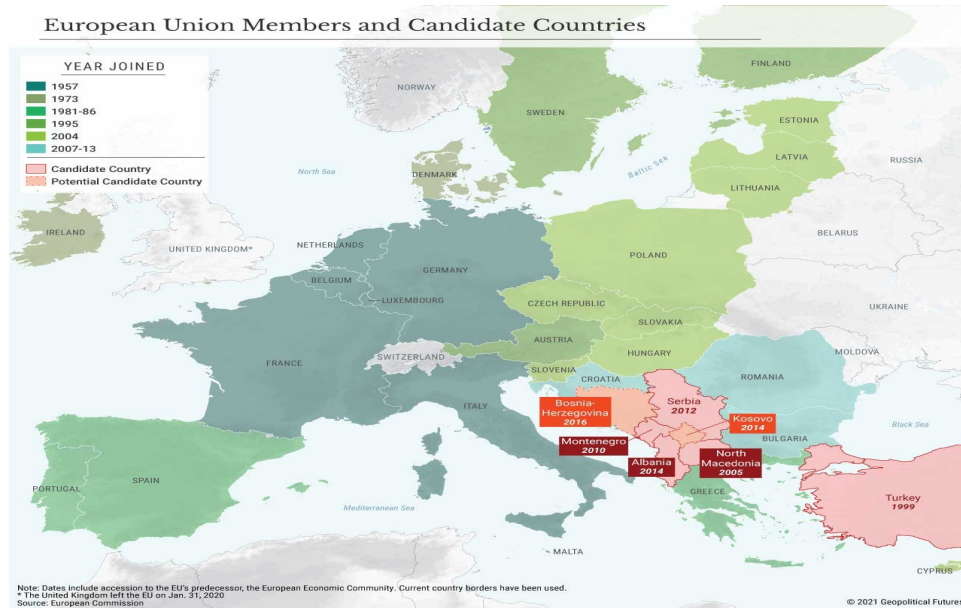
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**Chart 2.** *Gross Domestic Product per capita and the price level show the purchasing power between the core and periphery states,*

Source: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=GDP\\_per\\_capita,\\_consumption\\_per\\_capita\\_and\\_price\\_level\\_indices](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=GDP_per_capita,_consumption_per_capita_and_price_level_indices)

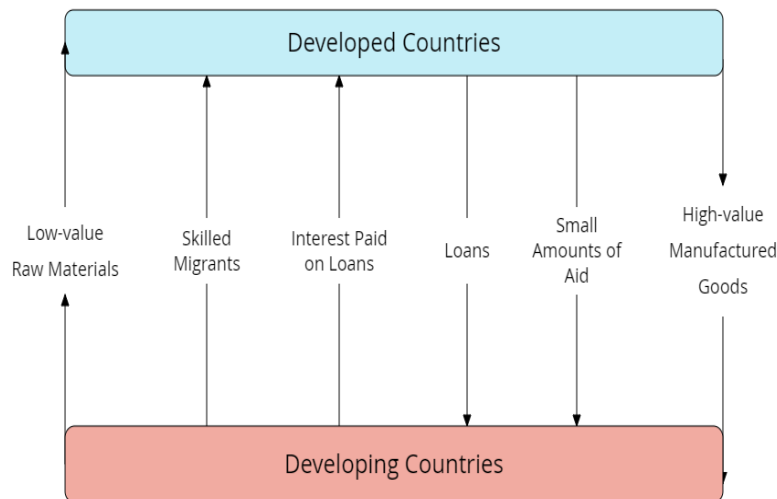
### **The Systemic Determinants of Trade Inequalities between European Economies: The Cases of the Newly Accessed States of South-Eastern Europe**

According to the above and with the logic of the theory of uneven development, the newly entrant countries to the EU, Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 and Croatia in 2013, of course the same can apply to the ten member states that were introduced in 2004, as well as the countries of the Western Balkans (with the appropriate differences, since each state possesses different agricultural and technological data), where they are in the process of accession negotiations with the European Institutions, in order to enter the EU, are all considered member states of the countries of the European periphery. With the liberalization of trade they will suffer some economic, political, institutional and social effects. For Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia, the new political and institutional environment resulted in something unprecedented. After the fall of the former USSR and the rise of political and economic liberalism, the economies, and societies of the satellite states of the centrally planned production model entered their stage of transition and westernization (Przeworski 1991).



**Map 3.** The candidate states of the Western Balkans, as the main strategic objective of the EU Enlargement Policy,  
 Source: <https://geopoliticalfutures.com/balkans/>

These structural changes are usually accompanied by great social and political costs, and these countries were no exception. Although their economies are mainly based on the primary sector, they show some special characteristics that have emerged more after their entry into the EU. With Romania having achieved a good level of industrialization of its production and with the partnership of national conglomerates with their private core country counterparts, Bulgaria to have a relatively low degree of energy dependence due to autonomous nuclear energy production and Croatia to show an upward trend in terms of its tourism stock. Nevertheless, the structures and export performance of their secondary and tertiary sectors cannot compete with their counterparts in the core countries both quantitatively and qualitatively (Sokol 2013).

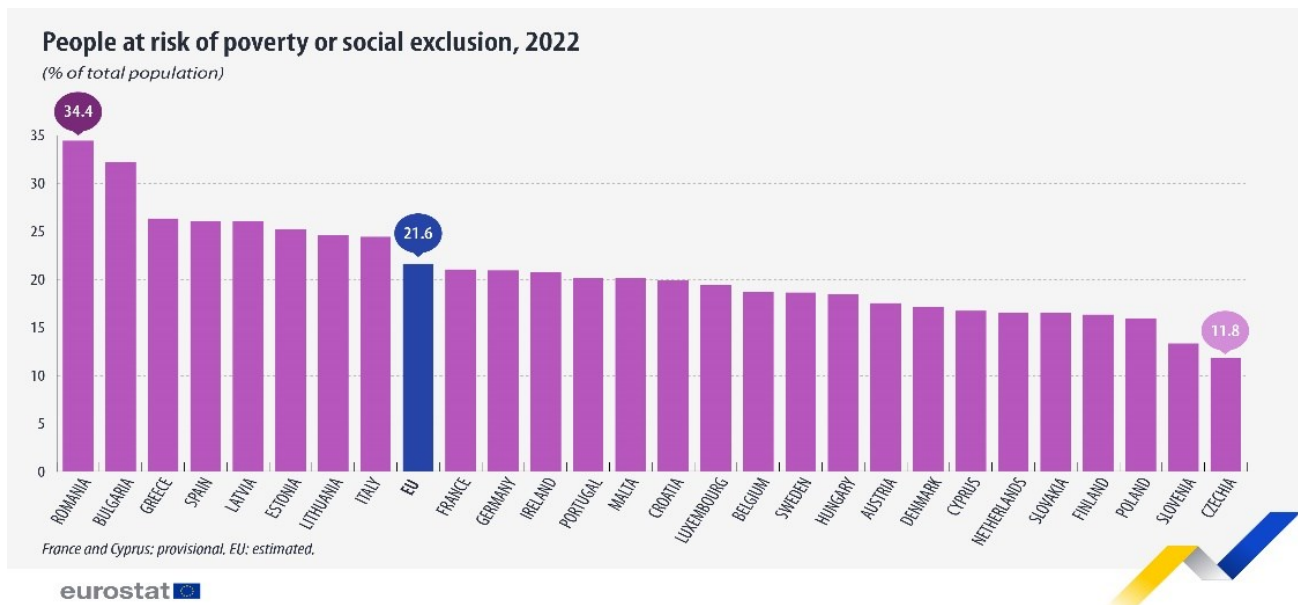


**Figure 2.** Within the EU trade characteristics are shown between core and periphery, reflecting the international categorization of developed and developing states,  
 Source: [https://www.goconqr.com/p/9443111/note\\_page/514350](https://www.goconqr.com/p/9443111/note_page/514350)



The societies of South-Eastern Europe, in the context of globalizing political, economic, and cultural processes, have significantly differentiated in their consumer preferences. In this fact, the open market of mass media from the previous decades plays a decisive role, as well as the spread of social networks as services based on high technology, acquiring western standards in their individual and collective lifestyles. The trade reconciliation that takes place between the agricultural products of the newly entrant states of the periphery and the technological products of the core states, which present high macroeconomic figures and international recognition of their high-tech products, clearly favors the developed countries of the European north (Baldwin 2016).

The exports of technological products of the countries of the European core are constantly increasing with respect to the newly entrant countries with the liberalization of trade, while on the contrary the imports of agricultural products from them are decreasing. There is a great differentiation of producers, since developing countries in South Asia, South America, and Sub-Saharan Africa offer cheaper and different types of agricultural products to the new eating habits of European consumers or even where the same levels are observed, prices are considered cheap for the level life of western Europeans. The prices of technological products in the newly entrant countries of the European periphery for the average consumer remain particularly high (Dunford and Greco 2006).

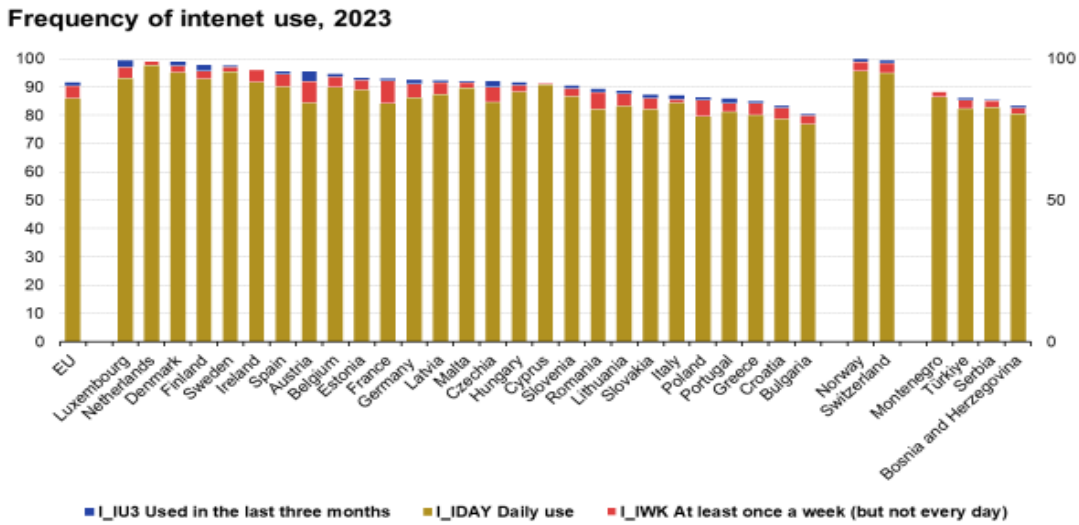


**Chart 3.** The risk of poverty and social marginalization is much greater in the countries of the European periphery and semi-periphery,

Source: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/DDN-20230614-1>

1

The commercial advantage of the European core countries is mainly due to technological innovation and capital reserves. The development of advanced technological methods and practices due to public and private investments, an institutional framework that enshrines labor relations and promotes investment in high-tech products, as well as asymmetric information (digital illiteracy rate, technophobia phenomenon, information on technological breakthroughs, promotion of technological patents, etc.) between the citizens of the European core and the newly entrant states of the European periphery, results in the increase of financial resources for further investments and the training of the new workforce with new production methods in the economies of the developed EU countries, making newly entrant countries uncompetitive on the European and international development map (Milanovic 2018).



Source: isoc\_ci\_ifp\_iu

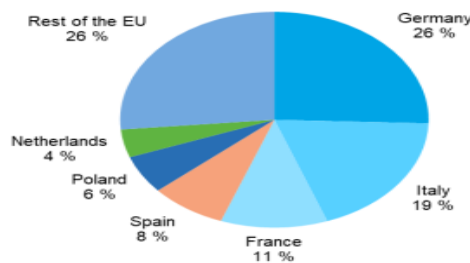
eurostat

**Chart 4.** The states of the region show a lower frequency of internet use, the international economic interconnection requires the use of more digital products,  
 Source: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Digital\\_economy\\_and\\_society\\_statistics\\_households\\_and\\_individuals](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Digital_economy_and_society_statistics_households_and_individuals)

### The Uneven Development of the EU Regions, as a Geo-economic Vulnerability in the Enlargement Policy

In the context of the EU and liberal world trade, there are three main restrictions for the new entrants to the EU, which either make this tariff protection of specific markets and the promotion of new domestic products of higher technological specialization impossible, or very limited. The first has to do with the institutional framework of the EU and specifically with competition law. For historical and geopolitical reasons, the European core countries have created a legal framework, which favors technology-intensive core countries with large investments in the technological and industrial sector. Let's not forget the ECSC, the first attempt at European unification after the war, came mainly from countries of the developed north, to promote the main industrial metals of the time, steel, and coal (Roberts 1993).

EU value of sold industrial production, by country, 2022 (% of total value of sold production)



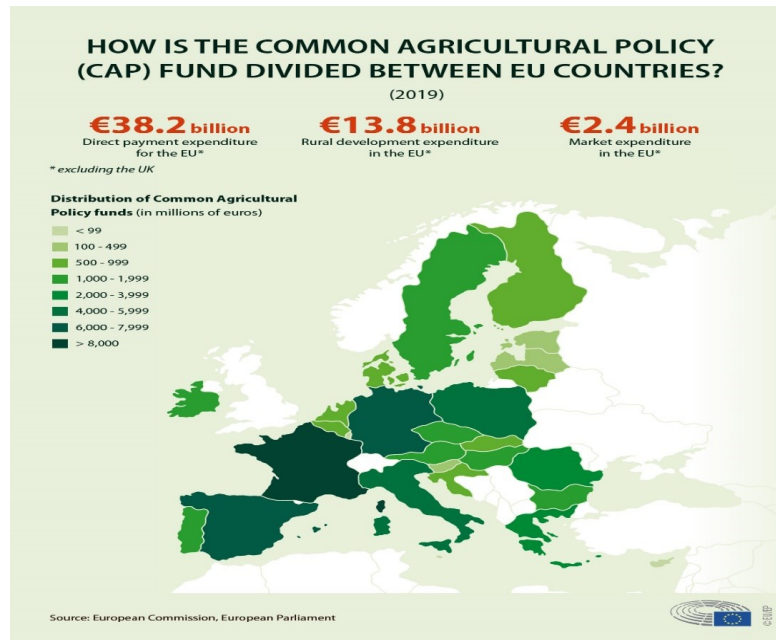
Note: EU except Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta  
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: DS-056120)

eurostat

**Figure 3.** A few states within the EU and mainly from the core and semi-periphery, hold the largest percentage of the value of industrial production sold, out of the total production sold. The largest percentage is held by Germany, while a very small percentage corresponds to the countries of the periphery

Source: [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Industrial\\_production\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php?title=Industrial_production_statistics)

On the contrary, the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy), which is mainly addressed to the states of the European south, and thus also to the newly entrant countries of the region, especially in recent years does not enjoy the political prestige and institutional influence towards the core states, while it is often treated as means of promoting national policies of the states of the European core. A typical example is France, which, in addition to large industrial production, to balance the technological competition with Germany, promotes agricultural policies to increase and improve its agricultural production, further reducing the agricultural competitiveness of newly entrant countries (Malang and Holzinger 2020).



**Map 4.** *In the financing of the Common Agricultural Policy, the states of the European core are favored, with the result that the states of the periphery, although they own more arable land and their economy depends directly on agricultural production, are underfunded with direct consequences for their development. A typical example of a favored country is*

*France,*

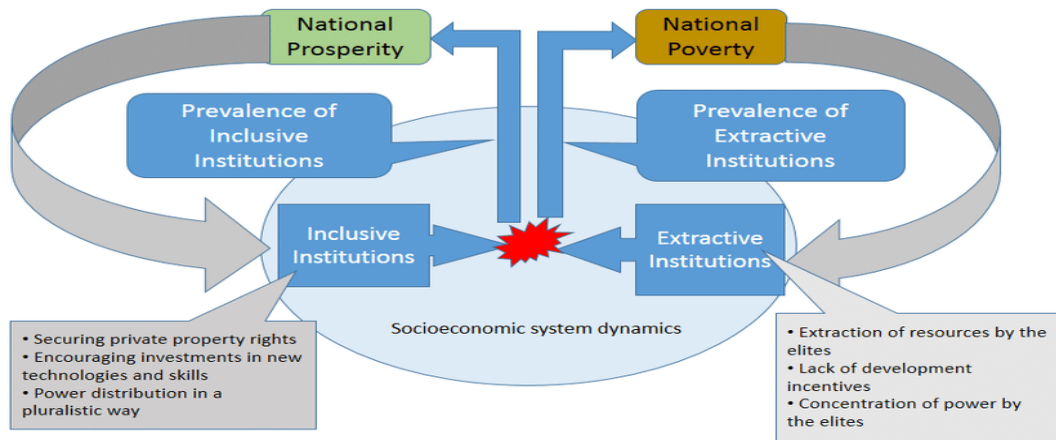
*Source: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20211118STO17609/eu-agriculture-statistics-subsidies-jobs-production-infographic>*

Moreover, within the EU, equality and equal status considered a basic condition for commercial purposes as well, with the result that the newly entrant countries cannot implement national policies to substitute imports of industrial products from the core European countries. On the contrary, with the liberalization of trade within the EU, the countries of the European core are favored for increasing both their exports and to new markets, as well as for increasing their investments in the market of newly entrant countries (European Union 2013).

The second limitation is related to the structure of international trade and its development after the war. International economic organizations (WTO, IMF, World Bank) are structured according to liberal policies and the opening of international markets. The EU works closely with these organizations and promotes policies that favor industrially and technologically advanced states, while promoting development programs for the integration and modernization of developing and rural states in the international financial system (European Commission 2024).

The third is endogenous and has a direct relationship with the integration criteria and the political and institutional inadequacy presented by the newly admitted states in the transition stage. With the existing technical and operational conditions, they cannot adequately cope with the political pressures to achieve and formulate an autonomous and independent trade policy. The states of the European core, either with political and military exchanges (preferring to the states of the periphery, mainly their integration into the western organizations of the EU and NATO), or with purely economic ones, remove protective measures and promote policies that favor open markets and the promotion of their technological products. Despite their entry into the EU, the

new member states do not yet have the open political and economic institutions that would allow them to establish both their developmental comparative advantages and an independent policy that would balance the trade surplus of the European core states and will make them commercially competitive at the European and international level (Acemoglu and Robinson 2013).



**Figure 4.** The states of Southeast Europe need to deepen even more in political and economic institutions, with a long-term strategic plan of inclusion, transparency and extroversion, in order to become at the same levels of development as the EU core states,

Source: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Why-nations-fail-according-to-Acemoglu-Robinson-2013\\_fig2\\_333662391](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Why-nations-fail-according-to-Acemoglu-Robinson-2013_fig2_333662391)

## Conclusions

The modern international system is on an evolutionary course, where it is possessed by a transitional state of paradigm change, both at the level of redistribution of power, and in the emergence of new regional and international actors. Multipolarity, multicrisis, different means and fields of geopolitical competition, global population flows, natural disasters due to climate crisis, energy, and food insecurity, as well as the return of military conflicts with different operational tactics and strategic targeting, they are structural characteristics of analysis during the process of making institutional, corporate and strategic decisions. The EU, both at a political level, through European Institutions, and at a strategic level, in specific areas, such as trade policy, owes especially in a period where great importance is given to the field of defense and security, as well as to the development of European defense industry (a sector which, it seems, will have common deviations and imbalances between core and periphery) to embark on deepening policies.

The strategic anxiety that possesses it, especially after the diplomatic, commercial, military, environmental, technological, and cultural challenges, from non-western international actors, leads it to policies of institutional paternalism. Integration decisions, as historically and commercially evident from the above, do not mechanically lead to the corresponding development results sought by the European governing bodies. It is advisable, as a dominant factor of development and security, to promote the distribution and redistribution of technological and agro-food products in the EU member states, without extra-European interventions, of the Marshall Plan type (not overlooking its important development role for the post-war period), which will predetermine the productive identity and potential of each member state.

The newly entrant states of the region, although trade liberalization has negative consequences for their trade balance, understand that they cannot remain isolated from the rest of the world and while they would normally have to undertake some protectionist policies, with the aim of replacing imports from domestic products to reduce their costs, within the framework of the EU, such a trade policy cannot be implemented institutionally. Usually, the states of the European periphery take trade measures with favorable terms for investments from countries of the European core. Characteristic examples are the presence of German companies in Croatia and French companies in Romania with favorable taxation, oligopolistic privileges, and the financing of a part of western investments from state funds, with commercial contracts and agreements favoring either a certain percentage of the profits of these companies and the creation of new jobs, or by training

the labor force of the newly entrant countries with western know-how.

The dominant regional objective of the EU must be a long-term Cohesion Policy, such that it removes in a modern and effective way the development inequalities within Europe. By promoting a model of bottom-up governance, structural changes in competition law, cooperative models with non-western actors through international and regional organizations that will not be governed by a western-centricity (this ideology raises suspicion and awakens historical nightmares), as well as institutional strengthening of the labor force and forms of labor, capital and production of the states of the periphery in a manner determined by the states themselves, based on their social needs and cultural patterns. With the perspective, the main goal to be a positive influence for EU governance model, that will be more attractive at the international level and start an important institutional and strategic dialogue on EU enlargement in the Western Balkans, Ukraine, Georgia, etc., without ineffective expansions and creating new international competition, with adverse effects on European Integration.

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## IV. EUROPE



### The Geostrategic and Geopolitical Role of Transnistria in Russian Strategic Plans or Russia's Irresistible Temptation of Protecting its Compatriots in the Near Abroad

*Ioannis KARAMPELAS (Greece)*

*“Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland;  
Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island;  
Who rules the World-Island commands the world.”*

*Mackinder H.J., Democratic Ideals and Reality*

#### Abstract

The seceded region of Transnistria is under the direct control of Moscow which supports it economically, politically, and militarily. Although there is an established mechanism for the resolution of the conflict between Chisinau and Tiraspol, little have been done so far for a viable solution. Russia is not really willing to contribute in resolving the conflict since current situation serves its interests. Transnistria remains a valuable geostrategic and geopolitical “tool” for Moscow, especially under the prism of the ongoing war with Ukraine. Tiraspol allows Russia to maintain its influence in a region which is considered as vital for the Kremlin's interests, especially under the pressure of the EU and NATO.

**Key Words:** Transnistria, Moldova, Russia, NATO, EU, secession, conflict resolution, Ukraine, pro-Russian, pro-Western, information war

#### Introduction

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, Transnistria, located in the eastern part Moldova, aiming to catch the rapid political developments and changes declared its independence seeking to secede from Moldova and to remain as a part of the Russian Federation. Indeed, Moldova declared its independence in 1991, which actually led in a brief war between the two sides in 1992. Since the ceasefire that agreed



Source: [https://noi.md/md/news\\_id/259228](https://noi.md/md/news_id/259228)

between the two parts, Transnistria or the Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic (PMR) operates as an independent state, despite that it is not recognized by any of the UN member states, including Russia. Moldova, Russia, and Transnistria established a peacekeeping force in the region, while Moscow exercise significant military, economic, energy, and political presence, enjoying high influence in the breakaway state, which is actually fully dependent on Russia.

The Russian – Ukrainian war has complicated geopolitical situation in the wider region, threatening regional peace and stability. Moscow instruments the influence it enjoys in the seceded state, using it for its wider strategic plans and its regional policy in the former Soviet republics, considering them as integral parts of its sphere of influence. The Euro-Atlantic expansion to the Eastern Europe is perceived by Russia as a direct threat in its national security and in this context it implements a foreign policy of interdicting further presence of the EU and NATO in the soft underbelly of the Russian territory. Under the pretext of protection of compatriots abroad in post-Soviet unresolved conflicts, Russia implements its policy of intervening in neighboring countries and promoting its regional plans. It happened before in South Ossetia, canceling Georgia's integration in NATO, it could happen in the near future in Transnistria. Besides, the Russian invasion in Ukraine has started in the name of protection of Russian population in Donetsk and Luhansk. Moldova enjoys lately a warm approach with the EU and NATO, signaling an alarming situation for Moscow, which realizes that the Euro-Atlantic structures threaten its privileged presence and influence in the region (SpecialEurasia OSINT Team, 2024).

Moldova and the PRM are contesting regarding the status of the latter. Moldova seeks to reintegrate Transnistria in its state structures, while the latter seeks to gain international recognition as an independent state. Russian interference by supporting the breakaway region militarily, economically, and politically makes difficult any attempt for the resolution of the conflict. On the other hand, the EU seeks to facilitate negotiations between the two parts aiming to enable a peaceful resolution of the “frozen conflict.” The war in Ukraine accelerated the opening of accession negotiations for Moldova, bringing the poorest country of Europe closer than ever in the achievement of the strategic goal of the European integration. Currently, the Moldovan pro-western orientation is favored due to the pro-western President, Maia Sandu who vehemently demonstrates her commitment to make Moldova a pro-western state, fully integrated in the Euro-Atlantic structures. Taking into consideration this prospect, Russia might be activated in Transnistria aiming to cancel the Moldovan effort (SpecialEurasia OSINT Team, 2024).

### **Some History...**

Political rivalry between Moldova and Transnistria is not a new one, but dates back to the 80s. However, situation escalated dramatically after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1990 and the decision of Transnistria to declare its independence in 1991, seeking to remain part of the Russian Federation and not to comply with its political center, Chisinau. The latter declared its independence in 1991 which led to the Moldovan – Transnistrian war in 1992. The separatists backed politically, economically, and militarily by the Russians defeated the Moldovan troops. Hostilities ended in July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1992 when a ceasefire agreement was signed by the Presidents of Moldova and Russia. The agreement was foreseen a “special political status” for Transnistria, the establishment of a “Security Zone,” the deployment of a trilateral (Moldova, Russia, Transnistria) peacekeeping force, and the creation of the Joint Control Commission (JCC). Moldova tried to replace the peacekeeping force by an international one, but it failed due to the Russian persistence. It is important to be highlighted that the ceasefire agreement envisioned negotiations for the withdrawal of the 14<sup>th</sup> Russian Army, which was stationed in the city of Bender and had an active role in the recent war. However, instead of the withdrawal of the Russian troops, Moscow transformed in 1995 the 14<sup>th</sup> Army into the Operative Group of the Russian Troops (OGRT), attributing it unilaterally peacekeeping competencies in order to legitimize its presence in the seceded region (Secieru, 2011).

Since then, negotiations have started for the resolution of the status of the breakaway state without any result until today. The initial negotiation scheme included Moldova, Russia, and Transnistria, but in 1995 the format was enlarged by including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Ukraine. The five-lateral negotiation group was further broadened in 2005 by including the EU and the US as observers, receiving its final formation, known as the “5+2” negotiation mechanism. Despite the establishment of the broad format, negotiations were stalled due to the Russian reluctance to actively participate in the talks. One could say that Moscow undermined negotiations by preferring to negotiate in “2+1” (Moldova, Russia, Transnistria) or “1+1” (Moldova, Russia) formats, aiming to promote its own interests (Secieru, 2011).

Since the end of the brief war and the establishment of the ceasefire agreement the PMR operates as a fully independent state which has developed all its functions such as autonomous foreign policy, central bank,

currency, and political competencies. However, the international community treats Transnistria as an integral part of Moldova (Miarka, 2020). According to the latest census (2015) the Transnistrian population is 475,373 people, while the Russians are dominant with 29.1%, followed by Moldovans with 28.6% and Ukrainians with 22.9% (Population census of PMR, 2017). The population living in Transnistria – including the Moldovans – has a strong Russian identity and consequently a pro-Russian orientation. However, the development of the PMR competencies would not have been established adequately if the breakaway region did not enjoy support by Russia. Tiraspol developed close relations with Moscow as a strategic choice which guaranteed the survival of Transnistria. The bilateral cooperation of the two parts has focused on political, defense, security, economic, and social support. For instance, Moscow provides free gas to Tiraspol ensuring the energy security of the seceded state. Speaking for the defense and security domain, Russia maintains a significant force of approximately 1,600 soldiers (402 soldiers as a peacekeeping force and 1,200 soldiers of the OGRT), while in the village of Kolbasna are stored approximately 20 tons of weapons and ammunitions (Miarka, 2020). Nowadays, all talks and negotiations for the peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian case have stopped due to the Russian – Ukrainian war. Ukraine does not accept the participation of Russia in the negotiation mechanism, while Russia insists that the “5+2” mechanism is the only way to resolve the issue. At the same time, Moldova has granted the status of candidate country by the EU on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022, while on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 the European Council decided to open accession negotiations with Chisinau. The pro-Western President of Moldova, Maia Sandu fully promotes an agenda which foresees strengthening of the Euro-Atlantic orientation of the country, as a strategic choice (Solovyov, 2024).

### **Russian Strategic Approach Towards Transnistria**

Before analyzing the Russian policy towards Transnistria it is essential to approach the ideological principles of the Russian strategic thought. Moscow is motivated by the realistic school of thought where national interest is the core element of the strategic planning. In other words, Russia seeks to maximize its security against any potential external threat, acting more or less as a rational international actor. In this context, hard power combined with excessive use of information and hybrid war practices has a central role in the Russian geostrategic and geopolitical thinking. The Russian center of gravity in terms of foreign policy and security is to interdict any attempt of external interference in its internal affairs, and simultaneously Moscow should spread its influence to the its western and southern neighboring regions. Having the perception of a great power which resists in the detrimental action of the western powers, struggling to maintain its values, its traditions and its identity, Russia believes that the post-Soviet states belong to its sphere of influence and nobody has the right to exclude it from its privileged space (Miarka, 2020).

In this context, the policy of the seceded states (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria, Crimea) has an exceptional role, promoting the Russian interests. The strong influence Russia maintains in Transnistria puts a permanent pressure on Moldova, especially with regard of its aspirations to join the Euro-Atlantic structures. Moscow has always the capability to activate Tiraspol in order to destabilize Chisinau. Russia is able to instrumentalize politically or militarily the PMR maintaining its influence in Moldova and canceling Chisinau’s plans to join the EU and NATO. Besides, in the past Moscow has made absolutely clear that if Moldova deepens its relations with the Euro-Atlantic structures, would strengthen the Transnistrian efforts for separation, or even to annex the seceded region within Russia. Russian influence in the PMR deprives Chisinau of exercising full political control of its entire territory and consequently it is vulnerable to potential efforts of destabilization of the country. Taking into consideration that Russia would receive the strengthening of Euro-Atlantic relations of Moldova as a direct threat to its national security, it is assessed that Transnistria is the geostrategic counterweight of Moscow to prevent Moldova’s accession to the EU and a closer relation with NATO (Miarka, 2020).

Apart from that, Transnistria might have a strategic role in the ongoing war in Ukraine. As the Russian General Rustam Minnekayev unveiled on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022, a potential advance of the army in the strategic direction of southern Ukraine would allow the Russian forces to reach Transnistria, not only cutting Kiev’s access to the Black Sea, but also posing a threat to the western borders of the country (The Economist, 2022). Moreover, deployment of the Russian armed forces in Transnistria, through a corridor from south Ukraine, would increase pressure towards Romania, a NATO member state. Not only that, but the deployment of Russian troops in Transnistria following a successful advance in southern Ukraine, would actually mean that Moldova could become under the Russian dominance (Hockenos, 2024).

Finally, Moscow could take in advantage of the Transnistrian territory and the control it exercises there to use the region as a forward base for its military operations in Ukraine. In other words, Russia could deploy in the PMR battle support facilities including logistics, medical aid, ammunition and weapons resupply, maintenance



and repair capabilities to support the Russian troops in the western borders of Ukraine (Al Jazeera, 2022).

### **Current Geostrategic and Geopolitical environment of Transnistria**

Lately, Transnistria came in the international spotlight on February 2024 due to the fact that it requested the protection of Russia against the threats from the Moldovan government. The Kremlin did not miss the chance to reply in the Transnistrian call that protecting its compatriots is a priority. Nevertheless, Moscow avoided making a clear reference to military protection and rather it implied financial and humanitarian aid. However, the Russian rhetoric for the protection of Russian compatriots has awakened memories of the military operations in South Ossetia, Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk where Moscow sent its troops to protect the Russian population.

Following the opening of accession negotiations with the EU, Moldova has shifted its strategy towards Transnistria. More specifically, Chisinau is gradually hardening its stance towards the breakaway region, aiming to push it for a favorable solution, namely the reintegration in Moldovan state. Moldova has increased its economic and legal pressure, frustrating Tiraspol. First of all in 2023 Chisinau introduced a law by which separatist actions are a criminal offense, putting pressure on the PMR's officials who have the fear of being arrest if they enter the Moldovan territory. Moreover, has introduced a new custom policy which obliges the Transnistrian companies to pay import and export taxes in both, Chisinau and Tiraspol. For 2024, it is leaked that the Moldovan authorities seek to pass a law which bans the use of Transnistrian license plates for cars, to introduce VAT on goods sold in Transnistria, and to impose excise duties on goods such as tobacco, alcohol, and fuel (Solovyov, 2024).

The war in Ukraine has worsened situation in Transnistria since Kiev has closed its western borders, forcing Tiraspol to direct all its trade and economic activity via Moldova. Currently, Chisinau and Brussels have full control of the Transnistrian flows of goods, exercising pressure to the latter, which faces the threat of full economic blockade if it escalates its activities against Moldova. Moreover, the Russian military failure to advance in south Ukraine, taking control of Odessa and its strategic harbor has isolated not the Transnistrian enclave, but also the Russian military force stationed in the region. Taking this into consideration, the military capabilities of this force are limited due to Russian inability to provide logistic support and reinforcements. In other words, the Russian military choices are limited as long as there is no secure corridor for the establishment of a land line of communication to the Transnistrian region which would provide strategic agility to the Russian forces. Apart from that, in a hypothetical escalation of situation in Transnistria it is more than certain that Ukraine would react, putting the Russian troops at a disadvantage (Solovyov, 2024).

### **Conclusions**

Under current circumstances it is assessed that Russia would likely limited in information (and disinformation) war against Moldova, aiming to destabilize the country and intervene to the coming presidential elections, seeking to overturn the election of the pro-western President, Maia Sandu who will continue the European integration of the country and the closer approach with NATO. The existence of a calculable pro-Russian population in Moldova makes Moscow to work for the election of a pro-Russian President aiming to interdict the pro-western orientation of Moldova. The military escalation is rather unlikely as long as Russia has no direct line of communication with Transnistria to support a potential operation. The PMR remains a geostrategic and geopolitical asset for Russia, but the war in Ukraine has changed the existing situation making things more complicated. Moldova with the support of the EU is exercising pressure to Tiraspol in order to force it for reintegration. Besides, the EU prospects could become attractive for pro-Russians of the seceded region too, offering a better future in a place where future does not actually forebode shiny.

## IV. EUROPE



### The “Partizani” Affair and the Fall of the Berisha Clan – A Good Example in the Fight against Corruption in the Western Balkans

Mona AGRIGOROAIEI

*The indictment of Sali Berisha – the former president and prime minister of Albania – represents the political death of a corrupt regime and the end of impunity in this country. With all the mayhem that Sali Berisha and his allies intended to cause in the Albanian parliament after he was indicted, he was recently placed under house arrest. A victory for justice, a victory for the SPAK – an institution that has assistance and help from the US - truly a model for other Balkan countries, which are still facing pandemic corruption.*

Sali Ram Berisha was born in Tropoja, Albania on July 11, 1944, and worked as Enver Hoxha’s personal physician. However, he was one of the first intellectuals who decided to give up his membership from the Labor Party of Albania and called for democratic reforms. He became the leader of the Democratic Party of Albania, founded in 1990, and he managed to oust Ramiz Alia from his position as prime minister following the DP’s landslide victory in the 1992 parliamentary elections. He made some economic reforms and introduced human rights laws (such as the 1995 abolition of the death penalty and an agreement to respect the rights of minorities), but these were insignificant due to continued political and economic corruption, discrimination against the opposition, and increased popular violence. Berisha was ousted from power in 1997, following the collapse of notorious pyramid schemes and became prime minister after the DP’s electoral victory in 2005.

In 2013, the Socialist Party of Albania and its former coalition partner, the Socialist Movement for Integration, won against the DP, and Berisha stepped down as its leader and became a member of the Tirana Parliament.

After many years, the United States of America “sealed” the political end of Sali Berisha and preceded SPAK, blacklisting his family for major corruption and obstruction of justice. In the US State Department’s explanatory announcement, it is stated that Sali Berisha used his power to enrich his family and allies, engaged in corrupt activities and misused public assets. The US State Department also points out that Sali Berisha protected himself, his family and his allies from facing justice for corruption and other criminal activities. One of the many corruption scandals that Sali Berisha and his family can be held responsible for is the Partizani affair. In this case, the state was at the disposal of the Berishas.



**Source:** <https://www.g4media.ro/raport-transparency-international-perceptia-asupra-coruptiei-se-inrautateste-in-balcani-si-in-europa-centrala-romania-evaluata-in-mod-constant-ca-fiind-una-dintre-cele-mai-corupte-tari-ale.html>

During the years that Sali Berisha was in power, all state institutions aligned, surrendered to illegalities and suspicious property alienation procedures.

One of the main owners, with 35% of the shares in the “Magnet” complex, is Jamarbër Malltezi, the son-in-law of the former Prime Minister, Sali Berisha.

The blocks left no trace of the sports fields. It has turned into one of the most expensive neighborhoods in Tirana.

In the years 1995-1999, the Begejas, Llagamis, Alimehmetis, Vaqarris and Saliagas had the Property Restitution and Compensation Agency (PRCA) return the vacant land of the Partizani football club.

Among the plaintiffs was Jamarbër Malltezi, even though he did not appear as a direct applicant to the PRCA. He was one of the heirs of the Begeja family, with 1/64 of the tax share or 144 square meters of land. With this negligible land he entered the game.

The plaintiff families had addressed the courts for the recognition of ownership and the removal of any evidence of inheritance. Because of the legislation, they were unable to physically walk the field – the law forbade it.

In more than 80 cases, privatization processes of sports complexes were initiated, but without success. Years later, suspicious procedures were conducted involving the Partizani club. In the 2000s, a strategy was adopted to denigrate Partizan, and easily take it to the streets.

At first, there was the conflict with the Italian shareholders of the club at the time. After their departure, the attacks did not stop even when the businessman, Albert Xhani, was put in charge. He faced a legal battle with the Ministry of Defense over the ownership of the crest of the Partizani football club. At the same time, another legal battle took place with the shareholder at that time, Paro Laçi. The disputes relegated Partizani to the third league in the Albanian championship.

The privatization of the lands belonging to the Partizani club was illegal from the start. A piece of land was returned to the former owners, even though they had been compensated for it in 1940.

After the invasion, the Italians built Tirana airport on that very land. The decrees issued by the Italian king, Victor Emanuel, and his viceroys expropriated the Albanian families who owned land in the “Shengjin Field”, as it was called at the time.

In the decree signed on November 9, 1940, the prime minister of the time, Shefqet Vërlaci, ordered that the owners should be paid. In the airport expansion plan, among the owners affected by the expropriation are Mahmud and Xhemal Begeja, the ancestors of Jamarbër Malteza. In the official notebook of May 15, 1942, the name of the Begejas appears again along with other people who were expropriated.

In a document signed on May 12, 1994, the former director of the archive, Luan Malltezi, Jamarbër’s father, informs the municipality and the court about the state of the land. He clearly clarifies that there are several decrees attesting to the expropriation and compensation of the owners.

Therefore, the families who once owned the “Shengjin Field” where the Partizani complex was built, could no longer be subject to the restitution - compensation law. They were compensated once in the 40s. Despite the change in the system and the constitutional order, the owners cannot be compensated since they had been paid for the expropriation.

Between 1995-1999, the Begejas, Llagamis, Alimehmetis, Vaqarris and Saliagas were subjected to the adoption of a series of positive decisions taken by the PRCA. However, the law prohibited the privatization of properties owned by the Ministry of Defense. After 2005, began the completion of years-long well-thought-out plan. Initially, the attacks took place on the premises of the Partizani club, which belonged to the Ministry of Defense.

A few months after the purges from the Partizani club, Jamarbër Maltezi appeared as involved in this matter. In early 2006, he signed a series of powers of attorney with the five families claiming the property.

Malltezi was appointed general representative and took over everything. With these powers, he sent a clear message to the ministers: they were dealing with the prime minister’s son-in-law. The game plan was clear. The area was of great value due to its geographical position, very close to the city center.

The plaintiff families empowered Jamarbër Maltezi until the start of negotiations and exchange contracts, contracts with construction companies to build towers, what happened later. All these services of course came from Jamarbër Maltezi and he didn’t do it for free. He had clear goals and ideas about what he wanted to gain. Initially, he entered the game with a capital of up to 5% of the property that would be his reward. Later, Malltezi became the main beneficiary, as shown years later.

Following the decisions taken during 1995-1999, the five claimant families addressed the Property Agency once more. The actions of the institutions seemed to be coordinated in their favor. In record time, within six days, the Property Restitution Commission made four positive decisions.

Specifically, decisions number 6 and 7, dated March 21, 2007, decision number 8, dated March 23, and decision number 9, dated March 26, 2007. Decision number 6, dated March 21, 2007, refers to the restitution of the property of the Begejas, with Jamarbër Maltese as their member. The signed restitution of property to the Begejas in 2007 referred to another PRCA decision, adopted in April 25, 1996. But there was a problem.

The building was mortgaged according to the ledger number 299, dated April 11, 1935. In fact, as we proved with the early documentation, in 1940 the families were expropriated for the construction of the airport in Tirana. These documents were not administered in the privatization brief of the Partizani club. They are believed to have disappeared.

So Jamarbër Malltezi used forged documents for the benefit of property gain. The managers of the Estate Agency at the time acted blindly; most likely they were pressured to break the law.

The four decisions favouring Malltezi and the other families taken in 2007 bear the signature of the Agency's director at the time, Dhurata Hoxha.

Hoxha is remembered for a lawsuit filed against her by several families who were forced out into the streets in 2013. The building they lived in on "Margarita Tutulani" street in Tirana was returned to a person who claimed to be the owner. However, the aggrieved parties sued Hoxha for forging documents. The beneficiary was the owner of a part of the property, as it was later discovered. With Hoxha's signature, everything was returned to him, sending 13 families on the streets.

Despite positive decisions against the plaintiffs, the Partizani piece of land was of public interest and could not be changed. The prime minister, Sali Berisha, was involved. During the government meeting, on November 21, 2007, they adopted the decision number 794 regarding "the evaluation criteria of state property that is privatized or assigned and on its sale procedure". This decision came to support other acts that favored Malltezi.

In fact, there are at least 213 army properties that have been claimed by former owners before the regime. No decision has been made for their return, proven by the lawsuit filed in SPAK by the head of the socialist group, Taulant Balla.

After the approval of government decision number 794, which paves the way for privatization, another measure was immediately adopted. With the letter number 9508, dated December 18, 2007, the Minister of Economy at the time, Genc Ruli, ordered the establishment of the Commission for the Evaluation of Objects for the Purpose of Privatization.

The evaluation is carried out by the accounting firm Elvira Aliaj. The estimated total value is 7.2 million dollars. The property covers a total area of 26,524 square meters, 775 square meters being under construction.

The land is valued at \$7.1 million. The civil buildings and fields at 100 thousand dollars. They include a 4-story hotel, shower and changing rooms for athletes, a one-story changing room, 3 football fields and fences. So all these assets are valued at a ridiculous amount of \$100,000.

The total area of civil constructions of the complex/all floors was 1,613 sq m.. If we calculate the minimum construction cost of 40,000 ALL per square meter, then the buildings have a value of 64.5 million ALL.

In other words, about \$600,000. If we also count the 3 sports fields, the value is about \$900,000. So, nine times more than the value that the experts of the Ministry of Economy estimated at that time. In the report, they acknowledge the evaluation's shortcomings:

Experts agree that the report did not comply with the criteria of VKM number 794 of November 21, 2007, which stipulates that the assessment must be made according to the real market value. The accountants Aliaj and Preçi justify themselves by emphasizing that they have complied with European evaluation standards and do not have a similar comparative case.

So, the evaluators of the Ministry of Economy, from Albania, which was headed by Genc Ruli, were afraid of the publication of this problematic expertise. The privatization of the land of the Partizani club was linked to a clear, well-thought-out plan for a long time. It meant to turn the land into a large buildings complex. To avoid any shortcomings along the way, Jamarbër Malltezi unites all the owner families in an agreement signed on September 29, 2008.

The amount they would have to pay was negligible compared to the actual value of the assets. According to the accountants' report, the former owners would pay 10.1 million Albanian lekë or \$100,000 for the instead of the real worth – around \$900,000.

They would not pay a penny for the land, which is worth \$7.1 million, because they were treated in this privatization as owners, despite the fact that in 1940, their ancestors were compensated for the same property.

The Minister of Finance, Ridvan Bode, one of Sali Berisha's closest people, took another step to hand over the property to Jamarbër Malltezi. Through the document issued on January 26, 2009, the Directorate for

Administration and Sale of Public Properties, subordinated to the Ministry of Finance, issued the authorization for the transfer of the ownership right.

Now the ball is in the defense minister's court, Arben Imami. On 15 October 2009 he signed an authorization to delegate the general, Xhemal Gjunkshi, to have the authority to sell properties.

At the time, Gjunkshi was the commander of the Support Command of the Albanian Army. He was later rewarded by being named Chief of Staff. In 2017, Gjunkshi was included on the lists of candidates for the Democratic Party, and was elected deputy.

Without wasting time, the next day the power of attorney was signed by Imami – the Minister of Defense, Jamal Gjunkshi handed over the property to Jamarbër Malltezi and to the other representatives. The deed of surrender was dated October 16, 2009. Here we have a serious violation.

The property is delivered before signing the sales contract. It seems that the institutions acted with their eyes closed, under pressure from the prime minister's son-in-law. The deed of sale is dated October 21, 2009. So, the contract was signed a week after the delivery of the building to Malltezi became a reality.

The value of the contract was 10,109,000 lekë. Only 2,021,800 lekë were paid in foreign currency. The businessman, Fatmir Bektashi, was the guarantor. He was supposed to pay back that. The rest was covered with privatization bonds.

In accordance with the plan to transform the grounds into a multi-storey building complex, on May 19, 2008, the company "HOMEPLAN" was established. The sole shareholder was Fatmir Bektashi, the same person who was the guarantor for the reimbursement. He had to pay back the money for the purchase of the club's land through his other company, "Kontakt" Ltd.

The amount in question was refunded by "Kontakt" on February 4, 2009. Meanwhile, the remaining amount of 8,200.000 lekë was refunded through privatization bonds from Xhimi Begeja, another person who would later appear as shareholder in the "Homeplan" construction company with 25% of the shares.

In fact, Jamarbër himself was behind the company "Homeplan". The company's activity was managed by Malltezi through Joana Qeleshi. On May 28, 2008, Fatmir Bektashi signed this power of attorney giving Qeleshi the right to manage "Homeplan" Constructions.

When the power of attorney was signed, Joana Qeleshi was working in the legal office of the Prime Minister's daughter, Argita Malltezi and her partner Flutura Kola.

There is data that proves Joana Qeleshi was getting paid, and was employed at least until October 2010. So, Qeleshi was paid by the Malltezi family at the time she was entrusted with the management of the "Homeplan" company.

During the right-wing government, she was appointed president of the Court of Durrës. The company "Homeplan" controlled by Jamarbër Malltezi obtained the construction permit from the Municipality of Tirana for 17 towers. The document signed by the mayor at the time, Lulzim Basha, is dated August 18, 2013.

6 months after the construction permit was issued, on January 23, 2014, Jamarbër Malltezi owned 35% of the "Homeplan" construction company. It was when the construction of the complex began and showed himself as the owner. He paid a ridiculous amount for the shares 7,000 euros. The share purchase agreement is dated January 21, 2014, but it was submitted to the competent institution only on December 27, 2018. So, precisely when the construction of the building complex was completed and the sales money was collected.

Malltezi, bought 7,000 euros' worth of shares in a company that today owns a real estate complex worth 150 million euros. This has no economic logic. There is an explanation why he kept his shares secret when the construction of the buildings began.

He meant to hide the source of income of this colossal investment. In fact, Malltezi was the man who controlled the company even though he officially owned only 35% of the shares.

He managed the company and succeeded in privatizing the grounds using the influence of the government led by his father-in-law, Sali Berisha.

Malltezi obtained the building permit and was the man behind the business of the "Homeplan" company, using Joana Qeleshi in the beginning and later as a shareholder. On the same day Malltezi became a shareholder, so did Xhimi Begeja owning 25%.

The sum he paid was also ridiculous, only 25,000 lekë. We must remember that Jamarbër Malltezi became involved in this business as a descendant of the Begejas. So, all the facts clearly point in one direction: the son-in-law of the former prime minister Sali Berisha controls the company that built structures worth 150 million euros.

According to the records of the National Business Center we see that Jamarbër Malltezi is also the owner of "Magnet IMO" with an address on "Frosina Plaku" street, exactly in the complex bearing the same name. It was also built by Malltezi.

The company “Magnet IMO” was established to manage 17 buildings. Therefore, Malltezi collects funds from the residents of the complex. The company does the maintenance of the outside spaces, the flower beds, the common spaces, the elevator, etc. He apparently made an effort to make the complex a money mine for the family even after selling the apartments for tens of millions of euros. The son-in-law of the former prime minister is also the owner of another company “Magnet GYM & FIT”. Malltezi opened a gym in the complex.

He owns 60% of the shares, while the rest is owned by Ervin Kalemi. The gym is located on the second floor of the most luxurious building of the complex. Everything there is monitored by security cameras.

Apparently, the indictment of Sali Berisha represents the political death of a corrupt regime and the end of impunity. The chaos that Sali Berisha and his allies wanted to create in the Albanian parliament after he was indicted, placed him in house arrest. A victory for the justice system, a victory for SPAK - an institution that has assistance and aid from the US - truly a model for other Balkan countries still dealing with pandemic corruption.

In the end, of course, the trial of Sali Berisha is ongoing and the persons mentioned above are presumed innocent, but this journalistic investigation used several local sources that support the facts of this article.

## V. AFRICA



### Emerging Technologies: Shaping the Global Future and Africa's Role

*Oluwasogo Joseph DAIRO (Nigeria)*

Emerging technologies are revolutionizing the world at an unprecedented pace, offering immense opportunities and challenges. In today's rapidly evolving global context, understanding the impact of these technologies is crucial. This article explores the significance of emerging technologies, their global impact, management strategies, Africa's preparedness, and the implications for the continent's future role.

#### Emerging Technologies and Their Global Impact

Emerging technologies are revolutionizing the world at an unprecedented pace, transforming the way we live, work, and interact. These innovative technologies include:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI): Enabling machines to think and act like humans, AI is transforming industries such as healthcare, finance, and transportation.

- Blockchain: A decentralized and secure technology, blockchain is revolutionizing the way we conduct transactions, store data, and verify identities.

- Internet of Things (IoT): Connecting devices and objects, IoT is enabling smart homes, cities, and industries, and improving efficiency and productivity.

- Biotechnology: Advancing healthcare and medicine, biotechnology is leading to breakthroughs in gene editing, regenerative medicine, and personalized treatment.

- 5G and Quantum Computing: Enabling faster data transfer and processing, 5G and quantum computing are unlocking new possibilities for industries such as telecommunications, finance, and cybersecurity.



**Source:** <https://www.bizlaw.md/top-10-predictii-din-it-pentru-oameni-si-companii-in-2020-si-anii-urmatori>

- Virtual and Augmented Reality: Changing the way we experience and interact with the world, virtual and augmented reality are transforming entertainment, education, and healthcare.

- Autonomous Vehicles: Revolutionizing transportation, autonomous vehicles are improving safety, reducing congestion, and enhancing mobility for the elderly and disabled.

These emerging technologies are not only transforming industries but also reshaping global power dynamics, influencing geopolitics, and challenging traditional notions of national security. As they continue to evolve and converge, they will have a profound impact on the future of humanity.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages**

Emerging technologies offer numerous benefits, but also pose significant challenges. Here's a breakdown of the advantages and disadvantages of each technology, as well as general advantages and disadvantages that apply across multiple technologies:

#### General Advantages:

- Increased efficiency and productivity
- Improved decision-making and accuracy
- Enhanced customer experiences and convenience
- New business models and innovations
- Improved healthcare and wellness

#### General Disadvantages:

- Job displacement and unemployment
- Security risks and potential for hacking
- Dependence on technology and decreased human skills
- Unknown long-term effects and potential risks
- Ethical implications and potential for misuse

### **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

#### Advantages:

- Personalized experiences and customer service
- Automation of repetitive tasks
- Healthcare breakthroughs and personalized medicine

#### Disadvantages:

- Bias and discrimination in algorithms
- Privacy concerns and data misuse
- Autonomous weapons and ethical implications

### **Blockchain**

#### Advantages:

- Secure and transparent transactions
- Decentralized and resilient network
- Immutable and tamper-proof data

#### Disadvantages:

- Scalability and speed limitations
- Energy consumption and environmental impact
- Regulatory uncertainty and legal challenges

### **Internet of Things (IoT)**

#### Advantages:

- Improved decision-making and automation
- New business models and revenue streams
- Improved healthcare and wellness

#### Disadvantages:

- Data overload and management challenges
- Interoperability and standardization issues
- Increased vulnerability to cyber attacks



## **Biotechnology**

### Advantages:

- Breakthroughs in healthcare and medicine
- Personalized treatment and gene editing
- Regenerative medicine and tissue engineering

### Disadvantages:

- Ethical implications and moral dilemmas
- Unequal access and distribution of benefits
- Potential for bioterrorism and misuse

## **5G and Quantum Computing**

### Advantages:

- Faster data transfer and processing
- Increased connectivity and IoT enablement
- New applications and innovations

### Disadvantages:

- Increased energy consumption and costs
- Limited availability and infrastructure
- Potential for increased cyber attacks

## **Virtual and Augmented Reality**

### Advantages:

- Immersive experiences and entertainment
- Enhanced education and training
- Improved healthcare and therapy

### Disadvantages:

- Addiction and social isolation
- Privacy concerns and data misuse
- Potential for decreased human interaction

## **Autonomous Vehicles**

### Advantages:

- Improved safety and reduced accidents
- Increased mobility and accessibility
- Reduced traffic congestion and emissions

### Disadvantages:

- Liability and regulatory challenges
- Potential for job displacement
- Dependence on technology and decreased human skills

## **Management Strategies**

Effective management of emerging technologies requires a holistic approach. This includes:

1. Regulation and Governance: Establishing regulatory frameworks that ensure the ethical use of technology and protect individuals' rights and privacy.
2. Investment in Education and Training: Educating and upskilling the workforce to prepare for technological changes and maximize the benefits of innovation.
3. International Cooperation: Encouraging global collaboration to address cross-border challenges and promote cybersecurity.
4. Ethical Guidelines: Developing and adhering to ethical guidelines for responsible AI and technology development.

## **Africa's Preparedness**

Africa's readiness for emerging technologies varies across the continent. While some countries have

made significant strides in technological infrastructure and education, others face challenges such as limited resources, digital literacy gaps, and regulatory deficiencies. Addressing these challenges is essential to unlock Africa's potential as a leader in the global tech landscape.

### **Impact on Africa**

Emerging technologies present both opportunities and risks for Africa. They offer the potential to:

1. **Leapfrog Traditional Development Stages:** Harnessing technology to accelerate economic growth and development.

2. **Foster Local Innovation:** Encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation to drive economic growth and job creation.

3. **Address Development Challenges:** Leveraging technology to address challenges such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure development.

However, emerging technologies also pose risks, some are related to the disadvantages listed previously:

1. **Widening the Economic Gap:** Exacerbating existing economic disparities between countries and regions.

2. **Dependency on Foreign Technology:** Relying heavily on foreign technology and expertise, rather than developing local capacity.

3. **Job Displacement:** Automating jobs, potentially displacing workers, and exacerbating unemployment.

4. **Increased Inequality:** Widening the gap between those with access to technology and those without.

5. **Cybersecurity Risks:** Increased vulnerability to cyber attacks, data breaches, and identity theft.

6. **Privacy Concerns:** Misuse of personal data, surveillance, and erosion of privacy.

7. **Ethical Implications:** Unethical use of technologies, such as AI and biotechnology, potentially harming individuals and communities.

8. **Environmental Impact:** Uncontrolled growth of technologies, contributing to environmental degradation and resource depletion.

9. **Unintended Consequences:** Unforeseen effects of technologies, potentially disrupting social structures, cultural heritage, and traditional ways of life.

10. **Lack of Digital Literacy:** Insufficient understanding and skills to effectively utilize technologies, potentially leading to dependence and exploitation.

To mitigate these risks, it is essential for African countries to develop comprehensive strategies for embracing emerging technologies while prioritizing local development, capacity building, and inclusive growth.

### **Recommendations for Africa**

To harness the benefits of emerging technologies, Africa must:

1. **Invest in Education:** Focus on STEM and digital skills development to prepare the workforce for technological changes.

2. **Create Conducive Environments:** Implement supportive policies and regulations to foster tech growth and innovation.

3. **Foster Partnerships:** Collaborate with global tech leaders and institutions to facilitate knowledge exchange and capacity building.

4. **Address Digital Literacy Gaps:** Invest in digital literacy programs to ensure that all Africans have the skills to participate in the digital economy.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, emerging technologies are shaping the global future, and Africa's role in this landscape is pivotal. By embracing technological innovation responsibly and proactively addressing challenges, Africa can unlock its full potential and contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable future for all.

## VI. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



### Artificial General Intelligence: Inevitability or Industry Jargon?

Marco GARZIA (Great Britain)

It is undeniable that Artificial Intelligence, as an emerging general-purpose technology, will profoundly change our societies and our species. Over the past year, in response to this narrative, global equity markets have seen massive gains as corporations worldwide scramble to implement AI tools into their businesses before competitors, and investors place bets on future industry leaders. Given the rapid rate of progress we have observed between the public release of *OpenAI's* GPT-3.5 model in November 2022 and today, it is easy to imagine that such progress will continue exponentially and without end, and perhaps it will.

Many industry CEOs, like Sam Altman of *OpenAI*, view their ultimate mission as the development of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI). Altman describes AGI as an AI system that is generally more intelligent than humans in all ways. He not only views the technology as an inevitability but foresees its arrival shortly. This worldview, however, is based on an assumption of uninterrupted future progress. We must recognise that potential bottlenecks exist, especially regarding energy and physical compute infrastructure, and we must remember that market hype cycles often fog reality (look to the Dotcom Bubble and recent cryptocurrency ‘bull runs’). It is also important to recognise that exponential technological advancement, as illustrated by Moore’s Law, does not always align with reality due to external factors including geopolitical insecurity, financial crises, resource scarcity and pandemics.



**Source:** <https://www.quest.nl/tech/technologie/a43119244/what-is-artificial-intelligence/>

#### Development Prerequisites

Last month, *McKinsey* published a report entitled *What is Artificial General Intelligence?* Which highlights eight capabilities of AI that need to be ‘master[ed]’ before AGI can be achieved:

1. Visual Perception
2. Audio Perception
3. Fine Motor Skills
4. Natural Language Processing
5. Problem-Solving
6. Navigation
7. Creativity
8. Social and Emotional Engagement

To summarise, the report argues that the sensory perception capacity of AI remains far from a human level, limited by both software and hardware constraints, noting that many autonomous cars are still fooled by minor vandalism of road signs and that even best-in-class systems cannot interpret, particularly sound, at a human level. In terms of interacting with the physical world, it argues that AI-powered robots still lack human-level dexterity for precise tasks such as surgery, but that solid progress has been made, such as *OpenAI's* single arm robot which solved a Rubik's Cube in under 4 minutes in 2019. Another challenge identified is natural language processing, most notably the ability to understand the non-verbal and implicit aspects of human communication, something difficult to derive simply from statistical correlations in datasets. In terms of problem-solving, the report suggests that an AGI system should be able to learn from its environment, adjusting to new situations in the absence of human guidance. It also notes that whilst autonomous navigation has made progress, we are years away from developing systems that can independently navigate without human priming. Furthermore, the author identifies a need for AI systems to rewrite their code before matching or exceeding human creativity levels, which first requires an intuitive understanding of vast amounts of human-written code. Finally, it cites the need for high-level social and emotional engagement capabilities for humans to want to interact regularly with AGI. While some systems can already mimic human emotions to a limited extent, humans themselves often struggle to read emotions, and the current state-of-the-art remains far from achieving even parity with our abilities.

### **Hallucinations**

A major issue users have found with generative AI chatbots like ChatGPT, *Anthropic's* Claude and *Google's* Gemini has been a tendency to 'hallucinate.' The term describes instances in which generative AI models generate false information presented as fact. This can be due to erroneous connections made between concepts within the models' training data or simply a lack of information on a specific topic.

During a Q&A session last month, *Nvidia Corp.* CEO Jensen Huang was asked how hallucinations should be managed. Huang responded that the issue was easily solvable using a technique known as *retrieval-augmented-generation* (RAG), where answers derived from training datasets are cross-referenced with relevant, up-to-date, real-world information from external sources to improve reliability. Despite Huang's confidence, generative AI companies and research organisations are already employing RAG and similar techniques, yet these issues persist on a wide scale. Part of the issue is the complex nature of 'truth'. There is inherent subjectivity to many human concepts and, as such, AI systems must be equipped with frameworks for identifying and implementing nuance in their outputs.

### **Flawed Industry Trajectory?**

Another potential issue is how much of the recent, rapid generative AI progress has been made. In 2017, a group of *Google* engineers released a paper, 'Attention is All You Need', introducing the groundbreaking 'transformer' neural network architecture. As computing power was scaled, transformer models demonstrated the ability to recognise patterns in increasingly large datasets, resulting in broad performance improvements. When developers began to see the materialisation of unpredictable yet desirable emergent properties in generative AI models simply by scaling compute resources, the industry's philosophy shifted accordingly. This new approach, based on the empirical observation that larger models tend to perform better (including on tasks for which they were not designed), has faced criticism by some in the field for a few reasons.

Firstly, as models grow, the associated costs and energy required to train them increase exponentially, raising concerns surrounding the sustainability of such an approach. This is especially relevant within our contemporary political context in which environmentalism is prioritised highly in most developed countries, characterised by a shift away from efficient, but polluting energy sources. AI data centres are notoriously energy intensive, requiring more than double the electricity input of regular data centres. Some, like Oregon-based nuclear reactor firm *NuScale*, believe the future of AI data centres lies in energy input stemming from in-house *Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)*. This builds on a blueprint developed by *Imperial College London* which operated a proprietary reactor for teaching and training purposes between 1965 and 2010. There are no SMRs in commercial operation today, however, China is in the process of building the world's first.

Another flaw of this approach is that, as models grow more powerful and their outputs more sophisticated, they become prone to more complex errors such as more subtle and hard-to-detect forms of hallucination and unintended bias. Resolving these complex failures requires more resources, adding cost and exacerbating aforementioned sustainability issues. The process of rectifying such issues is made more challenging by an incomplete understanding of why the models act as they do.

the size of training datasets. There is a possibility that the additional data required does not exist, or does not exist in a form that is usable in generative AI training. It is also possible that new regulation regarding how data can be used in the training process is introduced, handicapping the ability of developers to access vital data or to do so profitably.

For example, *OpenAI* is currently embroiled in a legal battle with the *New York Times* who allege that the organisation violated copyright laws by using millions of its articles to train its GPT models without permission. The NYT argues that its data was used to build products that could substitute its content, potentially negatively impacting its revenue. If the lawsuit is successful, *Microsoft* and *OpenAI* could face severe consequences to progress made on their models and underlying business strategies if forced to shut down or significantly alter models trained on NYT data.

Additionally, a verdict in favour of the NYT could set an industry precedent, potentially resulting in slowed development progress. A future framework regarding fair use of content in training generative models could mirror a recent USD 60 million deal between *Google* and social media platform *Reddit* for the right to use its user-generated content. The deal provides *Google* access to *Reddit's* Data Application Programming Interface (API) which allows the tech giant to better understand and utilise *Reddit's* data. The deal is not exclusive, meaning that *Reddit* is free to make other similar deals. This would increase costs associated with the development of generative models while creating significant value for companies possessing vast quantities of usable data.

Finally, an approach centred around constant investment in and development of expensive, manpower and resource-intensive infrastructure naturally raises barriers to entry, likely insurmountable for smaller firms. While this may not directly inhibit AGI development, the reduction of competitiveness in the industry could stunt innovation. Furthermore, centralisation of power in AI development, as with all monopolies, opens the door to anti-trust violations and other misuses, particularly concerning in this case given the immense power of the technology in question.

### How Will We Know?

A less technical challenge to the development of AGI regards definitions. Predicting if and when AGI will arrive is made more difficult by the lack of a universally accepted definition. Given the extent to which AGI already has entered the public consciousness, as well as become industry jargon, it's puzzling (although understandable given the current theoretical nature of the issue) that a consensus definition has not emerged.

This is particularly abstruse in the case of *Microsoft* and *OpenAI's* USD 10 billion deal which contains a clause stating that *Microsoft* loses the right to the developer's IP after AGI (as defined by *OpenAI's* board) has been achieved. It is surprising that the world's most valuable company would enter into such a high-stakes agreement with largely undefined parameters, especially while deferring definitional power to its smaller partner. This illustrates the immense value it sees in *OpenAI's* work.

Likewise, *OpenAI's* charter contains a clause stating that if another entity reaches 'late-stage AGI development' before it, instead of competing with this entity, it will seek to assist it. The intention is to prevent a development race in which quick deployment is prioritised at the expense of safety. The lack of a clear definition for 'late-stage AGI development' or AGI in general diminishes the reassurance *OpenAI* seeks to provide in its charter. One can imagine a situation where it refuses to acknowledge that a competitor's system has reached AGI level to avoid honouring this clause before continuing to prioritise profit and market share growth. Depending on the extent of *Microsoft's* board's influence on *OpenAI's* decision-making process, this may not be a farfetched scenario.

The motivations of *OpenAI*, which claims to be committed to the principles of broadly distributed benefits, long-term safety, technical leadership and cooperative orientation, have been brought into question as of late. This is partly a result of its deal with *Microsoft* which seemingly contradicts its mission statement of operating as a non-profit seeking to develop AGI 'to benefit all humanity' given that its technology is now providing financial gain to *Microsoft*, a for-profit company. This was the fundamental motivation for a lawsuit launched against the organisation earlier this year by billionaire Elon Musk who claims that it has become a 'closed-source de facto subsidiary' of *Microsoft*.

### Predictions

**Short-term:** Market hype will continue as new AI breakthroughs are made, especially if US and global interest rates are lowered. We expect these breakthroughs will continue, at least in the short-term, but perhaps also on a longer time horizon.

**Medium-term:** As legacy media struggles to remain profitable and related jobs are threatened by

generative AI, we expect more legal action against developers. Entities with vast collections of data will seek to monetise it by selling to developers.

**Long-term:** We expect data's value as a commodity to further increase. Those who discover novel ways of collecting and synthesising data about the world to be used in training AI models will profit immensely.

## VII. CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN MOBILITY



### Fundamentals on Climate Change and Human Mobility

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#### Abstract

This paper aims to present the fundamental aspects of climate change in relation to human mobility, thus wishes to communicate the basics in understanding climate change and they way it is linked with human mobility. Firstly, a brief overview will be provided on the definition of climate and climate change. Secondly, the discussion will delve into climate change itself, exploring its causes and impacts on both nature and human systems. Vulnerability will then be examined, considering geographical and social factors, alongside an exploration of the concept of climate justice. Following this, human mobility resulting from climate change will be examined, addressing the challenges in defining legally the affected populations and outlining the basic international legal framework. Finally, recent research findings will be presented, exploring human mobility due to climate change, addressing common misconceptions, and examining the links between climate change and the green transition within the context of employment.

**Key Words;** Climate Change, Human Mobility, Climate Change Migration, Displacement



Source: <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/politico-schimbarile-climatice-vor-accentua-diviziunile-in->

#### Climate Change and Climate

Upon deconstructing “climate change” it’s evident that the term refers to an alteration of climate, meaning a change in the general weather conditions usually found in a particular place. However, these weather conditions distinguish themselves from what is commonly referred to as ‘weather’ in terms of duration and pattern. Climate exhibits a sustained duration in time and an overall consistent pattern in each area. Although Climate is an international factor, it’s formulation is based upon regional environmental and atmospheric conditions which led to the formation of climate zones. These zones serve the purpose of examining and distinguishing climate conditions. Based on the above, it’s clear that climate varies from one region to another. Therefore, when observing climate change, it’s implied that changes will manifest differently depending on the region. For instance, a country in southern Europe will experience climate change differently from those in Central Asia and vice versa.

## Definition and Causes

According to The United Nations Framework Convention's on Climate Change (UNFCCC) ART 1.2 , an international treaty adopted in 1992 which serves as the overarching framework for global efforts to address climate change and provides a platform for negotiations and agreements among member countries, Climate Change refers to *a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods* (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1994). Among the most impactful actions that lead to climate change are the production of carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide by burning coal, oil and gas, deforestation, Increasing livestock farming, fertilizers containing nitrogen, and products emitting fluorinated gases (Causes of Climate Change, n.d.).

## Impact on Nature

The impact of climate change is evident in both environmental and human aspects.

Climate Change is often characterized as a threat multiplier highlighting not only the interaction between the environmental and human sectors but also the impact of existing sub-sectors affecting and being affected simultaneously. In its natural aspect, climate change manifests as high temperatures, drought and wildfires, unavailability of fresh water, floods, sea level rise (SLR) in costal areas, biodiversity challenges , increase in saline soils and alternate soil quality, water scarcity and low water quality, ocean acidification (Consequences of Climate Change, n.d.). Additionally, humanity is profoundly affected at its core and in its livelihoods. The primary impacts are felt in the socio-economic sector and even threaten to the enjoyment of human rights.

## Impact on Health

The alternation of climatic conditions initially impacts the quality of fresh air, water, and agricultural opportunities. These natural resources are vital for survival and further cultural development. Therefore, clean air, water, and soil, being directly and inextricably linked to food systems and livelihoods, remain vulnerable to harm, resulting in a wide range of health-related issues including the spreading of waterborne, foodborne and vector-borne disease risk. World Health Organization estimates that between 2030-2050 climate change is expected to be responsible for approximately 250.00 additional deaths per year due to undernutrition, malaria, diarrhea and heat stress alone (WHO, 2023). Equally disturbing is the increasing risk of deaths, non-communicable diseases, the emergence and spread of infectious diseases, and health emergencies. Moreover, the affected populations are also under the pressure of mental health issues, anxiety and post traumatic stress (WHO,2023). In the rising of such health emergencies arises the question about the whether the equal access to health care can be practically applicable. Hence, the universal human rights to health is in danger. The Right to Health is officially declared by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 in its Art. 12 (ICESCR, 1966) and by Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Art 25 (UDHR, 1948).

## General Socio-Economic Impact on Humanity

Besides the vital aspects of survival and livelihood, climate change impacts spread over more complex foundations of human activity. The Right to Education<sup>1</sup> and the Right to Work<sup>2</sup> remain also on the threat mark. Consequently, ethical matters surrounding the human right to dignity come under the microscope. Furthermore, the sectors of energy, infrastructure and building, insurance as well as crosscutting issues on businesses are being swept along as well (Consequences of Climate Change, n.d.) Lastly, neither cultural heritage remains untouched by climate change. As per Climate Rights International, forms of cultural destruction causes by climate change can encompass various aspects, such as the disappearance of languages, the disturbance of traditional ways of making a living, the devastation of cultural landmarks, the dispersal of communities resulting from enforced migration, the permanent dispossession of customary territories, and the hindrance in observing traditional rituals and practices (Climate Rights International, 2023). The unstable economy and the ailing tourism sector can also have implications, extending beyond economic effects, on the emerging cultural crisis.

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<sup>1</sup>Art 26 of UDHR,1948 & Art 13 of ICESCR,1966

<sup>2</sup>Art 23 of UDHR,1948 & ART 6 of ICESCR, 1966



## **Climate Change Vulnerability Based on Geographical and Social Factors**

Climate Change is indeed a threat multiplier as it triggers rifts in interdependent sectors enhancing their impacts. Following this, it's crucial to examine which groups of people are more vulnerable both socially and geographically to the impacts of climate change. The impacts of climate change disproportionately affect certain segments of society that are already marginalized or vulnerable due to factors such as geographical location, gender, sexual orientation, age, indigenous or minority status, disability, or living in areas affected by conflict, violence, or displacement. This is highlighted in HRC resolution 48/14, which establishes a Special Rapporteur to promote and protect human rights in the context of climate change (UNHR,2022).Evidence provided show that low-income countries and small island developing states endure the harshest, particularly in terms of health (WHO,2023). Other findings indicate most impacts are felt the most by the children and economically disadvantaged (DARA and the Climate Vulnerable Forum,2010). Specifically around climate-related fatalities evidence shows that over 99% of all mortality occurs in developing countries, and nearly 80% of all climate deaths are registered only among children living in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (DARA and the climate vulnerable forum,2010). Indigenous Peoples, coastal communities, and people from small island states are highly influenced by this existential threat because many are dependent on ecosystems and natural resources that are prone to severe climate impacts. Low-lying island states are extremely vulnerable to sea level rise, and island communities are threatened with imminent displacement and loss of culture and heritage (Climate Rights International, 2023). The climate crisis will pose more acute risks to cultural traditions. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, higher degrees of global warming will have higher consequences on disadvantaged and vulnerable communities (Climate Rights International, 2023). Adding to this, residents of low-income urban areas with inadequate infrastructure, as well as demographic groups with lower incomes and resources, face heightened exposure to climate impacts but possess limited capacity to cope with them. Women, also, may face a disproportionate burden from climate change, particularly when costly adaptation measures are necessary as well as unemployed individuals and those on the margins of society are among the most vulnerable to climate-related risks (Consequences of Climate Change, n.d.) Human Rights Council recognized in 2021 in its 48/14 resolution more affected the populations vulnerable due to geography, gender, sexual orientation, age, indigenous or minority status, disability, or living in situations of conflict, violence, or displacement (UNHR, 2022). By the findings of DARA and the Climate Vulnerable Forum, there are four major climate impact areas: 1) Health, 2) Weather Disasters, 3) Habitat Loss, and 4) Economic stress. Based on this evidence, almost every country has a high vulnerability to one major climate impact (DARA and the climate Vulnerability Forum 2010).

### **The Concept of Climate Justice**

Generally, it's commonly accepted that developing countries, although they contributed little to the climate crisis, face the majority of challenges. In this context, the term "Climate Justice" arose. Climate justice emphasizes fairness and human rights in addressing climate change, recognizing historical inequalities in contributions to the crisis. This entails wealthier countries, industries, businesses, and individuals who have emitted significant greenhouse gases taking responsibility to assist those most affected by climate change, particularly less affluent countries and communities that have contributed minimally to the issue. Additionally, climate justice advocates for equitable distribution of responsibilities based on contributions to the problem, while addressing systemic, economic, and generational disparities (Climate Change Is a Matter of Justice – Here's Why, 2023). The developing countries stand on the dilemma, for which the prime minister of France Emmanuel Macron long stated that no country should ever be in, meaning choosing between fighting poverty and the protection of the global climate (NEWS WIRES, 2023).

### **Human Mobility Driven by Climate Change: Challenges and Basics of International Law**

As previously mentioned, one of the significant impacts of climate change on humanity is forced migration. When discussing forced migration, we encounter terms such as climate refugee/migrant, environmental refugee, internal displacement, and climate-induced human mobility. There isn't an international term to describe people "on the move" due to climate change challenges. Since 2008, more than 376 million individuals worldwide have experienced forced displacement due to floods, windstorms, earthquakes, or droughts, with an unprecedented 32.6 million cases recorded in 2022 alone (APAP, 2023). These individuals were characterized by the term "environmental refugee" in the early stages of the examination of climate change,

with the term serving as a tool to reflect and raise awareness about the issue. Legal obstacles arose since the specific legal meaning of the term “Refugee”, existing both in the Refugee Convention of 1951 and International Refugee law does not include the climate factor. Later on, the term “environmental migrant” came into use but once again met against criticism because legal migration suggests a degree of volition in the decision to move. Recently, the term “environmentally/climate displaced person” seems more eligible to describe the issue since it appears to be taking into account the different types of environmental change and forms of mobility (APAP,2023). International Organization about Migration (IOM) defines climate migration as The movement of a person or groups of persons who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment due to climate change, are obliged to leave their habitual place of residence or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, within a State or across an International border (International Migration Law No. 34 - Glossary on Migration, 2019). The International Legal Framework suggests that for the internally displaced populations, the state remains obliged to protect, promote and fulfil human rights (UNHR,2022). On the other hand, for cross-border displaced international refugee law may be applicable on the basis of non-refoulement. In any case, international human rights law could also be considered applicable as the states are bound to uphold human rights (UNHR,2022). After all, in 2021 the Human Rights Council (HRC) in its resolution 48/13 recognized the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

### **Recent Findings and Suggestions regarding Climate Mobility**

At this juncture of the analysis, it is crucial to examine some recent aspects of Climate Change Migration. Whether environmental change leads to increased human migration is still under assessment, since some studies suggest so and others do not. Migration driven by climate change is primarily internal or to low- and middle-income countries. The strongest relationship is found in studies with a large share of countries outside the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, particularly from Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa, and studies of middle-income and agriculturally dependent countries (Hoffmann et al., 2020).

Aspects leading to migration, besides the crucial ones of health and productivity, are related to the urbanization coming from internal migration leading to pressure on the labour market and triggering out-migration. Arising or existing conflicts in the area serve both as mediators and moderators of migration (Hoffmann et al., 2020). Certainly, exposure to environmental changes may have very different implications in different areas and at the same time, environmental factors are not independent but may be correlated with one another. Migration is only one of many potential responses to environmental stress and has to be analysed against the background of other adaptation strategies, which can complement or substitute migration (Hoffmann et al., 2020).

Given the expected adverse consequences of climate change in many regions of the world, environmental migration may become more prevalent in the future for certain countries. However, vulnerable sub-groups in the population may not be able to afford to migrate (Hoffmann et al., 2020). Specifically concerning the coastal populations, Hauer (2017) suggests the Sea Level Rise (SLR) to be unique among environmental stressors as the conversion of habitable land to uninhabitable water is expected to lead to widespread human migration without the deployment of costly protective infrastructure. Based on this, his study claims that unmitigated SLR is expected to reshape the US population distribution, potentially stressing landlocked areas unprepared to accommodate this wave of coastal migrants and underlines the scarcity of studies that have attempted to model the destinations of potentially displaced persons.

A fresh approach in researches regarding climate migration should be preferred. Firstly, climate change does not consist the sole factor leading to migration, rather it is accompanied by a mixture of sociopolitical, cultural and economic aspects which form this mobility and it's unclear to which extent climate change alone enhances mobility. At the same time, not all populations choose to move, even in the presence of climate crisis, where others move internally or seasonally or just relocate to urban areas. Of course, other populations face difficulties in moving safely. It appears crucial that future researches have to include the very populations in mobility in their efforts to examine climate migration. In addition, climate change migration framing could benefit from not being associated with a “crisis”, “a mass migration posing a threat” and, lastly, the destination - countries should also be included in the researches (Boas et al., 2019).

Shayegh's (2017) findings argue that the potential of migration lowers the fertility rate and increases the number of children receiving an education when compared to a world without migration. Skilled individuals have more means and opportunities to migrate compared to unskilled individuals whose migration probability decreases as climate change looms. Meaning, that migration closes the income inequality gap in the

sending region, but the endogenous response significantly amplifies this effect. Even after considering this response, however, in most scenarios, global income inequality for skilled labor increases as a result of climate change. These results demonstrate the potential for migration to alleviate the negative economic and demographic impacts of climate change. However, even low-skilled human resources can contribute to crucial factors of the economy, especially in the green transition on condition that they receive equal access to education and green skills development. The environmentally sustainable skill development should take into account migration considerations when forming. Migrants, especially those with lower skill levels and more vulnerable to being affected negatively by the job market, could benefit from having access to educational and training opportunities in environmentally-friendly sectors. The cooperation between the origin and destination country is based on the imperative to broaden the global pool of skilled workers (Tiwary et al., 2019).

Examining the framework of climate crisis and human mobility Siegfried (2023) argues that some myths regarding climate crisis and displacement need to be examined further. Mass migration from the Global South to the Global North driven by climate change is a rather non-true scenario as the majority of people moving due to climate change are either internally displaced or moving to neighbor regions, either by choice or by lack of opportunities for moving abroad. In 2022, for example, disasters triggered a record 32.6 million internal displacements in external, of which 98 per cent were caused by weather-related hazards such as floods, storms, wildfires and droughts, according to the International Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). Generally, about 70% of refugees and internally displaced people now live among countries most vulnerable to climate change (Siegfried, 2023). Once again, climate change is characterized as a threat multiplier leading to a variety of reasons that influence or force people to move. Lastly, she argues that predictions regarding the future displaced populations are likely to be considered credible since this type of migration flow will be largely driven by the measures taken now to limit global temperature increase and adapt to the changing climate (Siegfried, 2023).

### **Conclusion**

Climate change is a complex issue. As a threat multiplier, climate change affects both the natural and human environment. Moreover, climate change's impacts multiply when in correspondence with other factors such as poverty, poor health and educational mechanisms and unemployment. In the human sphere climate change poses a threat to human rights as well since basic needs such as access to clean air, water, soil and safe housing, equal access to health are under dangerous influences. Socio-economic activity as well as cultural aspects are also deeply affected by climate change. In terms of the higher vulnerability index, it appears that the strongest effects of climate change are felt in developing countries by small island and coastal areas, indigenous populations and, as for the social factor, gender, sexual orientation, age, minority status, disability, or living in areas affected by conflict, violence, or displacement play a crucial role in the index of vulnerability. Women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities appear as more affected than other social groups. In this context the climate justice concept arose raising awareness and promoting practices in favor of the developing world contributed little to climate change and yet faces most of the challenges. Defining legally the people on the move driven by climate change is a complex task hence, up to date, there isn't a legal framework specifically defining and managing these migration flows. However, the variations on reasons for moving, and the inability to calculate the degree of impact of climate change, since it does not serve as the only catalyst, underline these challenges and call policymakers and law specialists to take action considering both humanitarian aspects as well as the general credibility of the international law system. Until then, perhaps the term "human mobility" includes all main actions of moving, meaning displacement, migration and planned relocation. Recent researches in the field of migration studies argue whether climate change influences migration and mobility while those standing in favor of this argument suggest that climate change is a factor among many which leads to human mobility. Migration appears to stand among the many potential responses to climate change yet questions arise regarding the will to migrate, the means to migrate as well as the opportunity to migrate safely. The impact of this human mobility of course touches neighboring countries, for example, the coastal and small island areas affected by SLR will eventually put pressure on landlocked neighboring countries. Notwithstanding, climate human mobility should not be examined as a "mass threat". Most of this human mobility happens either in the state or in neighboring countries. Some researchers support the dynamic migration holds on affecting positively economic gaps while others highlight the need for equal access to education and training in environmental - friendly sectors and practices in order to secure social cohesion. Lastly, the cooperation between countries of origin and destination is highly advised for the creation of skilled workers adapted and advocating in the green transition. It is important to note that predictions regarding the future displaced populations are likely to be considered credible since this type of migration flow will be largely

driven by the measures taken now to limit global temperature increase and adapt to the changing climate.

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## VIII. STRATEGIC THINKING



### The Impact of Strategic Thinking in Achieving Organizational Success

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#### Abstract

This study aims to identify the impact of using strategic thinking through the interactive role of core capabilities in achieving organizational success. The current study fills a knowledge gap as no Arab or foreign study to the best of the researcher's knowledge has addressed the relationship between the variables and dimensions of the study. The study included hypotheses that were subjected to several tests in one hypothetical model at the University of Basra. A questionnaire was used as a means of obtaining the required data for this test. The analytical survey method was applied to 800 individuals from the University of Basra as a population, with a study sample of 260 questionnaires suitable for analysis. Approved statistical tools such as descriptive statistics represented by the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, the Cronbach alpha stability coefficient, the Pearson correlation coefficient, and simple decline analysis were used.

Confirmatory factor analysis was also employed to measure the effect between variables. These statistical tools were applied using the program SPSS.V.24 to determine the extent of the importance of this relationship in improving the organizational success of the University of Al Basra. The study reached several conclusions, including the demonstration of the existence of a moderate direct correlation in the relationship between strategic thinking and organizational success. Additionally, the study found a positive interactive influence on the relationship between strategic thinking and organizational success, leading to the development of competencies and expertise, which positively reflects on achieving goals, objectives, and overall performance levels.



*Source: <https://www.iraq-businessnews.com/tag/basra-investment-commission/>*

**Keywords:** strategic thinking, core capabilities, organizational success, Knowledge Gap, Interactive Role

## Introduction

Strategic thinking has become an increasingly important concept in the world of planning, although it remains somewhat ambiguous for scholars and practitioners. It involves the ability to analyze internal and external factors that influence the organization, with the aim of identifying the strategic direction in the decision-making process (Graetz et al., 2002: p456–462)

Mintzberg observed that strategic thinking differs from traditional thinking and planning approaches. It necessitates the capacity to explore new possibilities and effectively assemble various pieces of information to form a comprehensive and cohesive understanding of the situation. Heracleous defines strategic thinking as an integrated perspective that contributes to organizational success and is vital for proactive strategic decision-making. Group cohesion and organizational identity create a sense of “long-term organizational learning,” which helps change the mental models of leaders throughout the organization, in order to facilitate plan implementation and accelerate organizational learning. Successful adaptation involves responding quickly to changes in work practices (Kanaan, 2010).

Given this context, the current study aims to explore the impact of strategic thinking and the interactive role of core capabilities in achieving organizational success and thinking development at the University of Basrah. This study is essential in the broader context of Iraqi universities, where keeping pace with rapid developments is crucial for flourishing and producing high-quality outputs. In today’s fast-paced and ever-changing environment, it has become necessary for university directors of divisions and units to lead the way in embracing strategic thinking. Therefore, the significance of this study lies in its intellectual proposal, focusing on modernity in proposals related to strategic thinking and its relationship to organizational success.

Based on what we mentioned above, the problem of the study can be formulated with the following question: **What is the impact of strategic thinking on achieving organizational success at the University of Basra and what is the role of core capabilities in this?**

The study population includes the entire group of individuals, events, or objects that the researcher is interested in studying. The current study focuses on department managers and administrative units within the University of Basrah, which is one of the largest and oldest universities in Iraq. Located in the central city of Basrah Governorate in southern Iraq, the university comprises several faculties with various specializations. Founded on April 1, 1964, the University of Basra started with five faculties: Science, Engineering, Economics, Law, and Arts in the academic year 1964-1965, accepting 816 students. Over the years, the university has developed into a center for scientific research in Iraq, with 20 faculties containing 83 scientific departments. The university manages 11 consulting offices and 16 scientific centers, publishes 16 scientific journals and periodicals, and awards bachelor’s, higher diploma, master’s, and doctoral degrees in various sciences and specializations. The University of Basra was the nucleus for the establishment of universities in Thi-Qar and Maysan. The faculties of education, arts, and science in Thi-Qar Governorate were affiliated with the University of Basra until 2002, when Thi-Qar University was founded. The basic education college and the education college in Maysan were affiliated with the University of Basra until 2007 when Maysan University was founded. The university is a member of the Association of Arab Universities and the Association of Islamic Universities. This study focuses on the University of Basra to test a model for several reasons, including testing the strategic importance of university quality and the need for universities to have information technology. In-depth studies are needed to improve the desired quality level, as the University of Basra is an important institution that influences its outputs in all aspects of the job market.

At the beginning of the 21st century, institutions in many countries, especially the Arab world and in Iraq specifically, faced significant challenges. These challenges were brought about by traditional methods and means that made it difficult to keep up with the demands of globalization and the ever-changing landscape of contemporary life. Dealing with these challenges, requires innovative thinkers who can develop appropriate methods and strategies for both addressing and building upon the available resources.

Building a strong foundation for an institution has become increasingly difficult without incorporation strategic thinking based on vision, inclusiveness, and multiple-directional elements through interaction with each other to achieve their objective. Therefore, strategic thinking is one of the gateways to the future, emerging from a broad reflection and anticipation of the institution’s future and determining its path. This leads them to have the power to face great challenges both internally and externally.

## The Concept of Strategic Thinking

The concept strategy has its military roots. Currently strategic thinking is highly regarded in various fields, with many authors preferring its use (Farhangi & Dehghan, 2011). The roots of strategic thinking (systematic analysis of the current situation and future orientation for formulation) have been studied,

including original ideas on long-term perspectives and the concept of strategic thinking include the following:

- Strategic analysis, quality, resource allocation models, organizational culture, leadership, measurement, and strategic alignment are the cornerstone in the development of strategic thinking (Allino, 2006).
- A wide range of administrative approaches cover the development and implementation of organizational strategic plan in management literature, without explaining the distinction between strategic planning and strategic thinking, which has led to confusion in strategic management (Heracleous, 1998). Mintzberg (1994) believes that planning alone cannot develop strategic planning because it entails analytical, formal, and executive processes.
- Goldsmith (1996) acknowledges that strategic planning did not even mature until financial interests and financial performance of institutions were taken into account. Strategic management is considered a means of leaning rather than an end to be achieved.
- Bonn (2005) argues that strategic thinking for solving strategic issues is associated with creative thinking and multiple logical methods. Implementing creativity in the real world and employing sequential in strategic thinking and planning are the best way to achieve innovative strategies in practice.
- Howard (1989) discusses strategic thinking a visionary as a process of finding alternative solutions to competition (Abraham, 2005). To that end, it can be said that strategic thinking is a product of managers' imagination, requiring human intuition and creativity.
- Liedtka (1998) suggests that strategic thinking is a systematic perspective, with elements of time passing, convergence hypothesis, intent, and optimism. Combining these elements yields favorable outcomes for the organization.
- Bonn (2001) believes that three essential characteristics are required to achieve strategic thinking. These characteristics include a comprehensive understanding of the organization and its environment, with reminders and the complexity of the infrastructure for communication, creativity, new ideas, reusing old ideas, and a vision for the future of the organization. Some strategic management thinkers suggest that the concept of strategic thinking is to look forward.
- Strategic thinking focuses on creating a better future through future-making and also emphasizes increasing societal value goals by achieving profitable results.
- Strategic thinking is deemed highly significant in management, as many decision-makers believe that senior management should prioritize the process of effective thinking in today's business organizations. This viewpoint is widely shared among psychologists, philosophers, and management scholars.
- Effective strategic thinking is considered one of the most crucial success factors in organization and life, leading to its peak, and the appreciation of all managers for its importance in business institutions.
- Institutions' interest in strategic thinking stems from their pursuit of developing a comprehensive plan that encompasses vision, mission, and objectives. It involves the formulation of strategic alternatives, namely, setting goals, principal policies, and implementation mechanisms to achieve organizational objectives (Johnson et al., 2006).
- Strategic thinking can be described as an intellectual methodology that guides administrative processes and activities in an organized manner to realize organizational goals and objectives. It necessitates adaptation in light of internal and external variables, ultimately fostering competitiveness within institutions based on strategic thinking.
- In academic literature, scholars strive to distinguish between traditional strategic planning and more general strategic thinking. Early efforts to define the term included ideas, information seeking, and learning from experience. The United States Internal Revenue Service defines strategic thinking as leadership efficiency that involves formulating effective strategies while considering external impacts from a national and global perspective.
- Strategic thinking delves into matters of public policy and long-term strategic planning, leading to a compelling organizational vision. It establishes objectives and priorities, leveraging points of strength. Multiple definitions of strategic thinking have emerged, ranging from thinking within the realm of planning to engaging in a comprehensive approach to organizational life that allows for the discernment and understanding of the challenges one faces.
- Despite its somewhat enigmatic nature, the recent perception of strategic thinking appears to manifest as a fundamentally distinct and more innovatively practical departure from strategic planning.
- Wilson (1994) suggests that we have enhanced previous models of strategic planning to the extent that what has emerged is something more useful referred to a strategic thinking on strategic management. The procedural approach ultimately focuses on traditional strategic planning, asking how we can accomplish mission priorities and specifying the actions to be taken at any time.

- Understanding the collaborations between the components of work, consisting of mutual understanding of internal and external factors, is crucial for organizational strategy (Liedtka, 1998) (Bonn, 2005).
- Managers and strategic thinkers have a positive or negative impact through actions or environmental circumstances (Amabile, 1998). Strategic thinkers must seek fresh perspectives to create a competitive advantage. One condition for creativity is questioning common conceptions.
- Enhancing clarity and reducing ambiguity (Collins et al., 2009, p.10).

**Introduced by Fairholm (2009), five perspectives were identified as being executed or neglected within organizations.**

- The first perspective: Management (scientific). The underlying strategic assumption is that institutions and their leaders need to control chaos, where predictable, manageable, and organized processes and outcomes should prevail as the norm.
- The second perspective: Leaders as managers of excellence, aiming to control chaos by focusing on improving processes and engaging employees in developing strategic plans.
- The third perspective: Values-driven activity, assuming that strategic thinking prioritizes the values of others. In this manner, strategic thinking revolves around influencing chaos rather than trying to control it.
- The fourth perspective: Trust culture, primarily encouraging mutual trust to inspire people to act wisely and independently towards achieving common goals. This approach embraces chaos to achieve desired objectives.
- The final perspective: (Spiritual) directly transcendent, emphasizes that strategic thinking, at its highest levels, aims to develop the best in others so they lead themselves in appropriate directions to achieve suitable goals. Key components include commitment, credibility, and communication.

### **Advantages of Strategic Thinking**

- Emphasizing the importance of envisioning and determining future directions and possibilities rather than fixating on present and entangled problems.
- Unifying efforts and mobilizing energies towards goals and objectives instead of focusing on means and parts.
- Effectively utilizing human resources, capacities, and tacit knowledge, while fostering creativity and innovation.
- Strategic thinking contributes to building employee loyalty, engagement, satisfaction, and attraction towards strategic objectives.
- Strategic thinking fosters a culture of dialogue, participation, openness, optimism, and transparency. (Al-Ghalabi & Idris, 2007: pp. 62-63).

### **Dimensions of Strategic Thinking**

Contributions of strategic thinking are crowned in seeking effective approaches to establish compatibility between organizational resources and institutional aspirations for the future. Overlooking events or ignoring the continuity and evolving interrelatedness between reality, intersections and requirements inevitably requires a certain level of awareness and preparation. Moreover, it is the best way to utilize strategic thinking skills in all its dimensions and components. This is a starting point to say that the organizational reality of any institution cannot be understood without effective and conscious awareness of the movements in its environment, which reflects many different changes that have various effects on its actions and their impact. This can only be achieved by invoking what is known as the dimensions of strategic thinking, which we can see as a linked sequence indicating integrated links and continue to maintain tangible work inside it. It is an acknowledgment of the work of strategic thinking at various levels, including activities and events, and for this reason strategic thinking possesses a systematic methodology, a scientific nature, serves reality, explores it, observes its changes and benefits from opportunities. The data in the table indicates a gap between the proposals of researchers related to the dimensions of strategic thinking and their perceptions. In light of the previous, after reviewing the previous models, the researcher stated that they were not significantly different in content, but differed in form and style.

### **The Concept of Organizational Success**

Success in English, according to (Webster, 1974), means ending and reaching what is best or achieving it, while in French, according to (Robert, 1983), success means obtaining a new result and means to reach or achieve it. The majority of institution managers aim for the success of their institutions. However, it is not



clear how this goal can be achieved because measuring or even defining success is difficult.

The concept and idea of organizational success belong to what is known as the gray area and are not clearly defined in the context of the economy (Barhatov & Pletnjev, 2014). There are many methods to achieve organizational success in philosophy, psychology and economics.

The most common method is to focus on defining the concept of organizational success from an economic perspective. Success of the institution enables drawing conclusions about the extent to which the institution serves its function and achieves its goals, which, in turn, allows its leaders to take these data into account and make changes and adjustments to its activities.

The essence of the idea of the institution lies in its ability to be sustainable while being active, creating value, and reaching its goals (Barhatov & Pletnjev, 2014). (Barhatov, 2016) suggests that organizational success should be defined as feasibility manifested in profitability, growth potential and the ability to be better than competitors.

It is also worth noting that success is a temporary feature that may change over stages or cycles of organizational development (Likierman, 2006). Miljohina and Adova (2014) suggest that the concept of organizational success is a variable linguistic concept, the meaning of which depends on the evaluator; in other words, the definition of success is subjective.

Based on the different definitions of organizational success, which are sometimes contradictory, it can be concluded that this concept is extremely complex and there is no comprehensive, agreed upon definition of organizational success. Traditionally, organizational success is measured primarily based on financial indicators, such as employee turnover, profit, and cost-effectiveness (Maltz et al., 2003; Kaplan & Norton, 1992). However, in recent years, other factors have started to be taken into consideration when determining success.

The main reason for this is the growing demand to look at the success of the institution not in the context of the past but rather to be more oriented towards the future. This means that the long-term success and development of the institution become important (Gorenak & Košir, 2012).

According to (Balaboniene and Večerskiene, 2015), standards alone are not sufficient to create a balanced model for the crucial factors of organizational success, as indicators tend to measure the past. Different authors refer, based on their research area, to the individual factors that must be considered when determining institutional success. Some scholars arrange the factors in order, while others create a single-level or multi-level system. According to (Siimon, 2006), organizing the factors, especially at the multi-level, is a crucial aspect, as the one-level approach does not allow for a systematic overview of the strength of the factor and the opportunity to classify the determinants of organizational success. From analyzing the literature, it can be observed that there are a number of simpler divisions of the factors that characterize organizational success, based on different aspects and a limited number of topical aspects, and that the simplification (division) contributes to analyzing the determinants of organizational success by providing an initial classification opportunity and identifying trends of this analysis by dividing the factors into external and internal factors. It is up to the institution itself to determine if these factors can be influenced internally (internal factors) or if they are practiced to influence external factors.

(Miljohina and Adova, 2014) suggest that the success of the institution depends on the dynamics and interaction of the external and internal factors because measuring the concept of organizational success, the approach of the various authors is not contradictory, but complementary or narrow down the previous classification. Organizational success is often an indirect concept, and measuring it can be a significant challenge for those who need to do so.

Due to the diversity of definitions of success and its multidimensional nature, it is important to use a reasonable and logical set of factors that determine organizational success.

(Maltz et al., 2003) consider simplicity, dynamism, and temporal flexibility important factors in the success of the institution. These factors should reflect improvement and should involve institution leaders in choosing success factors that ensure that these factors are related to the organizational strategy, goals, and objectives. At the same time, leaders need to obtain information about the institution's past, present and future (Maltz et al., 2003).

The achievement of organizational success is still muddled by confusion and ambiguities regarding the methodological and procedural frameworks. Growth is an indicator of measuring system operations, implying efficiency or the organization's capacity to achieve long-term goals by expansion, innovation, and survival (Whetten, 1987). However, defining success through performance, productivity, operational efficiency, profits, and targeted returns, along with quality management programs, reengineering audits, and comparisons, is a narrow perspective that does not define long-term success with respect to competitive markets.

Long-term success lies in the organization's ability to perform better than competitors by possessing

unique and fundamental capabilities that cannot be replicated. Additionally, it involves the capacity to attain a competitive position of advantage (Hill & Jones, 2001).

There are two operational systems, the first being the system's capacity to achieve long-term goals and balance between employee goals and objectives (Kenny, 2001). The second system entails the organization's ability to coordinate activities across all components that are linked to a common vision to achieve strategic objectives (Dell & Kramer, 2003). The basic elements of the operational system can be expressed in the form of an equation: message + strategic objectives + excellent performance (Whitney, 2010).

There are two approaches to operating systems in various institutions. The first approach is the economic gateway, which is based on the competitive advantage derived from superior markets. The performance of the institution is influenced by the external environment (Ambrosini, 2003), which includes the forces of competition (Porter) and innovation (Schumpeter), as well as scenario analysis that features a vision of future opportunities and environmental threats, along with an analysis of competitive advantages (Grant, 2000). The second approach to operating systems is based on the relatively modern resource-based view, which emphasizes the possibility of viewing the institution as a collection of resources enabling it to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Ambrosini, 2003).

This approach is primarily based on studies by Selznick (1957) on distinctive competencies, and Penrose (1959) that view the institution as a collection of resources. This also includes the value chain approach to analyzing strategic capabilities that can be transformed into core competencies supporting the analysis of competitive advantage (Hitt, 2001).

Organizational success is obscured by the ambiguity and complexity of the organizational and procedural framework. The concepts mentioned in the literature by researchers on organizational success, competitive success, strategic success, long-term success, and operational success all contribute to the concept of organizational success as an integrated concept. To examine various approaches and examine success from an internal, external, or initial perspective (Daham, 2005: p.10). Several definitions have been received regarding this subject.

### **The Importance of Organizational Success**

The importance of organizational success has been identified by Shihab (2016: p76) as follows:

- The ability of an institution to deal with sudden environmental changes and emergencies related to material aspects.
- Organizational success helps to boost employee morale and provides conditions that facilitate creativity, innovation, and modernization.
- It maintains a good reputation with external parties involved in the institution.
- It helps the institution achieve short and long-term strategic goals and organizational plans.
- It assists the institution in meeting all its human, material, financial, and informational needs according to its requirements.

**Similarly, Mahdi (2008) and Ali (2018: p214) have identified the importance of business success as follows:**

- Creating a suitable climate of trust and ethical dealings that eliminate the possibility of employee complaints against the institution.
- Enhancing employee performance levels and investing in their potential and skills in a way that promotes progress and development.
- Evaluating human resource management programs and policies, as the results of this process can be used as indicators to assess the accuracy of these policies.
- Supporting the institution in establishing precise standards.

### **There are four sections to improving organizational success, as mentioned below**

1. Service Quality: This entails meeting customer requirements in service delivery. Although quality can be engineered in manufacturing processes using statistical quality control, progress in quality control for service delivery has relatively advanced at a slower pace (Parasuraman et al., 1985). However, service quality is more challenging and tends to be performance-oriented, making it difficult to implement and measure accurate specifications for uniform quality (Sigala, 2004). Parasuraman and others (1985) proposed ten determinants of service quality, which they later narrowed down to five determinants, including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance (employee knowledge and courtesy), and empathy (care and individual attention).

2. Relationship Quality: This is influenced by various factors in information technology research, and it

includes five selected relationship qualities: trust, commitment, communication quality, cultural similarity, and mutual dependence (Lee and Kim, 1999).

3. External Sourcing: Considering strategic success, financial success, technological success, and satisfaction with relationships as proposed by Paravastu (2007).

4. Organizational Performance: Efforts have been made to find self-information about the performance of institutions and managers are requested to evaluate not only financial performance but also non-financial performance, as both are integral to organizational efficiency (Avci et al., 2011).

### **Dimensions of Organizational Success**

The dimensions of organizational success are defined by Paris (2000: p3) as those measures that we believe clarify the impact of our actions and can be specific, quantifiable or knowledge-based criteria that reflect the goal and mission. The institution emphasizes the importance of measuring success because it provides feedback on assumptions and underlying principles, whether they are consistent with current observations or if changes are needed. This is what Kaplan and Norton (1996) refer to as the double-loop learning process. Defining the dimensions of success creates a shared vision and thinking among work groups, highlighting the organizational dimensions of success adopted by institutions. There are several criteria for measuring organizational success, and the authors and researchers propose in the table below what they suggest in these dimensions.

### **Distinguishing Features of the Current Study from Previous Studies**

While previous studies individually focused on the variables in the current study, the current research demonstrates intellectual and cognitive overlap with both previous and current studies. Through her research, the researcher seeks to clarify the impact of strategic thinking through the interactive role of core competencies in achieving organizational success, drawing from the sub-variables identified in previous studies and applying them in the Iraqi environment, specifically at the University of Basra, which is one of the most important institutions of the Iraqi state with its unique characteristics and conditions.

### **Descriptive Statistics of Strategic Thinking**

The final measure of strategic thinking comprises 9 statements, divided into three items for each of the three dimensions. (**Appendix 1 - The descriptive statistics for the variable of strategic thinking.**)

According to the results presented in the Table, the following becomes evident:

The arithmetic mean of the independent variable (strategic thinking) (3.19) shows a neutral or somewhat agreed level of response. Additionally, the standard error of the mean is relatively low at (2.4%), indicating a good representation of the data obtained from the selected sample of the population.

Furthermore, the standard deviation of this variable (0.386) confirms the minimal dispersion and coherence of the data, instilling confidence in the accuracy of the data.

After “temporal thinking”, the highest arithmetic mean score was obtained (3.24), while after “systematic thinking”, the lowest arithmetic mean score was obtained (3.17). This indicates that time-based strategic thinking is at a moderate level, suggesting that the university recognizes that time is an essential source for organization and achieving effective organizational performance, albeit at an intermediate level.

Concerning the nine paragraphs that compose this variable and its three dimensions, the paragraph with the highest arithmetic mean is (Item9) stating “Does the university strive to keep up with time within its available resources?” Following it is paragraph (Item8) stating “Does the university believe in interactive thinking across the temporal trilogy of (past, present, future)?” This indicates that the university places great importance on the factor of time in its strategic activities. On the other hand, the paragraph with the lowest arithmetic mean is (Item3) stating “Does the university seek to adopt the strategic intention movement in the workplace?” Following it is paragraph (Item6) stating “Does the university employ cognitive skills to adapt to environmental changes?” This also confirms the university’s interest in systematic thinking, which encompasses all its parts. Moreover, the university has strategic intentions towards the future, variables, and potential incidents within it, but this interest falls short of the desired level.

The standard error values for the nine paragraphs and three dimensions of this variable range from (2.8% to 4.7%), indicating a reasonably high and good level of sample representation of the population. On the other hand, the standard deviation values for the dimensions and paragraphs of this variable range from (0.454 to 0.753), which is relatively low, reaffirming the minimal dispersion and coherence of the data, instilling confidence in the accuracy of the data.

**The final scale of core competencies consists of ten paragraphs divided into three dimensions (structure and process) and four paragraphs for the knowledge management dimension.**

**(Appendix 2 - This table illustrates the descriptive statistics of the organizational success variable.)**

The arithmetic mean of the dependent variable (organizational success) (3.23) indicates a neutral or somewhat agreeable level of responsiveness. The relatively low standard error of the mean (2.6%) suggests a good representation of the data obtained from the sample selected from the population. Additionally, the standard deviation for this variable (0.414) confirms a small dispersion and harmony in the data, which instills confidence in the accuracy of the data.

After the “process” phase, the highest arithmetic mean was obtained (3.26), while after the “knowledge management” phase, the lowest arithmetic mean was obtained (3.18). This indicates that the university focuses appropriately on managing its processes, but its activities related to knowledge management are relatively low in level. Regarding the 10 paragraphs that make up this variable and its three dimensions, the paragraph that obtained the highest arithmetic mean was (Item28), stating “The university strives to adopt innovative ideas to achieve organizational success.” It is followed by paragraph (Item32), which states “The university contributes to achieving organizational success through reliance on knowledge tools.” This indicates that the university attempts to adopt new and innovative ideas to achieve a moderate level of distinction. On the other hand, the paragraph that obtained the lowest arithmetic mean was (Item34), which states “Knowledge management has helped the university achieve organizational success.” It is followed by paragraph (Item33), which states “The university uses advanced technological means to achieve organizational success.” This suggests that the university needs to enhance the use of technology in its operations and activities to achieve excellence and organizational success. The standard error values for the ten paragraphs and three dimensions of this variable ranged from (3% to 4.8%), which are somewhat low, confirming that the sample’s representation of the population was of a high and good level. On the other hand, the values of the standard deviation for the dimensions and paragraphs of this variable ranged from (0.475 to 0.762), which are relatively low, confirming a small dispersion and harmony in the data, instilling confidence in the accuracy of the data.

Strategic thinking obtained a high and good level, reflecting the hypotheses that focused on high perceptions in practicing strategic thinking. In terms of temporal thinking dimension, it achieved the highest level among the dimensions of strategic thinking which confirms that the university attaches great importance to the factor of time in strategic activities. As for the other two dimensions (systematic thinking and strategic intention), the university gave attention to thinking in a systematic way and also strategic intentions towards the future, but not at the required level.

The core capabilities variable achieved a high and good level in the University of Basra, indicating that the university’s work is characterized by continuous change, and it is capable of using its potential efficiently to benefit from the human capital and empower employees at the university to attract top leadership from department managers and administrative units with experience and skills in management and the responsibilities available in the field of work.

The researcher found that the variable of organizational success in the University of Basra achieved a high and good level, showing that it contributes to achieving success over its competitors in the future, which indicates good ability in differentiation and the possibility of raising the level of organizational success. As for the “structure and process” dimension, it achieved the highest level, confirming that the university seeks to adopt innovative ideas using cognitive tools to achieve organizational success. However, the knowledge management dimension in the university, in terms of using advanced technology, was not at the required level.

Strategic thinking has become necessary for universities today and an important part of leadership requirements to deal with the changing environment. It helps them to grow and solve problems and make long-term decisions to capitalize on available opportunities and overcome obstacles in a timely manner to achieve organizational success at the University of Basra.

Strategic thinking is a contemporary and fundamental approach, a thought plan that helps to achieve compatibility between the capabilities of the University of Basra and its reality and a tool to shape the future by managing its various activities and facilitating its operations within the targeted institutional framework.

Formulating the appropriate strategy by activating creative skills and competencies according to the needs of administrative levels helps the university to be better prepared for expected scenarios and to be able to adapt to sudden changes.

The researcher found that the core capabilities have a positive effect on strategic thinking and organizational success, increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of change, and considered the basic guide for all activities and events, including the university’s needs.

The University's management attempted to properly use core capabilities through systematic and temporal thinking and strategic intentions to determine the future vision, as this is one of the most important factors for gaining a competitive advantage in the University of Basra.

Organizational success for the university is important and powerful because it involves activities and tasks distributed among employees and the university. At the same time, it is a lens for employees towards their universities and the surrounding environment.

The current status of essential capabilities at the University of Basra is highly commendable, as the participants unanimously agreed on the benefits derived from collaboration in human capital and management. This enables the university's executives to address issues and make decisions, thus reinforcing the interconnectedness of the university's core competencies.

In the age of the information and communications revolution, the university commits to acquiring creative skills as a monitor of situations, skills, and experiences, as they are rooted in the intelligence, imagination, and creativity of managers and motivate them to progress, improve and develop the University of Basra.

### **Conclusions Regarding the Correlation between Study Variables**

The study reveals a moderate positive correlation between strategic thinking and organizational success in the context of the University of Basrah (study sample). This correlation reflects the extent to which strategic thinking and its dimensions contribute to enhancing organizational success. The conviction of department managers and administrative units, as well as their perception of strategic thinking, significantly contribute to the improvement and continuity of organizational success at the university.

*The conclusions regarding the relationships between study variables:*

The study found a positive causal relationship between strategic thinking and organizational success, indicating that the use of strategic thinking improves the continuity of organizational success at the University of Basra.

The study did not find evidence of a positive interactive influence of collaboration on the relationship between strategic thinking and organizational success.

### **Based on the above findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made**

The need to focus on providing employment opportunities and giving priority to active employees, especially in leadership positions, based on skills and capabilities rather than other considerations.

Clarifying and instilling the university culture in employees and removing barriers that hinder the dissemination of a culture of change, such as selecting managers with high charisma that facilitate easy persuasion of employees, among other means that aid in this.

The management of the University of Basra should benefit from the proposed model in the study for application areas and adopt it as a method and direction that has proven successful.

All departments of the university should commit to preparing strategic plans in accordance with the requirements set by the ministry and the influence of creativity and excellence.

Developing specialized courses and training programs for all levels of management at the University of Basra, specifically in strategic thinking and management, to improve their performance and increase their administrative effectiveness, as well as help them find solutions to the problems that arise in their work.

Organizing competitions between university faculties and administrative levels to distinguish in strategic thinking and management.

Adopting a strategic approach in the management of the University of Basra when selecting administrative leadership.

Department heads and administrative units should work towards harmonious and effective working relationships with employees in order to promote collaboration in suggestions and seeking input to benefit from ideas and skills.

The mission of leaders (managers) should be to make the right decisions that lead to organizational success for the university through strategic thinking that aligns with the university's interests and the administrative staff.

It is necessary for the university, especially other universities in general, to adopt a philosophy of developing its current and future strategies using strategic thinking to create a clear vision for the future of the universities in light of that and strategies that consider potentials.

Enhancing cooperation and trust between top management and university subordinates through meetings and discussions with strategic ideas to build an efficient and competitive institution capable of evolving in its environment.

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## Appendix 1

*The descriptive statistics for the variable of strategic thinking.*

Items	Questions	Arithmetic mean		Standard deviation
		Mean	Standard error	
Item1	Does the university harness its capabilities in the field of work for the benefit of future work aspirations?	3.24	0.046	0.723
Item2	Does the university strive to prioritize goals within the framework of their effective importance?	3.18	0.045	0.723
Item3	Does the university seek to adopt strategic intention in the workplace?	3.12	0.0450.	0.710
Item4	Does the university work on integrating intellectual capacities with the requirements of reality?	3.16	0.047	0.754
Item5	Does the university focus on activating the realities and challenges it faces?	3.19	0.045	0.724
Item6	Does the university employ intellectual skills to adapt to environmental developments?	3.15	0.046	0.735
Item7	Does the university rely on predicting the future based on past results?	3.16	0.046	0.737
Item8	Does the university believe in interactive thinking between the three timelines (past, present, future)?	3.24	0.038	0.608
Item9	Does the university race against time within the limits of available possibilities?	3.31	0.03	0.591
Strategic	intent	3.18	0.032	0.515
Systems	thinking	3.17	0.31	0.491
Temporal	thinking	3.24	0.028	0.454
Strategic	thinking	3.19	0.024	0.386

*Source: Outputs of SPSS V. 24 software*



## Appendix 2

(This table illustrates the descriptive statistics of the organizational success variable.)

Items	Questions	Arithmetic mean		Standard deviation
		Mean	Standard error	
Item25	Does the university handle the distribution of powers and responsibilities objectively?	3.21	0.042	0.675
Item26	Do the heads of departments and units within the university work according to functional specialization?	3.29	0.042	0.669
Item27	Does the university prioritize prompt response to proposals regarding organizational development?	3.20	0.048	0.762
Item28	Does the university strive to embrace innovative ideas in order to achieve organizational success?	3.30	0.046	0.741
Item29	Is the university committed to developing strategic plans to achieve organizational success	3.22	0.041	0.651
Item30	Does the university make utmost efforts to maintain work relationships?	3.27	0.043	0.687
Item31	Does the university work on generating, selecting, organizing, and disseminating ideas in the work environment through specific programs?	3.28	0.045	0.720
Item32	Does the university contribute to achieving organizational success by relying on knowledge tools?	3.29	0.042	0.663
Item33	Does the university utilize advanced technological means to achieve organizational success?	3.23	0.043	0.687
Item34	Did the knowledge management of the university assist in achieving organizational success?	2.94	0.037	0.591
Structure		3.23	0.032	0.514
Process		3.26	0.033	0.533
Knowledge Management		3.18	0.030	0.475
Organizational Success		3.23	0.026	0.414

Source: outputs of SPSS V. 24 software

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*He is an independent researcher specializing in Ecolinguistics and Critical Environmental Discourse Analysis. He earned his PhD in Applied Linguistics from the University of Moulay Ismail in Meknes, Morocco. Dr. Mliless has contributed to the field through his publications on legal and environmental discourse and has authored articles and edited books addressing social and environmental issues. He is a member of the International Ecolinguistics Association (IEA), an editor at the International Journal of Police Science (IJPS), and a member of the editorial board of Jurnal Arbitrer. He also serves as a peer reviewer for various academic journals.*



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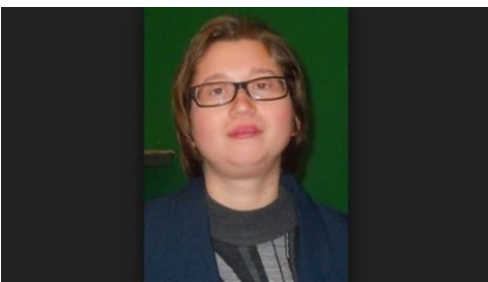
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