

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

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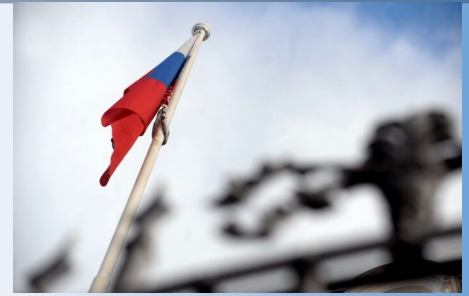
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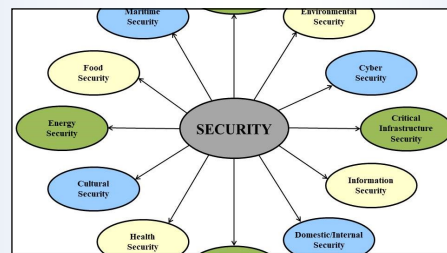
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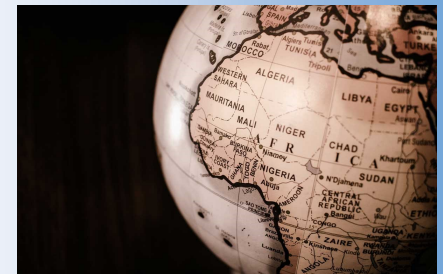
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1. EDITORIAL



The G-3 (US, China and India) Could Manage the Whole World Situation under a New World Order

PhD. Eng. Stelian TEODORESCU

“You have learned the rules of the game. All you have to do is play it better than anyone else”.

Albert Einstein

As a result of the deep transformations that have been taking place for several years at regional and global level, as a result of the connections and interactions that are developed between state actors, but also between them and non-state actors, new models of political, economic, military, cultural, informational, social and demographic interdependence emerged. We also see new types of international and transnational relations that are often categorized as atypical.

As a result, the dynamics and predictability of the current geopolitical and geostrategic environment are strongly influenced by the sometimes incomprehensible dynamics and transformations of the relations between the main global actors, as well as by an increased freedom of action and influence of new regional actors (state or non-state). The fact that the geopolitical architecture of the world changes from one era to another does nothing but see the geopolitical reconfigurations we are currently witnessing as challenges which, at a given moment, impose new geopolitical actors, all of which are due to the integrationist/disintegrationist processes taking place in the international arena.

Will Russia's years-long expansionist policy be a success or a failure? Does China have a well-developed plan for a military assault on Taiwan and is it a priority on Beijing's list of interests? In today's world, will the optimism regarding intense carbon emissions around the world intensify or temper? Do we need to prepare for further expansion of the nuclear weapons? Have developments in all fields around the world contributed decisively to the creation of an environment that will cause an even greater global volatility? These are just some of the questions to which answers are sought at a global level in order to develop the most likely predictions about the most influential change factors in the world in the following years. Of course, the vast majority of experts around the world share their knowledge and understanding during various meetings and events on geopolitics, climate change, technological disruption, the effects of the global economy, social and political movements, defense and security, but also others that could be as important for the evolution of humanity in the coming decades.

With the assertion of several such international actors and the imposition of their influence in various spheres of regional influence, but especially with the increase of their involvement in issues related to security and defense, a serious contradiction appeared between their interests and the expansion of military unions and blocs. In this context, an analysis of the transformation of geopolitical architecture highlights is necessary. One should focus on the spirit of rivalry, and I believe the most eloquent example in this sense is that of Europe which became a sphere of influence and action involving actors such as Russia, Turkey, China or India



Source: <https://www.eurasiareview.com/22092020-china-india-us-triangle-changing-balance-of-power-and-a-new-cold-war-analysis/>

which developed their own foreign and competitive policy in the region.

Apart from the two big international actors, the USA and Russia, new geopolitical actors extremely important for the evolution of the whole world have appeared on the international arena, such as China and India, actors who have an increasingly impressive influence on the international arena and asserting themselves as decisive poles of power in various regions of the world. Not long ago, political analysts were talking about the “G-2” - that is, a potential working alliance between the US and China, designed to manage global issues both to their mutual benefit and to the world’s regional benefit. Such a “double” in terms of collaboration was seen as having even stronger potential than the G-7, the group of leading Western economies. However, such “double” cooperation lost its appeal in Washington and Beijing as well, as tensions continued to rise over Taiwan, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the fragile situation in the Western Balkans and the Middle East, and, why not, because of other unpredictable issues and developments in Africa.

As a result, the war in Ukraine has generated a lesson to be learned in terms of managing regional and global developments, and it is necessary for the US and China to now accept that they have no choice but to share their global responsibilities with India, that nation with a growing nuclear arsenal, which is now the most populous on the planet, where the socio-economic situation is improving, and which will become soon the world’s third largest economy. In other words, if global disaster is to be avoided, whether the US and China like it or not, these countries will have to agree to begin planning for an emerging G-3.

It should not be overlooked that out of the total world population of 8.119 billion, India’s population is 1.441 billion. I wanted to point this out as well, as developments in recent decades have played a significant role, India overtook China, which has a population of 1.425 billion. According to UN data, China’s population has started to decline after reaching 1.426 billion in 2022. Experts even predict that China’s population will drop below 1 billion by the end of this century. In other news, India may become the world’s third largest economy in the near future after finishing 2023 with a record economic growth of 8.4%. In the coming years, India will overtake Japan and Germany.

Amidst the seemingly never-ending catastrophe of the war in Ukraine, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the US, China and India, or a possible G-3, are likely to be the major world powers that can craft the final resolution to end the conflict sparked by Russia in Ukraine. This conflict has put extreme pressure in all areas on the whole of Europe. They can also manage the situation in the Middle East by flattening a major and large-scale conflict in a decades decimated region.

Analyzing the actions taken by Moscow so far, we can say that the possibility of destroying Ukraine as a functioning state has proved a remarkable failure, but in the same context, we can appreciate that Russia’s total defeat and the disappearance of Vladimir Putin seem very unlikely. Russia cannot continue to fight in Ukraine nor to impose its interests in other areas of the world without support and unilateral agreement especially coming from China and India, and in the context of a surprise joint decision to reduce or even block their continued trade with Moscow for their massive purchases of Russian fossil fuel reserves.

Furthermore, none of these three countries (US, China, India) want the war to escalate or last much longer, given the damage it does to global growth prospects. For the Chinese, in particular, it has created friction with key trading partners in Europe, which resent Beijing’s continued ties to Moscow. Therefore, for their own reasons, the leaders of China and India are likely to put increased pressure on both Moscow and Kiev to seek a negotiated outcome that, of course, will not be to the two parties’ advantage.

It has become very clear that after the end of the conflict in Ukraine, we will find ourselves in a new world order. After reaching the limits of the Ukrainian offensive present on Russian soil, which is unlikely to cause Moscow to withdraw all Russian troops from the Ukrainian lands they have seized since February 2022, the USA, India and China will almost certainly resort to coercion to get both countries to accept a peace deal that is more about restoring the flow of global trade than upholding principles of any kind, brought to the negotiating table by Kiyv and Moscow.

Although the outcome of the war in Ukraine remains difficult to predict, we can conclude that the role of the USA, China and India, as major actors in the adoption of a resolution and a peace plan, will help define the future world order based on multipolarity with the member states of the future G-3 established as major nodes of power of the world. Europe is not yet qualified to play such a role because of its internal divisions and will have to wait until it reaches the projected level of defense and security. Russia is no longer a major node of world power due to its declining military, economic and financial strength. As a result, the G-3 countries possess some basic characteristics that distinguish them from all other powers and are likely to become more pronounced in the future.

2. DIPLOMACY



Cyberdiplomacy – A New Dimension of Diplomacy

PhD. Cosmin DUMITRESCU

The complex relations between Romania and Italy are currently at a very high level. The size of commercial exchanges exceeded, in 2023, 20 billion euros between the two countries, and if we look from a purely economic perspective, we could emphasize the existence of over one million jobs in each country, which owe their existence to this privileged economic relationship. This reality places Italy in second place in the top of Romania's external economic partners.

Obviously diplomacy itself, as an activity, through diplomatic relations has its role in this complex system, the multiple international relations established between the two countries are also the fruit of the work and involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the staff of Romanian embassies and consulates. Therefore, we can say that Romania's relations with Italy are at the top of diplomatic relations in Europe.

In this dynamic, proactive, bilateral and multilateral context, I want to point out some milestones of a new diplomatic reality, namely cyber diplomacy.

There is a concept relatively close to this, that of digital diplomacy, which involves the use of a digital tool to cooperate, send messages and strengthen relations between countries, in our case between Romania and Italy, providing our partners with the information they need.

Videoconferences and meetings are a concrete and good example of digital diplomacy, but even if this example is related through its functionality and certain technical characteristics to cyber diplomacy, it is at the same time very different from it.

Very little is said about cyber diplomacy, even though it is one of the main subjects of discussion, today, in all diplomatic systems around the world.

I believe that cyber diplomacy focuses on managing and negotiating relationships between state and non-state actors to resolve and regulate current cyber crises – such as the one caused by the maritime incident that led to the collapse of the bridge in the US port of Baltimore – or ransomware attacks that block institutions, corporations or hospitals.

We use the term cyber diplomacy to describe the application of diplomatic strategies, tactics and techniques during negotiations in international relations. This is a very difficult thing for many traditional



Source: <https://aunetwork.org/cyber-diplomacy-and-international-relations/>

diplomatic systems to adapt and accept. Cyber diplomacy also covers the specific aspects of cyber warfare and the pre-existing or subsequent agreements of these conflicts, as the rules of the positive law of cyber warfare must be clearly established, even in this very new field of action.

So the question that the experts of strong diplomatic systems ask is whether we are ready to conduct and develop cyber diplomacy on a national or international level.

Do we have the right staff in our diplomatic systems, do we have the necessary schools and programs, do we have the domestic and international legislative-normative instruments and functional tools to put into practice these new principles and action strategies?

Cyber diplomacy is typically based on managing the difficulties and obstacles presented by the cyber world as well as promoting responsible action.

Cyber diplomacy aims at maintaining cyber security and ensure stability in the cyberspace. Has this become impossible without cyber diplomacy?

Are we able to develop national cyber security policies or regulate complex social engagement tactics or are we able to defend, at the same time, the privacy and fundamental rights of people who are directly affected by the activity, action and protection of cyber systems?

As diplomats, it is our duty to preserve and defend the rights of the citizens in the countries we represent, and now we must do so in the cyberspace as well. This way, international cooperation is promoted through cyber diplomacy to mitigate mutual threats and challenges.

It is obvious that nations must collaborate and cooperate to develop regulatory cyber standards, guidelines and agreements that support a safe and secure online experience, without abusive or aggressive measures that risk affecting the fundamental rights of citizens. There are concerns and there are initiatives in many key areas about how much this space should be regulated.

We can try to be pioneers in this field because we understand that cyber diplomacy has been and is being used to establish mutually beneficial relations through diplomatic means between states, as well as between states and relevant non-state actors at continental and global levels.

Other relevant questions for diplomats involved in the configuration of a consolidated system of public and private international law rules are: how can we use existing classical diplomatic means for cyber diplomacy? Can these means be used in cyberspace as well? What instruments of diplomatic action can we use to meet as representatives of our countries commit to achieving such a goal? Will we use digital diplomacy to do this? Can we do this effectively or not? These are questions that all countries primarily ask their own diplomatic systems and information technology specialists, but also each other for all diplomatic systems and their relations.

Cyber diplomacy is undoubtedly a type of diplomacy in its own right and can be used not only for conflict resolution or prevention in the cyberspace, but also to avoid the physical consequences of actions in that cyberspace.

For international cyber governance, both theoretically and practically, concrete effective national and international public and private law rules need to be established, which could include, inter alia, the development of cyber laws, treaties and systems. Regulations are significantly influenced by cyber diplomacy, as these governance structures are essential to maintaining order and reducing the risks associated with cyberspace activity.

Speaking of trust, as diplomats, we know very well that trust is very important in relations between countries that know different levels of cooperation and achievement, both at high and middle level. I am referring to reporting, communicating, relating, informing each other and maintaining a good, relevant and valid flow of useful information.

So, establishing trust, building cooperative systems is also an important step in cyber diplomacy. This reality is essential to resolve a possible conflict between nations and to promote mutually beneficial collaborations, in individual or collective cyber activities, at the public level, in the private sector or in the national and international activities and strategies of the two sectors, separately or within joint projects.

Such activities can and should involve the exchange of information, working teams and specialized technical assistance lines, in order to avoid misunderstandings and errors in the interpretation of acts and actions taken by different actors in the cyberspace.

Cyber diplomacy attempts to address the issue from the perspective of building mechanisms for state or non-state actors to taking responsibility for the hostile cyber operations they undertake.

We now have the opportunity to observe what hybrid activities mean for global security. We can see how cyberspace is used to cause big problems and crises at a regional or state level. We can see how this is being used against our NATO partners by major international actors or against Ukraine by the Russian

Federation in its illegal aggression.

We realize that to effectively combat cyber threats, cyber diplomacy is best suited to foster cooperation between all governments and private corporations, because the private sector plays a major role in the cyberspace. This public-private partnership between international organizations, governments and large technology corporations is very important. An illustrative example is the way the European Commission acts to protect the rights and privacy of European citizens, trying to establish standards to regulate, in particular, electronic commerce, to fight monopolies etc.

Cyber diplomacy also promotes capacity building for developing nations by helping them develop their capabilities to act and protect their cybersecurity hotspots. Assistance to these states can come from sharing methods of training expertise and through technology transfer.

I return to e-commerce, which could very well be considered an important part of the objectives of economic diplomacy. We can see the dynamics of e-commerce, which is currently taking over many markets, often by force. We now buy many products and services online. We place our data and personal information on those websites. We take many risks as consumers and citizens. Cyber diplomacy should act much more in this field to find common denominators in the regulation and harmonization of national, European, regional or global systems.

We now have digital diplomacy, which brings significant benefits to the public and private sectors nationally and internationally. We have been using it lately, as we have been using social networks, and secure or public computer systems for online conferences. We call this digital diplomacy, Diplomacy 2.0. We have new regulatory systems, we identify risks, vulnerabilities and security challenges.

On the other hand, we have cyber diplomacy, which we are trying to develop now and in the immediate future. My analysis of governments and their actions, along with diplomats who have the duty or need to specialize in cyber diplomacy is still unfinished. I am going to propose in the next period an article about this new reality after reaching the relevant conclusions in the research of this new, fascinating field that has become so important for all mankind.

3. GLOBAL SITUATION



The China-Russia Binomial: Myth and Reality

PhD candidate. George-Vadim TIUGEA

The privileged relations between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation are the subject of much discussion and debate today. Many authors talk about a new strategic alliance, a real "binomial" consisting of the two states¹, which are major world powers (including nuclear) and members of the UN Security Council (UNSC). Indeed, the collaboration between China and Russia has continuously intensified, but not only recently, but throughout the last three decades that have passed since the end of the Cold War, especially within multilateral structures such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the BRICS group. This was the result of the existence of common interests between the two sides, but also of the international situation favorable to their joining. At the same time, the good relations were also determined by some similarities between the respective states and their power structures, as a result of historical developments with many common points and their geographical location within the large Eurasian continental mass. However, the two great powers have a number of different interests, which add a degree of complexity to their relationship, something often overlooked by some analysts, who tend to see things in black and white, a natural legacy of the prevailing mentality during the Cold War. The present article is intended to contribute briefly and shed some light in the public debate, by highlighting the elements that unite and divide the two sides, but also by emphasizing the characteristics of the action of the Sino-Russian "binomial" at the international level.



Source: https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/jumatate-din-platile-facute-de-rusia-pentru-marfuri-din-china-au-avut-loc-prin-intermediari-2776359__grsc=cookieIsUndef0&_grts=57514430&_grua=d90c91ba47074ebc106cbdef0c8105ed&_grn=1

¹Adrian Botezatu, *The Russian-Chinese binomial: the consolidation of the multipolar world*, Alexandria Publishing House, Suceava, 2013, *passim.*; Hotnews, "Iulian Chifu: The Russia-China Binomial is Conjectural and only Imagological" in <https://hotnews.ro/iulian-chifu-binomul-rusia-china-este-conjunctural-si-doar-imagologic-1586588>, accessed on 1 August 2024.

Introductory Elements

Both China and today's Russia are states with an imperial-type strategic culture, which means that they prioritize relations with great powers and less so with small states, with which they manage group relations. China is the inheritor of a multi-millennial civilization of the continental type, beginning in Antiquity (20th century BC) and continuing through no less than 25 distinct dynasties or historical periods. Currently, the Chinese state manifests itself through the People's Republic of China, a communist state resulting from the victory of the Chinese Communist Party, led by Mao Tse-Dun, in the civil war against the Kuomintang Nationalist Party (1927-1949) and against the Japanese Empire in World War II. Despite the bankruptcy of communist systems in most of the world, the Chinese Republic has maintained its political system until now, mainly thanks to its integration into the global capitalist economy after 1980, becoming what specialists in the field call the "workshop of the world"². The main assets of the Chinese state are represented by the large population (the largest in the world by 2023) of about 1.4 billion inhabitants (with a gigantic labor force and impressive armed forces), the huge area (9.5 million km²) natural boundaries (mountains in the west and southwest), desert and the Amur River in the north, maritime space in the east and southeast).

Today's Russia (officially, the Russian Federation) is the successor to the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire that developed from the 13th century AD around Moscow. Historically, the Russian state has been based on constant territorial expansion (except for the period 1945-2008) against neighboring state entities, based on an impressive military force. Politically, the current Russian state inherits, despite democratic appearances, the centralized system of Russian tsars and general secretaries of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), characterized by the concentration of political power in the hands of the country's leader, ruled by terror and coercion and a state-controlled economy. The main assets of the Russian state are the impressive surface area (17.2 million km², on two continents), abundant natural resources (especially natural gas, oil and diamonds), considerable weaponry (produced and available - including nuclear) and significant armed forces.³

Cooperation between the two great neighboring powers dates back to the early 90s of the last century, when they had common or relatively similar positions within the UN Security Council. Although the new regime in Moscow declared, at the beginning, it supported the democratic order led by the United States and Western European countries, it sometimes "ignored" it, playing alongside China, and taking certain actions in various theaters of operations around the world (former Yugoslavia, 1992 -1999; Iraq, 2011-present; Mali, 2021-2023). In some cases, China has acted as a constructive opposition, by refraining from expressing its veto, but many times the two permanent members of the UNSC opposed a common veto to the action of the Western permanent members (the United States, Great Britain, France).

Since 1996, China and Russia have been founding members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a structure designed to maintain the strategic status quo in Central Asia to avoid external influences, both from the West and from Islamic terrorism⁴. Subsequently, the SCO became a political-military forum for the promotion of a multipolar world, opposed American unipolarity, but also for the intensification of economic cooperation between member states (since 2017, India, Iran and Pakistan have joined this structure). Since 2009, China and Russia have been the founding members of BRICS, an international political structure designed to coordinate the positions of the main non-Western international actors (in addition to China and Russia, India, Brazil, South Africa, and from 2023 four other states) on a global level⁵. All these developments support the idea that the two states are carrying out a common policy directed against the interests of Western states and, in particular, against the military supremacy of the United States at the global level. Although that idea has become an axiom of international relations, especially after the Russian invasion against Ukraine in February 2022, in practice things are not so simple.

Similarities

China and Russia are linked by a number of commonalities in the evolution of their strategic cultures and domestic political power structure. Thus, both represent centers of power with an independent existence of

²Paul Dobrescu, *The Cunning of Globalization. The assault on American power*, European Institute, Iasi, 2010, p. 132.

³Some of the statements regarding Russia included in this article are the results of doctoral research undertaken by the author within the Doctoral School of Political Science at the University of Bucharest starting in 2019.

⁴Peng Guangqian, *China's National Defense*, translation by Chen Ru, China Intercontinental Press, Beijing, 2004, p. 128.

⁵Ben Judah, Jana Kobzova and Nicu Popescu, *Dealing with a Post-BRIC Russia*, European Council on Foreign Relations, London, 2011, pp. 16-18.

the imperial type, with claims to universality. In China's case, the emperor represented the supreme authority of divine origin, a fact attested by the episode of the reception of English messengers in the 16th century and the claim that the king of England became a vassal of the medieval Chinese state.⁶ Even the Chinese name of the state (Chung-kuo) means "middle kingdom", which indicates the assumption of an identity of international centrality of the Chinese empire. In Russia's case, the medieval Muscovite state based on the divine right authority of the tsar (Samoderjavie) always had a claim to a separate center of power, as it appears from the first contacts with the envoys of the Roman-German emperor in the 15th century, when the claims are at least of equality between the centers of imperial power⁷. Another important component is the identity assumed by Moscow of the "Third Rome", the civil-religious authority of the Christian world, analogous to the status of the Byzantine emperors, whose heir Russia claimed after 1453. Consequently, both states hardly accept external interference in their domestic politics, as well as subordination to possible allies. China's experience of quasi-colonization from 1839 to 1945 (the "century of humiliation") with the involvement of European powers, the United States and Japan, it contributed to some latent hostility towards Western societal patterns. With Russia, its experience with Western invasions during the Troubled Times (1606-1612), the war with Sweden (1707-1709), the invasion of the Napoleonic Empire (1812-1813) or the invasion of the Axis forces (1941-1944), led to a reserved attitude towards the West. From this point of view, the two states show similar attitudes internationally, considering themselves independent centers of power in a multipolar world.

Another common point is the origin of the current political regime in both states. The Chinese Republic is a communist state based on the Marxist-Leninist ideology developed by the Russian Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. At the time of the founding of People's China, the Maoist regime took over much of the Stalinist policies of communism developed in one country, bringing them to unsuspected heights of political repression in the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The resulting political regime is characterized by the supremacy of the Chinese Communist Party and its general secretary (currently Xi Jinping), faithful to the Soviet legacy, with small puppet parties meant to imitate an alleged democratic pluralism⁸. The current Russian state is the successor to the Soviet Union, even though it formally claims to be a democratic state by Western standards. Its political system reflects the dominance of the presidential party (United Russia), which brings together the main actors of the power structures inherited from the Soviet era (secret services, armed forces), which have changed their names, not their repressive behavior. In the Russian political system there are small decorative parties (communist, nationalist, socialist) that mimic Western-style pluralism during elections. From this point of view, both states represent avatars of an authoritarian-totalitarian state, where the political opposition and freedom of expression are repressed, and power structures (secret services, army) play an important role. Also, by virtue of previous historical experiences, both states are run centrally (the "verticality of power" in Russia⁹), usually by the holder of executive power.

In terms of geopolitical tradition, both states are continental powers, covering vast territories in Eastern Europe, Northern and Eastern Asia. Their development was based on the expansion of railways, starting from the second half of the 19th century in Russia (especially the Trans-Siberian highway – 9,289 km) and in the second half of the 20th century in China (currently supported by the unprecedented expansion of high-speed railways – 40,000 km built between 2008 and 2023!)¹⁰. Both are based on the supremacy of land armed forces, although special attention is paid by both sides to naval forces, air forces and the development of aerospace equipment. At the same time, however, in both there are significant development gaps between the center and the periphery (Moscow and the European part of Russia versus the Asian part; China's maritime regions versus the internal regions).¹¹

⁶Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Great Chessboard. American supremacy and its geostrategic imperatives*, translated by Aureliana Ionescu, Univers enciclopedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000, pp. 24-25.

⁷Iver B. Neumann, „Russia's Standing as a Great Power, 1494–1815” in Ted Hopf (ed.), *Russia's European Choice*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2008, pp. 12-16.

⁸Șerban Filip Cioculescu, *China from the "hidden brilliance" to global expansion*, Cetatea de casă, Târgoviște, 2018, pp. 15-16

⁹Armand Goșu, „Russia - the illusion of democracy”, in Armand Goșu, Alexandru Gussi (coord.), *Democracy under siege: Romania in a regional context*, Corint Books, Bucharest, 2019, p. 354.

¹⁰Micah McCartney, „China's High-Speed Rail Miracle” in *Newsweek*, July 13, 2024, <https://www.newsweek.com/china-high-speed-rail-miracle-1924185>, accesat pe 31 iulie 2024.

¹¹Brzezinski, *op. cit.*, p. 180; Pascal Marchand, *Atlas géopolitique de la Russie. Puissance d'hier, puissance de demain*, Éditions Autrement, Paris, pp. 46-47.

Domestically, both countries implement policies to limit citizens' access to the internet and support the development of parallel networks (ChinaNet, RuNet), with separate social networks. Censorship is also widespread in both countries, both in print and in the audiovisual. China wants to avoid episodes like those that happened in Tiananmen Square in 1989, but also the tumultuous experiences of Russia's internal politics since the beginning of the 90s of the last century¹². For its part, the Putin regime is using methods of social control long experimented by the Chinese state, including those using artificial intelligence.

At international level, both China and Russia are followers of the theory of absolute national sovereignty, which assumes the unrestricted right of national governments to manage their policies on their own territory, without the influence of any international forum. Although they are members of the UN and accept the provisions of the UN Charter, as well as the jurisdiction of certain related organizations such as the IAEA, UNESCO, etc., China and Russia do not accept the supremacy of human rights in international law, having their own policies in the field of national minorities. Russia feigned respect for human rights by joining the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights (1996-2022), but did not apply the provisions and sentences of the ECHR that concerned it. Also, the participation of the Russian state in the OSCE only involved the promotion of its own security interests and much less the values on which this organization is based. Moreover, Russia's attitude towards the post-Soviet conflicts in Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Transnistria highlighted the duplicitous attitude towards common security on the European continent.¹³

Cooperation between the two sides at the international level is best highlighted by participation in political blocs such as the OCS and BRICS. In addition to these, however, China and Russia have developed, in recent years, a solid military cooperation, manifested by participating in joint exercises in various regions of the world, by sea, air and land¹⁴. Both sides cooperate at a fairly good level with states considered pariahs at the international level (North Korea, Iran, Venezuela, etc.). Recently, for example, Russia's relationship with North Korea has deepened to a level not seen since the Soviet era¹⁵. The Chinese government has also been involved in the initiative to reconcile the various factions of the Palestinian population (including Hamas, a terrorist organization in the West).¹⁶

From a demographic point of view, both states are facing an accelerated process of aging population. In China's case this is a side effect of the flawed "one child" policy (boys being preferred over girls), in Russia's case it is about the lack of economic opportunities for the population and the strong emigration of skilled labor to the West, simultaneously with the increase of the Muslim population. Attempts to counteract these trends, especially by encouraging the birth rate in Russia, but also improving the status of women in China, have had no results so far. From this perspective, the two states are part of the general demographic crisis that exists in the developed states of the northern hemisphere, although they try to create the impression that they belong to a common front of the "Global South".

At the economic level, both states support a model of state capitalism, based on the supremacy of large companies controlled by government authorities or power circles in charge of the country. This contradicts the anti-monopoly policies pursued by Western actors such as the European Union or the United States¹⁷. But while China focuses on the production of high-tech finished products (semiconductors, microprocessors, electric vehicles, solar panels, etc.), Russia focuses on exporting raw materials (natural gas, oil, and diamonds), nuclear technology, and weapons. This is one of the main difference between the two sides, which can be an important obstacle in strengthening the bilateral relationship, along with other elements.

¹²Information obtained by the author following study visits to the Russian Federation in October 2010 and the Chinese Republic in February 2012.

¹³Nicu Popescu, *The European Union's foreign policy and post-Soviet conflicts*, translated from English by Alexandru Șiclovan, Cartier Publishing House, Chisinau, 2013, pp. 75-76, 85-86, 94-106, 113-114, 116-118, 145, 155, 160-162, 179.

¹⁴Associated Press, „China, Russia start joint naval drills, days after NATO allies called Beijing a Ukraine war enabler”, July 15, 2024, in <https://apnews.com/article/china-russia-joint-naval-drills-nato-ukraine-08590a566d76ae1ddc47dde7cea8ad1a>, accesat la data de 29 iulie 2024; BFBS Forces News, „China And Russia Team Up For Joint Military Drills”, 10th August 2021, in <https://www.forcesnews.com/news/china-and-russia-team-joint-military-drills>, accesat la data de 29 iulie 2024; Yew Lun Tian, „China, Russia to start joint air and sea drill in Sea of Japan”, July 16, 2023, in <https://www.reuters.com/world/china-russia-start-joint-air-sea-drill-sea-japan-2023-07-16/>, accesat la data de 29 iulie 2024.

¹⁵Justin McCurry and Andrew Roth, „Russia and North Korea sign mutual defense pact”, 19 June 2024, in <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/19/russia-and-north-korea-sign-mutual-defense-pact>, accessed on July 30, 2024.

¹⁶Laurie Chen and Nidal Al-Mughrabi, „China brokers Palestinian unity deal, but doubts persist”, July 23, 2024, in <https://www.reuters.com/world/hamas-fatah-meet-with-media-china-after-reconciliation-talks-2024-07-23/>, accesat la data de 30 iulie 2024

¹⁷European Commission, „Competition Policy: Antitrust and Cartels” in https://competition-policy.ec.europa.eu/antitrust-and-cartels_en, accesat la data de 20 august 2024.

In terms of cyber security, both sides have informally resorted to destabilizing Western networks through professional hackers. This approach aimed, in addition to making the tasks of specialized institutions in the targeted states more difficult, namely economic espionage, and the extraction of secret or personal information, intended to discredit certain leaders considered hostile (for example, hacking the e-mail address of the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton by Russian hackers in the summer of 2016, in the context of her candidacy for the position of President of the United States).¹⁸

Last but not least, both countries are currently led by authoritarian leaders with close visions regarding the governance model. Vladimir Putin is the representative of the old power structures of the Soviet state (KGB), now transformed into the guarantors of Russia's great power status. Its values are conservative-nationalist and Eurasianist, although its mode of action is pragmatic, force-based and with a pronounced imagological purpose¹⁹. Xi Jinping is a career Chinese Communist Party politician with nationalist accents but embracing the same kind of pragmatism as the Russian leader. Although his mode of action seems focused on diplomacy, the Chinese leader does not hesitate to put pressure, mainly through economic means or through other methods of intimidation of his opponents.

Differences

China and Russia have not had such a close bilateral relationship since the beginning. On the contrary, it can be said that, for most of the time, the two states were strategic competitors in conflict. Ever since they had a common border at the level of the Siberian taiga and Central Asia (17th century), the two powers have disputed their supremacy in various territories. Although the first treaty between the two states, concluded at Nercinsk in 1689, was signed on equal terms, drawing the common border, later the Russian state had an expansionist policy against the Chinese state²⁰. Thus, in the second part of the 19th century, taking advantage of China's weaknesses, attacked by Western colonial forces, Russia annexed Chinese Turkestan (today's eastern Kazakhstan) and the maritime province east of the Amur River, imposing its influence on Manchuria and the strategic port of Dairen (Port Arthur). During the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, a significant part of the elites of the White forces found refuge in Nationalist China, which kept the relationship at a chilly level. At the same time, the Soviet Union supported in 1924 (including with armed forces) the independence of the new Mongolian state from its former sovereign, China.

During World War II, the Stalinist regime in Moscow supported the People's Liberation Army of China, led by Mao Tse Dun, which contributed to the victory of the Communist side in the Chinese Civil War in 1949. However, Moscow's attempt to subordinate the People's Republic of China within the communist bloc ran into firm opposition from Beijing. This attitude manifested especially after the intervention of the Chinese army in the Korean War (1950-1953), which enshrined the upkeep of the communist regime in North Korea and its special relationship with the People's Republic of China. After the condemnation of the Stalinist regime at the level of the CPSU in 1956, the Chinese side, remaining faithful to Stalinist methods of governance, pursued a separate policy from the Soviets within the communist bloc, instead supporting the Non-Aligned Movement within the Third World and communist regimes of conservative from countries such as Albania, Cambodia, North Korea or Romania. China also opposed the interventionist policy of the Soviet Union within the Warsaw Pact countries, manifested by suppressing the Prague Spring in 1968.²²

The border conflicts between the Chinese Republic and the Soviet Union in the area of the Amur River culminated in 1969 in a veritable military confrontation which aimed to conquer certain islands in the region. In the end, the escalation of the conflict was avoided, but the Chinese began to have better relations with the United States, the main enemy of the Soviet Union during the Cold War²³. The strained relations between Beijing and Moscow resulted in the conflict between various camps supported by the two sides in civil wars in developing countries (Angola, Cambodia, Mozambique etc.) in the 70s-80s of the last century.

¹⁸Ellen Nakashima and Shane Harris, „How the Russians hacked the DNC and passed its emails to WikiLeaks”, July 13, 2018, in https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/how-the-russians-hacked-the-dnc-and-passed-its-emails-to-wikileaks/2018/07/13/af19a828-86c3-11e8-8553-a3ce89036c78_story.html, accesat la data de 19 august 2024.

¹⁹Fiona Hill and Clifford G. Gaddy, *Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin*, Brookings Focus Books, Washington D.C., 2013, *passim*.

²⁰Paul Dukes *History of Russia*, translated by Gabriel Tudor, All Publishing House, Bucharest, 2009, pp. 86-87, 167.

²¹Cioculescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-134.

²²*Ibidem*, p. 315.

²³Robert D. Kaplan, *Revenge of geography: what the map tells us about future conflicts and the fight against destiny*, translated from English by Mihnea Gafița, foreword by Paul Dobrescu, Litera, Bucharest, 2019, p. 362; Cioculescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-137.

The Chinese state adopted, starting with 1980, an economic policy of opening up to the capitalist economy of the world, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. The encouragement of economic freedom was not matched by political freedom, so Beijing was reserved towards Moscow's new reformist policy under Mikhail Gorbachev. The political and academic analysts in Beijing believe that granting greater political freedom to the Soviet society is still considered one of the main causes of the fall of communism in the Soviet Union after 1991.²⁴

Starting with 1992, Russia, for its part, took steps to integrate into the world's capitalist economy. This meant connecting natural gas and oil resources to the Western consumer market, including through gas and oil pipelines destined for Western Europe. Thus, Russia became the main supplier of hydrocarbons of the European Union. Instead, the attempt to connect to world financial markets was hit by the Asian financial market crisis of 1998, which affected Russia considerably and made policymakers in Moscow much more cautious about opening up to other markets.²⁵

Domestically, the oligarchs supported by the Yeltsin regime until 1999 were gradually eliminated by the Putin regime, which relied on the formation of monopolies led by members of the power circle (siloviki), following the model of the Gazprom or Transneft conglomerates. However, the Putin administration pursued the connection of the respective conglomerates to the global energy market, especially in the context of joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2012, with the significant support of the European Union (EU). Russia has thus become a "petro-power", a major exporter of hydrocarbons, alongside the OPEC countries with which it has been coordinating since 2016. When its export interests are threatened, Moscow does not hesitate to use pressure methods economic (Ukraine, 2006-2008; EU, 2020; Moldova, 2021) or even military (Georgia, 2008; Ukraine, 2014) against those who oppose it.²⁶

In contrast to this model, China has focused on the production of high-tech components (semiconductors, microprocessors, solar panels, electric vehicles), which ensure its supremacy in the global profile markets. This approach, however, requires securing the consumer markets for its own products, the main ones being the North American market (United States, Canada) and the European market (EU member states). Also, maintaining a constant level of economic production requires securing energy resources from various parts of the world, simultaneously with the main world trade routes (especially the one from the Persian Gulf/Red Sea through the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea). In this sense, the Beijing administration launched, in 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which involves deepening the interconnection between China, Asian, European and African states, in order to increase their dependence on Chinese products (economic, financial and other) and ensuring a constant flow of natural resources to China. Although it supports this kind of interconnection, the Chinese state does not domestically offer foreign investors the conditions it demands from other states for its own companies²⁷. Thus, China's integration into the world economy is done from the position of an economic superpower that aims at a one-way relationship, facilitating its own exports, but without too much opening of the internal market.

Regarding the war in Ukraine, launched by Russia in February 2022, China had a reserved position. At the international level, the Chinese state supports the order based on the maintenance of the borders established after the end of the Second World War, especially since there are significant minorities with secessionist potential (Tibetans, Uyghurs or Mongols) on its own territory. Russia's attempt to review the borders of a sovereign state, especially under the pretext of a humanitarian intervention aimed at supporting the Russian-speaking population, cannot be viewed lightly by Beijing, which has condemned in the past, at the UN level, the humanitarian interventions of Western states in the former Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya. China is trying to become a mediator of this conflict, even if the proximity to Russia does not provide credibility guarantees for the Ukrainian side²⁸. Thus, if Russia does not hesitate to engage in a military conflict to change the global balance and international political order, China prefers to use other means (mainly economic) to achieve this goal.

²⁴See note 12.

²⁵Graeme Gill and Roger D. Markwick, *Russia's Stillborn Democracy?: From Gorbachev to Yeltsin*, 1st edition, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, pp. 205-237, 240-242.

²⁶Paula Daniela Gânga, *The European Union-Russia relationship. The energy problem*, foreword by Zeyno Baran, European Institute, Iasi, 2010, *passim*.

²⁷Cioculescu, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

²⁸Hotnews, "ANALYSIS Can China really broker a peace between Russia and Ukraine? Arguments for and against", August 4, 2023, in <https://hotnews.ro/analiza-poate-china-sa-medieze-cu-adevarat-o-pace-ntre-rusia-si-ucraina-argumente-pro-si-contra-51151>, accessed on August 20, 2024.

Conclusions

China and Russia currently form one of the strongest alliances in human history, at least if we go by the formal statements of the leaders of the two countries²⁹. Their demographic, territorial, military and economic potential is significant and should not be underestimated. However, their joining, beyond the common points, which exist and are important, has an important conjectural component: It is the result of a power balance policy applied by the two against the former hegemonic power in the international system, the United States. This became obvious, especially after the US military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and especially following the failure of these interventions to achieve their major objectives (pro-Iranian parties hold power in Iraq, and the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan). Today's American military supremacy, even if it is maintained (for example, by Iran's reluctance to strike Israel decisively), is waning, and the two competing powers are trying to maximize their global weight by joining them, but also by co-opting other actors non-westerners. However, outside of the two states, the other BRICS actors (with the exception of Iran) have reserved attitudes in opposition to the United States, with which they cooperate in some areas (most visibly, India and Brazil). The attempt of the Sino-Russian binomial to build a world order parallel to the Western system has so far been unsuccessful, primarily because economic prosperity is still based in Western Europe and North America.

Another element, which supports the conjectural alliance hypothesis, is represented by the potential tensions between the two parties. On medium and long terms, the Chinese side is the decisive actor within the binomial, by virtue of its economic development (not without obstacles in the coming period). In the context of the conflict with Ukraine, Russia undoubtedly benefited from China's tacit, which took over part of Russian hydrocarbon exports destined for the West. This, however, makes Russia more dependent on China than vice versa, which may not suit Moscow, which would like an equal relationship. But under the current relationship between the two sides, Russia is only a reservoir of natural resources and a secondary market for China's economy, while without China's support, the Russian economy would collapse in a short time³⁰. At the same time, joining Russia's Asian-Siberian space, sparsely populated and poorly connected to the European core of the country, and the densely populated Chinese space, in economic expansion, it will always be a weak spot in the security of the Russian state and an eternal cause of concern for decision-makers in Moscow.

The interconnection between the two states will continue in an accelerated manner in the coming period, as China cannot ignore the use of Russia's resources, especially in the perspective of a gigantic confrontation with the United States for global hegemony, which is looming in the coming decades. However, for Russia this could be a fatal embrace, which could return it to the vassal status it has not had since the period of the "Mongol yoke" (13th-14th centuries). From this point of view, the Sino-Russian binomial cannot be considered sustainable in the long term except in order to achieve some limited objectives of the two parties (exiting Russia's international isolation and increasing China's international negotiating power). Beyond the dreams of an invincible continental block of some of the ideologues of the two sides, the hard reality indicates only a momentary alliance, more reactive than pro-active and whose point of attraction for other countries remains at a modest level, especially in the conditions promoting a repressive and undemocratic political system.

²⁹Andreas Umland and Hugo von Essen, "What the China-Russia alliance means for the West", July 10, 2024, in <https://www.politico.eu/article/china-russia-alliance-global-trade-economy-war-ukraine-beijing-moscow-liberal-front-taiwan-banks/>, accessed on August 21, 2024.

³⁰Kaspar Pucek, "A Chinese Tributary? The Consequences of Moscow's Increased Dependence on Beijing" in *Clingendael Alert*, June 2024, <https://www.clingendael.org/publication/consequences-moscows-increased-dependence-beijing>, accessed on August 21, 2024.

3. GLOBAL SITUATION



The Republic of Moldova, our Good Sister in the European Union

PhD. Eng. Cristian-Marcel FELEA

“After Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova was, by far, the favorite target of Russian aggression in recent years. Immediately after the citizens of the Republic of Moldova voted for a pro-European president, but also a pro-European political majority, 3 years ago, Russia launched an aggressive blackmail against the Republic of Moldova by increasing the price of gas and, subsequently, reducing gas supplies. The goal was to reduce the pro-European appetite of the Republic of Moldova and to keep the country captive, dependent on Russia.”¹

Siegfried Mureșan, MEP, vice-president of the EPP

The Republic of Moldova, our Romanian-speaking² sister - an important aspect, to which I will get back in a certain context - has a historic opportunity within its reach, and this is called the process of accession to the European Union, which, once completed, will bring it, together with its citizens, into the family of European democracies. This opportunity, unfortunately, arose and acquired real shape only after Vladimir Putin gave the order for a large-scale armed invasion of Ukraine at the end of February 2022. Ten days later, the President of the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu, and the Gavrilița government submitted Brussels the request to start the accession negotiations to the European Union. Since then, more than two and a half years have passed in which all of Europe understood that Chisinau must also be supported in its aspirations, alongside Ukraine.

Ukraine is under military attack and partially occupied, and the Republic of Moldova is under a savage hybrid assault, designed to prevent its integration into the Union, despite Moscow’s claims that it is “not bothered” by Chisinau European aspirations. The blackmail levers are the



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accession_of_Moldova_to_the_European_Union#/media/File:President_Michel_meets_President_of_Moldova_-_202404_-_03.jpg

¹<https://www.contributors.ro/pacea-in-europa-se-va-obtine-impotriva-rusiei-nu-impreuna-cu-rusia/>

²<https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/maia-sandu-a-promulgat-legea-prin-care-limba-romana-devine-limba-oficiala-in-republica-moldova-2291235>

same: the enslaved elite from Tiraspol and Comrat, amplifying the fears of Russian-speaking citizens, pumping funds to feed political pro-Russian parties or allegedly protectors of the “Moldovan nation”, corrupting the elites. The last avenue of attack on which Russian propaganda marches: the European Union accession will dissolve the statehood of the Republic of Moldova, and will be used for force a territorial union with Romania.

“Throughout its more than two decades of rule, the Putin regime’s social contract with Russian society has been based on reviving lost greatness and restoring the Russian empire. But today, it appears that it has failed to fulfill its most fundamental responsibility as a state: protecting the territory and citizens from foreign invasion.... Regardless of how the situation will evolve from a military point of view [the Kursk Oblast operation], the political damage is done and is rooted in the nature of Russian politics” - so says Brian Whitmore³ -, “under Putin, the Russian state has become, in essence, an organized crime syndicate. Its internal logic, processes, incentive structure and behavior resemble those of a mafia family; a destabilizing moment in a crime syndicate is when the mob boss looks weak.”⁴ This is how opportunities arise, it’s all about audacity, as Kiev is doing militarily. “Beyond the realities on the battlefield” - says Ukrainian parliamentarian Oleksiy Goncharenko - “the offensive in Kursk disproves some of the biggest fears about this war. Obviously, the invasion of some Russian territories by Ukraine proved that Putin’s nuclear threats and his warnings about so-called red lines are actually a bluff designed to intimidate the West. Ukrainians have often accused Western policymakers of being overly concerned about the so-called danger, of Putin’s provocation. Since 2022, the international response to Russian aggression has been hampered by the widespread fear of conflict escalation, which has led to persistent delays in the delivery of military aid and absurd restrictions on the use of Western weapons. This [the Ukrainian offensive] pointed out the ridiculousness of this excessive caution.”⁵

If the tsar is empty, if the establishment built by the siloviki⁶, if the Kremlin begins to falter when bold actions are put in place, as Kiev is doing in Kursk Oblast, the world begins to understand that another logic must be approached in the relationship with Moscow, namely its systematic push into a series of crises that would put it on the defensive, undermine the confidence of Putin and his people, make them contemplate their possible defeat. Chisinau must not do otherwise: Pro-Europeans must strike the iron while it’s hot, make the people financed by Moscow expose themselves, expose their real intentions and then neutralize them, continuing the process of European integration unabated.

The Stages of the Accession Process to the European Union

On March 3, 2022, the Republic of Moldova officially submitted an application to join the European Union. On June 17, 2022, the European Commission issued a positive answer regarding Chisinau’s request. A week later, the European Council decided to grant the status of a candidate country for integration and invited the Commission to draft and submit a report on the fulfillment of the accession conditions by the Republic of Moldova. In November 2023, the European Commission issued a recommendation to open accession negotiations with the Republic of Moldova. In December 2023, European Union leaders decided to open accession negotiations and invited the Council to adopt the negotiating framework, after the completion of the relevant steps set out in the Commission’s report. Following the progress made by the Republic of Moldova, in March 2024, the leaders of the Union invited the Council to adopt quickly the draft negotiation framework. All this time, the Republic of Moldova was a process partner with Ukraine, receiving together the invitation to start accession negotiations on June 25, 2024.

The first ministerial-level accession conference with the Republic of Moldova took place in Luxembourg on June 25, 2024. This meeting took place as a result of the European Council’s decision of December 14, 2023, to open accession negotiations with the Republic of Moldova and the approval of the Council, on June 21, 2024, of the negotiation framework for the negotiations with the Republic of Moldova. The Union delegation was led by Hadja Lahbib, Belgian Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, with the participation of Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement. The delegation of the Republic of

³Assistant Professor at Texas-Arlington University, full member of the Eurasia Center.

⁴https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/ukraines-kursk-offensive-marks-putins-third-major-humiliation-of-the-war/?mkt_tok=NjU5LVdaWC0wNzUAAAGU_0tkTpembHmf6T7mIvucodJ6aAJICPXPpEPVesCX8QhewMtlWB1Ho2WGYHiJCM-sXXqgmXV1yTXorMH2gf1H6ql0awCcdbC-QP4Wx5U7mEL9HGA.

⁵https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/ukraines-invasion-of-russia-exposes-the-folly-of-the-west-escalation-fears/?mkt_tok=NjU5LVdaWC0wNzUAAAGU9s24iVxux5xVuxuVVGeSy6K37y4HBCOI1G5Ueoz75jjwSBu_2aHhJyVQbgPAKBub3ouaB8qoDoWfdQvfMOUcsjDapvdd-m72GXGv-bKcMbtw9dg.

⁶This word came into circulation in Russia with Vladimir Putin’s rise to power and is generally used to describe networks of influential figures in the oligarchy and secret services in the inner circle of the Kremlin.

Moldova was led by Prime Minister Dorin Recean.

The European Council acknowledged, through the decisions taken, that the Republic of Moldova has demonstrated a clear commitment to its reform process and insisted that, in order to continue moving forward on the accession path, sustainable and tangible progress on reforms is crucial, in particular in the field of rule of law, justice and fundamental rights. The Council also encouraged the Republic of Moldova to continue to act for a deep reform of justice, including the verification process, and to strengthen the relevant institutions in the fight against corruption. In this sense, the Republic of Moldova must build a solid record of investigations and convictions, including in high-level cases. The Council emphasized the importance of continuing transformative economic reforms, sectoral cooperation and the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the internal market of the European Union in order to achieve new progress in reforms in the economic and financial sector. These should be carried out on the basis of the EU-Republic of Moldova association agreement and the deep and comprehensive free trade agreement between the European Union, on the one hand, and Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, respectively, on the other.

The President of the Republic of Moldova, Maia Sandu, issued, on June 21, 2024, a decree for the initiation of the accession negotiations of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union and the organization of the negotiations of the draft Treaty of accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union. In the same decree, the deputy prime minister for European integration, Cristina Gherasimov, was designated as the head of the negotiation delegation - chief negotiator of the Republic of Moldova. The coordination of the negotiation process of the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union, as well as the organization and operation of the negotiation team was mentioned in the decree, and will be carried out according to the national mechanism established by the Government.

According to a decision approved by the Recean government (in March 2024), the Republic of Moldova's negotiating team will include: the Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration/Chief Negotiator, the Deputy Chief Negotiator, the Secretary General of the Government, the Secretary of State for European Integration, head of the Bureau for European Integration, head of the Center for Harmonization of Legislation, representative of the National Bank of Moldova, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economic Development and Digitization, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry and of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, the ambassador, the head of the Mission of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union and national experts. The list will be able to be completed with people outside the public service, specialists from the academic and research environment, representatives of the business environment, of civil society, who have the necessary expertise to organize and lead the negotiations with the European Union.

In December 2023, President Maia Sandu proposed to the Parliament the organization of a referendum on integration into the European Union simultaneously with the presidential elections in 2024. At the last session of the Parliament in Chisinau in 2023, the Electoral Code was amended, so that the referendum proposed by Maia Sandu could be organized simultaneously with the presidential elections in 2024. Then, in April, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova issued a provision approving the organization of a constitutional referendum on the accession to the European Union on the same day as the presidential elections, on the 20 October 2024. The question to which the citizens of the Republic will answer with "YES" or "NO" is: "Are you in favor of the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union?". Following the referendum, the Constitution is to be amended with the chapter "Integration into the European Union"; in fact, the declared purpose of the referendum and the amendment of the Constitution is to confirm the aspirations of European integration, establish a heading towards European values, as well as to set the European integration as a strategic objective for the Republic of Moldova.

Polls and Political Messages

The list of all the candidates for the presidency of the Republic of Moldova is not clear, but - at the time of this writing - several polls are available that have taken the voters' pulse since the beginning of the year, mainly measuring Maia Sandu, who is running for a new mandate. Possible challengers are being taken into account, challengers who, basically, wish to stop the course towards European integration and return under Moscow's rule. Trend analysis indicates the current president of the Republic, Maia Sandu, is favored in the electoral race, but she will not be able to count on a victory in the first round, which leaves room for elements of uncertainty.

- March 2024 – "iData" polling company, Chisinau:

Maia Sandu had 27.9% of voting intentions, followed by Igor Dodon, with 13.3%, by ex-prime minister Ion Chicu - with 5.7%, by the current mayor of Chisinau, Ion Ceban - with 4.4 %, by the former governor of Gagauzia, Irina Vlah - with 4.3% and by the controversial businessman Renato Usatii - 3%. The balance could be tipped by the more than 30% of respondents, who declared that they did not know whom they would vote for or did not want to answer. The sample did not include citizens from the diaspora and from Transnistria.

- April 2024 - “CBS Research”, at the command of the “WatchDog” Community Moldova:

Maia Sandu could obtain a new presidential mandate, if elections were held the following Sunday, but not from the first, but only from the second round of voting. 35.1% of all respondents would vote for Maia Sandu, while 15.8% would vote for the former president, the socialist Igor Dodon. The survey was conducted between April 6-13, on a representative sample of approximately one thousand people, with a margin of error of 3.1%.

The survey results also show that the pro-EU vote would be 57%, and for joining the Eurasian Economic Union (Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan) 34.8% - a slight downward trend in recent years. Joining NATO was supported by 34% of the respondents, an increase of over 10% in the last year; over 47% of respondents would vote against Moldova joining NATO.

- May 2024 – “iData” polling company, Chisinau:

Maia Sandu would be voted by 30.4% of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova. In second place, by a long distance, the respondents expressed their preference for the former president Igor Dodon, credited with 14.3% of the votes, while Ion Chicu (Moldovan Development and Consolidation Party) would have had the votes of 6.1% of the voting citizens of the Republic of Moldova. 24.2% of respondents do not know whom they would vote for, while 4% did not answer the question.

- July 2024 – “International Republican Institute”, Chisinau:

60% of survey participants said they were very likely to vote, while 30% said they were fairly likely to vote. In the list of political leaders from the Republic of Moldova in whom the citizens trust, President Maia Sandu occupies the leading place, with a weight of 33%, surpassing Igor Dodon (23%), Ilan Șor (15%), Ion Ceban (10 %), Igor Grosu (8%) and others. 36% of voters who participated in the survey intend to vote for Maia Sandu in the presidential elections, while 25% would vote for Igor Dodon.

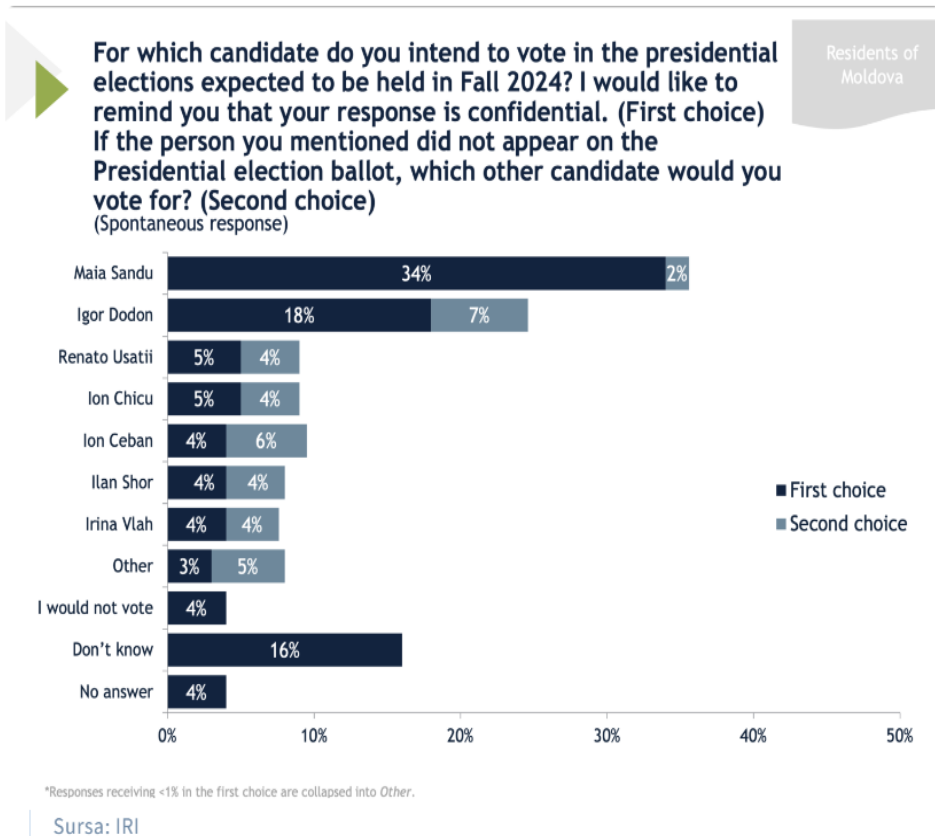


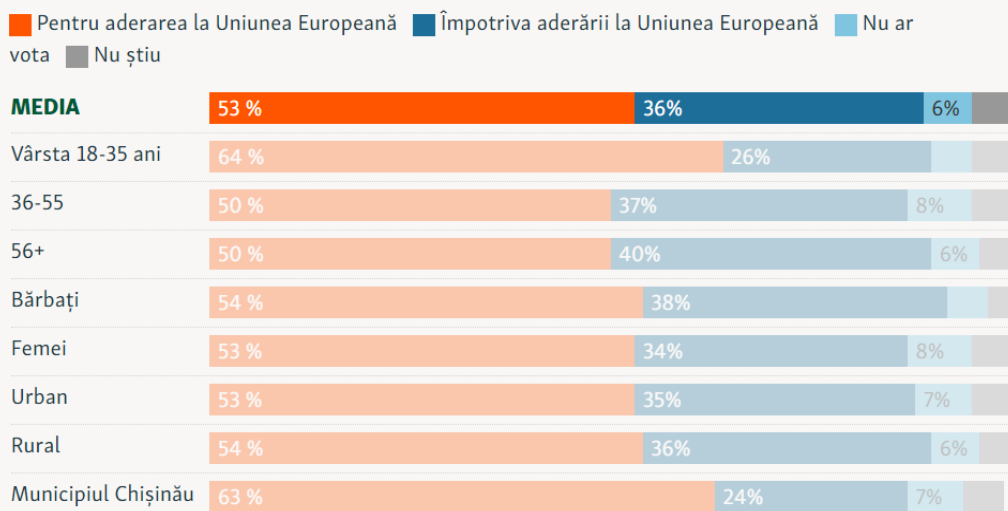
Fig. 1 - Presidential IRI survey, July 2024

- July 2024 - IMAS Bucharest: The IMAS survey was conducted between July 8 and 21, 2024, on a sample of 1,093 respondents, representatives of the adult population of the Republic of Moldova, excluding Transnistria. The maximum sampling error is ±3.0%. 43% of voters would vote for Maia Sandu, after excluding the 19% who are undecided. Alexandr Stoianolgo, supported by the PSRM, would take 14.2% of the votes and would come in second place. Renato Usatii follows with 13.3% and Irina Vlah, the former Basque of Gagauzia, with 10.9%.

The Action and Solidarity Party (PAS), founded by president Maia Sandu, is fighting to assert its role as the most visible

promoter of the referendum for European integration, which, moreover, was initiated by the head of state herself. For many months PAS members have been roaming the towns of Moldova talking to people about the referendum and the advantages of joining the European Union. In addition to PAS, for now only the European Social Democratic Party (SDP), which placed third in last year's local elections, has officially declared that it is pro-referendum, but with certain reservations. Dissatisfied with the monopolization of the idea of European integration by PAS, the SDP led by Ion Sula decided, in June, to "save the referendum" and launched its own campaign to promote the elections. Even if they do not agree with the idea of the referendum taking place on the same day as the presidential elections, the SDP still urges its voters to vote "YES" to the referendum.

Cum ați vota dacă referendumul privind aderarea la Uniunea Europeană ar avea loc duminică viitoare?



Grafic: MoloșniucR • Sursă: IRI

Fig.2 - IRI referendum survey, July 2024

The mayor of Chișinău, Ion Ceban, of the The National Alternative Movement (NAM) has conveyed several times that he supports the referendum, but he is not satisfied with it taking place at the same time as the presidential elections, nor with the time it would take place, citing that in most European Union countries conducted such a referendum after the accession negotiations were completed.

The Socialist Party, led by Igor Dodon, urges the boycott of the referendum, which it considers illegal; otherwise, the ex-pro-Russian president believes, as well as his former advisor, Ion Ceban, that the referendum should be organized only after the accession negotiations are concluded. Igor Dodon conveys to his party's supporters that, if the citizens vote "YES", then the Republic of Moldova will immediately lose part of its sovereignty in favor of the European Union: all European directives will be automatically transposed into the legislation in Chișinău.

The leader of the Party of Development and Consolidation of Moldova (PDCM), Ion Chicu - one of Igor Dodon's former advisers - stated that, for his party, boycotting the referendum is the only solution because the party's pro-European status. It forms a common front with the socialists. Even if the PDCM signed the Pact for Europe, there could be no question of a "YES" vote in the referendum, because it would be detrimental to the integration of the Republic of Moldova into the Union, "planting some bombs" for the statehood Republic of Moldova.

Opportunities, of course, but also Significant Risks

Our Romanian-speaking sister across the Prut is at a time in its history that we have also been through: Romania submitted its application for accession to the Union in 1995, two years after the Maastricht Treaty, with the "Declaration of Snagov" involving all political parties. However, a credible alternation in power was needed between 1996 and 2000, so that the Romanian democracy could be considered somewhat functional, even if many fundamental reservations were expressed. It was only four years later that a positive recommendation was issued for the start of accession negotiations, which actually started as a process in February 2000, when the Mugur Isărescu's government came at the Victoria Palace.

Just like the Republic of Moldova, Romania needed to understand well its new position in the global concert, to correctly distinguish between friends, possible allies and enemies, in order to then, mobilizing most of the nation's energies, choose the path of integration with the West: NATO, the European Union and, currently, the OECD. The threat, it was clear to us, came from Moscow, even though in 1997 Russia had signed a cooperation agreement with NATO and a joint council had been established. Or, since the days of the war in Transnistria - between March and July 1992 - the Republic of Moldova should not have doubted

With regard to whom its enemy was, even if it was disguised as a “mediator” in the “5 + 2 Format” as well as a “guarantor of peace”, through the troops it deployed in Tiraspol.

Romania was absent from the “Transnistria equation”, failed (perhaps did not even try) to obtain diplomatic status as a mediator in that case and, in general, was a favorite target of the Russian propaganda and disinformation. It portrayed us in the eyes of the Russian-speaking population of the Republic of Moldova as a threat, i.e. - just as Kiev would accuse us years later - as “Nazis” eager to force a territorial union and unleash the “terror of the Romanian gendarme”. Russian propaganda has always had the same goal, which is to sow confusion and fear, so that the enemy is perceived as a savior and blood brothers as dangerous enemies, eager for revenge.

Vitalie Ciobanu⁷ eloquently described the state of confusion in which society in the Republic of Moldova finds itself: “The great vulnerabilities of the Republic of Moldova are poverty and moral crises. Not all citizens understand the source of evil, their identity issues obscures their existential danger. To associate “national betrayal” with an activity in favor of Russia is still a novelty in the Republic of Moldova, it sounds unusual and disturbing for many. “Patriotism” and “national interest” are not univocal notions. If it were not so, we would have no doubts about” the irreversibility of the pro-European option”, proclaimed by the authorities. In order to stimulate a mentality change, a long process of education and reforms is needed in all areas, especially in the judiciary. We lacked this respite, we lack it. Here, in Moldova, the song says: “we were not born in the right place”.⁸

Vladislav Kulminski, former deputy prime minister and minister for reintegration in the Gavrilița government, formerly a UN official in conflict resolution structures, comes to complete this picture with much more concrete details:⁹

- “All residents in Transnistria have Moldovan citizenship. According to the latest data, 375.000 citizens of the Republic of Moldova are in Transnistria. Many also have Russian, Moldovan, Romanian, and Bulgarian passports... There are people there who have 4-5 passports, so they travel a lot on the right side of the Dniester, but also to Romania and the European Union. Even in the Republic of Moldova there is a simplistic picture of the people who live in this region. But there are other ways than the reintegration of Transnistria in the Republic of Moldova which currently cannot be put into practice.”

- “Unfortunately, the communication of the Republic of Moldova with Transnistria was somewhat neglected in all fields: political, economic, social. It was not very good communication with Gagauzia either. We are talking about Transnistria, but here we have Gagauzia which has a very well-defined status in the legislation of the Republic of Moldova, but even there is a parallel reality, which does not intersect with that of the Republic of Moldova (...) Initially, in 1994, its autonomy [of Gagauzia] was created with the help of then Turkish president[Suleyman] Demirel, as cultural. The sad reality is that the Gagauz region was Russified to a much greater extent during the time of independent Moldova than during the Soviet Union. The Gagauz language, and culture are now on the way to extinction. (...) In this case we also have a paradox because Moldova’s movement towards the European Union is a beneficial thing for Gagauz autonomy, much more beneficial than for the rest of Moldova, because there their rights will be protected, they will have legal institutions to turn to, and their relationship with Chisinau will become much more predictable. But they oppose it, because of the propaganda that exists in this region and which says that the European Union means to destroy the statehood of the Republic of Moldova.”

- “Probably the most turbulent period since the independence of the Republic of Moldova is coming. For 30 years, the Republic of Moldova sat on the fence. The favorite policy of all politicians was “let’s be friends with both the East and the West”. We have not had a clear option, such as: “here is the development path of the Republic of Moldova and we will follow this path from the beginning to the end” (...) This is the first government that does not intend to play with The Russian Federation. It has said very clearly: our path is towards the European Union, we will take decisive steps to get out of the sphere of influence of the Russian Federation. This means losing control over the Republic of Moldova and creating an impossible situation regarding the regulation of the situation in Transnistria.”

⁸<https://www.dw.com/ro/analiz%C4%83-l%C4%83sa%C8%9Bi-m%C4%83-cu-europa-voastr%C4%83/a-69851655?maca=rum-rss-rom-all-1493-rdf>.

⁹<https://hotnews.ro/video-gagauzia-a-fost-rusificata-mai-mult-in-timpul-moldovei-independente-decat-al-urss-interviu-cu-fostul-vicepremier-pentru-reintegrare-vladislav-kulminski-1770034>.

“The Republic of Moldova had a period in the years 2012-2015 when it was a country with the stamp of an independent country and a seat in the UN, but where money laundering and all the issues that would not have been possible in the EU countries were practiced. The Republic of Moldova was controlled by a group of people who wanted to make money. So this state of “gray zone” is very beneficial for the people who control the Republic of Moldova and who now want to return to power. (...) Sor’s party is the one who wants destabilization. There is a lot of money, something like this the Republic of Moldova has never seen, because from the point of view of the Russian Federation it is easier to buy a country than to start a war. Hence the very high stakes of the elections.”

I must emphasize that the Republic of Moldova must remember Romania’s progress during the accession and post-accession negotiations and avoid errors. A quarter of a century after the decision by which Brussels invited Romania to join the Union, westernization still has a winding path. The elites from Bucharest are just as corrupt, only they have refined their methods, we still find quite a few nostalgic for national communism and admirers of the force policies of the dictator from the Kremlin. The fact that more than 90 billion euros entered Romania between 2007 and 2023, or that the country’s GDP exceeded 320 billion euros in 2023, compared to 124 billion euros in 2007, is no guarantee that the society will remain open and deeply democratic in the future - Romania struggles with the past every day, even more so due to the disruptive factor represented by this aggressive Russia. It is all the more difficult to translate the European project into life in a country like the Republic of Moldova, where Moscow has levers of destabilization at its disposal, such as criminal groups disguised as defenders of the rights of ethnic Russians in Tiraspol and Comrat, which can be unleashed at any time to ensure that European integration will not be completed. However - as Vladimir Kara-Murza also warns us - in today’s Russia, a regime change can take place from one day to the next, without any prior warning, without an explicit sign. That’s why Chisinau must dare and I think it will. It is enough for its rulers to look at Alexander Lukashenko display of panic, to understand what an extraordinary opportunity history is providing. The risks will be commensurate, but those who do not dare cannot wait for fate alone to smile on them; hence the admiration for the way Kiev knows how to take its fate into its own hands.

4. SECURITY AND RESILIENCE



Towards a New Russian Strategy for NATO

Gerlinde Niehus (Germany)

In early 2022, Russia launched its brutal, unjustified, and unjustifiable all-out war against Ukraine. In Ukraine, this meant over two years of suffering, death – and sustained defence and heroic resistance against a murderous regime.

Across the Euro-Atlantic area and beyond, Russia has shattered peace and security. Putin and his criminal system seek to undermine good governance, foster other dictatorships, and seek to change the international order in their favour.

As a bitter irony of history, Russia's aggression and brutality, used internally but also mainly towards other nations like Ukraine, have strengthened NATO. As it is increasingly self-evident that peace and security cannot be taken for granted, NATO is considered more relevant and vital than ever. According to recent polls, some 75 % of Allied populations assess NATO as important to the future security of their country, and some 77% of populations support maintained or increased investments in defence. The Alliance has kept, albeit on occasions with some difficulties, its unity in supporting Ukraine in its defence against Russia. So far, so good.

But where is the coherent NATO strategy for responding to Putin's Russia? The short and sobering answer is: Not there yet!

Over the past two years and more, what NATO did when looking at Russia has been, at best, patchwork. Under the leitmotiv of "Understanding Russia better," a stream of external experts and discussions have been held with the stated aim of understanding Russia better, but not more than that. Political consultations took place, also with the EU. And Russia's policies and activities have been assessed. But so far, NATO has been unable or unwilling to answer the question: What is the strategy we should pursue in the years and decades ahead against a revanchist regime whose aggression clearly goes beyond Ukraine? What is our collective response to Putinism, for which the demolition of Ukraine is "just" one building block in the fight against



Source: <https://www.e-ir.info/2023/10/05/misplaced-certainty-nato-hostility-as-collective-common-sense-within-russias-leadership/>

democracies and open societies – and everything NATO stands up for?

When asked why no discussion on a Russia strategy would be tackled head-on, the standard response has been that such an undertaking would be too risky and unlikely to yield any results, as Allies are too far apart.

That has typically also been the key argument, at least from the group of conservative voices, every time NATO wanted or needed to embark on defining a new Strategic Concept. However, the fact that over the decades, NATO achieved just that, i.e. agreeing on new Strategic Concepts, exposes the fallacy of the argument for shying away from a strategic debate.

As a contribution to stimulating such a debate, here are some ideas on how such a new Russia strategy for NATO could look like:

The Starting Point: Our Vision

NATO itself has recently updated its vision by adopting the 2022 Strategic Concept at the Madrid Summit:

“We remain steadfast in our resolve to protect our one billion citizens, defend our territory and safeguard our freedom and democracy. We will reinforce our unity, cohesion and solidarity, building on the enduring transatlantic bond between our nations and the strength of our shared democratic values. We reiterate our steadfast commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty and to defending each other from all threats, no matter where they stem from. We will continue to work towards just, inclusive and lasting peace and remain a bulwark of the rules-based international order. [...]”

Our vision is clear: we want to live in a world where sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights and international law are respected and where each country can choose its own path, free from aggression, coercion or subversion. We work with all who share these goals. We stand together, as Allies, to defend our freedom and contribute to a more peaceful world.”¹

In combining this vision of NATO nations with the vision underpinning the Helsinki Final Act, which also The Soviet Union Russia signed in 1975, a vision for Russia could be following:

“We want a Russia which respects sovereignty, internationally recognized borders, human rights, and international law. We want a Russia which is peaceful and prosperous, and contributes to a more peaceful and prosperous world.”

Shaping our Mission

Building on this vision, the 2022 Strategic Concept gives, in fact, also overarching guidance from which a mission for a future Russia strategy for NATO could be derived:

“The Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine has shattered peace and gravely altered our security environment. Its brutal and unlawful invasion, repeated violations of international humanitarian law and heinous attacks and atrocities have caused unspeakable suffering and destruction. A strong, independent Ukraine is vital for the stability of the Euro-Atlantic area. Moscow’s behaviour reflects a pattern of Russian aggressive actions against its neighbours and the wider transatlantic community.”²

“The Russian Federation is the most significant and direct threat to Allies’ security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. It seeks to establish spheres of influence and direct control through coercion, subversion, aggression, and annexation. It uses conventional, cyber and hybrid means against us and our partners. Its coercive military posture, rhetoric and proven willingness to use force to pursue its political goals undermine the rules-based international order.”³

In applying this overarching guidance from the Strategic Concept, NATO’s mission in relation to Russia could be the following:

“Our mission is to contain Russia in posing a threat to Allied security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area and beyond.”

In this context, it is overdue for NATO to finally declare the NATO-Russia Founding Act from 1997, which Russia has violated repeatedly since 2008 but certainly torn into pieces since its all-out war against

¹NATO 2022 Strategic Concept; Preface.

²NATO 2022 Strategic Concept; Preface.

³NATO 2022 Strategic Concept; Strategic Environment; para 8.

Ukraine in 2022, null and void⁴⁻⁵.

Main Strategic Objectives of a Future NATO-Russia Strategy

To pursue the mission outlined above, the following could serve as main strategic objectives:

- Russia must be defeated in Ukraine, while Ukraine must prevail in its defence against Russia, holding up its sovereignty, independence, and democracy.
- NATO's deterrence and, if needed, defence against Russia must remain efficient.
- NATO's "internal" weaknesses of Allies must be tackled and minimised.
- Russian destabilization and subversion across the globe must be curtailed.
- Russia's military build-up and regeneration must be constrained.
- China's partnership of "no limits" with Russia must be curbed.

Main Building Blocks for a Coherent Russia Strategy

The development and implementation of a coherent and holistic containment strategy against Russia is not only a strategic military issue, but it is, above all, a political issue requiring political will, courage, and leadership, as well as a means to forge unity⁶. If there is one big lesson from past wars, it is that any attempts to appease an aggressor are doomed to fail – as they will only encourage the attacker to pursue aggression further as it clearly delivers benefits.⁷

Some of the points outlined below go eventually beyond NATO's current political agenda. This should be no showstopper. Article 4 of the Washington Treaty gives members the possibility to "consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened." So, the mandate is there; it "just" requires political leadership, will and courage to use it.

• Enable Ukraine to Win the War with Russia on Its Own Terms

Russia's war in and against Ukraine transcends that battle. Russia's revisionist imperialism seeks not only to subjugate Ukraine but to overturn the international order into one where violence, lawlessness and aggression are the norm and countries such as Russia (and others following its model) get away with imposing might over right. So, what is at stake in Ukraine is no less than the world vision enshrined in NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept. Future generations will judge today's leaders on whether they have been up to the challenge – or not.

There is no doubt that since Russia's all-out war against Ukraine (combined with a hybrid one against Ukraine's partners), the US, the EU, NATO nations and partners in a large international coalition have provided unprecedented support to Ukraine to ensure that Ukraine can assert its right to territorial integrity, self-defence and its right to self-determination. It is equally clear that, in accordance with international law, parties supporting a nation to execute these rights to self-defence⁸ and self-determination⁹ do **not** become parties to the conflict. As long as there is no direct participation in military combat activities, willing partners would also be allowed to undertake the training of Ukrainian forces in Ukraine.

Notwithstanding, over the past two years, and much too often, too many decision-makers or decision shapers have put themselves in a straitjacket by applying some form of self-censorship to draw self-imposed (but also artificial) "red lines" for their own actions. As the typical argument goes, trespassing on these (self-imposed) "red lines" would lead to a serious escalation of aggression from the aggressor, i.e. Putin and his regime.

This is a fundamental misunderstanding. President Putin is not operating on an escalation and de-escalation ladder. Rather, he respects strengths and exploits weaknesses. Wherever he can, he fosters fears, procrastination, and cowardice – to use to his advantage – and we are all too prepared to fall into that trap ever and ever again.

⁴Just to illustrate: In the Founding Act NATO and Russia commit to "build together a lasting and inclusive peace in the Euro-Atlantic area on the principles of democracy and cooperative security. (...) The present Act reaffirms the determination of NATO and Russia to give concrete substance to their shared commitment to build a stable, peaceful and undivided Europe, whole and free, to the benefit of all its peoples."

⁵See also: Alexander Vershbow: *Russia policy after the war: A new strategy of containment*. Atlantic Council, February 2023; *Russia policy after the war: A new strategy of containment* - Atlantic Council.

⁶In that sense also Luis de Aleida Sampaio: "From Deterrence to containment. The future of the International Order is decided in Ukraine". Center for Strategic Decision Research. See also: CEPA: *Containing Russia, Securing Europe*, 2024.

⁷See also: Stefanie Babst: *Sehenden Auges. Mut zum strategischen Kurswechsel*. München, 2023.

⁸As enshrined in article 51, Chapter VII, of the UN Charter.

In consequence, the world continues to provide too little support too late to Ukraine – only to then complain about Ukrainians not making the desired progress in defending their country. In fact, providing that assistance in the summer of 2022, before the Russian mobilization of September, could have dealt a decisive blow to the Russian operation.

So far, what we have been witnessing is a collective failure of potentially historic dimensions: The 56 partners participating in the coalition supporting Ukraine, whose combined GDP exponentially supersedes that of Russia¹⁰, have, over the past more than two years, been unable and/or unwilling to support Ukraine in a way that it can win the fight against the aggressor. It is, therefore, of strategic relevance to finally reverse this approach.

With Ukraine waging its existential war of survival, it is defending our world and our values – often with enormous sacrifices. We need to see any investment in Ukraine’s defences as an investment in the forward deterrence and defence of Allied security. We finally need to stop dithering¹¹ and provide Ukraine with the political, military, economic and humanitarian aid it needs to prevail. If Russia were to win in Ukraine, the costs to all Allies would be exponentially higher. If Ukraine wins, it is not only winning what it deserves: the future as a democratic, sovereign country; it is also a strategic reinforcement for all rules-based, open societies – and the strongest driver for regime change in Russia.¹²

• Live up to a New Era of Collective Deterrence and Defence

Putin’s Russia is and will remain for the foreseeable future the most significant and direct threat to Allies’ security and peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area¹³. In line with the guidance from the 2022 Strategic Concept, consecutive NATO Summits in Madrid and Vilnius have therefore put renewed and reinforced emphasis on collective deterrence and defence.

The related challenges are formidable, if not daunting. It is nothing less than to reverse three decades of reaping the putative “peace dividend” by allowing the constant atrophy and erosion of deterrence and defence capabilities and the establishment of a prevailing mindset which implied that peace and security, at least in the Euro-Atlantic area, can be taken for granted, falling like manna from heavens.

While these days are over, the to-do list for NATO is long and demanding, and not all Allies pursue these with the sense of urgency and determination required in view of the strategic turning point we are facing. Key tasks for Allies include, in particular, expeditiously increasing defence spending¹⁴ and maximising force contributions to fully implement the Vilnius Defence Investment Pledge; meeting current and future capability targets as identified in the NATO Defence Planning Process; to fully resource the new defence plans as agreed in Vilnius to ensure their full executability; to urgently ramp up defence production and implement the Defence Production Action Plan; and to ensure the credibility and effectiveness of NATO’s nuclear deterrent mission. Furthermore, innovative approaches such as adopting a NATO economic deterrence agenda should be considered and pursued.¹⁵

In view of Russia increasingly using hybrid warfare methods, including cyberattacks, political interference and covert operations on Allied soil, it seems high time for NATO to also rethink its approach to these types of hybrid threats. The longer we let Russia “get away with it,” the more we invite her to intensify these corrosive campaigns.

To illustrate, it would also seem important to develop a response to Russia’s increased “accidental” violations of Allied air space, especially in countries adjacent to Ukraine. In addition, Russia has been using jamming techniques systematically to disable GPS signals of civilian aircraft, e.g. in the Baltic and Black Sea regions. While there are, so far, no indications of a large-scale conventional attack of Russia against a NATO Ally, these incursions and intrusions should be seen as a way to test NATO’s resolve and determination. What would NATO do if, following jamming by Russia, two civilian aircraft would collide? NATO needs to develop a response.

¹⁰Just to illustrate: The combined GDP of only ten of these 56 partners in the Ukraine Defence Contact Group, namely US, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Norway, the Netherlands, and Japan is in the region of 43 trillion US Dollars. That of Russia in the region of 1.7 trillion US Dollars!

¹¹See also Alexander Vershbow: *The West can no longer hesitate on Ukraine*. *Foreign Policy*; 03 March 2024.

¹²Cf. for example Andrea-Kendall Taylor and Erica Frantz: *The Treacherous Path to a Better Russia*. In: *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 102, Number 4, July/August 2023.

¹³NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, para 12.

¹⁴See also Camille Grand: *Defence spending: sustaining the effort in the long-term*. *NATO Review*; July 2023.

¹⁵See Anna Dowd and Dominik Jankowski: *Developing an economic security agenda for NATO*. In: *War on the Rocks*, 28 May 2024. *Developing an Economic Security Agenda for NATO - War on the Rocks*

In sum, NATO needs to rethink and reinvigorate its deterrence and defence posture by making it fit for the age of hybrid warfare.

• Tackle and Minimize Internal Weaknesses of the Allies

Over the years, if not decades, Russia has been using the full spectrum of hybrid destabilization instruments to undermine democracies, open societies, and Euro-Atlantic security. These range from political interference and pressure, hostile disinformation and propaganda, especially in the context of election campaigns, via malicious cyber activities, e.g. by attacking government networks or critical infrastructure, to the weaponization of energy and the conduit of Russian intelligence and security service activities on Allied territory, including assassinations, sabotage or coup attempts in Montenegro and Moldova. With Vladimir Putin in power, there is no sign of a reversal of this hostile strategic approach. For NATO and its Allies this means that Russia will exploit and widen, whenever possible, all internal weaknesses.

To tackle this set of daunting challenges, a full range of counter-measures should be put into place: NATO needs to enhance further the resilience of all Allies across all of NATO's baseline resilience requirements. Countries like Hungary and Turkey must be convinced to reduce their energy dependence on Russia. Other counter-measures could include, e.g. (cyber) exercises to signal the Alliance's steadfastness or further limitations to the movements of Russian spies and visa regimes for Russians across Allied nations.

Perhaps more importantly, the principles of good governance to which NATO commits itself in the 2022 Strategic Concept¹⁶ need to be reinforced. While this is easier said than done, NATO has at least four avenues to pursue such a goal: It could set up its own mechanism for good governance - by establishing within NATO Headquarters in Brussels a "Centre of Democratic (or Societal) Resilience" - a move promoted by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly already for a number of years. An alternative, and eventually less politicised approach, could be the establishment of a dedicated NATO Centre of Excellence on Good Governance. The Alliance could also look into withholding (temporarily) some of the assets and advantages nations can derive from NATO's security investment programme. Finally, nations belonging to both NATO and the EU can reinforce the potential application of Article 7, i.e. the suspension clause of the EU Treaty, if a member country seriously and persistently breaches the principles on which the EU is founded.

We need to bear in mind that a chain is only so strong as its weakest link.

• Reinvigorate NATO Crisis Prevention and Cooperative Security

With the 2022 Strategic Concept, NATO redefines the earlier core task of crisis management into crisis prevention and management: "We will increase our efforts to anticipate and prevent crises and conflicts. Prevention is a sustainable way to contribute to stability and Allied security. We will enhance support for our partners, including to help build their capacity to counter terrorism and address shared security challenges."¹⁷ This reflects, as one of the bitter lessons learnt from the decades of futile crisis management in Afghanistan, the realisation that crisis prevention is the more effective and a better "return of investment" than the extremely costly military operations. However, the approach pursued so far does not live up to the levels of ambition of the Strategic Concept in general¹⁸, and in particular also not to the strategic challenges Russia (and by extension other malign actors like notably China) pose among NATO's partners across the globe.

NATO and the EU need to finally realise that leaving partners aspiring for membership in either or both organisations in limbo over protracted periods of time is an open invitation to malign actors to derail a partner's Euro-Atlantic course, intensify bad governance and seed instability. On the EU side, this makes the energetic pursuit of enlargement processes with candidate countries (with the exception of Turkey) a geostrategic imperative.¹⁹

On the NATO side, this means finally mustering the political courage and leadership to offer membership to both Georgia and, yes, Ukraine. The NATO Study on Enlargement, while often referred to as a hindrance to such a move, does not constitute such a showstopper. As a case in point, West Germany, which saw itself as the only legitimate representative of the German people, was integrated into NATO in 1955, while East Germany remained under the grip of the Soviet Union until 1989.

¹⁶NATO Strategic Concept 2022, Purpose and Principles, para 5.

¹⁷NATO Strategic Concept 2022, para 38.

¹⁸NATO Strategic Concept 2022, in particular paras 40 to 42.

¹⁹Current candidate countries at different stages of the accession process are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine. Of these, Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia are already NATO members.

NATO's engagement with the Global South is so far, at best, modest. Of the 54 African countries, NATO has cooperated more intensely with two, Tunisia and, since 2022, and Mauritania, mainly via so-called Defence Capacity Building (DCB) packages. From the current 22 member states of the Arab League, NATO cooperates via similar DCB packages, in addition to Mauritania, with Iraq and Jordan. The limited footprint is largely due to the "strategic" view of some NATO nations, especially France, that the prevailing actor in engaging Africa and the Middle East should be the European Union, while NATO has been considered more or less "toxic" – although many countries from the regions are strongly interested in intensifying cooperation. A meaningful engagement would, however, require finally investing in crisis prevention and cooperative security at strategic levels, and not as a 'nice to do' fringe activity – as is currently the case across the NATO enterprise, both on the civilian and the military side of the organisation.

Taking this core task to its true strategic level also implies efficiently countering Russia's destabilization in Moldova, the Western Balkans, and the Baltic and Black Sea regions, including Georgia.

Looking at crisis prevention and cooperative security as a building block of a Russia containment strategy also implies the need for Allies to find ways to disrupt Russia's illegal arms acquisition, and to curtail military support from countries such as Iran and North Korea for Russia's war against Ukraine.

Most importantly, it must strive to reverse China's deepening bilateral cooperation with Russia. By providing essential support that allows Russia to revitalise its defence industrial base, China is key in enabling Russia's military regeneration²⁰. While China mainly uses the partnership with Russia as a strategic counterbalance to the US and eventually as a tool to curtail US global power projection, China's long-term strategic interests are also tied to access to markets and technology, trade, and investment. Euro-Atlantic partners, including the EU, while pursuing their "de-risking" strategy, could well use these more as carrots and sticks. As US Secretary of State Blinken recently flagged during his visit to China: "Now, if China purports on the one hand to want good relations with Europe and other countries, it cannot on the other hand be fuelling what is the biggest threat to European security since the end of the Cold War."

Foster the NATO – EU Strategic Partnership

The 2022 Strategic Concept commits NATO to "enhance the NATO-EU strategic partnership, strengthen political consultations and increase cooperation on issues of common interest."²¹ While there is no explicit reference to Russia in the context of NATO - EU cooperation in the Strategic Concept, areas mentioned, such as military mobility, resilience, and countering cyber and hybrid threats, are clearly highly relevant and applicable. Over the past two years, NATO and the EU have, in responding to the Russia threat, largely lived up to their commitment to "play complementary, coherent and mutually reinforcing roles in supporting international peace and security."²² While the EU has been and continues to make massive contributions to financing Ukraine's defence and statehood and imposing a growing series of sanctions on Russia, NATO has been focusing on rebuilding its deterrence and defence capabilities, a security umbrella which allows nations to provide military assistance to Ukraine.

This strategic partnership needs to be further strengthened. This would include NATO nations unequivocally supporting not only the EU sanctions but also efforts to close numerous loopholes²³. In addition, NATO nations could join forces with the EU to intensify efforts to seize Russia's central bank assets of an estimated US \$300 billion with a view to using them as compensation for the losses caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.²⁴

Furthermore, NATO should work hand in glove with the EU to transform European defence: EU and EU member states need to maintain the momentum of increases in defence investment. We must shift the tide from decades of military erosion and underinvestment, creating capability gaps. The EU could adopt the 2% GDP NATO baseline as its own standard. We should spend more together and not side by side. The EU defence landscape is too fragmented and therefore ineffective: the EU has some 180 major weapon systems;

²⁰China supporting Russia in massive military expansion, US says | China | The Guardian.

²¹NATO Strategic Concept 2022, para 43.

²²Ibid.

²³EU sanctions: new rules to crack down on violations | News | European Parliament (europa.eu); New rules criminalising the violation of EU sanctions (europa.eu).

²⁴On Proposed Countermeasures Against Russia to Compensate Injured States for Losses Caused by Russia's War of Aggression Against Ukraine (iiss.org).

the US has 30. The EU has 17 main battle tanks, while the US has just one²⁵. There is insufficient joint procurement: only 18% is pursued via European frameworks in 2022. Billions of Euros are wasted year by year due to duplication, insufficient pooling and joint procurement. NATO should support the EU's plans to create the function of a new EU Commissioner for Defence, with a focus on defence procurement.

In addition, NATO should engage with and support the EU in all efforts to strengthen the Russian opposition, be this in Russia proper or in exile. This also implies looking after the security of individual opposition representatives, such as Yulia Navalnaya or finding ways to stay in touch with opposition members jailed in Putin's Gulag. Developing jointly with the EU a long-term communications strategy, notably via social media channels, addressing Russian audiences with the overarching message that "We are not your enemies! We want a better future for Russia and its people!"²⁶ could be another important component.

A Wild Card? Suspending Russia's Membership in the UN Security Council

Russia is not "only" attacking Ukraine. In parallel, it is obstructing multilateral organisations. In the case of the OSCE, Russia's obstructionism has largely paralysed the organization, and uses it as a platform for propaganda or intimidation toward other members. In the case of the UN, Russia would have a particular responsibility to uphold international peace and security, considering its status as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council. Instead, it (ab)uses its seat and veto right in the UN Security Council to undermine the international order by protecting its own lawless behaviour, or that of its "partners in crime" like recently North Korea, or by derailing the work in the UNSC through contentious and hypocritical proposals.

There has been quite some debate on the idea of suspending Russia's seat and veto right in the UNSC in 2022-2023²⁷, but since then, the topic largely disappeared from the radar screen. This is a pity. Admittedly, the hurdles for such a move are significant. However, keeping the debate alive and aiming, for example, for a majority of nations in the UN General Assembly to vote in support of the idea would send a powerful signal not only to Russia. At the same time, it would keep the spotlight on the current dysfunctionality of the UN Security Council and the urgent need to reform it to re-establish the currently lost credibility and relevance.

Stand up for our Vision – with Passion!

Arguably, the most powerful and durable containment starts in the minds and hearts of the people. There needs to be the understanding and will to contain Russia not because we are against Russia per se but because Putinism is a peril to his country²⁸, a threat to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area, and a threat to the very type of societies we want to be.

At the same time, being "against" something is not enough. There needs to be an alternative and more appealing vision: "The West also needs to deploy one of its most powerful weapons: universal liberal values. It was these, as well as Star Wars and dollars that helped bring down the Soviet regime by exposing the inhumanity of its totalitarian system."²⁹

This presupposes that we ourselves fully embrace these universal liberal values. In view of the rise of populism, flaws in our democratic systems, self-doubts, and complacency are on the rise. There are again many who feel either helpless or disenfranchised in view of the rogue behaviours of some states and their leaders, or even explain that authoritarian rulers and systems have numerous advantages over open societies and liberal democracies, such as centralised command and control or the absolute power to impose will, also against public opinion. This is a flawed assessment. On the one hand, it underestimates, in particular, the innovation capacity of open societies and their inherent abilities to come up with solutions in the best interest of majorities. On the other hand, it underestimates the corrosive effect of misguided decision-making by the absolute ruler based on a delusional perception of the world around him.³⁰

²⁵Chart: Europe Has Six Times As Many Weapon Systems As The U.S. | Statista.

²⁶In fact, the 2022 Strategic Concept states in para 9 that: "NATO does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to the Russian Federation."

²⁷Cf. for example: *Expelling Russia from the UN Security Council — a How-to Guide - CEPA; How to expel Russia from the UN | The Hill; or: The role of the UNSC in the Russia/Ukrainian war - Stichting Jason (jasoninstitute.com).*

²⁸Cf. for example Karl Schlögel: *Putins Losung ist: Nach mir die Sintflut*". In: *Der Spiegel*, Nr. 12; 16.03.2024.

²⁹"Inside Putin's Russia". In: *The Economist*, March 16th 2024, page 7.

³⁰More on this and the theory behind it in: Gerlinde Freia Niehus: *Außenpolitik im Wandel. Die Außenpolitik Spaniens von der Diktatur Francos zur parlamentarischen Demokratie. 2 Bände. Frankfurt am Main, 1989.*

Against this backdrop, President Macron's recent wake-up call for a humanist Europe was both timely and to the point.

For NATO and its nations and people, this wake-up call means to stand up, with conviction and passion, for the vision enshrined in its 2022 Strategic Concept:

"Our vision is clear: we want to live in a world where sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights and international law are respected and where each country can choose its own path, free from aggression, coercion or subversion. We work with all who share these goals. We stand together, as Allies, to defend our freedom and contribute to a more peaceful world."³¹

- *The views expressed in this article are the author's own and should not be taken to necessarily reflect those of NATO or NATO allies. The article was also published in GLOBSEC (<https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/commentaries/towards-new-russia-strategy-nato>) and Gerlinde Niehus gave her consent to be published in the GEOSTRATEGIC PULSE.*

³¹NATO 2022 Strategic Concept; Preface.

4. SECURITY AND RESILIENCE



Understanding National Security - Part II The Component of Economic Security

Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Georgios KOUKAKIS (Greece)

„The EU’s economic strength is built on our unique Single Market and open, rule-based global trade. But current geopolitical shifts and the rapid development of sensitive technologies mean we have to strike a balancing act: we must uphold our economic security, while ensuring we continue to benefit from an open economy.”

Valdis Dombrovskis

EU Executive Vice-President & Commissioner for Trade

Abstract

This article is the second part of a series of articles that aim to present the various components of national security, a dimension of security that has recently been under the spotlight due to the numerous crises and threats that prevail in the contemporary security environment endangering the well-being of citizens and the proper functioning of states. It focuses on economic security, the component of national security that – along with the component of military security – is related to the concept of ‘hard power’. Its purpose is to clarify the context of economic security, present its interconnection with the rest of the components of national security and other policy fields and highlight its importance for peace and stability, while its main conclusion is that economic security – in addition to military security – is the foundation of national security and must not be overlooked.

Introduction

The contemporary security environment has been characterized as an environment of *polycrises* (multiple crises) and *permacrises* (permanent crises)¹, due to the numerous long-lasting and different types (military, economic, energy, food, health, etc.) crises that have occurred. *Globalization* and *technological advancement* have also facilitated the spread of economic security threats, mainly due to the ability of actors to access new markets, *while geopolitical competitiveness* and major shifts in regional and international *balance of power* have also rise tension in the bilateral and multilateral economic relations of several actors, which in addition to the contestation as far as the values and norms of the western civilization is concerned have enhanced *instability* and *turmoil*.

¹Koukakis, G. (2023). *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>.

In this context, national security – especially its economic component – is of vital importance for every state, as it contributes greatly not only to the promotion of its national economic interests but the wellbeing of its citizens as well, since security and development are interconnected². One of the components of national security is *economic security*, the importance of which has been highlighted during several contemporary crises that had a direct or indirect impact on the national and global economy. To this end, the EU issued a *European Economic Security Strategy* (EES) that underlined the importance of resilience of *supply chains, critical infrastructure, technology and economic dependencies/coercion*, focusing on:

“[...] minimizing risks arising from certain economic flows in the context of increased geopolitical tensions and accelerated technological shifts, while preserving maximum levels of economic openness and dynamism”³.

The article presents the context of economic security, one of the two –the other one being military security – basic components of national security. Its importance lies in the fact that economic security is vital for the survival of every state, as it ensures the states’ *proper function* through the effective tackling and/or management of economic threats that allow the effective implementation of domestic and foreign policy. Current research indicates that the current security environment of polycrises and permacrises –especially in the context of globalization– forced states to emphasize on their economic security, thus the article contributes in existing literature as it provides additional information that can help *citizens* understand the need for enhancing economic security and *policy makers* plan and implement respective policies in a more effective way. Its purpose is to clarify the context of economic security, present its interconnection with the rest of the components of national security and other policy fields, and highlight its importance for peace and stability. The main conclusion is that economic security – in addition to military security – is the foundation of national security and must not be overlooked. As far as the structure of the article is concerned, it initially clarifies the concept of national security, it then explains the context of economic security, after that it presents the main collaborative economic schemes and the contemporary economic crises worldwide, it proceeds to a brief analysis of the interconnection between economic security and other policy fields, and concludes by referring to the future challenges and opportunities.

The Concept of Security

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.⁴ 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* at the individual level, *National Security* at the state level, *Regional Security* at the group level, and *International Security* at the system level (**Picture 1**).

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 1947⁵. 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 insecurity⁶. Later on, the United Nations (UN) related security to people and the eradication of poverty and underdevelopment⁷, introducing the concept of *human security* through the *Human Development Report* that was published in 1994⁸.

²Stern, M., & Öjendal, J. (2010). *Mapping the Security–Development Nexus: Conflict, Complexity, Cacophony, Convergence? Security Dialogue*, 41(1), 5–29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26301183>.

³European Commission. (2023, June 20). *An EU approach to enhance economic security* [Press Release]. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_23_3358.

⁴Neocleous, M. (2000). *Against security*. *Radical Philosophy*, 100, pp. 7-15. <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/against-security>.

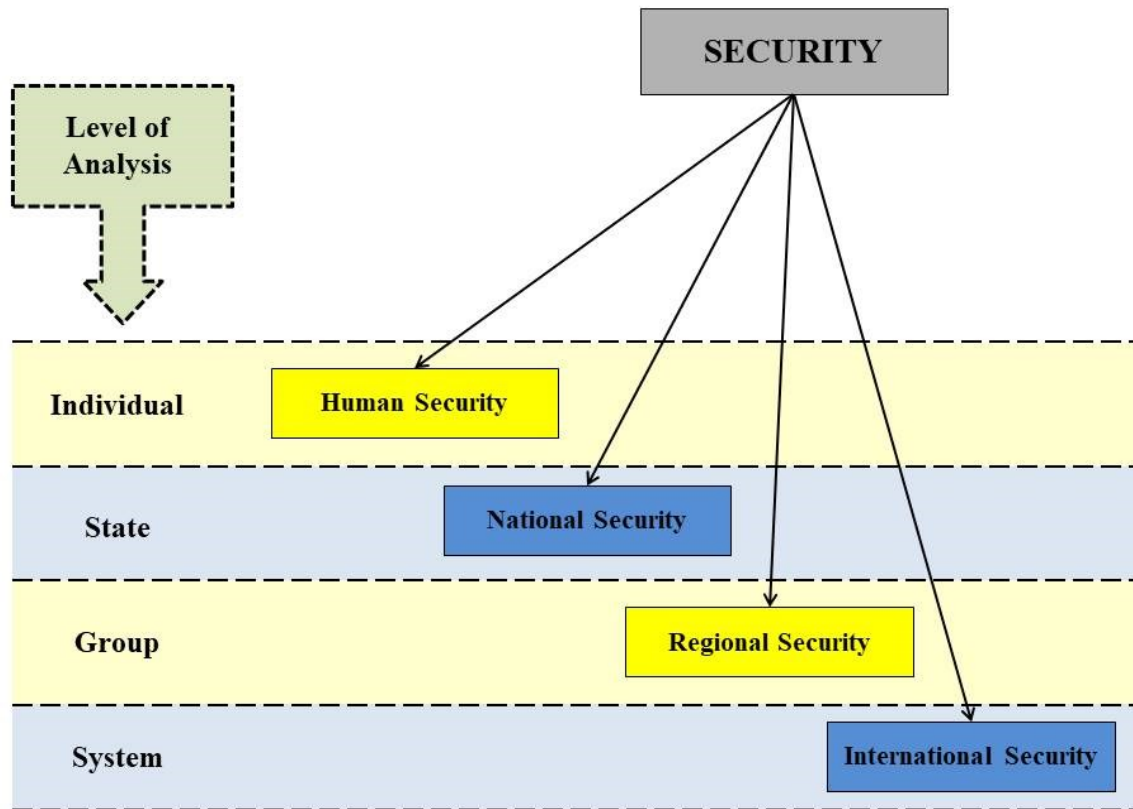
⁵Department of State. (n.d.). *National Security Act of 1947*. [https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/national-security-act#:~:text=The%20National%20Security%20Act%20of,National%20Security%20Council%20\(NSC\). \(21/04/2024\)](https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/national-security-act#:~:text=The%20National%20Security%20Act%20of,National%20Security%20Council%20(NSC). (21/04/2024)).

⁶Buzan, B. (1983). *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*. Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, p. 69.

⁷Buzan, B. & Hansen, L. (2009). *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 203.

⁸United Nations Development Programme. (1994). *Human Development Report 1994*. <https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/hdr1994encompletenostatpdf.pdf>.

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 systems⁹. 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 terms¹⁰ – leading to the establishment of several regional organisations such as the EU.¹¹



Picture 1: The 4 types of security
Source: Edited by Georgios Koukakis

Finally, *international security* is closely related to globalization¹², mostly dealing with global threats through international organizations such as the United Nations¹³. Moreover, security –regardless the institutional level in which it is examined– encompasses several *dimensions/components*, 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) water security, (13) demographic security, (14) information security, and (15) space security (**Picture 2**).

⁹Graham, 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).

¹⁰Krause, K. & Jütersonke, O. (2005). 'Peace, Security and Development', *Security Dialogue*, 36(4), pp. 447-462. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0967010605060449>.

¹¹Bailes, 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.

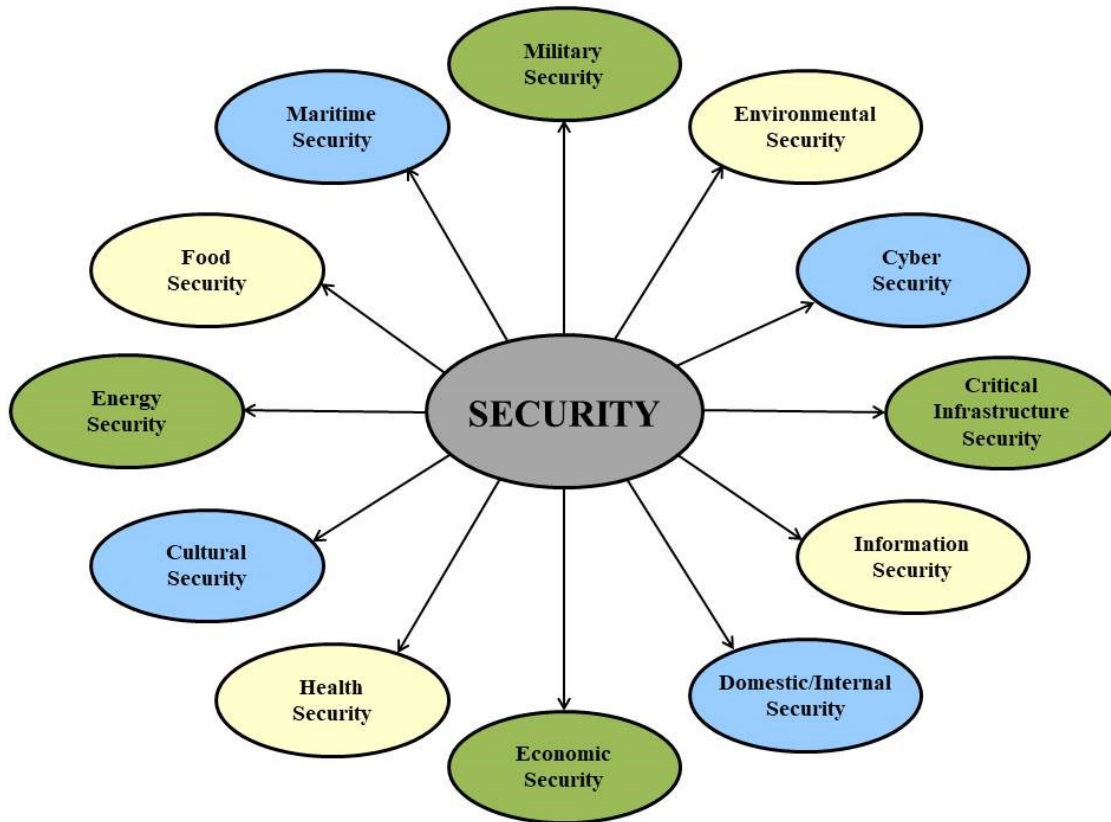
¹²Cha, V. (2000). *Globalization and the Study of International Security*, *Journal of Peace Research*, 37(3), pp. 391-403. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0022343300037003007>.

¹³United 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.

The Context of Economic Security

Taking into consideration the aforementioned definition of security, it is understood that economic security is the protection of an actor against economic threats. In order though for someone to fully comprehend the context of economic security, the article analyzes the following economic security elements:

1. **Threats:** As far as economic threats are concerned, it must be stressed that they usually include *state* and/or *non-state actors* (public and/or private sector enterprises/companies/organizations) that are involved in a state's economy or financial system.



Picture 2: Indicative dimensions/components of security
Source: Edited by Georgios Koukakis

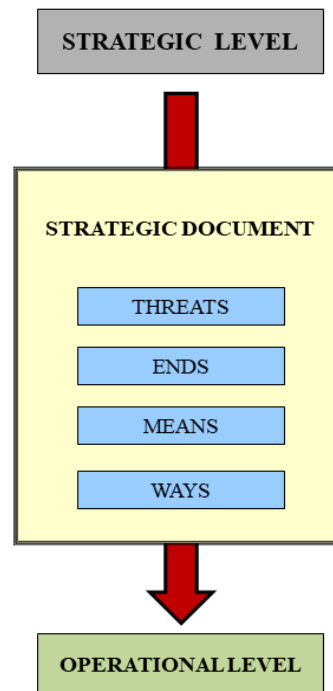
2. **Means:** As far as the means that an actor may use to threaten the economic security of another actor, they usually include goods/products/resources and/or services that are (directly or indirectly) related to the economy. Moreover, an actor's economic security can be threatened (unintentionally) by a situation such as inflation that may harm its economy.

3. **Ways:** As far as the ways that economic means are used, the most common use is through the implementation of economic measures such as sanctions, embargos, restriction of exports, the establishment of a new financial system etc. or/and the implementation of non-economic ways such as cyberattacks and physical attacks against an actor's financial system and critical infrastructure.

4. **Goals/Objectives:** The main goal that an actor wishes to accomplish through the use of economic measures is – since they constitute another form of war, an economic one – according to *Clausewitz* to impose its will to the opponents.¹⁴ As far as the economic objectives are concerned, they usually include the *malfunction* and/or *degradation* of an actor's *economy* and/or *financial system* and/or the *deprivation* of its critical resources in order to cause the overall malfunction of a state and public unrest which will put pressure to the state's leadership and allow its 'opponent' reach to an agreement.

¹⁴Shephard, J. E. (1990). *On War: Is Clausewitz Still Relevant?*. *Parameters*. pp. 85-99. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA515723.pdf>.

5. **Strategic documents:** As far as the strategic documents that are related to economic security, they include either national security strategic documents such as the *National Security Strategy* (NSS) of the United States¹⁵, the *National Strategic Review* (NSR) of France¹⁶, and the *Integrated Review Refresh* (SRR) of the United Kingdom¹⁷, that include special chapters/sections regarding economic security, or specialized strategic documents such as the *National Strategy for Economic Transformation* (NSET) of Scotland¹⁸, *Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040*¹⁹, or the *Indo-Pacific Strategy* (IPS) of the USA²⁰, Canada²¹, and France.²² Their main purpose is to provide the framework – by defining the main threats, desired ends (goals), necessary means, and preferable ways of using them– in which Branches of the Armed Forces of the state will implement their respective strategies (**Picture 3**).



Picture 3: *The function of Strategic Documents*
Source: Edited by Georgios Koukakis

6. **Decision-making:** Finally, as far as the decision making process regarding the use of economic measures are concerned, due to the fact that it is an action with severe political, diplomatic and social consequences and that it must be coordinated with other actors, the decision for the implementation of such

¹⁵Koukakis, G. (2022). *The National Security Strategy of the USA: Background, Recent Developments and Future Considerations Regarding the International Security Environment*. HAPSc Policy Briefs Series, 3(2), 122–132. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hapscpbs.33792>.

¹⁶Republic of France. (2022). *National Strategic Review*. <https://www.sgdsn.gouv.fr/files/files/rns-uk-20221202.pdf>.

¹⁷Government of the United Kingdom. (2023, March 13). *Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a more contested and volatile world*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-review-refresh-2023-responding-to-a-more-contested-and-volatile-world>.

¹⁸Scottish Government. (n.d.). *Economy strategy*. <https://www.gov.scot/collections/economy-strategy/>.

¹⁹Australian Government. (2023, September 01). *Invested: Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040*. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/southeastasiaeconomicstrategy>.

²⁰The White House. (2022). *Indo-Pacific Strategy*. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>.

²¹Government of Canada. (2022). *Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy*. <https://www.international.gc.ca/transparence-transparence/indo-pacific-indo-pacifique/index.aspx?lang=eng>.

²²Government of France. (2022). *France's Indo-Pacific Strategy*. https://franceintheus.org/IMG/pdf/Indopacifique_web.pdf.

measures is usually taken in the higher strategic political level by the Head of State or Government. To this end and in order to facilitate the decision making procedure, some states have established several staff bodies. One of these is *National Economic Council (NEC)* of the USA established in 1993 in order to:

*“[...] advise the President on U.S. and global economic policy. It is part of the Executive Office of the President. By Executive Order, the NEC has four key functions: to coordinate policy-making for domestic and international economic issues; to give economic policy advice to the President; to ensure that policy decisions and programs are consistent with the President’s economic goals; and to monitor implementation of the President’s economic policy agenda”.*²³

Economic Collaborative Schemes and Strategic Partnerships

Having understood that cooperation is the best way to counter economic threats, many actors have proceeded to the establishment of several collaborative schemes of economic nature – either in the form of an *international/regional organization* or *multilateral/bilateral agreements* – in order to enhance their *economic capabilities* and/or achieve *favorable conditions* as far as their economic relations (mainly exports and imports) are concerned. Some of the most known among the plethora of regional and international economic collaborative schemes are the following:

1. **World Bank:** The World Bank was established in 1944 as the *International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)*²⁴, and is currently a group consisting of five (5) Institutions namely the *International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)*, the *International Development Association (IDA)*, the *International Finance Corporation (IFC)*, the *Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)* and the *International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)*. It includes *189 member-states*²⁵ and its mission is to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity on a livable planet²⁵ by working in every major area of development in order to:

*“[...] provide a wide array of financial products and technical assistance, and [...] help countries share and apply innovative knowledge and solutions to the challenges they face”.*²⁶

2. **International Monetary Fund (IMF):** The IMF was established – along with the World Bank – in 1944, it is an international organization that currently includes *190 member-states*,²⁷ and according to *its official website*:

*“[...] works to achieve sustainable growth and prosperity for all of its 190 member countries. It does so by supporting economic policies that promote financial stability and monetary cooperation, which are essential to increase productivity, job creation, and economic well-being”.*²⁸

3. **World Trade Organization (WTO):** The WTO was established in 1995, it is an international organization that currently includes *164 member-states*²⁹, and according to *its official website*:

*“[...] it operates a global system of trade rules, it acts as a forum for negotiating trade agreements, it settles trade disputes between its members and it supports the needs of developing countries”.*³⁰

²³The White House. (n.d.). *National Economic Security*. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/nec/>.

²⁴World Bank Group. (n.d.). *Explore History*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/archive/history>.

²⁵World Bank Group. (n.d.). *Who we are*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/who-we-are>.

²⁶World Bank Group. (n.d.). *What we do*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/what-we-do>.

²⁷North Atlantic Treaty Organization. (n.d.). *What is NATO?*. <https://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/>.

²⁸International Monetary Fund. (n.d.). *About the IMF*. <https://www.imf.org/en/About>.

²⁹North Atlantic Treaty Organization. (n.d.). *What is NATO?*. <https://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/>.

³⁰World Trade Organization. (n.d.). *The WTO*. https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/thewto_e.htm.



Picture 4: The logos (left to right) of the World Bank, IMF and WTO
Source: Wikipedia

4. **United Nations (UN):** The UN was established in 1945 and it currently includes 193 member-states³¹. It contributes to the international economic security through the *Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)*³² – which is one of its six (6) main bodies – and the *Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee)* of its General Assembly³³, and according to *paragraph 4 of article 1* of its Charter one of the UN purposes is:

*“To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion”.*³⁴

5. **European Union (EU):** The EU was established in 1951 as an economic union by the name of *European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)*.³⁵ Despite the fact that it gradually became a political union and since 2003 an aspiring *security provider*³⁶, it never lost its initial character as it gradually established an *Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)*³⁷. The EU that currently includes 27 member-states³⁸, of has also established several economic institutions and bodies such as the *European Central Bank (ECB)*³⁹, the *European Investment Bank (EIB)*⁴⁰ and the *European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)*⁴¹, while the Commission’s department that deals with economic security issues is the *Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs (DG ECFIN)* which:

*“[...] conducts economic forecasts and business and consumer surveys to underpin economic policy in the EU. It also coordinates the Commission’s work for a deeper and fairer Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), and promotes the role of the EU as a global actor in the economic arena. Finally, the Directorate-General is responsible for economic policy coordination, in particular through the European Semester, and safeguarding fiscal and financial stability in the EU”.*⁴²

³¹United Nations. (n.d.). About Us. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us>.

³²United Nations. (n.d.). ECOSOC at a Glance. <https://ecosoc.un.org/en/about-us>.

³³United Nations. (n.d.). Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee). <https://www.un.org/en/ga/second/index.shtml>.

³⁴United Nations. (n.d.). United Nations Charter, Chapter I: Purposes and Principles. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/chapter-1>.

³⁵European Union. (n.d.). History of the EU. https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu_en.

³⁶Koukakis, G. (2024) ‘The evolution of the European Union Security Strategy: Towards the establishment of a European Army?’. Center for International Strategic Analyses, Research Paper No. 105. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.34521.12648>.

³⁷European Commission. (n.d.). Economic and Monetary Union. https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-and-monetary-union_en.

³⁸European Commission. (n.d.). From 6 to 27 members. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/6-27-members_en.

³⁹European Union. (n.d.). European Central Bank (ECB). https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/search-all-eu-institutions-and-bodies/european-central-bank-ecb_en.

⁴⁰European Union. (n.d.). European Investment Bank (EIB). https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/search-all-eu-institutions-and-bodies/european-investment-bank-eib_en.

⁴¹European Union. (n.d.). European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/institutions-and-bodies/search-all-eu-institutions-and-bodies/european-economic-and-social-committee-eesc_en.

⁴²European Commission. (n.d.). Economic and Financial Affairs. https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/departments-and-executive-agencies/economic-and-financial-affairs_en.



Picture 5: The flags (left to right) of the UN, EU and AU
Source: Wikipedia

6. **African Union (AU):** The AU was established in 1963 as *Organization of African Unity* (OAU) and currently comprises 55 *member-states*.⁴³ In order to address economic security issues, the AU has established the *Economic, Social & Cultural Council (ECOSOCC)*⁴⁴, and cooperates closely with the *Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of Africa* – such as the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Community of Sahel–Saharan States (CEN–SAD), the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) – which *comprise the African Economic Community (AEC)*. The main purpose of the AU is:

“[...] to refocus attention from the fight for decolonisation and ridding the continent of apartheid, which had been the focus of the OAU, towards increased cooperation and integration of African states to drive Africa’s growth and economic development”.⁴⁵

7. **Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):** The OECD was established in 1961 as *Organization for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC)* in order to facilitate the reconstruction of Europe through the administration of American and Canadian aid provided by the Marshall Plan⁴⁶. It currently includes 38 *member-states*⁴⁷, and its core aim is to:

*“[...] provide advice on international standard-setting – and help countries forge a path towards stronger, fairer and cleaner societies”*⁴⁸



Picture 6: The logo of the OECD
Source: Wikipedia

⁴³African Union. (n.d.). *About the African Union*. <https://au.int/en/overview>.

⁴⁴ECOSOCC. (n.d.). *The Genesis of ECOSOCC*. <https://ecosocc.au.int/en/about/overview>.

⁴⁵African Union. (n.d.). *About the African Union*. <https://au.int/en/overview>.

⁴⁶OECD. (n.d.). *Our history*. <https://www.oecd.org/en/about/history.html>.

⁴⁷OECD. (n.d.). *Members and partners*. <https://www.oecd.org/en/about/members-partners.html>.

⁴⁸OECD. (n.d.). *Who we are*. <https://www.oecd.org/en/about.html>.

8. **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN):** The ASEAN was established in 1967, currently includes 10 member-states (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam)⁴⁹ and its purpose is to promote:

*“[...] cooperation in the economic, social, cultural, technical, educational and other fields, and in the promotion of regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter”.*⁵⁰

9. **Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC):** The APEC is the premier regional economic forum of Asia-Pacific⁵¹ and was established in 1989 in order to leverage the growing interdependence of the Asia-Pacific. It currently includes 21 member-states⁵², and its primary goal is:

*“[...] to support sustainable economic growth and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. [...] to build a dynamic and harmonious Asia-Pacific community by championing free and open trade and investment, promoting and accelerating regional economic integration, encouraging economic and technical cooperation, enhancing human security, and facilitating a favorable and sustainable business environment [...]”.*⁵³

10. **World Economic Forum (WEF):** The WEF was established in 1971 in order to facilitate cooperation between the Public and the Private sector, it currently comprises 10 Centers (Centre for Advanced Manufacturing and Supply Chains, Centre for Cybersecurity, Centre for Energy and Materials, Centre for Financial and Monetary Systems, Centre for Health and Healthcare, Centre for Nature and Climate, Centre for Regions, Trade and Geopolitics, Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Centre for the New Economy and Society, and Centre for Urban Transformation)⁵⁴, and according to its official website:

*“At the heart of our mission of improving the state of the world lies the belief in the power of human ingenuity, entrepreneurship, innovation and cooperation. We recognise the need for a forum fostering rigorous and respectful dialogue between and among leaders with different beliefs and viewpoints, where diversity of thought is respected and all voices can be heard. Achieving this mission is made possible by all our stakeholders, who come together to find common ground and seize opportunities for positive change”.*⁵⁵



Picture 7: The logos (from left to right) of the ASEAN, APEC and WEF
Source: Wikipedia

⁴⁹North Atlantic Treaty Organization. (n.d.). What is NATO?. <https://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/>.

⁵⁰Association of Southeast Asian Nations. (n.d.). The Founding of ASEAN. <https://asean.org/the-founding-of-asean/>.

⁵¹Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. (n.d.). About APEC. <https://www.apec.org/about-us/about-apec>.

⁵²Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. (n.d.). Member economies. <https://www.apec.org/About-Us/About-APEC/Member-Economies#>.

⁵³Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. (n.d.). Mission Statement. <https://www.apec.org/about-us/about-apec/mission-statement>.

⁵⁴World Economic Forum. (n.d.). History. <https://www.weforum.org/about/history/>.

⁵⁵World Economic Forum. (n.d.). Our Mission. <https://www.weforum.org/about/world-economic-forum/>.

11. **Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS):** The BRICS is an informal group of states that was initially established in ministerial level in 2006 between Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) on the initiative of Russia and held its first summit in 2009, while South Africa was added as a member in 2011 (BRICS)⁵⁶. Moreover, in 2023 the group welcomed six (6) additional member-states namely *Saudi Arabia, Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, Ethiopia, and Argentina*⁵⁷. As far as the purpose of the group is concerned, according to its official website is to:

“[...] promote dialogue and cooperation among our countries in an incremental, proactive, pragmatic, open and transparent way. The dialogue and cooperation of the BRIC countries is conducive not only to serving common interests of emerging market economies and developing countries, but also to building a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity”.⁵⁸

12. **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO):** The SCO is an international organization that was established in 2001 between Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russian, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan⁵⁹, and according to its Charter aims to:

“[...] strengthen mutual trust, friendship and good-neighborliness between the Member States; [...] encourage the effective cooperation between the Member States in such spheres as politics, trade, economy, science and technology, culture, education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection etc.; [...] jointly ensure and maintain peace, security and stability in the region; and [...] promote a new democratic, fair and rational international political and economic international order”.⁶⁰

13. **Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO):** The ECO was established as the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) in 1964 between Iran, Pakistan and Turkey and was renamed to ECO in 1985⁶¹. Its current ten (10) member-states include the three (3) founding states in addition to Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan⁶², while its fundamental goal is to:

“[...] create amenable and conducive conditions for the continued promotion of sustainable economic development in the region, aiming at joint welfare and wellbeing of the Member States [...]”.⁶³

14. **League of Arab States (LAS):** The LAS is a regional organization that was established in 1945 between Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen and was later joined by Libya, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, Kuwait, Algeria, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Mauritania, Somalia, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Djibouti and Comoros⁶⁴. According to article 2 of its Charter:

*“The purpose of the League is to draw closer the relations between member States and co-ordinate their political activities with the aim of realizing a close collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries. It also has among its purposes a close co-operation of the member States with due regard to the structure of each of these States and the conditions prevailing therein, in the following matters: (a) Economic and financial matters, including trade, customs, currency, agriculture and industry; (b) (communications, including railways, roads, aviation, navigation, and posts and telegraphs; (c) Cultural matters; (d) Matters connected with nationality, passports, visas, execution of judgments and extradition; (e) Social welfare matters; (f) Health matters.”*⁶⁵

⁵⁶BRICS. (n.d.). History. <http://infobrics.org/page/history-of-brics/>.

⁵⁷Kenny, M. (2024, August 10). BRICS. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/BRICS>.

⁵⁸BRICS. (n.d.). Ibid.

⁵⁹The Shanghai Cooperation Organization. (2017, January 09). General information. <https://eng.sectsc.org/20170109/192193.html>

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Economic Cooperation Organization. (n.d.). History. <https://eng.sectsc.org/20170109/192193.html>.

⁶²Economic Cooperation Organization. (n.d.). Member States. <https://eco.int/member-states/>.

⁶³Economic Cooperation Organization. (n.d.). History. Ibid.

⁶⁴Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2024, August 8). Arab League. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Arab-League>.



Picture 8: The logos (left to right) of the SCO, ECO, LAS, and GCC

Source: Wikipedia

15. **Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC):** The GCC is a regional organization that was established in 1981 between the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait⁶⁶, having –according to its Charter– the following objectives:

*“To effect co-ordination, integration and inter-connection between member states in all fields in order to achieve unity between them; To deepen and strengthen relations, links and areas of cooperation now prevailing between their peoples in various fields; To formulate similar regulations in various fields including the following: Economic and financial affairs, Commerce, customs and communications, Education and culture, Social and health affairs, Information and tourism, Legislative and administrative affairs; To stimulate scientific and technological progress in the fields of industry, mining, agriculture, water and animal resources: to establish scientific research: to establish joint ventures and encourage cooperation by the private sector for the good of their peoples”.*⁶⁷

16. **Multilateral & bilateral agreements:** As far as the bilateral agreements are concerned, an example is the *Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements* and other *Trade Agreements* such as the ‘Japan Critical Minerals Agreement’ that the USA has signed with numerous states (Australia, Bahrain, Chile, Colombia, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Oman, Peru, Singapore, etc.)⁶⁸, the *North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)* that was signed between the USA, Canada and Mexico in 1992 and was replaced by the *U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)* in 2020⁶⁹, and the agreements (advanced framework, free trade, investment protection, digital trade, economic partnership, etc.) that the EU has signed with several non-European actors (Chile, India, Indonesia, Kenya, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, etc.).⁷⁰

17. **Group of Seven (G7):** The G7 is an informal bloc between Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA) that was established in 1975 as G6 (France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK and USA) in order to provide a framework for non-communist major-economy states to address common economic issues and coordinate their policies through a Summit that takes place in an annual basis.⁷¹

18. **Group of Twenty (G20):** The G20 is an informal bloc between Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the UK and the USA that was established in 1999 in order to provide a framework for major-

⁶⁶GCC. (n.d.). Objectives. <https://www.gcc-sg.org/en-us/AboutGCC/Pages/StartingPointsAndGoals.aspx>

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸U.S. Customs and Border Protection. (2024, July 12). U.S. Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements and Other Trade Agreements. <https://www.cbp.gov/trade/priority-issues/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements>

⁶⁹U.S. Customs and Border Protection. (2024, April 25). U.S. - Mexico - Canada Agreement (USMCA). <https://www.cbp.gov/trade/priority-issues/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/USMCA>

⁷⁰European Commission. (n.d.). Negotiations and agreements. https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/negotiations-and-agreements_en

economy states to address common economic issues and coordinate their policies through a Summit that takes place in an annual basis.⁷²

Contemporary Economic Crises

As far as the major contemporary economic crises are concerned, it must be stressed that they might be *primary* in case they are caused by a malfunction of the financial/economic sector or *secondary* if they are a consequence of the malfunction of other sectors such as health, security & defense, etc. The most important contemporary economic crises (referred by chronological order) are the following:

1. The 2008-2009 primary economic crisis also known as the *Great Recession*, that was caused by the deficient lending policy of banks and mortgage lenders.⁷³
2. The 2020 secondary economic crisis that was caused by the *COVID-19 pandemic*.⁷⁴
3. The 2022 secondary economic crisis that was caused by the *War in Ukraine* which fueled global inflation.⁷⁵

The Interconnection of Economic Security with other Fields

As far as the interconnection of economic security with other fields is concerned, it must be noted that when economic security is threatened – e.g. during a crisis, through the imposition of an embargo or the implementation of sanctions etc. – most public sectors malfunction, leading gradually to several other crises such as food crises, energy crises, and humanitarian crises. In addition to that, economic security is interconnected to the following fields:

1. **Security & Defence:** Another field that is interconnected with economic security is security & defense, as the latter is closely connected to a state's *defense expenditures* which contribute greatly to the armed forces' readiness and operational capability through the acquisition of new equipment, weapons, ammunition and means, and of course the conduction of training and exercises. Moreover, economic security is interconnected with the *defense industry* sector, as public and private defense enterprises are part of a state's economic ecosystem.
2. **Resilience:** Though it is not always stressed enough, every component of national security is interconnected with the respective component of resilience, as the latter is a prerequisite of the former. For example, in order for an actor to achieve economic security (be protected from economic threats) it must ensure that its vulnerabilities are the minimum possible and it is able to implement countermeasures to regain the advantage/initiative over the threat, thus to be economic resilient. That is exactly the reason why resilience is highlighted in several strategic documents of major actors.⁷⁶
3. **International Law:** As far as international law is concerned, its interconnection with economic security is *international economic law*, which is basically the legal framework that governs the economic relationships between states, organizations and enterprises of different nationality. It usually concerns unilateral, bilateral and multilateral treaties, and includes a variety of disciplines such as international monetary law, international financial regulation, international labor and services law, International intellectual property law, international tax law, international development law, international environmental law.⁷⁷

⁷²McBride, J., Siripurapu, A. & Berman, N. (2023, October 11). *What Does the G20 Do?* Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-does-g20-do>.

⁷³Duggan, W. (2023, June 21). *A Short History Of The Great Recession*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/investing/great-recession/>.

⁷⁴Irawan, A., & Alamsyah, H. (2021). *The Covid-19's Economic Crisis and Its Solution: A Literature Review*. *Etikonomi*, 20(1), 77 – 92. <https://doi.org/10.15408/etk.v20i1.16870>.

⁷⁵Guénette, J., Kenworthy, P. & Wheeler, C. (2022). *Implications of the War in Ukraine for the Global Economy [EFI Policy Note 3]*. World Bank Group. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099616504292238906/pdf/IDU00bdb5a770659b04adf09e600a2874f25479d.pdf>.

⁷⁶Koukakis, G. (2023). *Resilience: Highlighting its Importance for Security and Development through References to (National) Security Strategic Documents of International Actors*. *HAPSc Policy Briefs Series*, 4(1), pp. 77–87. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hapscpbs.35186>.

⁷⁷University of Lincoln. (2022, July 29). *What is international economic law?*. <https://online.lincoln.ac.uk/what-is-international-economic-law/>.

4. **Human Rights:** Despite the fact that economic security and human rights seem to be two fields that are not connected, this is not the case. In fact economic sanctions are one of the main measures taken by the UN against states that are violating the *human rights* and *fundamental freedoms* of their citizens.

5. **Intelligence:** Intelligence is another relative field that is crucial for maintaining economic security, as it facilitates the production of *assessments* regarding future trends of the market, competitor's actions, and of course the effectiveness of the measures taken by a state.

6. **Public Health:** As far as public health is concerned, it is also connected to economic security not only because medicine and healthcare – as part of the goods and services respectively – contribute to a state's economy thus are vulnerable to economic threats, but also because in times of pandemics such as COVID-19 the economy apparatus dysfunctions, leading indirectly to economic crisis.

7. **Technology:** In addition to the aforementioned fields, technology is one of the most important fields that is strongly connected inter alia to economic security, as the new technological means and methods that are being constantly developed can also be integrated into several aspects of the economy (stock market, supply chains, critical infrastructure, etc.) interconnecting different economies around the world, making them more *resilient* as they enhance the given support but at the same time more *vulnerable*, as an economic crisis that is not tackled on time can easily affect other economies via a domino effect.

8. **Climate Change:** As far as climate change is concerned, it is also connected to economic security mainly because of its negative impact to agriculture which also leads several groups to migration⁷⁸, in addition to the dysfunction of the economy apparatus in times of natural disasters due to the disruption of the supply chain – as part of the goods and services respectively – contribute to a state's economy thus are vulnerable to economic threats, but also because in times of pandemics such as COVID-19 the economy apparatus dysfunctions, leading indirectly to economic crisis.

9. **Geopolitics:** Finally, geopolitics is also connected to economic security as the *geopolitical competition* between state-actors affects the collaborative schemes that are being established in order to gain or maintain power through economic influence. *BRICS* for example is considered by some policy-makers to be an economic scheme that seeks to alter the U.S. dollar-based international financial system, thus an economic security threat, especially for the USA⁷⁹. The same applies for China and its *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI) which is seen as a way by which China achieves economic coercion.⁸⁰

Concluding Remarks

Taking into consideration the information presented in the article it is concluded that economic security – in addition to military security – is the foundation of national security and must not be overlooked, as this will have major consequences to several policy fields. As far as the main *challenge* for international community is concerned, it lies in the ability to maintain the *openness* of the economy – a vital factor for development – in addition to protecting the established *rules-based economic order* that guarantees equal opportunities and competitiveness. As for the main *opportunity* that lies ahead, it lies in the ability of states to keep up with the rapid *technological advancements* that change the established ways of economic interaction and endorse *new practices* that maximize profit without sacrificing economic security. It must be also stressed that the implementation of economic measures as a mean of ensuring a state's national security must be coordinated in both intrastate and interstate level in order for the maximum results to be achieved⁸¹. As the *G7 leaders* stated on May 20, 2023 regarding Economic Resilience and Economic Security:

*“We affirm that our cooperation to strengthen economic resilience and economic security will be rooted in maintaining and improving a well-functioning international rules-based system, in particular the multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core”.*⁸²

⁷⁸Huang, L. (2023, November 16). *Climate Migration 101: An Explainer*. Migration Policy Institute. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/climate-migration-101-explainer>.

⁷⁹Dyer, P. (2024, April 19). *Can BRICS Really Drop the Dollar?* Middle East Council on Global Affairs. https://mecouncil.org/blog_posts/can-brics-really-drop-the-dollar/.

⁸⁰Ferchen, M. (2023, March 01). *Does China's Coercive Economic Statecraft Actually Work?* United States Institute of Peace. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/03/does-chinas-coercive-economic-statecraft-actually-work>.

⁸¹Demarais, A. (2022, December 27). *The End of the Age of Sanctions?* Foreign Affairs. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/end-age-sanctions>.

⁸²The White House. (2023, May 20). *G7 Leaders' Statement on Economic Resilience and Economic Security* [Press Release]. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/05/20/g7-leaders-statement-on-economic-resilience-and-economic-security/>.

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4. SECURITY AND RESILIENCE



Europe - The Favorite Target of Russia's Hybrid Actions

PhD. Eng. Stelian TEODORESCU

"You have learned the rules of the game. All you have to do is play better than anyone else ,,"

Albert Einstein

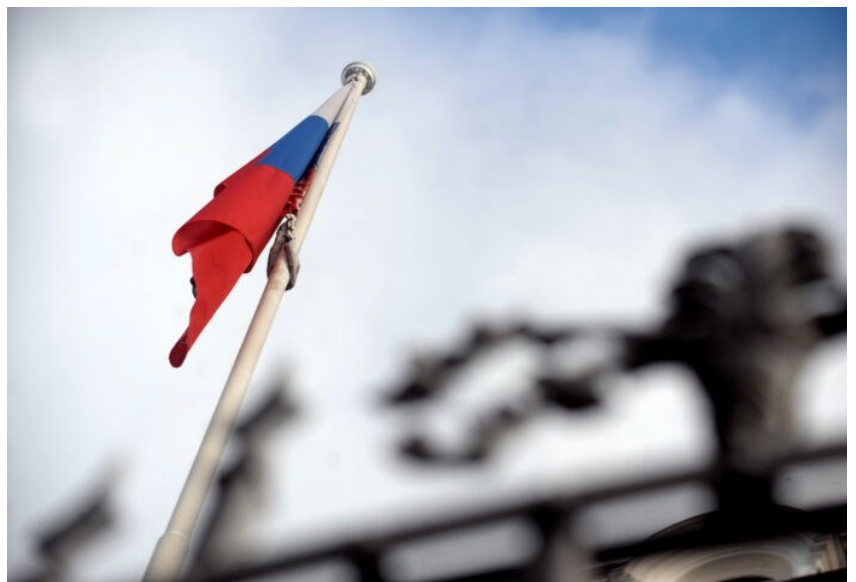
Russia's hybrid actions in Europe carried out alongside the war launched for the invasion of Ukraine, but also its involvement in the management of other regional conflicts such as the one in the Middle East or others in Africa, give rise to significant challenges for regional and global security.

Analyzing the world context generated by political, economic and security developments, we can see that, in the last year, Russia has become increasingly aggressive in using its hybrid tools to give rise to continuous and successive threats, in particular in the Baltic Sea and Black Sea region, but also in other parts of the world. The proximity of the Baltic Sea region's borders to Russia and Belarus, along with various known and unknown connections, creates both vulnerabilities and opportunities for threat detection.

Russia's neighbors are among the states that feel the Kremlin's pressure most acutely. Officials in these states presented their experience dealing with harassment and pledged to be proactive, not reactive. "We talk about hybrid attacks, yes, this is a constant situation for us," Hanno Pevkur, Estonia's 2022 defense minister, told a Politico-Welt event. "We are facing an aggressive country. We are facing consequences, which have much wider impact," Andris Sprūds, the Latvian Minister of Defense from September 15, 2023, said in turn at the same event.

"Simply, the Russians don't attack when you are strong. If you're weak, if you're divided, he can do that," said Laurynas Kasčiūnas, Lithuania's defense minister in March 2024.

Russia uses various tactics, such as disinformation, cyberattacks, psychological pressure, instrumentalized migration, and acts of sabotage, to pressure and destabilize targeted countries, especially NATO members. However, despite an ongoing process, a broad process of resilience and determination to counter such threats, while maintaining internal coherence and vigilance, has begun to consolidate at the NATO level. Effective



Source: <https://bnn-news.com/russias-hybrid-activities-in-europe-sab-analysis-and-predictions-257016>

defense requires strong alliances and proactive measures. However, it can be seen that Russia persists in adjusting and adapting its tactics and testing the reactions of the targeted countries. Therefore, close monitoring, resistance to change in the limits of acceptability, raising awareness and intensifying the process of deterrence are vital for the EU, NATO and all their member states.

It has become very clear that Russia's essential strategy is to wage a "shadow war" against Europe through cyberattacks, disinformation, propaganda, sabotage and other actions specific to this type of war, according to European leaders present at the NATO summit in the US, making it clear it was high time they identified these threats and prepared clear and proactive responses. Significant reactions came from the Estonian Prime Minister appointed in January 2021, Kaja Kallas, who was joined by Czech President Petr Pavel and Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, acknowledging that "there is a war going on in the background", which is clear in all areas, appreciating that "awareness needs to be raised" but that "not sure everyone sees it the same way."

On June 30, at an international level, the process of bringing to the attention of the international public opinion regarding Russia's involvement in the organization and conduct of hybrid operations in EU member states and, of course, NATO members, intensified. When someone tried - and failed - to set fire to a bus garage in Prague in early June 2024, the failed attack didn't attract much attention until Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala revealed it was "highly likely" that Moscow is behind the action.

As expected, the allegation raised alarm among intelligence and security officials and, of course, among governments, as several similar incidents had occurred in Europe in the last months of this year.

The Riga Occupation Museum was targeted in an arson attack in February 2024. A warehouse in London burned in March 2024, and a shopping center in Warsaw caught fire in May 2024. Police in Germany arrested several people suspected of planning attacks using explosive materials and of arson attacks in April 2024, and French authorities launched an anti-terrorism investigation after detaining a suspected bomb maker who was injured in an explosion in early June 2024.

In the same context, several hacking attacks and espionage incidents have been reported in various European countries. At the same time, the EU accused Russia and Belarus of substantially contributing to inducing and controlling migration by pushing asylum seekers from other third countries to the EU's borders. There were also several suspicious attacks on individuals: a Russian defector was found shot dead in Spain, and a Russian opposition figure exiled in Lithuania was brutally attacked with a hammer.

It has become abundantly clear that Russia is behind a series of cyber intrusions, arson attacks and other non-kinetic attacks in Europe this year. For example, the former general of the Czech army, former chairman of the NATO Military Committee and current president of the Czech Republic emphasized that Russia is in a "continuous conflict" with European countries. The tools Moscow uses, he said, are "much cheaper" and "more effective" than bombs and conventional weapons. The Czech Republic was among several European countries that accused Russia, in May 2024, of conducting cyberattacks on their defense and aerospace industries, but also on political parties, Russia denying involvement.

Czech intelligence and security services have accused Russia of being behind the 2014 explosion of an ammunition depot in Vrbetice, with Czech police confirming on April 29 that agents of Russia's military intelligence (GRU) were involved in two explosions at the depot of ammunition in which two workers were killed. In 2021, Prague accused Moscow of involvement in the explosions and expelled several Russian diplomats, at the time Moscow denied any involvement. The Czechs said two Russian men were involved in the blasts, identifying them as Russian nationals who were also accused by Britain of taking part in the 2018 poisoning of former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter.

As a result, it has been clearly concluded that, through its hybrid actions, Russia's purpose is in fact to spread doubt and fear among the European peoples, so that they lose confidence in their institutions and create significant pressure on political and military leaders.

"We need to take active measures to defend ourselves against this kind of war," Petr Pavel added, without specifying what steps Europe should take to become truly proactive. It is no secret that Russia actually started testing its hybrid capabilities in European countries two decades ago. Estonia was one of the first major victims when Russia launched a massive cyberattack in 2007 that blocked websites and paralyzed the country's entire internet infrastructure. Estonia was targeted by "the most extensive cyberattacks of 2007" shortly after it removed a Soviet-era monument in a region with a sizable ethnic Russian majority. The Russian hacking group Killnet claimed responsibility for the attack, saying on its Telegram account that it blocked access to more than 200 Estonian state and private institutions, including an online citizen identification system. Killnet also pointed out that it acted after a Soviet T-34 tank was removed from public exhibitions organized in the

city of Narva in a museum. It is significant to mention here that on August 25, the Russian Embassy in Paris accused the French authorities of “refusing to cooperate” with Moscow following the arrest in France of the owner of the encrypted messaging service Telegram, Pavel Durov, who, among other things, has Russian citizenship. “I immediately asked the French authorities to explain the reasons for his arrest and asked that his rights be protected and that he be granted consular access. To date, the French side has continued to refuse to cooperate on this issue,” the Russian embassy in Paris. According to a source close to the case, French investigators have issued a search warrant against Pavel Durov for various crimes involving his encrypted messaging service, ranging from fraud to drug trafficking, cyberbullying, organized crime, advocacy of terrorism and fraud.

Estonia’s K. Kallas said Russia is getting bolder with each attack, stressing that the issue is being discussed within NATO. Russia “is trying to destabilize us all and is using different measures,” Danish Prime Minister M. Frederiksen said in a conference. She also stressed that the wave of attacks across Europe was not isolated and that countries needed to “take it more seriously”. Leaders must demonstrate “that they are willing to do whatever it takes to defend Europe” from such attacks, Frederiksen said. During a separate panel on the Nordic region, Finnish Defense Minister Antti Hakkanen said in turn that Russia is using new hybrid tools such as migration. Finland closed its long border with Russia last year to stem a flow of migrants from other countries, including Syria. Finland, which joined NATO in 2023, has accused Moscow of trying to destabilize their society by favoring and increasing migration, a claim denied by the Kremlin. “That’s why we need to act quickly and cooperate more closely with all NATO countries”, said A. Hakkanen.

For his part, Swedish Defense Minister Pal Jonson told the Nordic group that countries need to take a “society” approach to defend themselves against Russian hybrid activities, such as develop strong inter-agency cooperation in a common public-private environment. “Ensure that your security services work well in cooperation with the police and military intelligence services. I think it’s really crucial. We need to be able to share information with the private sector in two ways,” Pal Jonson specified in his statements. The three officials, K. Kallas, P. Pavel and M. Frederiksen are among the leaders from all 32 NATO member states who met at the NATO summit in the US to discuss strengthening their collective defense, as well as about new measures to support Ukraine. It had no effect that M Frederiksen also specified that European countries will likely need to spend more than the target of 2% of the gross domestic product on defense each year if they hope to defend themselves against growing global threats, including against aggressive Russia. “I see no sign, no sign in Russia and in Russia’s behavior that they will stop with Ukraine,” Frederiksen said. For his part, P. Pavel also emphasized that NATO must intensify the aid given to Ukraine, so that it can repel the Russian forces. He also said the West may have to accept that parts of Ukrainian territory could be “temporarily occupied” by Russia. However, he also added that, “such a situation should not prevent the continuation of the process of Ukraine’s integration into NATO or the EU and efforts should be made to restore its full sovereignty.” K. Kallas also emphasized that the non-aligned status of Ukraine left it open to Russian attack and demanded that the country be admitted to NATO. “Ukraine has this war because it is in a gray area. My belief is that Ukraine will have to become a member of NATO if we want to get rid of conflicts,” she emphasized.

To the surprise of many analysts, international outlets let know that the Russian government supports and significantly develops educational programs on “hybrid and information warfare” aimed at training Russians to conduct and counter information operations, to use open-sources research methods and effectively analyze and counter hybrid threats to the Kremlin. An ultranationalist Russian milblogger and journalist advertised on July 30, 2024, a six-month training program at the Academy of Political Sciences in Moscow that aims to train Russian professionals to defend and conduct hybrid and information operations. The Russian milblogger who advertised this course on intelligence and hybrid warfare is one of several Russian military-focused journalists listed as professors in the program. The Academy of Political Sciences, in Moscow, said it created this course and several others on “proxy information and intelligence support for information operations” and “proxy information for non-governmental organizations (NGOs)”.

These programs include experts who are current and former employees of the Russian state security agencies, including the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) and Rosgvardia. The Russian government had previously tried to promote similar educational programs on conducting intelligence operations and hybrid warfare at Moscow State University (MGU), although that institution discontinued its master’s program in intelligence and hybrid warfare in December 2023, due to students’ concerns about job prospects and problems in college. In this context, we can appreciate that the Russian government will likely continue its attempts to expand its educational programs on information and hybrid warfare to increase the number of Russian civilian cadres, youth and professionals interested in and capable of conducting information, influence and operations

hybrids against all targets targeted by Russia, whether enemies or allies.

“We are threatened by something that is not a full military attack, these hybrid threats...come with everything from interference in our political processes, undermining trust in our political institutions, disinformation, cyberattacks (...) and sabotage, actions against critical infrastructure,” said NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (who will end his term on 01 October 2024) during an event in Canada in late June 2024. Rod Thornton, Senior Lecturer in defense studies at King’s College, London, pointed out that there was a pattern of attacks linked to Russia. “There has certainly been an increase in recent months in terms of the number of these particular types of operations. It’s something the Russians are looking to step up,” R. Thornton pointed out. Moscow has not claimed responsibility for any of the attacks and did not respond to media requests for comment, but Russian President Vladimir Putin has floated his own view that he sees the war in Ukraine as part of a wider conflict with NATO.

Western officials also remain concerned about Russia’s efforts and actions to influence the upcoming US presidential election. On July 29, media reported that an official from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) warned that various Russian actors are trying to use American citizens to spread propaganda and disinformation about the US presidential election. In this context, Americans have been warned that they should consider that any online content, especially social media, could be foreign propaganda. As a result, Moscow reacted through the Kremlin spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, who denied Russia’s influence operations targeting the US presidential election. But behold, Ukraine’s Kharkiv force group warned on July 30 that Russian actors and Russia’s Federal Security Service (FSB) are increasingly trying to co-opt Ukrainian citizens to spy on Ukrainian forces and carry out sabotage activities in Ukraine. Russian milbloggers recently amplified images that claim to show unspecified actors setting fire to the vehicles of Ukrainian regional recruitment center officials, and claimed that those cases of arson are particularly prevalent in the Odesa region. In such a context, the Russian opposition publication, *Vazhnye Istorii*¹, also reported on July 10 that Russian darkweb sites are advertising jobs for sabotage contracts, burning military jeeps Ukrainian and other military vehicles in Ukraine, for sums between \$1,500-\$2,000. The Kremlin has long been working to develop capabilities to spur violent protests and anti-government activity in Ukraine through informational efforts.

It has become abundantly clear that Russia is increasingly using blackmail and financial incentives to corrupt various vulnerable individuals, a telling example being the German citizens hired to spy for Moscow after its intelligence service dealt with the blow coming from Europe that expelled about 600 Russian diplomats, fact made known by the Germany’s internal security service. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) said that Russian intelligence services are allocating large financial resources to recruit agents in Germany, despite Western attempts to limit their operations since Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine. “Russia is working hard to compensate for the German government’s reduction in the number of Russian agents in Germany,” BfV chief Thomas Haldenwang said during a press conference held to present the agency’s annual report. The BfV pointed out that two German citizens who were charged in August 2023 with high treason for spying for Russia received an estimated amount of 400,000 euros for their services provided for Moscow. “The agent fees show that Russian services continue to have enormous financial resources to pursue their intelligence objectives,” he added in the report. At risk of being targeted by the Russian security services were Germans living in, or regularly traveling to Russia, including German diplomats, who could be easily vulnerable to blackmail attempts. “Once they have compromising information about their targets, these services are not shy about using aggressive recruitment techniques,” they added. NATO reiterated its concerns about Russian espionage and called for tougher action in response to what it said was a campaign of hostile activities, including sabotage and cyberattacks.

A recent decision taken by Hungary to facilitate the entry of Russian and Belarusian citizens onto its territory has sparked criticism within the EU. The leader of the largest political bloc warned that this could open the doors to spies. In a letter to the European Council President Charles Michel, Manfred Weber, the head of the European People’s Party (EPP), said the Hungarian move gave rise to “serious national security concerns”. The “questionable” new rules “create serious loopholes for espionage activities...potentially allowing large numbers of Russians to enter Hungary with minimal oversight, posing a serious risk to national security”. Hungary recently released details of a new fast-track visa system for citizens from eight countries - including Russia and Belarus - without security checks or other restrictions.

¹An independent media organization based in Riga, Latvia. The site produces investigative articles that often tackle difficult and controversial topics. The site also offers training and resources for journalists with skills such as computer programming and data analysis. In 2021, the site was labeled a “foreign agent” by Russia’s Ministry of Justice. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the site was designated an “undesirable organization”.

Budapest said many will be employed to build a nuclear power plant that is under contract with Russia's Rosatom.

Russian citizens do not face the ban to enter the EU and the Schengen area without border control, which also includes Norway and Switzerland, EU member states, if they have a valid visa and have no ties to the Russian president, V. Putin. But Western sanctions in response to Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine include a ban on Russian-owned airlines operating in the EU's airspace, making it more difficult for Russian citizens to travel to the bloc. At the same time, the rules regarding the issuance of work permits are the responsibility of each EU member state. In his letter, M. Weber called on EU leaders "to adopt the strictest measures to immediately protect the integrity of the Schengen area, to limit the security risk that has already arisen and to prevent member states from taking similar initiatives in the future."

Viktor Orbán, long criticized for his friendly ties with V. Putin, faced a new backlash in early July after he went to Moscow to meet the Russian leader following a visit to Kyiv. Holding the rotating six-month presidency of the EU, Viktor Orbán presented his visit as a mission of peace, but EU leaders made it clear that he did not represent them on his travels. Many countries have since refused to send their ministers to the meetings held in Hungary, causing them to be rescheduled to Brussels. Rasa Juknevičienė, MEP and former Lithuanian defense minister, criticized Viktor Orbán's actions in an interview. "Many people are surprised by Hungary's decision, although we shouldn't be, because the actions of Hungary and Viktor Orbán have destroyed the EU from within," she stressed. "But our patience will run out sooner or later." Although many hope that Hungary's government will change through a democratic process, "until then no one wants to expel the entire Hungarian nation from the EU," she added. During Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine, Viktor Orbán broke with other EU leaders by refusing to provide Kiev with weapons to defend against Russian forces, and delayed but also watered down or blocked efforts to send financial aid to Kiev and to impose sanctions on Moscow. The EU's longest-serving leader, Viktor Orbán has become an icon for some conservative populists for his staunch opposition to immigration. He has also cracked down on Hungary's media and judiciary, and has been accused by the EU of violating standards of the rule of law and democracy.

By now, it has become abundantly clear that with each increase in Western aid to Ukraine – whether through new arms deliveries or the imposition of new sanctions against Russia – the Kremlin has stepped up its response. R. Thornton emphasized that Moscow is resorting to a campaign of sabotage as an alternative to an all-out war with NATO, which would be disastrous for Russia as Russian leaders have very likely realized. "It has long been part of Russia's military doctrine to try to avoid a possible confrontation with NATO directly on the battlefield, because they know they will lose in front of the NATO forces", said R. Thornton. In such a context, what the Russians find more useful for them is to undertake various diplomatic actions and covert subversive actions due to the fears generated by the need to deal with a possible activation of Article 5 at the NATO level.

Article 5 is the fundamental principle that an attack on one NATO member state is an attack on all member states of the Alliance. It was invoked only once – after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the US planned and carried out by Al Qaeda. R. Thornton also said that by deliberately maintaining his actions below the threshold of armed conflict, Russia hopes to produce a significant split within NATO, as they believe there is no clear plan on how to act. As is well known, the decision-making process at NATO level works and is put into practice only when consensus is achieved. As a result, we can unreservedly state that Russia's main objective now is to disrupt the decision-making process regarding Western military aid flows to Ukraine in the long term and to undermine unity and consensus within the Alliance. In the same context, we can appreciate that there is also a major, long-term risk, according to which Russia could prepare for a more direct confrontation with NATO, these disinformation, hybrid operations, sabotage and, implicitly, propaganda actions against NATO, being in tandem with its attempts to improve its conventional military capabilities, but especially to prepare its nuclear capabilities for a potential future conflict with NATO. We express this point of view especially in the current context in which Moscow seems to have been very surprised by the lightning operations carried out by the Ukrainian military forces right on the territory of Russia.

Russia watchers say Moscow has been beefing up its hybrid warfare units for years. The most obvious sign of this, they say, was the promotion of a notorious spy commander, Andrei Averianov, to the top ranks of the GRU in 2020. A. Averianov allegedly oversaw the 2018 poisoning with Novichok (a first-generation neurotoxin IVa) of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury, England, and the 2014 explosion at a munitions depot in the Czech Republic, which killed two people and was mentioned earlier. Now deputy head of the GRU, he is wanted in the Czech Republic for his role in the explosion in the town of Vrhetice. Russia has repeatedly denied its involvement in both events. "He was previously the head of unit 29155, which is known for its

participation in the Salisbury attack, they tried to organize that coup in Montenegro, they had operations to destabilize Moldova and North Macedonia,” said Oleksandr Danylyuk², an associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, a UK defense and security think-tank, and a former Ukrainian defense and foreign intelligence official. “His promotion and the creation of a new special operations division that has new powers to recruit its own assets ... is a very strong indicator that Russia is trying to expand its capabilities,” he added. “At the moment most of these people are just proxies paid by the GRU, they are not trained to do these types of operations, they could be seen as a testing mechanism by the Russians to see where the Western weaknesses are in critical national infrastructures”, O. Danylyuk also said. Five people have been charged in connection with the London arson attack – four of them were in their 20s and at least one was accused of being paid to participate in the attack. The German Federal Prosecutor’s Office said the people who were arrested on suspicion of planning arson attacks and explosions on Russia’s behalf were “in contact” with Russian security officials, rather than being spies themselves. In Poland, a man arrested for spying and plotting the assassination of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was also a local citizen.

O. Danylyuk also said that the Russian security apparatus is not shy about using criminals to do its dirty work, exploiting its connections with international organized crime. “What’s actually very dangerous and disturbing is that they use these networks, plus a lot of potentially violent organizations, radical groups, far-right groups, far-left groups,” he added.

We can say that most of the attacks produced and analyzed so far have been classified as relatively minor, which suggests that Russia’s main goal is not to cause the greatest possible damage but rather to induce and spread fear in the ranks of the populations of various target states. “The goal is to affect the will of citizens and the support for Ukraine. If you were living peacefully in your country and suddenly you have a series of terrorist attacks, and all of this is attributed to the fact that your country supports Ukraine, that puts pressure on your support for Ukraine,” said Olga Lautman, a security researcher specializing in organized crime and intelligence operations from Russia. Many of the attacks are accompanied by a disinformation campaign designed to undermine all evidence of Russian culpability, as various researchers have suggested. That’s a lot of what happened after the failed arson attack in Prague, according to research from Czech Elves, a group of volunteer activists who monitor, analyze and fight disinformation campaigns appearing on the Czech internet. The group said, however, that the disinformation campaigns it monitored sought to trivialize the attacks and discredit the Czech government. One narrative tried to portray Fiala’s accusation that Russia was behind the fire as an attempt to distract from the government’s poor showing in the European Parliament elections. Others played down the facts, saying the attack “only” affected a few buses. Disinformation campaigns seem to go hand in hand with cyberattacks. Several countries in Europe have suffered major hacks in recent months. Authorities in Finland and Estonia said the GPS signal was regularly jammed, causing flight disruptions. Several French government departments suffered what the French described as a “massive cyberattack”, with a blood testing laboratory serving several hospitals in England becoming the target of a ransomware attack. However, Thornton said these incidents are likely just the beginning. “What Russian cyber operators are doing now is testing the weaknesses of cyber security systems, planting malware, finding out where and how to attack without doing it now,” he said. “They will wait for the big day when they need them.”

NATO has warned for months about Russia’s unconventional attacks on the West, saying Moscow is using espionage, cyberattacks, election interference, disinformation and sabotage to try to destabilize the alliance and affect its decision-making. In this context, it should not be overlooked that, until recently, European leaders have sometimes not been so firm, and at other times they have faced different points of view and lack of consensus.

“Russia has always been antagonistic to the West,” said R. Thornton. “The idea that the West is a threat, that the West wants to destroy Russia, to make Russia a smaller state, a weak state ... so whoever you put in power in the Kremlin will be with this mentality that the West is essentially the enemy.” The current hatred of the current leadership in Moscow stems in part from the events after the fall of the Soviet Union in the

²Oleksandr V. Danylyuk has cooperated closely with Ukrainian government structures in the defense, security and intelligence sectors for many years. In 2014, he was chief adviser to the Minister of Defense of Ukraine. Later, he was a special adviser to the head of the Foreign Intelligence Service of Ukraine, assistant to the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and for many years he was also a member of the Parliamentary Working Group on Combating Hybrid Threats. In recent years, he was the coordinator of the Ukraine-NATO platform for the early detection and countering of hybrid threats.

early 1990s, when Russia should not forget that it had to be bailed out by the West after its economy collapsed. The idea that Russia's aggression will end after the change of leaders in the Kremlin is highly unlikely, saying that successive leaders will continue to see the West as an enemy until the country abandons the idea of Russian imperialism - a process that will not happen easily.

Russia's malign hybrid activities in NATO countries are a source of deep concern, the presidents of Romania, Poland and Latvia said in a statement coinciding with a meeting of the alliance's eastern members within the B9 Group of NATO states. Countries on NATO's eastern flank say Russia is using tactics ranging from sabotage and cyberattacks to illegal migration to destabilize them because of its support for Ukraine. Russia has repeatedly denied accusations that it is behind such activities. "We are deeply concerned about Russia's recent malign hybrid activities on allied territory, which pose a threat to allied security," the presidents said in their joint statement. "We will act individually and collectively to address these actions, increase our resilience, and continue to coordinate closely to ensure that the Alliance and allies are prepared to deter and defend against hybrid actions or attacks." Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said on June 11 that 10 people had been arrested in Poland in recent times for acts of sabotage.

As a result of the actions implemented by Russia in various countries, especially European ones, at the international level it was natural to ask the question: Are we facing a new wave of terrorism? The answer is clear that we are not witnessing a new wave of terrorism but rather some "apparently random attacks" that are part of "Russia's hybrid war against the West" as the same conclusion was reached in the international media space. The main aim is to "weaken Western resolve to support Ukraine and undermine unity in the West", such a development giving rise to a major challenge for NATO, the attacks cannot be ignored as well as accelerating the process of substantial preparation to deal with them, but especially to prevent or counteract them. It seems that the key question that has arisen is how to discover Russia's possible intentions and how to respond to them without triggering a major regional or global conflict. There are no guidelines on how to respond to such "gray zone" attacks that fall short of full-scale war, which is why European officials are very cautious. "Russia is throwing us new challenges all the time, new risks," said one diplomat, and "the hybrid war has turned into one of the most serious for the Alliance."

In this context, American intelligence structures in collaboration with those of other European states have laid the foundations for real-time provision of valuable information to European counterparts to prevent or counter possible hybrid actions whose targets are NATO states. Norwegian officials, for example, recently issued a warning that attacks could target companies that supply arms to Ukraine. This escalation makes war even more dangerous for the whole world. "The danger of a misstep is getting worse." The sabotage "is designed to damage Europe's confidence and instill caution through fear." But this is not new, with Russia having a long history – long before the invasion of Ukraine – of supporting violent attacks that do not quite approach the brink of war: in 2011, for example, Russian intelligence units were linked to an explosion of a weapons depot in Bulgaria. Such a wave of hybrid attacks is a sign of the Kremlin's desire to "put pressure on the West to curtail and limit its own involvement in the war in Ukraine" or elsewhere in the world, Russia and several other states having the well-known objective of creating a new world order.

We must not ignore the fact that, inexplicable incidents – arson, rail derailments and GPS jamming have occurred on – or sometimes over – the territory of the Alliance, whose expansion and support for Kiev against Russian aggression has angered Moscow. NATO members have failed to curb so-called "grey zone" attacks, often linked to Russian GRU military intelligence structures. "There has been a lot of talk but little NATO action to deal with this problem," said John Foreman, a former British defense attaché in Moscow and Kiev. "Allies do not agree on the nature and extent of the threat, nor on what to do." He noted how a NATO Parliamentary Assembly proposal for a NATO Center for Democratic Resilience was rejected by Alliance members, highlighting a lack of preparedness against Moscow's attempts to divide the West. Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said in May 2024 that claims of Russia's involvement in such incidents "are completely baseless, and we decisively reject them all." J. Foreman says Moscow has waged a campaign of political warfare against the West for nearly two decades, which also involves political interference, threats, disinformation, espionage, cyberattacks and assassinations. Despite "ample evidence of the scale and ambition of Russian unconventional operations, NATO members have been unwilling to address the issue, focusing on the Russian conventional military threat," J. Foreman added. Police in NATO's newest member, Sweden, are investigating repeated rail derailments. An increase in GPS jamming over the Baltic Sea has prompted Finnair, the national carrier of the second newest member of the Alliance, to suspend flights to Tartu (city in southern Estonia). Fires at a scrap metal factory in Hamburg, a pharmaceutical company in Copenhagen and a shopping mall in Warsaw are among the recent incidents that created distress, but also plausible deniability behind their cause and failure to meet the criteria for a collective response under Article 5. We can say that they are some

of the issues that the cause some concerns for the Alliance. As Latvian President Edgars Rinkēvičs stated, NATO will not attack Russia with missiles “because of a rather small incident”. Daniela Richterova, a senior lecturer in the Department of War Studies at King’s College London, said Moscow’s targets were similar to those of the Cold War. “Since the 1960s, Moscow, Prague and East Berlin have planned and in some cases carried out attacks against NATO member states,” she told the media. “We have evidence of detailed plans against critical infrastructure, weapons depots and security infrastructure in France, Germany, Austria. What I don’t think we’ve seen before, but what was part of Soviet Bloc doctrine, is targeting what the KGB and other Soviet Bloc services called political, security and intelligence facilities and infrastructure.”

The US State Secretary, Antony Blinken said that “hybrid attacks against frontline states” were a focus for NATO foreign ministers when they met in Prague in May 2024. He said that “we will respond both individually and collectively,” without giving further details. What form this might take is unclear, especially given the asymmetric nature of the targets, which are often unrelated to Ukraine. The Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavský said restricting the visas of Russian diplomats to stop travel outside where they are accredited could be an option. “Increased oversight and restrictions on diplomats could be part of the solution,” said J. Foreman, who believes there must be coordinated punishments such as sanctions, visa restrictions and deportations, “otherwise the threat will endure.” Roger Hilton, a defense researcher at Slovakia-based think tank GLOBSEC, said the concerns expressed by NATO foreign ministers in Prague last month were the biggest collective acknowledgment yet of Russia’s activities in the hyperzone gray. “Publicly announcing these incidents with attribution is the first step in responding to these threats, where more solutions around building higher levels of resilience and social media literacy take longer to bear fruit,” said R. Hilton. NATO may also consider “restricting the movement of Russian diplomats, increasing surveillance of potential critical national infrastructure targets and increasing cyber defenses,” he added. “Until some of these policies are implemented at the national level, Russia’s increased asymmetric tactics will give them a clear advantage in causing disruption and strategic distraction for policymakers,” Hilton said.

Russia is also exploiting specific systemic vulnerabilities in various European countries. In the Baltic States, for example, they recruit and use agents from the local Russian-speaking population. In Poland and other European states where the Russian population is small, it targeted newly arrived Ukrainians. Russia also exploits knowledge of national laws and procedures. He began using instrumentalized migration pressure against Finland, which had previously taken a more liberal approach to asylum seekers before closing its eastern border. Despite Russia’s increasing efforts, its tactics have yet to yield significant results, as hybrid influence efforts require more fertile ground to be effective, but this is diminishing day by day in the context of emerging perceptions at international level regarding the positions adopted by Russia concerning various regional developments where wars have broken out. Societies in the countries of the world are increasingly aware of the threat Russian influence operations pose and have developed a certain immunity to them. Both the strong political and social consensus and the defense and security consensus of all NATO states to resist Russian aggression and support Ukraine contribute greatly to their defense. The states’ homeland security authorities have also demonstrated their resolve in preventing and stopping the threats of hybrid attacks. Russia currently lacks significant leverage over the domestic politics of the countries under study, as its influence is limited to marginal numbers due to its toxic reputation among the majority of the world’s population. Since Finland joined NATO in 2023, all countries studied are members of the Alliance, and NATO’s overall conventional defense posture in the region has been strengthened accordingly. The decoupling from Russia in all spheres of life in recent years has made the significant decrease possible of the lever on which this could exercise it.

In conclusion, we can say that the hybrid threat activities that Russia has launched especially in Europe in parallel with the invasion of Ukraine generate numerous challenges for the regional and international order and security, as well as for the European security architecture. Recently, it can be seen that Russia has become more aggressive towards the West in general, but especially towards the NATO member states that are near its borders. We can appreciate that their geographical proximity to Russia and the various types of ties they have had with Moscow offer very troubling avenues of hostile exploitation. As a result, Russia uses a variety of tools to pressure and destabilize these nations with the goal of exploiting points of friction, sowing fear, and undermining societal resilience. Russia’s hybrid threat actions now include surprise, bold, and far more frequent activities, all part of a hybrid war in Europe.

4. SECURITY AND RESILIENCE



The Conflicting Mentality of the Leadership in Pristina and Belgrade From Dialogue to Nationalism

Mona AGRIGOROAIEI

When I thought of writing this topic, I wanted to summarize the previous events in which Albin Kurti (prime minister of Kosovo) and Aleksandar Vučić (president of Serbia) showed intransigence in the relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

But I will also do a detailed analysis of an ongoing event with relevance to the relations between Kosovo and Serbia - on the one hand, and Kosovo and the international community on the other.

In fact, the behavior of “waving a stick through the neighbor’s fence” has manifested itself several times throughout the tenure of Kurti and Vučić. The license plates, the resignation of the Lista Srpska party from the parliament and local institutions (which were offered and reserved for Serbs by the Constitution), the tensions in North Mitrovica and other towns in northern Kosovo, which led to the injury of some KFOR soldiers last year, the Serbian attack in Banjska - all this is part of the turbulent series of actions and counter-actions, statements and counter-statements between Kurti and Vučić. With the exception of the armed incident in Banjska, an attempted attack by a Serbian nationalist group, led by Milan Radojčić, against Kosovo’s institutions, all counter-reactions between Kosovo and Serbia were at the declarative level.

Nationalism (or false nationalism, as the case may be) has often reached alarming heights. There is no question of dialogue anymore, there is no question of respecting the framework agreement from Ohrid (concluded informally last year between Kurti and Vučić). The international community has made significant efforts in recent years for dialogue and normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia, but efforts have been somewhat futile in recent years.

Why this worsening of relations between Pristina and Belgrade? Being in a permanent pre-election campaign, Kurti continuously finds new topics of discussion and argument, through which he appears as a patriot, a nationalist in front of the Albanian electorate in Kosovo. At the same time, a nationalist attitude suits Vučić too, especially in front of young Serbs, who, according to a survey, 31.7% would like the start of a new war between Serbia and Kosovo so they could fight. Thus, when Kurti comes up with a topic that



Source: <https://faktormagazin.ba/vijesti/region/prijedlog-u-deset-tacaka-srbija-i-kosovo-fakticki-dvije-drzave-sta-ce-uraditi-vucic/>

could be considered a contentious topic, Vučić stirs up spirits even more with destabilizing actions. All this is against the background of the friendly relations between Russia and Serbia, proven by the last visit of Aleksandar Vulin (former director of the BIA, the Serbian intelligence service and the current deputy prime minister of Serbia) to Moscow, where he met, among others, with Lavrov.

We are 100% certain that it would be great for Russia to have a new conflict in the Balkans, however the one that stirs the waters the most seems to be not necessarily Vučić, but Kurti! For what reasons?

In addition to the pre-election, it must be said that Albin Kurti, former student leader in the 90s of the last century, built his political career on nationalist ideas, such as the unification of Kosovo with Albania. After his release from prison by Serbia through the amnesty granted by former President Vojislav Koštunica, Kurti began his long non-governmental activity through the Kosovo Action Network (KAN), and then Lëvizja Vetëvendosje! (The Self-Determination Movement!), then became a political party. Kurti tried to win followers in Albania (without success), but also in North Macedonia (in the last elections of this year), aligning himself in interesting circumstances, with the nationalist parties of the Albanian opposition - the VLEN coalition - and the Macedonian - VMRO (pro-Russian party; its former leader Gruevski, moreover, obtained political asylum in Hungary, one of Russia's controversial allies). ***We will state regarding this that in the Western Balkans there is no black and white, but shades of grey, more or less dark...***

On the other hand, Vučić was, during the time of Slobodan Milošević, Minister of Propaganda and cannot think otherwise than a nationalist. Faced with violent protests, first due to election fraud in the last elections in Serbia and then as a result of the deal with Germany on lithium mines, Vučić also likes nationalism a lot. Thus, their mentality is one of confrontation, not cooperation, although "evil mouths" would say that the two agreed to maintain these appearances in order to create a conflict that would suit Russia, in the Western Balkans.

* * *

But let's refer to the most recent situation that proves this conflicting mentality of the two leaders, who have become "deaf and blind" when there is talk from Brussels and Washington about the normalization of relations. We could say that there has not been a de facto normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia during the last years, but a normalization that, pathologically speaking, risks making the region even sicker with a new armed confrontation.

Thus, the last topic of conflict is unfolding in front of us these days - the topic of opening the bridge between South and North Mitrovica. The topic was debated (as usual) by Kurti about a month ago.

A symbol of division and a place of tension, these are just two of the ways of the main bridge over the Ibar River, which divides Mitrovica into two municipalities. For some, its opening is both symbolic and purely political, as citizens find an alternative ways to get from one area to another.

Discussions about the bridge have been updated in recent weeks after a request was made in the North Mitrovica Municipal Assembly that the bridge be fully opened to traffic. The President of the North Mitrovica Municipal Assembly, Nexhad Uglanin, said that the implementation of the decision on the bridge issue belongs to the central authorities and security institutions. Officials of this Assembly even said that the opening of the bridge is also under the jurisdiction of South Mitrovica and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) peacekeeping mission in Kosovo, KFOR.

The timeline of events related to the bridge is as follows:

- After the war of 1998/99, this bridge divided the city of Mitrovica into the southern part, with an Albanian majority, and the northern part, with a Serbian majority.
- Ahtisaari's plan – the basis on which Kosovo declared independence in 2008 – called for Mitrovica to be split into two separate districts.
- In 2011, Serbian locals set up the first barricades there to protest the expansion of the Kosovo authorities.
- In 2013, North Mitrovica was formed under Kosovo laws.
- In 2014, the barricades were replaced with concrete blocks and trees. The new landscape was named "Peace Park". Also that year, Kosovo and Serbia reached an agreement in Brussels to remove the barricades and revitalize the bridge.
- In 2015, the Peace Park was removed, with the idea of opening the bridge for traffic.
- In 2016, the parties in Brussels agreed on a plan to implement the agreement on the bridge.
- The revitalization of the bridge was completed by the European Union (EU) in 2018 and cost

approximately 1.5 million euros.

Currently, the bridge remains open to pedestrians, but not to vehicles. Another problem regarding the opening of the bridge was the context related to the borders between the communes (the communes in Kosovo are territorial administrative divisions like our counties).

Back to current events, Kurti and Vučić chose the same recipe as before, bypassing any sharp reaction coming from the international community. Thus, the EU, KFOR and the American State Department issued countless statements, asking Kurti to bring the topic up for discussion on the dialogue table in Brussels and not to make a new unilateral decision. Faced with Kurti's intransigence, the EU threatened Kosovo with new sanctions, saying at the same time that "if it does not listen to its friends, Kosovo will remain alone and behind".

The US has also asked the Kurti government to discuss the issue of opening the bridge over the Ibar River in the dialogue, which is being mediated by the European Union." A State Department spokesman told VOA that the US does not support "any move to change the current status of the Mitrovica bridge at this time. Opening the bridge to vehicular traffic now increases the potential for violence and endangers the local population as well as KFOR soldiers – including Americans – who work to uphold peace and security in Kosovo," the State Department spokesman said in a statement.

We do not know how events will unfold, but it seems that in the coming days and months, especially after the visit of the head of the CIA to Kosovo, the topic will be kept quiet. A change in Kurti's behavior has already been noted: after this visit of the CIA Director to Kosovo, Kurti stopped making any comments on the disputed subject.

Burns' visit to the Balkans sent clear messages to end any unilateral actions and resume coordination between Kosovo and Serbia with the international community. The two leaders must give up their conflict mentality, although personally, I do not see the dialogue being revitalized until after the elections in Kosovo (set for February 9, 2025) The international community holds and must hold the reins in the string, although the "ruddy horses" would want to collide again And this is to be appreciated, because, in a global context, we live in a new world of regional tensions and conflicts, which risk becoming generalized.

4. SECURITY AND RESILIENCE



Breaking Free, African Nations Forge New Paths, Rejecting French Influence, Is It Justified?

Momodou Ted McEwan (Great Britain)

In recent years, a seismic shift has unfolded across Africa as several nations actively dismantle the lingering grip of French influence. This movement, led by countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, marks a deliberate and bold recalibration of their geopolitical stance. By ousting French troops and dismantling decades old systems of neo-colonial control, these nations are not merely reacting to external pressures but are actively redefining their sovereignty. This awakening represents an assertion of national identity and a determined pursuit of self-determination, free from the spectre of colonial domination.

This rejection is not just symbolic it signals a profound realignment in Africa's international relations. As these countries sever ties with France, they are broadening their horizons by forming alliances with emerging powers like Russia and China. The shift embodies a strategic pivot away from dependency on Western structures and towards a multipolar world where African interests take centre stage. Exploring the motivations and historical roots of this movement reveals a determined effort to reclaim agency, challenging systems that have hindered the continent's progress for far too long. For Africa, this marks a crucial step in redefining its future on its own terms, signalling the start of a more empowered and autonomous era.

To grasp the current upheaval, one must understand the roots of French neo-colonialism in Africa. Even after formal decolonization in the mid-20th century, France maintained a stronghold in its former colonies through a system known as "Françafrique." This intricate web of economic, political, and military agreements ensured that Paris remained deeply entrenched in Africa's affairs, sustaining a neo-colonial order that allowed France to exploit the continent's resources while dictating political outcomes. Under this system, African leaders who aligned with French interests were rewarded with financial aid, military protection, and political legitimacy, while those resisting French control faced coups, assassinations, or debilitating sanctions. The CFA franc imposed on 14 African nations and controlled by the French Treasury



Source: <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/08/09/african-nations-to-shake-off-neo-colonialism/>

exemplified France's economic stranglehold, severely curtailing the financial independence of its former colonies and tethering them to Paris's economic dictates.

This system also allowed French corporations to extract vast wealth from Africa's natural resources, benefiting from lucrative contracts while local populations saw minimal returns. The deep-rooted economic exploitation was bolstered by political interference, with France often playing the role of kingmaker, ensuring that only governments loyal to its interests would thrive. Decades of such dominance stunted Africa's economic growth, sowed political instability, and entrenched cycles of poverty. The present movement to sever French ties is not a recent development but rather the culmination of decades of built-up frustration, anger, and disillusionment with a system that has long undermined the continent's potential.

The current wave of anti-French sentiment stems from a mix of historical grievances and contemporary frustrations, underscored by a desire for a future unshackled from neo-colonial chains. For many African nations, the unmet promises of development under French influence have become all too clear. Decades of reliance on Paris for economic and military support have only deepened poverty, entrenched corruption, and perpetuated reliance on single-commodity economies.

The continued presence of French military forces, particularly in regions like the Sahel, has exacerbated tensions. Ostensibly stationed to fight terrorism, these troops have been increasingly viewed as ineffective and self-serving, more focused on preserving France's strategic interests than genuinely addressing security threats. This perception has fuelled demands for their expulsion, as African countries grow increasingly resentful of what they see as veiled attempts to maintain neo-colonial control under the guise of counterterrorism.

Beyond the economic and security spheres, the movement to reject French influence is a broader assertion of true sovereignty and cultural autonomy. More and more African leaders are exploring partnerships with non-Western powers such as Russia and China, which offer military and economic support without the baggage of colonial history. These alliances are not only pragmatic but also deeply symbolic, representing a deliberate break from the Western-dominated order and a step toward a multipolar world where African interests are prioritized.

As African nations distance themselves from France, they are crafting new alliances that are reshaping the continent's geopolitical landscape. The expulsion of French troops from countries like Mali and Burkina Faso has opened the door to new security arrangements, with Russia's Wagner Group stepping into the void. While Wagner's presence raises significant concerns, including potential human rights abuses and the destabilization of fragile regions, it reflects a broader trend as African nations are diversifying their security partnerships and reducing dependency on traditional Western powers.

Economically, this shift away from France has opened new avenues for trade and investment, particularly with China. Beijing has been quick to capitalize on these realignments, offering infrastructure investments, loans, and trade deals that present a stark alternative to Western-led economic frameworks. Although questions remain about the sustainability of Chinese investments, the growing inclination to diversify economic partnerships signals a significant reorientation away from reliance on former colonial powers. For many African countries, this presents an opportunity to break the cycle of underdevelopment and build more resilient economies rooted in diversified growth.

The rejection of French influence also mirrors a deeper quest for political and cultural sovereignty. By reasserting control over their political systems and rejecting external interference, African nations are laying the groundwork for more stable and responsive governance. This trend is increasingly evident as more leaders challenge the status quo, pursuing policies that align with national interests rather than the dictates of foreign powers.

Culturally, the movement is equally profound. For centuries, African identities have been overshadowed by colonial narratives that devalued local cultures, languages, and knowledge systems. Reclaiming sovereignty means revitalizing these indigenous systems, promoting African languages, and fostering intellectual independence. This cultural resurgence is integral to the broader struggle for a future where African nations can define their own paths, drawing from their rich heritage while engaging on equal terms with the rest of the world.

The momentum generated by countries rejecting French dominance is inspiring similar movements across the continent. Even traditionally pro-France nations like Senegal and Ivory Coast are beginning to re-evaluate their relationships with Paris, exploring alternative partnerships that better align with their national interests. This growing trend towards diversification reflects a broader realization that true independence requires breaking free from the constraints of neo-colonialism and forging relationships that respect African agency.

This shift is not without risks, as new alliances bring their own sets of challenges and potential dependencies. Yet, the determination to pursue sovereignty is resolute, driven by the conviction that Africa's future should be shaped by Africans. By breaking free from these constraints, nations can implement development strategies that are more aligned with their unique contexts and aspirations.

The ongoing movement against French influence is more than justified, it is necessary, urgent step toward the empowerment of the African continent. For far too long, Africa's potential has been stifled by neo-colonial systems that perpetuated dependency and underdevelopment. As African nations take control of their own destinies, they are not just rejecting external domination, they are charting new courses toward self-determination, sovereignty, and dignity.

This struggle is emblematic of a larger global shift towards multi-polarity, where Africa is poised to play a more assertive role. The rejection of French influence marks the beginning of a new chapter where African nations determine their futures on their terms, free from external dictates. As they continue to redefine their sovereignty and engage with the world from a position of strength, they are laying the foundation for a more empowered, prosperous, and independent Africa.

In an era still haunted by the remnants of colonialism, the determination of these African nations to break free represents a powerful stand for freedom, justice, and self-determination. Their bold defiance sends a clear message: the days of passive acquiescence are over, and the future of Africa will be written by Africans themselves.

In the next issue, we will explore the other side of this picture, diving into the responsibilities and challenges that West African nations themselves face. From internal governance issues to regional stability and economic management, these factors also shape the future of the continent. The conversation doesn't end here but true sovereignty involves not just breaking free from external control, but also addressing the internal dynamics that influence Africa's path forward. Stay tuned as we continue to unpack these crucial aspects in our upcoming analysis.

5. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



Artificial Intelligence Integration and Its Economic Impact on Productivity and Workforce Transformation

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration is rapidly transforming the economic landscape, particularly within modern enterprises. This paper explores the economic impact of AI on productivity and workforce dynamics. By automating routine tasks and enhancing decision-making processes, AI has the potential to significantly boost productivity across various sectors. However, this integration also presents challenges, particularly in terms of workforce transformation. The displacement of certain job categories and the demand for new skill sets are reshaping labor markets, necessitating adaptive strategies for both businesses and employees. This study analyzes the dual effects of AI and its capacity to drive efficiency and innovation while simultaneously disrupting traditional employment structures. Through a comprehensive review of current literature and case studies from leading industries, the paper examines the extent to which AI contributes to economic growth and the strategies enterprises are employing to manage workforce transitions. The findings highlight the importance of strategic planning in AI adoption, emphasizing the need for policies that support retraining and reskilling programs to mitigate potential negative impacts on employment. Ultimately, this paper argues that while AI integration offers significant economic benefits, careful consideration of its implications on the workforce is crucial for sustainable development.



Source: <https://www.capacitymedia.com/article/2bvwbw79mddqf36pbxmo0/news/ai-economy-boost-will-outweigh-hit-of-job-losses-google-report-says>

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Economic Impact, Productivity, Workforce Transformation, Automation, Employment Dynamics

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly become a pivotal force in shaping the modern economy, significantly influencing productivity and workforce dynamics. As a technology that extends beyond simple automation, AI encompasses a broad spectrum of capabilities, including data processing, machine learning, and decision-making, all of which are crucial in enhancing business efficiency and driving economic growth.

In the contemporary economic landscape, AI serves as a catalyst for innovation and efficiency. By integrating AI into business operations, companies can optimize processes, reduce operational costs, and enhance decision-making capabilities, which collectively contribute to increased productivity. For instance, AI's ability to analyze vast amounts of data in real-time allows businesses to make more informed decisions, improving overall efficiency and competitiveness (Mueller, 2006). Moreover, AI-driven automation has the potential to revolutionize industries by streamlining operations, from supply chain management to customer service, thereby enabling companies to scale rapidly and effectively (Nakatani, 2021).

However, the integration of AI into the economy is not without its challenges, particularly regarding its impact on the workforce. The automation of routine and repetitive tasks through AI has led to significant shifts in employment patterns, with certain job roles being phased out while new ones emerge. This transition necessitates a comprehensive approach to workforce management, including reskilling and upskilling initiatives to prepare workers for the evolving job market. The displacement of jobs due to AI poses a critical challenge, particularly in industries heavily reliant on manual or routine tasks. This has led to growing concerns about technological unemployment and the need for policies that support workforce adaptation (Berman et al., 2020).

Moreover, the broader economic implications of AI integration extend beyond productivity gains. AI's influence on economic structures necessitates a reevaluation of existing economic models and policies. The technology's ability to disrupt traditional industries and create new market dynamics requires a proactive approach to economic planning and policy-making. As AI continues to evolve, it is imperative that businesses and policymakers work together to harness its potential while mitigating the risks associated with workforce displacement and economic inequality (Raj & Seamans, 2019).

AI's integration into the modern economy presents both significant opportunities and challenges. While its potential to drive productivity and economic growth is undeniable, the accompanying workforce transformation requires careful management to ensure that the benefits of AI are broadly shared. As such, understanding the dual impact of AI on productivity and employment is crucial for developing strategies that promote sustainable economic development in the age of AI.

Research Questions:

- How does AI integration affect productivity in various industries?
- What are the implications of AI on workforce dynamics?
- What strategies can mitigate the negative effects on employment?

Objectives:

- To assess the economic impact of AI on productivity.
- To analyze workforce transformations resulting from AI integration.
- To propose strategies for managing workforce transitions in AI-driven environments.

Literature Review:

Overview of Relevant Economic Theories on Technology and Productivity:

The relationship between technological advancements and economic productivity has been a focal point of economic theory for decades. One of the central theories in this domain is the concept of *General Purpose Technologies* (GPTs), which are innovations that have broad applicability and can lead to widespread economic changes. Artificial Intelligence (AI), like previous GPTs such as electricity and the internet, has the potential to transform multiple sectors, driving productivity gains across the economy. The economic theory underlying GPTs suggests that these technologies can lead to substantial increases in productivity by enabling new methods of production, reducing costs, and fostering innovation (Author et al., 2023).

In the context of AI, productivity gains are primarily realized through two channels: enhanced efficiency in existing processes and the acceleration of innovation. For instance, AI can improve the efficiency of cognitive tasks, which make up a significant portion of economic activities in knowledge-based industries. By optimizing these tasks, AI not only boosts current productivity levels but also accelerates the rate of technological progress, leading to long-term economic growth (Brookings Institution, 2023).

Workforce Transformation Theories:

The integration of AI into the workforce also necessitates a consideration of theories related to labor economics, particularly those addressing workforce transformation. As AI and automation technologies become more prevalent, they are expected to cause significant shifts in employment patterns. Theories of technological unemployment suggest that while AI may displace certain job roles, particularly those involving routine tasks, it also creates opportunities for new types of employment that require advanced skills (OECD, 2021).

One critical aspect of workforce transformation is the concept of *skill-biased technological change* (SBTC), which posits that technological advancements tend to favor workers with higher skill levels, thereby increasing demand for skilled labor, while reducing demand for unskilled labor. This shift can lead to wage polarization and increased inequality if appropriate measures are not taken to reskill and upskill the workforce (IMF, 2023). Furthermore, the dynamic nature of AI means that ongoing adaptation and continuous learning will be essential for workers to remain relevant in an increasingly automated job market.

In summary, the integration of AI into various sectors has profound implications for both productivity and workforce dynamics. Theories of GPTs and SBTC provide a framework for understanding these impacts, highlighting the need for strategic interventions to maximize the benefits of AI while mitigating its potential negative effects on employment.

Current Research:

Summary of Existing Studies on AI's Impact on Productivity:

Recent studies have increasingly focused on quantifying the impact of AI on productivity across various industries. One of the key findings in this area is that AI, as a general-purpose technology, significantly enhances productivity by optimizing both cognitive and physical tasks. A study by Author et al. (2023) highlights how AI-driven automation in specific sectors, such as customer service, can lead to productivity gains of up to 30% for less experienced workers. This is particularly evident in industries where repetitive tasks are prevalent, as AI systems can automate these tasks, allowing human workers to focus on more complex and creative aspects of their jobs.

Moreover, research conducted by the OECD (2021) reveals that AI's impact on productivity is most pronounced in industries that are heavily data-driven, such as finance and healthcare. In these sectors, AI facilitates the rapid processing and analysis of large datasets, leading to more informed decision-making and, consequently, improved efficiency and productivity. However, the study also notes that the productivity gains from AI are not evenly distributed across all sectors, with industries that are slower to adopt AI technologies lagging in productivity improvements.

Analysis of Literature on Workforce Displacement and Reskilling in AI Contexts:

The integration of AI into the workforce has sparked considerable debate regarding its impact on employment, particularly concerning job displacement and the need for reskilling. A significant body of literature, including studies by the IMF (2023) and the Brookings Institution (2023), suggests that while AI has the potential to displace jobs, particularly those involving routine manual tasks, it also creates new opportunities for employment in areas that require higher levels of cognitive and technical skills.

For instance, the IMF (2023) highlights that as AI automates routine tasks, there is a growing demand for workers who possess advanced technical skills, such as programming and data analysis. This shift necessitates substantial investment in reskilling and upskilling programs to ensure that the workforce can transition to these new roles. However, the literature also points out that without adequate reskilling initiatives, the displacement of jobs due to AI could exacerbate income inequality and lead to social unrest, particularly in regions where access to education and training is limited.

While AI offers substantial productivity gains, it also poses challenges related to workforce displacement. Addressing these challenges requires a proactive approach to reskilling and upskilling, ensuring that the workforce is prepared for the evolving demands of the AI-driven economy.

Research Gaps:

While substantial progress has been made in understanding the impact of AI on productivity and workforce dynamics, several key areas require further research to fully grasp the broader implications of AI integration.

1. *Long-term Productivity Effects Across Diverse Sectors:* Current research predominantly focuses on the short-term productivity gains of AI in specific sectors such as finance and healthcare. However, there is a lack of comprehensive studies examining the long-term effects of AI across a wider range of industries, particularly in traditional sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture. Understanding how AI impacts these sectors over time, including potential productivity plateaus or declines, is crucial for a more balanced view of AI's economic influence (Autor et al., 2023; OECD, 2021).
2. *Impact of AI on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs):* While larger corporations have the resources to invest in AI and reap its benefits, the impact on SMEs remains underexplored. SMEs constitute a significant portion of the global economy, and their ability to adopt and integrate AI is crucial for widespread economic growth. Further research is needed to assess the barriers SMEs face in AI adoption and the potential strategies to overcome these challenges (IMF, 2023).
3. *Reskilling and Workforce Adaptation Strategies:* Although the need for reskilling in response to AI-induced job displacement is widely recognized, there is limited research on the effectiveness of existing reskilling programs. Moreover, the long-term career outcomes of workers who undergo reskilling, particularly in regions with less access to education and training, require deeper exploration. Research should focus on identifying best practices for reskilling and the role of policy in facilitating these transitions (Brookings Institution, 2023).

Methodology:

Mixed-Methods Approach:

This research employs a *mixed-methods approach*, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of AI on productivity and workforce transformation. The mixed-methods design is chosen to capture both the numerical data that reflects measurable outcomes and the contextual insights that explain the underlying dynamics of these outcomes.

Justification for the Chosen Research Design:

The mixed-methods approach is particularly well-suited for this research due to the complexity and multifaceted nature of AI's impact on economic factors. AI integration affects industries in varied ways, influencing not only quantifiable aspects like productivity metrics but also more nuanced elements such as workforce dynamics and organizational culture (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Quantitative methods are essential for measuring the extent of productivity changes across different sectors. For example, surveys and existing datasets can provide statistical data on the percentage increase in productivity attributable to AI, as well as changes in employment patterns. These methods allow for a broad, generalizable understanding of AI's impact, making it possible to identify trends and correlations that are statistically significant (Bryman, 2012).

However, quantitative data alone cannot fully explain the complex processes through which AI integration affects organizations and their employees. Qualitative methods, such as interviews and case studies, are necessary to explore the experiences of those who implement and interact with AI technologies. These methods provide rich, detailed insights into the challenges and opportunities that AI presents, which are critical for understanding how AI-driven changes are managed within different organizational contexts (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

The combination of these approaches allows for a more holistic analysis. While quantitative data can reveal the scale and scope of AI's impact, qualitative data can explain the "why" and "how" behind these changes. This integration of methods ensures that the research findings are both robust and nuanced, providing a deeper understanding of the subject matter than could be achieved through a single-method approach.

Furthermore, the mixed-methods design is supported by the need to address diverse research questions that require different types of data. For example, while quantitative methods are ideal for assessing the economic impact of AI on productivity, qualitative methods are better suited for exploring the strategies organizations use to manage workforce transitions. This flexibility makes the mixed-methods approach the most appropriate choice for achieving the research objectives (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

The mixed-methods approach offers a comprehensive framework for investigating the complex and interconnected effects of AI on productivity and workforce transformation. By combining the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research, this design ensures a thorough and balanced exploration of the research questions.

Analysis and Discussion:

Detailed Analysis of How AI Improves Efficiency and Output in Various Sectors:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed productivity across various sectors by enhancing efficiency, optimizing processes, and enabling more informed decision-making. In sectors like manufacturing, AI-driven automation systems streamline production lines, reduce error rates, and increase output by handling repetitive tasks with precision and speed. For instance, AI-powered robotics in assembly lines have reduced production time and costs, leading to substantial improvements in overall efficiency (McKinsey, 2021).

In the financial sector, AI algorithms analyse vast datasets in real-time, identifying patterns and making predictions that guide investment strategies. This capability not only enhances decision-making but also significantly reduces the time and effort required for data analysis, leading to faster and more accurate financial forecasting (PwC, 2022). Moreover, AI-driven customer service systems, such as chatbots, have improved customer interaction efficiency by providing instant responses and solutions, thereby enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Deloitte, 2023).

In healthcare, AI technologies have revolutionized diagnostic processes. Machine learning algorithms analyse medical images and patient data more quickly and accurately than human clinicians, leading to faster diagnoses and more personalized treatment plans. This not only improves patient outcomes but also enhances the productivity of healthcare providers by allowing them to focus on more complex cases (OECD, 2021).

Case Studies Illustrating Successful AI Integration and Its Economic Benefits:

Several case studies highlight the successful integration of AI and its subsequent economic benefits across industries.

One notable example is **Siemens**, which implemented AI-driven predictive maintenance systems in its manufacturing plants. By using AI to monitor equipment health and predict failures before they occur, Siemens reduced downtime by 20%, leading to significant cost savings and a 15% increase in overall production efficiency (Siemens, 2020).

Another case is **JPMorgan Chase**, which adopted AI for contract analysis through its COiN (Contract Intelligence) platform. The AI system reviews legal documents in seconds, a task that previously took lawyers thousands of hours to complete. This automation has resulted in considerable time savings and allowed the company to reallocate human resources to more strategic activities, thereby enhancing both efficiency and profitability (JPMorgan, 2021).

In the retail sector, **Amazon** has utilized AI to optimize its supply chain and logistics operations. AI-driven forecasting models predict demand with high accuracy, enabling Amazon to manage inventory more effectively, reduce holding costs, and improve delivery times. The integration of AI into these processes has been a key factor in Amazon's ability to scale operations globally while maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction (Amazon, 2022).

These examples demonstrate that AI's ability to enhance efficiency and output is not limited to a single sector. Its impact is broad, driving economic benefits through increased productivity, cost savings, and improved decision-making across various industries.

Workforce Transformation:

Examination of Job Displacement and the Creation of New Roles Due to AI:

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the workforce has led to significant shifts in job roles, resulting in both displacement and the creation of new opportunities. As AI systems automate routine and repetitive tasks, particularly in sectors like manufacturing, logistics, and customer service, certain job roles are being reduced or eliminated. For example, AI-driven automation in factories has decreased the need for manual labour in assembly lines, leading to job displacement for workers in these positions (World Economic Forum, 2020).

However, this technological shift is not solely about job loss. The rise of AI has also created new roles that require advanced technical skills. These roles include data scientists, AI specialists, machine learning engineers, and digital transformation managers. The demand for these new roles is rapidly increasing, particularly in industries that are heavily investing in AI technologies such as finance, healthcare, and information technology (McKinsey & Company, 2021). As a result, while some jobs are disappearing, new opportunities are emerging, leading to a transformation of the workforce rather than a straightforward reduction in employment.

Analysis of the Skills Gap and the Need for Retraining and Reskilling:

The workforce transformation driven by AI has also highlighted a significant skills gap. Many workers whose jobs are at risk due to automation lack the advanced skills required for the new roles being created. This gap is particularly pronounced in areas such as data analytics, machine learning, and AI system management, where the demand for skilled professionals far exceeds the supply (OECD, 2021).

Governments are also **investing in education and vocational training** to prepare future generations for an AI-driven economy. This includes updating school curricula to include AI literacy and digital skills, ensuring that students are equipped with the foundational knowledge required to thrive in an AI-dominated job market (OECD, 2021). Additionally, vocational training programs are being tailored to meet the specific needs of industries most affected by AI, providing workers with practical skills that can be directly applied in the workplace.

Another crucial role of government policy is **supporting research and development (R&D) in AI and related fields**. By funding R&D, governments can drive innovation and create new job opportunities in emerging sectors. Furthermore, policies that encourage public-private partnerships in R&D can lead to the development of new technologies that create jobs, thereby offsetting some of the employment displacement caused by AI (European Commission, 2020).

Managing the workforce transition in the age of AI requires a multifaceted approach involving both businesses and governments. While businesses focus on reskilling, upskilling, and adopting flexible work models, government policies play a critical role in providing the necessary infrastructure and support to ensure that the workforce can adapt effectively to the challenges and opportunities presented by AI.

Implications for Management and Economics:

Strategic Recommendations for AI Integration While Maintaining Workforce Stability:

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into business operations presents both opportunities and challenges, particularly in balancing technological advancement with workforce stability. To successfully integrate AI while maintaining a stable workforce, businesses should consider the following strategic recommendations:

- 1. Adopt a Phased AI Implementation Approach:** Gradual implementation allows organizations to integrate AI in stages, enabling them to assess the impact on productivity and workforce dynamics at each phase. This phased approach helps in identifying potential disruptions early, allowing management to address them proactively. For instance, companies can start with pilot projects in non-core areas before scaling AI across the entire organization (Bessen, 2019).
- 2. Invest in Employee Reskilling and Upskilling:** One of the critical strategies for maintaining workforce stability is investing in continuous learning programs. By providing employees with training in AI-related skills, companies can facilitate smoother transitions into new roles created by AI. This not only helps in retaining talent but also ensures that the organization has the necessary skills to manage and operate AI technologies effectively. Amazon's "Upskilling 2025" initiative is a prime example, offering training programs that prepare employees for tech-oriented roles (Amazon, 2022).
- 3. Promote a Culture of Innovation and Adaptability:** Encouraging a culture that embraces change and innovation is essential for successful AI integration. Management should foster an environment where employees are encouraged to learn, experiment, and innovate with AI technologies. This can be supported through incentives for innovation, collaborative projects, and the integration of AI in everyday tasks to demonstrate its practical benefits (McAfee & Brynjolfsson, 2017).
- 4. Collaborate with AI Technology Providers:** Establishing partnerships with AI vendors and technology experts can help businesses implement AI more effectively. These collaborations can provide organizations with the expertise needed to customize AI solutions that align with their specific needs, ensuring a smoother integration process. Additionally, such partnerships can offer ongoing support, which is crucial for maintaining workforce stability during transitions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019).

5. Implement Ethical AI Guidelines: Businesses should develop and enforce ethical guidelines for AI usage to address concerns related to job displacement, data privacy, and bias. Ethical AI practices not only safeguard the company's reputation but also build trust among employees and stakeholders, which is vital for workforce stability. Companies like Microsoft and IBM have established AI ethics boards to oversee AI implementation and ensure that it aligns with their corporate values (Microsoft, 2020).

Policy Suggestions to Support Economic Growth and Workforce Adaptation:

Governments play a crucial role in shaping the economic impact of AI by implementing policies that support both technological innovation and workforce adaptation. The following policy suggestions can help ensure that AI contributes to sustainable economic growth while mitigating potential negative effects on employment:

- 1. National Retraining and Education Programs:** Policymakers should invest in national retraining initiatives that focus on equipping the workforce with AI-related skills. These programs should be accessible to all workers, regardless of their current skill level, and should cover a wide range of AI applications. For example, Singapore's Skills Future initiative offers citizens opportunities to learn new skills, including those related to AI and digital technologies, helping to prepare the workforce for future challenges (Singapore Government, 2021).
- 2. Incentivize Business Investment in Workforce Development:** Governments can offer tax incentives or subsidies to businesses that invest in employee training and development. By reducing the financial burden on companies, these incentives encourage businesses to prioritize workforce development alongside AI integration. This not only helps in maintaining employment levels but also ensures that workers are prepared to take on new roles in an AI-driven economy (OECD, 2021).
- 3. Promote Public-Private Partnerships in AI Research and Development:** Policymakers should encourage collaborations between government agencies, academic institutions, and private companies to drive AI innovation. These partnerships can accelerate the development of AI technologies that are aligned with national economic goals, while also creating new jobs in emerging sectors. The European Union's Horizon 2020 program, which funds collaborative R&D projects in AI, serves as a model for such initiatives (European Commission, 2020).
- 4. Implement AI-Specific Labour Regulations:** To protect workers in an AI-driven economy, governments should develop labour regulations that address the unique challenges posed by AI, such as job displacement and changes in work patterns. These regulations could include provisions for retraining displaced workers, ensuring fair wages for AI-related roles, and protecting gig workers who may be disproportionately affected by AI (World Economic Forum, 2020).
- 5. Support Inclusive AI Adoption Across Sectors:** Governments should ensure that AI adoption is not concentrated in a few sectors or regions but is distributed across the economy to maximize its benefits. This can be achieved through targeted funding for AI projects in underserved areas, support for SMEs in adopting AI technologies, and policies that promote digital inclusion. By spreading AI's benefits more evenly, policymakers can foster broader economic growth and reduce regional disparities (OECD, 2021).

As AI continues to evolve, ongoing research is essential to understand its full implications for management and economics. Several emerging trends and areas warrant further exploration:

- 1. Long-Term Impact of AI on Employment Patterns:** While much research has focused on the short-term effects of AI on employment, there is a need for longitudinal studies that track the long-term impact of AI on job creation, displacement, and income inequality. Understanding these trends over time will provide valuable insights into how AI reshapes the labor market and what strategies are most effective in mitigating its adverse effects (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2020).
- 2. AI and the Future of Work in Developing Economies:** Most existing research on AI's economic impact focuses on developed economies. However, AI's implications for developing countries, where labor markets and economic structures differ significantly, remain underexplored. Research in this area could examine how AI adoption in these regions might influence economic growth, job creation, and social equity, and what policies could support a more inclusive AI-driven economy (UNDP, 2021).
- 3. Ethical and Social Implications of AI in the Workplace:** As AI becomes more integrated into the workplace, ethical concerns related to privacy, bias, and worker autonomy are becoming increasingly important. Future research should explore the ethical implications of AI in greater depth, including how businesses and policymakers can ensure that AI technologies are implemented in ways that respect

human rights and promote social justice (Floridi, 2019).

4. AI's Role in Economic Resilience and Crisis Management: The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of economic resilience in the face of global crises. Research into how AI can enhance economic resilience, for example, through supply chain optimization, remote work technologies, and predictive analytics, could provide valuable insights into how AI can be leveraged to prepare for and respond to future crises (McKinsey & Company, 2021).

5. Interdisciplinary Approaches to AI Research: Given the complex and multifaceted nature of AI's impact on society, future research should adopt interdisciplinary approaches that combine insights from economics, sociology, ethics, and technology studies. Such approaches can provide a more holistic understanding of AI's implications and help develop strategies that are both economically viable and socially responsible (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019).

The integration of AI into the economy presents both opportunities and challenges for businesses, policymakers, and researchers. By adopting strategic approaches to AI integration, supporting workforce adaptation through targeted policies, and exploring emerging trends in AI research, stakeholders can ensure that AI contributes to sustainable economic growth and social well-being.

Conclusion

This research has explored the profound impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on productivity and workforce dynamics across various sectors. The findings indicate that AI significantly enhances productivity by automating routine tasks, optimizing operational efficiency, and enabling more informed decision-making. Industries such as manufacturing, finance, and healthcare have seen substantial gains in output and efficiency due to the integration of AI technologies. However, these benefits come with challenges, particularly regarding workforce transformation. AI has led to the displacement of jobs, especially those involving repetitive tasks, while simultaneously creating new roles that require advanced technical skills. The skills gap resulting from this transition underscores the need for comprehensive reskilling and upskilling programs to prepare the workforce for the demands of an AI-driven economy.

This research advances the understanding of AI's dual impact on management and economics by providing a detailed analysis of both the opportunities and challenges associated with AI integration. It highlights the importance of a balanced approach that considers not only the economic benefits of AI but also the social implications, particularly in terms of workforce stability. By adopting a mixed-methods approach, the study offers a nuanced perspective that combines quantitative data on productivity gains with qualitative insights into workforce dynamics. This integrated view contributes to the existing literature by emphasizing the need for strategic management of AI adoption, ensuring that the benefits of AI are maximized while its potential negative effects are mitigated.

The research also contributes to policy discussions by offering recommendations for businesses and policymakers. For businesses, the study provides strategic approaches to AI integration that prioritize workforce stability, including phased implementation, investment in reskilling, and fostering a culture of innovation. For policymakers, the research suggests targeted interventions such as national retraining programs, incentives for workforce development, and inclusive AI adoption strategies that promote economic growth and social equity. These contributions are crucial for developing a sustainable and inclusive approach to AI in the economy.

While this research provides significant insights, it also highlights several areas for further study. First, there is a need for long-term research on the impact of AI on employment patterns, particularly in tracking job creation and displacement over time. Such studies would provide a deeper understanding of how AI reshapes the labour market and the effectiveness of various strategies in managing workforce transitions.

Second, the implications of AI for developing economies remain underexplored. Future research should focus on how AI can be harnessed to drive economic growth in these regions, considering the unique challenges they face, such as lower levels of technological infrastructure and access to education. Understanding how AI can be integrated into the economies of developing countries will be essential for promoting global economic equity.

Third, the ethical and social implications of AI in the workplace deserve more attention. As AI becomes more pervasive, issues related to privacy, bias, and worker autonomy will become increasingly important. Future studies should explore how ethical AI practices can be implemented in different sectors and how these practices impact both productivity and workforce satisfaction.

Finally, interdisciplinary research that combines insights from economics, sociology, ethics, and technology studies will be critical in providing a holistic understanding of AI's impact. Such approaches can help

develop strategies that are not only economically viable but also socially responsible, ensuring that AI's benefits are shared broadly across society. While AI presents significant opportunities for enhancing productivity and economic growth, its integration must be managed carefully to ensure that these benefits are realized without exacerbating social inequalities. Continued research and strategic action are essential to navigate the complex dynamics of AI in the modern economy.

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4. PSYCHO-PHYSICAL INJURIES IN MILITARY INVASIONS



Injured Bodies and Souls, an Unseen Collective Trauma

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Abstract

Rape belongs to those criminal phenomena which are approached with difficulty by the social and humanities science, because its reporting the nature of the crime is covered by law for many cultural contexts and social groups, in different time line is a taboo issue, which leads the survivors-victims, not to report it to the authorities. This, creates the so-called dark number of crime, which is all those crimes that are not reported and therefore automatically not existed in the records. Sexual crimes due to puritanism and the promotion of patriarchal standards even in modern societies and developing societies lead to some issues, such as victim blaming which contributes to the feelings of shame and stigma and self-stigmatization, so victims do not resort to the relevant services to report the incident. Regularly, rape is positioned in academic discourse as the “unseen crime” that everyone knows exists and takes actions to prevent it. Especially for females, who have the highest percentage of sexual victimization in the world, but no one refers to it because it belongs to the terrorism produced by the patriarch system. (Tsigri,1996. p,216). Rape is an expression of sexual violence, which often involves the use of physical violence and threats to bodily integrity; it is not considered a violent expression of a person’s sexuality. It is defined, as a crime of power and coercion, that causes a variety of harms to the victim, such as psycho-physical harms, brutally affects the victim’s personality and dignity driven by the humiliating experience



Source: <https://khironclinics.com/blog/what-is-collective-trauma/>

Invasions of Cyprus

In July 1974, Cyprus experienced significant geopolitical upheavals. On July 15, coup plotters attempted to overthrow the government of Archbishop Makarios and sought to unite Cyprus and Greece, an effort supported by the Greek military junta. Turkey invaded Cyprus on July 20 using the pretext of protecting the Turkish Cypriot

community from this union attempt. The invasion led to the occupation of the northern part of the island, resulting in widespread atrocities that claimed many Cypriot lives and marked the beginning of a devastating humanitarian crisis. During this period, there were many reports of rapes, looting, beatings, humiliation and murders (Papadakis, 1998, pp. 149-163).

Schwendinger, J.R., and Schwendinger, H. (1974), in their study “Rape Myths: In Legal, Theoretical, and Everyday Practice,” argue that the primary motive for rape is not the sexual satisfaction of the perpetrator’s urges, this comes second. Instead, the main motive is the enforcement of power at the expense of another person. They describe it as a “power trip” aimed at contempt and psychological degradation of the victims (Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1974, p. 46). Similarly, criminologist Brownmiller asserts that rape is a profoundly humiliating act that invades and destroys the victim’s personality. It constitutes an invasion of personal inner space and involves the imposition and subjugation of individuals through coercion, with the intent of dismantling the victim’s emotional and physical integrity (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 5).

Mass Rape as a Method of Military Domination

According to UNESCO, wartime mass rapes occur across various periods during armed conflicts and primarily target females of all ages, from children to the elderly. However, males, particularly soldiers and prisoners of war, can also be victims. Women are often regarded as “spoils of war” and rewards for the conquerors’ plundering. On the other hand, the use of rape as a means of exerting power, while inhumane, is sometimes accepted and supported in military circles mid wartime. During the 1974 conflict, approximately 800 rapes recorded of Greek Cypriot women, ranging from 9 years old to the elderly. However, there are reports of rapes of Turkish Cypriot women in the occupied areas of the island. Mass rapes are often tolerated as long as non-combatant populations are subjected to a state of exception, where human rights and bodily autonomy are violated under the pretext of “national security.”

In a society with patriarchal norms and strong religious feeling, such as 70s Cypriot society, national honor is often linked to the bodies of women. Women, as bearers of children, contribute to the creation of new lives and thus to the potential future military strength. Military repeatedly use the strategy of mass rape to produce biological war against the enemy, marking their presence within the adversary’s population through the “dishonor” of its women and the reproduction of children with their own genetic material. This serves as a continual reminder of their conquest to the people they are oppressing and effectively perpetuates collective trauma, rather than merely causing individual psychological and physical harm (Campbell, 2003, pp. 510-512).

Seifert discusses how wartime rape undermines the moral authority and social cohesion of the targeted community. During conflicts, women are perceived as protectors of cultural heritage and national identity. Their rape disrupts social stability and symbolizes an assault on the entire nation (Seifert, 1996, p. 36). Sarah Clark Miller adds that in-a-wartime, rape is not aimed solely at the women themselves but is intended to destroy the entire community they belong. (Miller, 2009, pp. 513-516).

The Stigmatization of Rape and Policies and Practices of Victim Assistance.

Many women who were raped in Cyprus were subsequently ostracized by their families. Some girls were sent abroad to marry, as their rape had stigmatized them as impure. Other women divorced their husbands some of them kept their rape as a secret for the rest of their lives. There have been cases where women became known faced intimidation and ridicule in their workplaces and social circles. The exact number of women raped in Cyprus in 1974 has not been recorded, as even today they bear the burden of stigma and did not reported their experiences and simultaneously living in a climate of social silence where everyone knows but no one speaks. Many people believe the rapes were thousands, rather than just 800 (Hadjipavlou, 2010, pp. 177-195).

In the meantime the state intervention for the care of victims, abortion laws were adjusted to legalize them for the rape victims of 1974. Specifically, hundreds of mass abortions were recorded in 74’s, carried out in private clinics, within the British Bases to maintain confidentiality, and some were performed at the General Hospital of Nicosia. Many women received first aid from the Red Cross, which distributed thousands of pills for unwanted pregnancies to women rescued from the camps. This indicates that international organizations were informed about the atrocities and repeated rapes experienced by prisoners of war in the occupied areas (Chrysanthou, 1999, p. xx).

It would be valuable to note that Cypriot Government began providing financial support and psychological assistance in 2015, after 40 years, to the victims of 1974. For many women, the trauma of rape had left them unable to work and without access to medical or psychological care. Even today, rape victims continue

to grapple with their inner demons, as the war deprived them of bodily autonomy, and society has silenced their voices, in the name of propriety.

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He is a career diplomat, Consul General of Romania in Turin (Italy). A special focus of his activity as Consul General of Romania is increasing the level of bilateral cooperation within the political, strategic, commercial, economic, cultural and academic dimensions of bilateral partnerships. A career diplomat, with a degree in law, in foreign languages and a doctorate in management, he was also consul general of Romania in Los Angeles - USA, he previously headed the Consular Section of the Romanian Embassy in Rome, the National Centre for Diplomatic and Service Passports within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Romanian Consulate in Castellon de la Plana - Spain and the Consulate General of Romania in Trieste - Italy. He worked as a teacher at the Romanian Diplomatic Institute, at the Consular Training and Training Centre of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and represented Romania in expert committees of the European Council and the European Commission in Brussels. He has published papers on consular regulation, emergency and disaster management, and security studies. Specialist and connoisseur of English, Italian, Spanish and French languages.



Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Ph.D. Georgios KOUKAKIS (Greece)



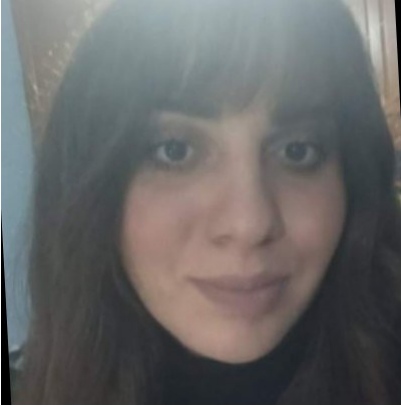
Georgios KOUKAKIS is a graduate of the Hellenic Military Academy (2002), the Hellenic Army War College (2020) and the Hellenic Supreme Joint War College (2023), with a strong professional and academic background in the field of security & defence, international relations, and adult training. He holds a Master of Arts in International Relations in „Governance, Development and Security in the Mediterranean” from the Department of Mediterranean Studies of the University of the Aegean (Rhodes, Greece) and is a Senior Researcher in the „Center for International Strategic Analyses” (KEDISA), a member of the „Hellenic Institute of Strategic Studies” (HEL.I.S.S.), a Research Associate of „HERMES Institution of International Affairs, Security & Geoeconomy”, a member of „ALLILON” (the Global Network of Greeks and Friends of Greece for Solidarity in the Professional Field) and a member of the „Mercury Negotiation Academy” (MNA). He has participated as a speaker in several seminars/conferences regarding international relations in the fields of foreign policy, security and defense, while several of his articles and research papers have been published in many scientific journals, the official „Military Review” journal of the Hellenic Army General Staff, the „Foreign Affairs The Hellenic Edition” magazine, the „Policy Journal”, „HuffPost Greece”, „Geopolitics & Daily News”, „Liberal”, as well as other international relations, security and defence websites. His research interests include National Security, Grand Strategy, EU Affairs, Greek Foreign Policy, Military Diplomacy, Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Cultural Diplomacy, and International & Regional Organizations (NATO, UN, EU, OIC, EfM, etc.). He is the co-author of the book „National Security: Myths and Reality” (in Greek) that was published in April 2023 and the Academic Head of the Educational Programme „Security Studies in the Mediterranean” of the Continuing Education-Lifelong Learning Center (CE-LLC) of the University of the Aegean. His research interests include National Security, Grand Strategy, EU Affairs, Greek Foreign Policy, Military Diplomacy, Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Cultural Diplomacy, and International & Regional Organizations (NATO, UN, EU, OIC, EfM, etc.). He is the co-author of the book “National Security: Myths and Reality” (in Greek) that was published in April 2023.



Gerlinde NIEHUS (Germany)



She has more than 25 years of experience in leadership, management and innovation in multilateral diplomacy, gained in particular at NATO and the European Commission. He is a leader with outstanding knowledge of international security policy and international cooperation. With her passion for promoting peace and democracy, Gerlinde led several reform processes. Gerlinde combines strong political analysis with excellent negotiation and communication skills. She has successfully chaired high-level NATO committees, led international teams from over 30 countries and connected NATO with people around the world.



Emmanouela POLYKANDRIOTI (Greece)

She has a degree in 'Sociology' from the University of Aegean and a master's degree in social sciences - 'Social Research on Regional Development and Social Cohesion.

She is specialised in critical criminology-qualitative research, and women's issues/harassment-gender based violence and marginalization.



PhD. Eng. Cristian-Marcel FELEA



He completed engineering studies at the University of Petroșani (former Institute of Mines) and master's and doctoral studies in mines, oil and gas. He also completed post-graduate studies at the „Carol I” Defense University and the „A.I.Cuza” Police Academy, being former officer.

He is a columnist for RepublikaNEWS Ploiești and a contributor to HotNEWS.



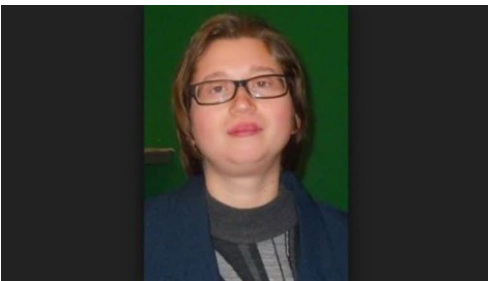
PhD. Hani M. HAIDOURA (Lebanon)



He is a professor at the Lebanese French University of Technology and Applied Sciences (ULF), widely recognized for his research in Political Economy. He holds key positions in academia and actively contributes to various educational and humanitarian organizations. Dr. Haidoura also serves as the Director of Administration and Financial Affairs. His extensive publication record in major indexed journals underscores his substantial contributions to the fields of Business and Economics.



Mona AGRIGOROAIEI



She graduated in Political Science - Bachelor and Master in Political Marketing and Communication at “Al. Ioan Cuza” University in Iași. In 2023 she also graduated with a second master's degree “Security and Diplomacy” at SNSPA, Bucharest. She followed an internship at the “Centre for Conflict Prevention and Early Warning during her studies at SNSPA. She specializes in academic research and exploration of Western Balkan political and security topics, publishing several analyses in the media of this area in various newspapers in Albania, Kosovo, North Macedonia.



Momodou Ted MCEWAN (Great Britain)

He specialised in transformative strategies across public and private sectors. Known for his results-driven approach and proven track record in overcoming complex challenges, Ted is a key player in fostering business growth and sustainable development. With deep experience in strategic partnerships, business transformation, and intercultural engagement, particularly within emerging markets like Sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe, he has a unique insight into the geopolitical shifts taking place in these regions. Ted's passion for social impact and small business development has led him to spearhead initiatives like The Baobab Foundation Gambia and SoGa-Impact. Through these efforts, he facilitates collaboration among governments, NGOs, and commercial enterprises to drive meaningful change and economic growth. His expertise in navigating complex environments and his dedication to sustainable development make him a leading voice in understanding the evolving power dynamics in West Africa, particularly regarding the region's rejection of French influence.



PhD Candidate George Vadim TIUGEA



He is a civil servant, political science researcher and English translator. In 2001, he graduated from the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Bucharest, Political Science section in English, with the bachelor thesis Sources and Features of Ethnic Conflict. In 2003, he graduated from the Master's Degree in International Relations of the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Bucharest, with the dissertation Ethnic Conflict Resolution Perspectives in Southeast Asia. Between 2003-2019 he was a researcher at the "Ovidiu Șincai" Social-Democrat Institute, since 2004 serving as coordinator of the Department of International Relations and project manager at the "Ovidiu Șincai" European School (project carried out under the auspices of the Council of Europe). Since 2019, he is a civil servant in the International Relations Department of the National Public Pension House and a PhD candidate in political sciences at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Bucharest, defending in October 2023 the thesis entitled The role of identity in shaping the European policy of the Russian Federation at the beginning 21st century. He has published articles on topics such as: the geopolitics of Eastern Europe, European nations and identities, conflicts and cooperation organizations in the Balkans, the transition in Romania, the foreign and security policy of the Russian Federation, in English, Romanian and Russian for magazines and publications online from Romania, Russia, Slovenia and Kosovo. He is the co-author of Contemporary Social Democracy – Between Tradition and Globalization (2004; chapters on social democracy in Great Britain, Latin America and North America) and The Dark Side of Globalization (2016; chapters on guerrilla movements in Colombia and Peru). He translated works on contemporary social democracy, modern and contemporary history of Romania and Europe, respectively international relations during the Cold War.



PhD. Hussein NABULSI (Lebanon)



He is a Professor of Economics at the Lebanese University and the American University of Culture & Education (AUCE), is renowned for his research in Political Economy. He holds influential positions in academia and contributes to numerous educational and humanitarian organizations. Dr. Nabulsi has an impressive record of publications in major indexed journals, affirming his significant contributions to his field.



PhD. Eng. Stelian TEODORESCU



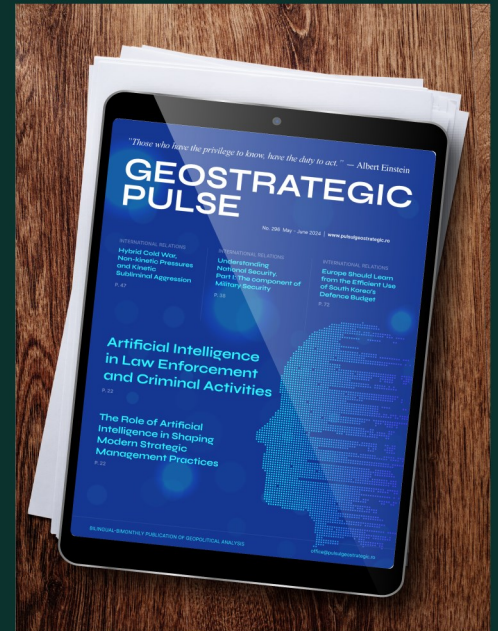
He is an aviation engineer and during his doctoral studies he was admitted to the SmartSPODAS Project - “Transnational network for the integrated management of smart doctoral and postdoctoral research in the fields of “Military Sciences”, “Security and Information” and “Public Order and National Security”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



GEOSTRATEGIC PULSE

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